

## Interpretation and Conducting of Jin Chengzhi's Magic City Chinese Choral Works

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i12/20187> DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i12/20187

**Published Date:** 24 December 2023

### Abstract

This study addresses various issues related to choral conducting in the context of Chinese Choral music, with a specific focus on Jin Chengzhi's Magic City Chinese Choral songs. Two primary issues are identified: first, the varying approaches of conductors in achieving balance and expressing dissonance in the music, and second, differences in their attention to the meaning and context of the music for the choir. Additionally, the influence of cultural backgrounds on conductors' communication styles is considered. The aim of this study is to explore the nuances of conducting within the realm of Chinese Choral music. The research objectives encompass addressing authenticity concerns in compositional works within this genre and investigating the relationship between musical elements and conducting gestures. Methodologically, this study adopts a systematic approach rooted in practice-based research. Data collection and analysis will encompass both textual and non-textual sources, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the discourse surrounding choir member selection and the execution of Jin Chengzhi's Magic City Chinese Choral songs. Through empirical observations and scholarly analysis, it seeks to provide a deeper insight into these processes. For future research, it is recommended that comparative studies be conducted to examine the interpretations of multiple conductors for a given composition. Such studies can shed light on the subjectivity inherent in musical interpretation, offering a more profound exploration of its influence on performance.

**Keyword:** Jin Chengzhi's Chinese Choral Songs, Conducting Chinese Choral Songs, Practice Based Research Conducting, Interpretation Jin Chengzhi's Chinese Choral Songs

### Introduction

The choral compositions of Jin Chengzhi exhibit a diverse and intricate blend of realism and lyricism. According to Chaloupková, (2021) and Yaping (2020) the realistic pieces within his body of work are considered to be the most emblematic. The present-day experiences of Chinese youth, along with their sentiments of longing and familial attachment towards their hometowns, are effectively conveyed in their artistic expressions.

The music of Jin Chengzhi holds significant importance in the advancement of amateur choirs within the Chinese choral society, as well as in the ongoing progress of social music activities in China. The significance of his compositions lies in their musical form and diverse artistic characteristics, which contribute to the advancement of Chinese choral theory.

Jin Chengzhi's musical compositions have garnered significant public interest due to his innovative performance style, resulting in a growing popularity within the Chinese choral community (Lam, 2008). Presently, Jin Chengzhi's musical compositions garner considerable attention and wield substantial influence within the Chinese choral community. Numerous mass choirs and university choirs actively perform Jin Chengzhi's works, which effectively cater to the varied aesthetic innovations embraced by today's youth. Jin Chengzhi's choral compositions are repertoire that combines Chinese and Western elements.

However, Chinese choir songs may present diction challenges for conductors and choir members who are not fluent in Chinese. This can make it difficult to accurately convey the meaning and context of the lyrics (Lau, 2013). The choirs from different cultural backgrounds may face challenges in performing Chinese music, including differences in communication styles, community culture of choirs, and cultural challenges. There is misconception is that Chinese music is only for Chinese people. In reality, Chinese music can be enjoyed and performed by people from all cultures and backgrounds. Chinese conductors may also face challenges related to inequity in cross-cultural choirs (Zhou, 2019; Tuo, 2022). Zhong, and Simon (2011) asserts that performers who lack fluency in Chinese or English may encounter difficulties due to language barriers, thereby impeding their capacity to effectively interact with the material. In response to this problem, there is a need for conductors to be required specific criteria when selecting choir members from non-Chinese regions, particularly in Chinese choir members in Malaysia.

A conductor's interpretation can communicate interpretive nuance to the choir, affecting the overall quality of the performance (Graves, 1984). Interpretation is "a concept of a work of art as expressed by the character and style of its representation or performance. According to Peed (1980), conductors need to interpret the choir song to convey the meaning and context of the music to the choir members. The performers should be concerned with them-selves and their individual role in the music, while the conductor takes these individuals and moulds them into a concise, disciplined, feeling entity. This can involve blending Chinese and Western vocal and instrumental traditions to create musical images within the choral works.

According to Magaro (2016) there are two factors that made the conductors have different levels of attention to detail that influence their interpretation of the music. The first, each conductor have differences in the way on the balance and expression of each dissonance in the music. The second, each conductor may have different levels of attention to detail to the meaning and context of the music to the choir. Reflecting these issues, there is a need for study related to the interpretation of the conductor in the Choir.

The other issues about Chinese choral conducting are conductors from different cultural backgrounds may have different communication styles, which can affect their ability to effectively lead a Chinese choir (Tuo, 2022). Conductors who are aware of these misconceptions and are able to educate their choirs about the diversity and significance of Chinese music may be more successful in leading a Chinese choir. In the case of a choir conducting, the conductor's interpretation will be shown in verbal and non-verbal forms (expressions of gestures) in choir practice. There is a need a study relate to link a conductor's interpretation, conductor's communication and rehearsal settings.

Reflecting a number of explanations above, there is a need to study conducting in Chinese Choral songs. The study conducting approach to Chinese Choral songs addresses three needs. The first is to address the issues of dissemination Chinese Choral songs. The second is to address the issues of authenticity of compositional works in Chinese Choral songs. The third is to address the issues musical element and conducting gesture in Chinese Choral songs.

The study will be conducted in a systematic manner, employing a practice-based research approach. Candy (2006) defines practice-based research as a form of inquiry that involves conducting an original investigation with the aim of acquiring novel knowledge, which is achieved through both engaging in practical activities and analysing the results of those activities (Djahwasi and Saidon, 2020). The demonstration of originality and contribution to knowledge can be accomplished by means of creative outcomes, encompassing various forms such as images, music, designs, models, digital media, as well as performances and exhibitions. These outcomes serve as tangible manifestations of the claims being made. Although the claims are explained in words, a comprehensive understanding can only be achieved by directly referring to the outcomes in question. A practice-based doctoral degree differs from a traditional doctoral degree in that it allows for the inclusion of creative outputs resulting from the research process in the final submission for examination. Furthermore, the requirement to demonstrate an original contribution to the field is fulfilled through the presentation of the original creative work.

### Artistic Review

The artistic review of 《Magic City》魔都魔都 observed based on Dragon TV Universal Intersection recording which was recorded in Jun 1, 2017. This performance was documented in you tube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEQQQcuiFwU&t=3s> .



The music video boasts the creative process of a seasoned director, while the enchanting melodies and heartfelt lyrics are masterfully crafted and performed by the illustrious Rainbow Choir. In this captivating musical endeavour, the artist skilfully weaves together a myriad of techniques, including the mesmerizing lead singer's performance, the harmonious interplay of voices, the enchanting duets, and the engaging dialogues.

The infusion of the Shanghai dialect adds a unique flavor to the composition, resulting in a dynamic and vibrant musical experience that takes the listener on a journey of highs and lows. Simultaneously, the melodic stylings employed by Rainbow Choir showcase their prowess in the realm of "advanced" lyrical interpretation, skilfully capturing the essence of Shanghai's vibrancy in a playful and humorous manner. In a mesmerizing symphony of architectural marvels and cutting-edge urban design, the capital of China has undergone a remarkable transformation, emerging as a vibrant metropolis that pulsates with innovation. This resplendent cityscape stands as a testament to the nation's unwavering commitment to progress and its relentless pursuit of excellence. With its captivating blend of tradition and modernity, the capital has become a harmonious fusion of ancient heritage and futuristic vision, captivating.

### Finding and Discussion

The lyrical composition of "Magic City" reverently acknowledges the vibrant metropolis of Shanghai, encapsulating its multifaceted essence, encompassing idiosyncrasies that are distinctly its own, while exuding an aura of congeniality and refinement. Furthermore, this composition serves as a poignant testament to the profound adoration the artist harbors for the urban landscape, which has undeniably imprinted itself upon the singer's emotional core. This composition serves as a poignant homage to a locale that encapsulates a myriad of recollections and sentiments.

**Table 4.2**

*The lyric of "Magic City"*

The Original Lyrics	Lyrics Translation
关于你有很多评价，我讲给你听，不要生气哦。	There are a lot of comments about you, let me tell you, please don't get mad.
有人觉得你超怪，排队买东西却越买越high。	Some people think you're super weird, queuing up to buy something but getting more and more excited.
诶，不要插队，有人觉得你有点娘。	Hey, don't jump the queue. Some people think you are a little sticky.
老婆大人的指令必须得照办，有人觉得你不够兄弟。	Some people think you're not enough of a brother when you have to follow your wife's orders.  It's not my fault. Some people think you're stingy. AA is also a treat.

事不关己，高高挂起，有人觉得你吝啬。AA制也算请客。

今天真的很谢谢你们哦。有人觉得你注重外表，下楼买菜也要西服手表。

等一下阿拉还要去跳舞lay，有人觉得你不够热情。

突然的拜访竟不是惊喜，这些印象并没有阻止我喜欢你。

相反走得越远，你的名字越是在我心中铭记。

【致敬《喜欢上海的理由》原词作者:陶为民/原唱:孔佳】

(上海是我长大跟成人所在，带着我所有的情怀:第一次干杯，第一次恋爱，在永远的纯真年代。)

其实你踏实，你敬业，你温暖，你负责，你优雅，你可爱，你包容着每一种心情。

你倾听每一句声音，你踏实，你敬业，你温暖，你

Thank you very much for today.

Some people think you're so concerned about your appearance that you have to wear a suit and watch when you go downstairs to buy food.

I have to go dancing later. Some people think you are not enthusiastic enough.

The sudden visit was not a surprise, but these impressions did not stop me from liking you.

On the contrary the further I walked, the more your name stuck in my mind.

【Tribute to "Reasons to Like Shanghai" Original lyricist: Tao Weimin / Original vocalist: Kong Jia】

(Shanghai is where I grew with all my feelings, first toast, first love, in the age of eternal innocence.)

In fact, you're down-to-earth, you're dedicated, you're warm, you are responsible, you are elegant, you are lovely, you embrace every mood.

You listen to every voice, you're down-to-earth, you're dedicated, you're warm, you're responsible, you're graceful, you're lovely, look at the white clouds over the Pu Jiang County.

Look at the river, (fellow residents, beware of fire and burglary, close your doors and Windows), converge into a sea.

I love Shanghai! I love Shanghai! I love Shanghai!

负责·你优雅·你可爱· 看那白云在浦江之上。 看河流，居民朋友们·防 火防盗·关好门窗·汇聚 成海。  我爱上海！我爱上海！我 爱上海！	
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The words of the song narrate a tale wherein the protagonist expresses their profound fondness for an individual whom they hold in high regard, while concurrently highlighting a significant bond with the urban metropolis of Shanghai.

First Stanza: Preliminary Observations. The narrative commences with the narrator acknowledging the existence of numerous perspectives and evaluations concerning the individual they hold in high regard. Despite acknowledging the presence of these ideas, the narrator kindly disregards them and advises the individual not to internalize them. The individuals commence delineating diverse attributes and idiosyncrasies of said individual.

The second verse delves into the exploration of unconventional traits. As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that this individual has certain non-traditional characteristics. Individuals exhibit heightened levels of excitement when queuing to make purchases, which may be seen atypical by certain individuals who perceive them as displaying characteristics traditionally associated with femininity. Remarkably, they conscientiously adhere to the directives of their partner, a behavior that certain others perceive as indicative of a dearth of autonomy. Nevertheless, the narrator expresses a genuine admiration for these idiosyncrasies, including the inclination to refrain from interfering in the matters of others.

The act of expressing gratitude is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and communication. It involves conveying appreciation and thankfulness towards others for their. Within the context of these many descriptions, the narrator conveys a sense of appreciation towards the individual in question. The individual expresses gratitude towards the recipient for a specific action performed on the aforementioned day, hence indicating a sense of fondness and affection towards them.

In the third verse, an exploration of more idiosyncrasies and behaviors is undertaken. The narrator proceeds to depict the individual's character further. The authors note the individual's apparent concern for their physical presentation, even when engaging in routine activities such as descending stairs to purchase groceries. The individual's intention to engage in dancing at a later time has been seen by some as indicative of a diminished level of excitement towards alternative hobbies. Notwithstanding these idiosyncrasies, the narrator's fondness for the individual remains unwavering.

The artistic creation titled "Bridge: Homage to Shanghai" is a tribute to the city of Shanghai. The narrative briefly deviates as the lyrics express reverence towards the metropolis of Shanghai. The narrator has a profound affinity towards this location, whereby they had encountered numerous crucial life occurrences. The individuals nostalgically reminisce about their formative years, characterized by significant events such as their first



celebratory drink and initial experience of romantic affection. It is apparent that Shanghai occupies a significant emotional space for them.

The Chorus: An Exploration of Individuality and the City of Shanghai. Revisiting the overarching motif, the chorus extols the individual's commendable attributes. The lyrics portray the individuals as exhibiting qualities such as diligence, dedication, warmth, responsibility, elegance, adorableness, and empathy. The individual is depicted as a proficient listener, demonstrating attentiveness to each uttered word.

The chorus adeptly portrays the scenic backdrop of Shanghai, evoking vivid vision of ethereal white clouds adorning the Pujiang River, while simultaneously emphasizing the harmonious coexistence of its inhabitants. The narrator holds a deep appreciation for the aesthetic appeal of the city and the strong communal bonds that exist within it.

The narrative concludes with a profound expression of affection towards both Shanghai and the individual. The aforementioned sentiments serve to highlight the fundamental nature of the narrative, wherein a profound and steadfast fondness is exhibited towards an individual who possesses idiosyncrasies, with an equally profound adoration for a metropolis that harbors cherished recollections.

The central theme of the narrative centers on the recognition and celebration of an individual's distinctiveness, while also emphasizing the deep personal bond that the narrator has had with Shanghai, a city where they have encountered both moments of happiness and moments of sadness.

### ***Score Analysis and Interpretation***

The song is divided into two sections, A and B. The A section runs from bar 1 to bar 35 and the B section from bar 37 to bar 51. The addition of many character performances and dialogues throughout the song adds to the drama of the track. The tempo and mood of the A and B sections are different, with the A section being at *Vivace* speed, using a *Swing* rhythm, and the accompaniment being almost entirely in Walking Bass, which is a narrative of the everyday life of ordinary Shanghai people, while the B section uses a lot of triplet rhythms, in *Andante*, with more long phrases, and the singing gradually becoming more powerful the whole piece ends directly. The song will be performed in two separate parts A and B. Part A will open the recital and part B will end the recital.

The song requires the singers to have fast, light-hearted singing skills, mastery of Swing rhythm, triplet technique, smooth singing at *Andante* tempo, handling of long phrases, emotional progression and the ability to act in character in order to make the whole song more lively, emotional and dramatic.

The A section is accompanied almost entirely by Walking Bass, which means that the choir needs to master *Swing*, the rhythm with a swinging feel, when singing to give the song a jazzy feel. The choir can express the *Swing* rhythm by subtly lengthening or shortening the duration of the notes between them. This requires the choristers to have a good grasp of the dynamics of the music as they sing, which includes the strength, weakness, and undulation of the music. When speaking the monologue, the singer needs to master the speed, tone and emotion of the words in order to make the character's monologue more authentic and engaging. It may be necessary to be flexible in the use of different intonations, speeds and pauses in singing to give the character's monologue a sense of rhyme and rhythm.

Part B is described as using a lot of triplet rhythms, which means that choristers need to master the technique of showing clear, fluid triplets in their singing, adding to the rhythmic richness and complexity of the song. In the mesmerizing composition titled 'Magic City' by the

brilliant Jin Chengzhi, we are presented with a pivotal and musically significant moment that demands our utmost attention and calls for a meticulous scrutiny and a thoughtful interpretation. At this pivotal juncture, a moment of great significance unfolds, precisely at the esteemed bar 36, as eloquently portrayed in the illustrious Figure 4.1 of the musical score. In this particular juncture of the composition, Jin Chengzhi skillfully incorporates a deliberate and captivating alteration in tempo, deviating from the established rhythm and seamlessly transitioning into the enchanting realm of the 'andante' tempo marking.

As a conductor, I must say that from the vantage point of choir conducting, this exquisite tempo alteration holds tremendous significance for the overarching performance and profound emotional resonance of the composition. The transition to 'andante,' a tempo that typically conveys a moderately slow pace while highlighting the importance of expressive phrasing, necessitates the keen guidance of a skilled conductor. To successfully navigate this segment, one must possess the expertise to skillfully direct the choir members in effectively capturing the desired mood and musicality.

As conductor, it is imperative for conductors to meticulously deliberate upon the subtle intricacies of the tempo alteration in the mesmerizing composition, 'Magic City' by the exceptionally talented Jin Chengzhi. One must embark on a profound exploration of the means by which the composer's artistic intent can be effectively conveyed. This entails delving into the realm of musical expression, where subtle nuances such as a gentle deceleration of the rhythm, a graceful extension of melodic phrases, or a deliberate emphasis on dynamics come into play, all with the purpose of heightening the emotional impact. Moreover, the conductor's discernment in executing this tempo alteration holds the power to deeply impact the choir's rendition, thereby shaping the audience's perception and emotional connection to the musical composition.

The tempo alteration occurring at bar 36 as beautifully illustrated in Figure 4.13 in the captivating piece "Magic City" composed by the talented Jin Chengzhi is far from a mere musical intricacy. Instead, it stands as a pivotal element that presents an extraordinary occasion for the conductor to mold the interpretation and unveil the profound emotional layers embedded within this remarkable composition. This piece truly emphasizes the significance of meticulous rehearsal and thoughtful direction, as they are the key ingredients to achieving a truly captivating and evocative rendition.



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33

铭记

铭记

铭记

铭记

上海是我长大跟成人的所在哦

上海是我长大跟成人的所在哦

Andante  
♩ = 60

Andante  
♩ = 60

rit...

mp

mp

mf

mf

3

5

tempo

eye contact

d.(8+8)

legato

X633-6636-RCS&TMC

Figure 4.13 The tempo alteration of Magic City on bar 36

When it comes to leading a choir, the task becomes even more intriguing when faced with unison sections that span across different octaves, as beautifully illustrated in Figure 4.14 of Jin Chengzhi's mesmerizing composition, 'Magic City.' This particular scenario poses a distinctive array of challenges for the choir conductor. Achieving a seamless and captivating performance hinges upon the art of skillfully balancing the different sections. In essence, the art of conducting a choir with *unison* sections in varying octaves, as exemplified in the illustrious Figure 4.11 of Jin Chengzhi's magnum opus 'Magic City', necessitates the conductor's adept finesse in deftly navigating the intricate realm of vocal equilibrium, tonal lucidity, dynamic intricacies, seamless fusion, and an unwavering comprehension of the music's profound emotional subtleties. Crafting a truly remarkable performance is no small feat. It requires meticulous rehearsal, precise communication, and an unwavering attention to detail. Only through these elements can one hope to achieve a performance that is both harmonious and truly impactful.

The image displays a musical score for the song 'Magic City'. It features four staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and two piano accompaniment staves (Right and Left Hand). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are in Chinese: '有人 觉得你超怪 排队买东西 却'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* and *mezzo-piano*. Handwritten annotations in red and purple ink are present: a red circle around the first vocal staff with the note 'C (4+4)', a purple circle around the first vocal staff with the note 'Attention: 5 Luv', a purple circle around the piano accompaniment with the note 'cue', and a purple circle around the piano accompaniment with the note 'balancing'. The copyright notice at the bottom reads '版权 © 金斧头工作室'.

Figure 4.14 Unison sections of 'Magic City'.

In the term of Octave Variation, a captivating technique that engenders a lush and intricate soundscape within the musical composition occurs when distinct vocal sections unite in unison, yet traverse diverse octaves. This artistic maneuver bestows upon the auditory experience a profound depth and complexity, elevating the overall sonic tapestry to unprecedented heights. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that this can potentially give rise to certain concerns when it comes to maintaining equilibrium within the musical composition. The conductor's paramount responsibility lies in meticulously maintaining a harmonious equilibrium among the voices across every octave, ensuring that no single entity dominates the others. To truly captivate the audience with your musical prowess, one must possess impeccable mastery over dynamics and vocal projection.

In the term of tonal clarity, mastering the art of tonal clarity presents yet another formidable obstacle. In the realm of harmonious melodies, it is worth noting that even amidst a unison section, the distinct voices possess the ability to exhibit a delightful array of tonal nuances and timbral variations. The conductor's paramount responsibility lies in harmonizing the choir's voices within each section, ensuring a cohesive and well-balanced sound. In the realm of musical mastery, one must delve into the intricate art of refining vowel shapes, honing breath control, and perfecting vowel consonant transitions. These elements, when harmoniously combined, give birth to a seamless tonal quality that resonates with the very essence of musical brilliance.

In the term of dynamic control, within the realm of choral music, the manipulation of dynamics holds a paramount position in the transmission of emotional depth and expressive nuances. In the realm of musical performance, when unison sections are artfully dispersed across various octaves, it becomes imperative for the conductor to skillfully navigate the realm of dynamics. This delicate task is undertaken with the utmost care, as it is crucial to preserve a harmonious and cohesive essence within the musical composition. In the realm of choral music, it is of utmost importance to establish clear and concise communication with the choir members regarding the precise moments to execute crescendos, decrescendos, or maintain a steadfast dynamic level.

In the term of blending and texturing on four-part writing voices, the pursuit of achieving a flawlessly harmonious fusion of voices spanning various octaves is a perpetual endeavor in the realm of music production. The conductor must skillfully cultivate a profound sense of unity and cohesion within the choir, meticulously ensuring that the melodic tapestry woven by their voices is one of seamless harmony, rather than a fragmented and disjointed arrangement. In order to achieve vocal excellence, it is imperative to engage in a series of vocal exercises, hone your listening skills, and adopt meticulous rehearsal techniques.

In the realm of choral music, the cultivation of exceptional listening skills is an absolute necessity for choir members. This crucial ability allows them to uphold a harmonious equilibrium, particularly when navigating through unison passages that span various octaves. It is crucial for performers to exhibit unwavering attentiveness to the conductor's cues and harmonize flawlessly with one another's voices. The maestro, in his role, must diligently instruct the vocal ensemble to exhibit utmost sensitivity towards nuanced variations in dynamics, pitch, and timing.

In the term of artistic interpretation, the delicate art of balancing various octaves within unison sections is a crucial aspect that resonates deeply with the conductor's artistic interpretation of the composition. It is imperative for the conductor to exercise their discernment in determining the sections that warrant emphasis and the precise moments to do so. This crucial task is rooted in a deep understanding of the composer's original intent and a keen sensitivity to the emotional nuances embedded within the music.

The delicate task of striking a harmonious balance between the various sections presents a set of unique challenges when it comes to the art of conducting a choir, especially when one is confronted with the complex patterns shown in Figure 4.10 In this particular scenario, where the enchanting soprano-alto section gracefully articulates a captivating motivic rhythmic pattern, while the distinguished tenor-bass section resonates with sustained, mellifluous notes, the conductor is faced with a multitude of unique challenges.

In the realm of music, achieving the perfect balance is a skill that separates the amateurs from the true masters. **Rhythmic Complexity:** The captivating presence of a mesmerizing motivic rhythmic pattern in the illustrious soprano-alto section suggests a delightful engagement with intricate and syncopated rhythms. The conductor must meticulously ensure the precise execution of rhythmic complexities, while maintaining a delicate balance that prevents them from overpowering the rest of the choir. When delving into the intricacies of the soprano-alto section, one must exercise meticulous care in regards to dynamics and articulation.

As the soprano-alto section skillfully maneuvers through intricate rhythmic patterns, it is imperative for the tenor-bass section to uphold a steadfast and exquisite vocal quality during their sustained melodic phrases. The delicate art of harmonizing these lingering notes with the intricate rhythmic tapestry of the contrasting section presents a formidable challenge. In order to achieve a harmonious and captivating musical performance, it is imperative for the conductor to collaborate closely with the tenor-bass voices. The conductor's role encompasses the crucial task of ensuring that the sustained notes produced by these voices are not only well-supported but also imbued with a profound sense of expressiveness.

The achievement of dynamic contrast between the two sections is absolutely crucial in order to cultivate a captivating musical experience. The conductor's crucial role is to skillfully navigate the choir through the intricate nuances of dynamic variations as dictated by the score. It is imperative for the conductor to strike a delicate balance, ensuring that the

rhythmic section does not overpower the lyrical elements, and vice versa. In order to achieve a harmonious and captivating musical experience, it may be necessary to fine-tune the dynamics within each section and ensure seamless coordination of dynamic changes between them.

The juxtaposition of patterns in these two sections can result in variations in timbre and vocal characteristics. The conductor's primary responsibility lies in the seamless blending of both sections, ensuring a consistent choral timbre throughout the performance. In order to attain a harmonious and consistent sound, it may be necessary to delve into the realm of specific vocal techniques and engage in targeted exercises.

In order to maintain a seamless flow and proper dynamics, it is crucial to have well-defined patterns and precise cues that guide the entrance and exit of each section. In order to ensure a seamless execution of these musical cues, it is imperative for the conductor to cultivate a robust rapport with the choir. In essence, when leading a choir with distinct patterns across sections, like employing motivic rhythmic patterns in the soprano-alto section while emphasizing long notes in the tenor-bass section, it necessitates the conductor's adept handling of various musical elements. These include managing intricate rhythms, creating dynamic contrasts, achieving vocal blend and quality, fostering effective communication, and meticulously planning rehearsals. Crafting a truly captivating performance is no small feat, dear readers. It demands the discerning ear of a maestro, an unwavering focus on the minutest of details, and a profound comprehension of the music at hand. Only through these elements can one hope to achieve a harmonious and enthralling rendition.

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled 'Magic City'. It features five staves: four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and one piano accompaniment staff. The lyrics are in Chinese. The score is annotated with handwritten notes in purple and red. A large purple bracket labeled '(4)' spans the first four staves. Red arrows point to specific notes with the words 'doubling' and 'balancing'. Dynamic markings like 'mp' and 'mf' are present throughout the score.

Figure 4.15 Balancing of each section 'Magic City.

Conducting a choir with a voiced conversation between the soprano-alto and tenor-bass sections, as shown in Figure 4.15 poses particular difficulties in terms of efficiently balancing each section. Here lie before us a myriad of intricate challenges, each demanding our utmost attention and discernment. Let us embark on this musical odyssey, exploring the depths of these specific hurdles that lie in our path.

In the realm of musical dialogue, the concept of voice distribution entails the captivating interplay between the ethereal soprano and alto voices, as they intertwine with the resonant tenor and bass voices, each contributing their unique essence to the harmonious

tapestry. The conductor plays a crucial role in maintaining a harmonious dialogue between each section, ensuring that their contributions are perfectly balanced. In order to achieve the desired musical masterpiece, one must possess impeccable mastery over the delicate nuances of volume and expression within each section.

In order to effectively convey the dialogue, it is imperative for the conductor to focus on honing the clarity and distinctiveness of the contrasting voices. In order to ensure utmost clarity and distinction for the audience, it becomes imperative to delve into the intricacies of diction, articulation, and vowel shapes. By meticulously refining these elements, we can guarantee that every line within each section resonates effortlessly with the listeners.

In the term of dynamic balance, the attainment of an optimal dynamic balance is of utmost importance in the realm of music. As the maestro, it is imperative for the conductor to skillfully navigate the intricacies of dynamics, delicately balancing the various sections to maintain a harmonious dialogue. In order to maintain a coherent dialogue, it is crucial to adjust in dynamics for each section and ensure coordination between them.

When it comes to the art of voicing dialogue, one cannot underestimate the importance of rhythmic precision. The conductor must diligently oversee the maintenance of precise timing and rhythmic coordination within both sections. As a seasoned conductor, it is crucial to skillfully handle any syncopations or intricate rhythmic patterns that may be intertwined within the dialogue.

In the term of blend and timbre, in the pursuit of musical excellence, it is crucial for the conductor to not only ensure clarity between different sections but also strive to cultivate a harmonious choral sound that unifies the ensemble. In order to achieve a harmonious and cohesive sound, it is crucial to attain a well-balanced blend and consistent timbre between the soprano-alto and tenor-bass sections. In order to achieve a harmonious blend, it is crucial to give special attention to the voices of each section.

The conductor, with their masterful baton, assumes a paramount position in the realm of musical interpretation, deftly molding the nuances and intricacies of the voicing dialogue. The conductor's astute choices in dynamics, phrasing, and expression possess the remarkable ability to profoundly shape the audience's perception of the musical dialogue. The interpretive choices made by the performers must be in perfect harmony with the composer's original intent and the profound emotional essence encapsulated within the music.

In essence, the art of conducting a choir with a nuanced dialogue between the soprano-alto and tenor-bass sections necessitates the conductor's adeptness in deftly navigating voice distribution, ensuring clarity, controlling dynamics, maintaining precise rhythm, achieving seamless blend, fostering effective communication, and meticulously planning rehearsals. Executing such a multifaceted endeavor demands the discerning prowess of a maestro, meticulously attuned to every intricacy, and possessing an intimate comprehension of the musical composition in order to attain a harmonious and evocative rendition.



The image shows a musical score for a swing-style piano accompaniment of 'Magic City'. It consists of five staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and three piano staves (Right Hand, Left Hand, and Grand Staff). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes Chinese lyrics: '有人觉得你注重外表' (Someone thinks you value appearance) and '下楼买菜也要西服手表' (Going downstairs to buy groceries, you also need a suit and watch). Handwritten annotations in purple and green ink are present: 'dynamics' is written in purple near the piano accompaniment, and 'balancing' is written in green near the vocal lines. A red vertical line is drawn through the score, and a purple oval highlights a section of the piano accompaniment.

Figure 4.16 The swing style piano accompaniment of 'Magic City'.

There are numerous distinct difficulties when conducting a choir with a piano accompaniment in a swing style, particularly when the piano part is written in a walking bass manner followed by harmonic intervals (as seen in Figure 4.16).

The pursuit of rhythmic precision stands as a paramount endeavor, requiring utmost attention in the execution of both the choral ensemble and the pianist's rendition. The walking bass style is characterized by the utilization of a steadfast and frequently syncopated rhythmic motif within the piano component. The conductor's role is crucial in ensuring that the choir maintains a cohesive rhythmic bond with the piano, with a particular emphasis on capturing the essence of swing and executing syncopations with precision.

The achievement of dynamic balance within a choral ensemble, particularly when accompanied by a piano employing a walking bass-style, presents a nuanced challenge. The piano's utilization of a walking bass frequently imparts a robust and fundamental rhythmic structure, accompanied by harmonies. The conductor's primary task involves the delicate art of achieving a harmonious equilibrium between the sonorous vocal ensemble and the resounding piano, wherein the choir's melodic lines are perceptible to the discerning ear, yet do not overshadow the delicate timbre of the piano's resonant tones. In order to achieve a captivating musical rendition, it may be necessary to make subtle modifications to the dynamics, while also providing guidance to the choir members on how to effectively convey their emotions through their vocal performance, all while adhering to the distinctive characteristics of the swing style.

The vocal articulation in swing music is characterized by its distinctiveness, wherein phrases frequently showcase swung or syncopated rhythms. The conductor's role is crucial in ensuring that the choir achieves the desired articulation, with a particular focus on highlighting offbeat accents and syncopated patterns that harmonize with the accompanying piano. The cultivation of this particular vocal technique necessitates dedicated periods of rehearsal and focused attention.

Swing music frequently incorporates the art of expressive phrasing, characterized by the deliberate manipulation of musical elements such as swells, accents, and dynamic variations. The conductor assumes a pivotal position in molding the choral ensemble's



phrasing to align harmoniously with the expressive nuances present within the piano accompaniment. The task at hand encompasses the delicate task of effectively communicating the intricate emotional subtleties inherent within the musical composition, while simultaneously ensuring that the choir's rendition remains faithful to the distinctive characteristics of the swing genre.

The coordination of rehearsals with the pianist holds utmost importance in the musical process. The conductor's collaboration with the pianist is of utmost importance, as it facilitates a harmonious synchronization between the two musicians in terms of tempo, style, dynamics, and interpretation. The collaborative act of rehearsing alongside the pianist serves to cultivate a harmonious and unified rendition.

The auditory acuity required in the realm of swing music is of paramount importance, as it hinges upon the musicians' aptitude to attentively perceive and promptly react to one another's musical expressions. The conductor's role encompasses the vital task of fostering a culture of active auditory engagement among the choir, thereby facilitating a heightened awareness of the delicate intricacies inherent in the piano accompaniment, and subsequently eliciting appropriate and synchronized responses from the choir members.

The preservation of consistency in the swing style poses a formidable task, particularly in the context of lengthier compositions or instances where tempo fluctuations are present. The conductor's primary responsibility lies in upholding the unwavering constancy of the swing feel, while also ensuring that the choir members consistently adhere to the desired stylistic nuances throughout the entirety of the performance.

In the realm of musical expression, it is imperative for the conductor to collaborate harmoniously with the choir, endeavoring to forge a profound emotional connection between the poignant lyrics and the melodic tapestry. Swing music frequently encapsulates a delightful, enchanting, or wistful sentiment, and it is incumbent upon the conductor to deftly steer the vocal ensemble in effectively communicating these affective qualities to the listeners.

In essence, the act of directing a vocal ensemble while being accompanied by a piano played in a swing style, characterized by a walking bass pattern and harmonic intervals, necessitates the consideration and resolution of various obstacles pertaining to the accurate execution of rhythm, the cultivation of a swinging sensation, the attainment of a balanced blend of dynamics, the articulation of vocal lines, the delivery of expressive musical phrases, the coordination of rehearsals, the cultivation of attentive listening abilities, the maintenance of uniformity, and the conveyance of emotional depth. The conductor assumes a pivotal role in deftly navigating these challenges, ultimately striving to achieve a performance that is both cohesive and captivating.

### ***The Conducting Gesture Communications***

The time duration of practice for the entire performance of Magic City is in 2 minutes and 26 seconds. The implementation of practice in 'Magic City' by Jin Chengzhi of this study documented which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obrsQvBPYDs> . In terms of gesture communication in Jin Chengzhi's "Magic City," this study identified three crucial issues that require attention.

The first is related to rhythmic interpretation in the form of *swing feel*. The coordination of *swing feel* poses a formidable challenge, as it necessitates a precise rhythmic interpretation. The conductor must effectively convey the essence of the swing style to the choir, ensuring that each member comprehends and internalizes the intricate nuances of the

swing rhythm. In order to effectively communicate the desired musical ambiance, one may employ a combination of verbal cues, expressive gestures, and illustrative examples.

In the practice of conducting this study, the *swing feel* is the first conducting gesture communication that is highlighted. Magic City's opening four bars are played on the piano by itself. As we delve into the musical analysis, let us observe the wondrous style of piano accompaniment known as *swing feel*. In the term of conducting gesture communication, I gracefully convey the swing feel with a directing emphasis on the strong beats at 2 and 4, as elegantly demonstrated between the fleeting moments of 0:00 to 0:09 in the following link above.

The second conducting gesture communication of this study in Jin Chengzhi's "Magic City" concerns the tempo change from *vivace* to *andante* in bar 36. In the term of conducting gesture communication, I instructed the pianist to play bars 34 and 35 of *ritardando*, which are displayed from 1:11 to 1:17 in the song's following link. The presence of *ritardando* on bars 34 and 35 was intended to serve as a transition between different moods that are present in the song.

The third conducting gesture communication of this study in Jin Chengzhi's "Magic City" focus on balancing inter section which occur at bar 12 to 16. As showed at figure 4.12, the difference in sound intensity between the soprano-alto and tenor-bass led me to adjust the tenor-bass's dynamics from *p* (piano) to *mp* (*mezzo piano*). The conducting gesture communication which occurs at bar 12 to 16 shown by the larger area of my hand movement as displayed from 0:13 to 0:16 in the song's following link.

## Conclusion

The lyrical composition of "Magic City" reverently acknowledges the vibrant metropolis of Shanghai, encapsulating its multifaceted essence, encompassing idiosyncrasies that are distinctly its own, while exuding an aura of congeniality and refinement. This composition serves as a poignant testament to the profound adoration the artist harbours for the urban landscape, which has undeniably imprinted itself upon the singer's emotional core.

The words of the song narrate a tale wherein the protagonist expresses their profound fondness for an individual whom they hold in high regard, while concurrently highlighting a significant bond with the urban metropolis of Shanghai. The central theme of the narrative centers on the recognition and celebration of an individual's distinctiveness, while emphasizing the deep personal bond that the narrator has had with Shanghai, a city where they have encountered both moments of happiness and moments of sadness.

The song of Jin Chengzhi's magnum opus 'Magic City', is divided into two sections, A and B. The art of conducting a choir with unison sections in varying octaves, as exemplified in the illustrious Figure 4.11 of Jin Chengzhi's magnum opus 'Magic City', necessitates the conductor's adept finesse in deftly navigating the intricate realm of vocal equilibrium, tonal lucidity, dynamic intricacies, seamless fusion, and an unwavering comprehension of the music's profound emotional subtleties. The art of conducting a choir with a nuanced dialogue between the soprano-alto and tenor-bass sections necessitates the conductor's adeptness in deftly navigating voice distribution, ensuring clarity, controlling dynamics, maintaining precise rhythm, achieving seamless blend, fostering effective communication, and meticulously planning rehearsals

Executing such a multifaceted endeavour demands the discerning prowess of a maestro, meticulously attuned to every intricacy, and possessing an intimate comprehension of the musical composition in order to attain a harmonious and evocative rendition. The conductor

assumes a pivotal role in deftly navigating these challenges, striving to achieve a performance that is both cohesive and captivating.

The musical compositions 'Magic City' exhibit a high level of intricacy, necessitating the expertise of a proficient conductor to effectively oversee vocal balance, tonal clarity, dynamics, and the nuanced expression of emotions. The role of the conductor is of utmost importance in attaining a harmonious and captivating performance.

The reflection commences by highlighting the seamless alignment between the study's pivotal discoveries and the objectives elucidated in the problem statement, along with the profound insights gleaned from the comprehensive literature review. The meticulous alignment of this research guarantees a direct and focused exploration of the unique challenges and requirements inherent in Chengzhi's compositions.

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