Vol.7 Iss.4 2026
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.adr.2026.020
Art & Design Research

# Exploration of Singing Techniques in Caidiao Opera in Guilin City, Guangxi Province, China

**Liao Shasha, Jiang Baolong***
**College of Art, Qinghai Minzu University, Xining City, China**
***Corresponding Author, E-mail: 895651034@qq.com**

## Abstract
*Caidiao opera is one of the most representative local opera genres in Guilin of Guangxi and was included in the first batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2006. Its singing techniques have developed a unique system through long-term artistic practice, featuring distinct national style and local characteristics. This article starts from the musical inherent characteristics of the singing style of the Caidiao opera, explores the constituent elements of its singing techniques, including vocalization methods, emotional handing techniques, and analyzes the application of singing techniques in practice in combination with classic plays.*

## Keywords
*Caidiao Opera; Singing Techniques; Guilin City*

## 1. Introduction

The musical singing style is the most distinctive artistic feature of Caidiao opera. In the performance format of Caidiao opera, it not only serves to connect the structure of the script, the performances of the actors and the stage arrangement, but also is the soul of Caidiao opera and an important symbol to distinguish local opera genres. The performers integrated life-like language into a highly performative singing style, fully demonstrating solid basic skills in singing, speaking, acting and dancing. The Caidiao opera is renowned for its life-like content, catchy tunes and singing styles, as well as its humorous and lively performance style.

## 2. The Vocalization Methods and Breath Control Techniques for Singing in Caidiao Opera

### *2.1 The Aesthetic Features of the Original Voice Singing Style*

When the actors of the Caidiao opera perform, they all sing in the Guilin dialect, follow the characters and sing in their original voices. This is the most typical singing method of the Caidiao opera. The so-called "original voice singing method" refers to the performer singing with their natural true voice (original voice), rather than using falsetto or mixed voice as in some opera genres. This singing style choice is closely related to the genre style of Caidiao opera - Caidiao is hailed as "a cheerful opera genre filled with the fragrance

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

of the earth", and its singing pursues a simple, natural, warm and touching artistic effect, rather than a high-pitched and resounding or a flamboyant and showy one.

The aesthetic value of the original singing style lies in its "truth" - the authenticity of the voice, the genuineness of the emotion, and the closeness to life. The themes of Caidiao opera are mostly about labor, love, family life and so on. The singing content is mostly the daily life of ordinary people. The original voice singing method can convey this simple emotion most directly. The performer integrates life-like language into a highly performative singing style, making the audience feel close and natural, and easy to resonate with.

### *2.2 The Essentials of Breath Control*

The application of breath control in color tune singing includes the following aspects: First, the depth of breath control - it requires the singer to sink the breath into the lower abdomen to provide a stable support for vocalization. Secondly, the smoothness of breath - it is required that the breath be evenly and continuously output during the vocalization process, avoiding intermittent or rapid breathing. Thirdly, the flexibility of breath control - adjust the flow rate and intensity of breath flexibly according to the rhythm changes and emotional fluctuations of the singing. The performer should "adjust the voice according to the character's age, personality, circumstances, etc., so that the voice fits the character and the singing conveys the emotions." This indicates that breath control is not only a technical issue but also an important means serving character development and emotional expression.

### *2.3 The Grasp of the Vocal Position*

The vocal position of the Caidiao opera singing shares some commonalities with Chinese national vocal music while also having its own uniqueness. Some studies have compared the commonalities between bel canto and Caidiao opera vocal styles from the perspectives of the braking part, vocalization part, vibration part, and resonance part of the human voice. Research has found that there is a technical basis for communication between the two in terms of breath support and resonance application, which provides the possibility for scholars or singers who already possess vocal techniques to participate in the transmission and protection of Caidiao opera.

However, the vocal positions used in the singing technique of Caidiao opera have their particularities. Due to the use of the original voice singing method, the resonance application in Caidiao opera singing mainly focuses on oral resonance and nasal resonance, with less use of chest resonance and head cavity resonance. The vocalization position is relatively forward and the enunciation is clear. This is closely related to the feature that the Caidiao opera is performed in the Guilin dialect and requires "clear enunciation that can be understood without subtitles". During the training, the performer is required to "keep the back of the neck upright" but "do not apply external force", emphasizing that under the premise of keeping the vocal channel unobstructed, the voice should be produced in a natural and relaxed state.

## 3. Emotional Handling Techniques for Characters in Caidiao Opera

In the long-term artistic practice of Caidiao opera, a rich variety of singing and handling techniques have been formed, and these techniques are one of the core contents of Caidiao singing skills. The performer

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

should present the character based on its emotional needs through means such as changes in dynamics, speed, timbre, and interjections. Among them, the most distinctive are the use of interjections.

The extensive use of interjections in Chinese traditional opera tones has endowed them with the significance of cultural symbols. Caidiao opera is also called "Na huo Hai" in folk culture because "Na Huo Yi Huo Hai" is often used as a filler in its singing style. The interjections are not only an organic part of the structure of Caidiao opera music, but also an important symbol of the singing style of Caidiao opera.

The application of Caidiao opera interjections needs to be approached from multiple aspects. First of all, it is necessary to grasp the characteristics of musical literature - although the interjections do not undertake the function of expressing meaning, their phonology, rhythm and the melody of the singing style are closely coordinated, forming the unique rhythmic beauty of Caidiao opera music. Secondly, it is necessary to break through the singing form - the singing of interjections should not be mechanical repetition, but should be flexibly handled according to the development of the plot and the emotions of the characters. Thirdly, specific technical adjustments need to be made - the pronunciation position of the interjections, the changes in dynamics, the handling of rhythm, etc., all of which require the singer to precisely grasp according to the requirements of the specific singing segment.

The plays of Caidiao opera mostly take labor, love and family life as themes, and the emotional expressions are rich and diverse - there are cheerful and humorous ones, deep and affectionate ones, ones mixed with grief and anger, and ones melancholy and sad. Different emotions require different singing styles to express. In cheerful works, performers often adopt a light and lively singing style, making the characters full of vitality and fun. In lyrical singing works, a coherent and smooth singing style is adopted, pursuing the smoothness of the melody and the depth of emotions. In sorrowful and indignant singing works, singing techniques with pauses and strong contrasts in dynamics may be adopted to enhance the dramatic tension. The reputation of Caidiao opera as a "happy genre" is closely related to the "happy factor" contained in its singing - even for the segments expressing sad emotions, the singing style of Caidiao opera often has an optimistic and open-minded undertone.

## 4. Analysis of Singing Techniques in Classic Plays

### *4.1 The Singing Art of "Liu Sanjie"*

The Caidiao opera "Liu Sanjie" is one of the most representative Caidiao opera and premiered in 1958. The original version of "Shan Ge Hao Bi Chun Jiang Shui" is the theme song of the Caidiao opera "Liu Sanjie", and its melody is adapted from a folk song of Liuzhou, Guangxi. This work is based on the perspective of the integration of ethnic vocal music and the discipline of drama performance, demonstrating the deep fusion of folk song genes and elements of drama performance.

The performance of "Liu Sanjie" fully embodies the characteristics of Caidiao opera, which are "singing according to the characters and using the original voice". Liu Sanjie's image is witty, brave and passionate about freedom. Her singing style combines the melodious and clear sound of mountain songs with the humorous and lively charm of Caidiao opera. In terms of singing techniques, the singer needs to maintain the

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

traditional charm of Caidiao opera while appropriately drawing on the vocalization methods of ethnic vocal music, so that the singing style not only has the charm of opera but also the appeal of the song. "New Liu Sanjie" has made innovations on the basis of inheriting classics. It not only creatively inherits various singing forms but also incorporates contemporary popular songs and musical elements.

### *4.2 The Singing Art of "Wangsan Da Niao"*

"Wangsan Da Niao" is one of the traditional classic plays of Caidiao opera. This play is popular in the Guilin area and is performed in the Guilin-Liuzhou dialect. The singing segments in the play are characterized by life-like language, a lively rhythm and humorous content, fully embodying the style and features of Caidiao as a "happy genre".

In terms of singing techniques, "Wangsan Da Niao" require the singer to have flexible rhythm control ability and vivid language expressiveness. The lyrics extensively employ slang and colloquial expressions of the Guilin dialect. The singer must accurately grasp the tone and intonation of the dialect in order to fully convey the humor and wit of the play to the audience.

### *4.3 The Singing Art of "Na Huo Yi Huo Hai"*

Caidiao opera "Na Huo Yi Huo Hai" is a play named after the characteristic interjections of Caidiao opera. The work of interjections in this play is of exemplary significance. Performance practice shows that the handling of color tone interludes in singing should start from grasping musical literature, breaking through singing forms, and making specific technical adjustments. This experience is not only applicable to this play but also has universal reference value for the interlude singing of the entire Caidiao genre.

## 5. Conclusion

Caidiao opera, as one of the most representative local opera genres in Guangxi, has developed a unique system of singing techniques over hundreds of years of artistic practice. The core of this system lies in "truth" - the application of genuine voice, sincere enunciation and genuine emotional expression. Caidiao opera is hailed as "a cheerful opera genre filled with the fragrance of the earth", and its singing techniques are precisely the musical embodiment of this rural flavor and cheerful spirit. In the context of contemporary intangible cultural heritage protection, the inheritance of the singing techniques of Caidiao opera not only requires taking root in tradition and preserving the "roots" and "flavor", but also needs to keep pace with the times and be innovative. Only in this way can this singing art, which embodies the wisdom and emotions of the people of Guangxi Guilin, continue to thrive and flourish in the new era.

## References

[1]Fan Yufeng (2025), "Research on the Singing Content of the Northern Guangxi Caidiao Opera", Gui Xue Research, No.1, pp. 159-172

[2]He Feiyan (2021), On the absorption and development of Chinese opera music to the cultural factors of multi-ethnic folk songs -- Taking the Music of Caidiao Opera as An Example, Modern Music, No.2, pp.15-17

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

[3]Liu Jiangang, Lu Qiuju (2023), "Tracing Back to the Source and Innovating Inheritance: A Study on the Singing of the Selected Segment of the Caidiao Opera "Mountain Songs Are Like Spring River Water", Home Drama, No.36, pp.36-38
[4]Merriam P. Alan (1964), "The Anthropology of Music" (Evanston, Illinois United States, Northwestern University Press)
[5]Qin Yang, Li Donghai, Liyi (2022), "Field Investigation Record - Guilin Caidiao", Beautify life, No.8, pp.92-94
[6]Shu Cuiling, Tao Yanlan (2024), "Analysis of the Stylized Characteristics of the Caidiao Opera Performance Art in Yongfu County, Guilin", Song of the Yellow River, No.10, pp.36-39
[7]Wang Sili (2024), "The Influence of Guangxi Caidiao Opera Vocal Art on the Development of National Vocal Music", Grand View (Forum), No.4, pp.48-50
[8]Wang Jingru (2021), "A Comparative Study on the Commonalities between Bel canto Singing and the Vocalization Methods of Guangxi Caidiao Opera", Journal of Guangxi Minzu Normal University, No.1, pp.157-160
[9]Yang Luhong (2025), "The Expression and Construction of Local Culture for Caidiao Opera in Guangxi", Drama Literature, No.6, pp.100-106
[10]Zhang Xiao, Tu Yanqi (2025), "The Re-creation and Interpretation of Ancient Classics by National Art: A Re-Exploration of the Artistic Value of the Newly composed Caidiao Opera 'Seven-Step Song'", Xi You, No.4, pp.9-12

© 2026 by the author(s); licensee Mason Publish Group, this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)