

# 跨越時代的理解與傳承 — 回看歌劇《蔥仔開花》

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展演、劇場，提供了公共議事的空間，自古以來是知識份子跟普羅大眾溝通的場域，也是傳遞意識形態的重要媒介。歌劇更是所有表演藝術項目裡的最大公約數，亦是政治、經濟、社會等意識型態交相影響下的產物，《蔥仔開花》（以下簡稱《蔥》）的推出，的確是新一波爭取國樂新觀眾的契機，從各方熱烈的後續討論便可見一般。

適逢馬偕來臺宣教 150 週年，國內先後推出相關的製作，臺北市立國樂團（以下簡稱「北市國」）也在今年 7 月推出年度鉅獻《蔥》，11 月即將在高雄衛武營演出巡迴演出，因此北市國在 8 月 1 日特別邀請國立臺南藝術大學中國音樂學系教授鄭德淵、醫師作家陳耀昌、國立臺北藝術大學音樂學院教授顏綠芬，與作曲家李哲藝、導演曾慧誠，以及筆者，在臺北書院進行了一場首演後座談會；由團長陳鄭港主持，從觀眾回饋、學術觀點、創作觀點等面向進行交流，期待在 11 月的高雄場演出有更好的呈現。



《蔥仔開花》這是一部大型的製作，是透過跨界的整合，在舞台上超過 150 位的藝術表演演進者。



臺北市立國樂團於 2022 年 8 月 1 日辦理《蔥仔開花》首演後座談會，與會人員（由右至左）為導演曾慧誠、作曲家李哲藝、國立臺北藝術大學顏綠芬、臺北市立國樂團團長陳鄭港、國立臺南藝術大學鄭德淵、醫師作家陳耀昌、筆者。

## 這不只是一齣歌劇，而是互文交織的創作

歌劇雖為綜合藝術，但其主體是音樂，音樂本身是抽象的有機體，高密度的生命容器，能海納各種抽象的樣貌、實際的事件、奇幻的場景、永恆的真理，進而建立浩瀚無邊、豐富多元、複雜的情感連結。

因此李哲藝談到音樂上的創作，是處理一件複雜的事情，但他從文本出發，而劇作家梁越玲、導演曾慧誠都是合作多年的夥伴，有一定的默契，「其實我很佩服團長能夠把這麼多的史料，整合到完整的舞台呈現，就是大家所看到的演出結果，或許這是一個不容易發揮的題材，而且當我們看到劇本時都在思考要如何精簡到濃纖合度，我在創作時把一些節奏加快，都還是有 3 個小時，連續 3 小時觀賞歌劇其實對於觀眾與演出人員都是一項挑戰，除非是像華格納的樂劇有歷史的基礎，能夠深深的吸引到特定的族群。新創作很難有這樣子的能量，或許未來改版之後，可以讓大家在整個觀看過程中，忘記時間的存在。」

醫師作家陳耀昌則點出現代人的觀賞習慣不同於 19 世紀，「如果真要拿華格納的歌劇長度相比，恐怕跟現代人的聆賞習慣有些差異了，以前的人可以連續欣賞一齣歌劇 4 個多小時，而現在可能也因為社會風氣的變遷，對於超過 3 小時的歌劇接受度有限，可能兩個半小時已是可被接受的極限了。」

3 個小時演出時間到底過長與否，其實是一種感受，而且因人而異，還包含其他複雜的因子。「國內如能像歐美的國家，有國家歌劇院或是歌劇公司，有完整的團隊，可專注於製作歌劇，有充分的製作期、有完整的場地，也能為每一部好作品提供溫床，能精益求精，成為經典，甚至之後可以有 2.0、3.0 的版本出現，也證明藝術是不斷的與時俱進的。」陳鄭港如此的期許著。由於《蔥》是一部巨大的製作，在在都是嚴峻的考驗，每次幾乎都是重新歸零，又遇到疫情搗亂，也會造成很多部份無法連貫與統整。「畢竟這個製作在幕前、幕後有超過 150 位的藝術工作者，本來就是一場巨大的製作，由於排練場地的限制，這麼龐大的劇組在排練時必須兵分三路，我們至少用到 3 個不同的場地，可想而知我們面臨這些硬體的設備的問題。」

整體而言，一部歌劇這麼龐大的巨作，從發想、創作、排練、演出，涵蓋了很多主客觀的條件，用年度為單位編列預算，看似合理，卻也侷限了很多創作能量。「希望將製作的期程拉長至 3 至 5 年，這都有可能讓所有的細節更加到位，因為任何經典的作品都不可能是一次就可以完成的，需要時間沉澱。但是環顧國內現階段表演藝術環境，似乎不太可行，因為都是用年度預算，或者是其他各種主客觀的條件，會造成我們必須要在很短的時間內，去完成一件非常龐大的事情。如果給我一個更完善、完整的一個環境，是否可以更超越自己一些極限？」李哲藝期許創作能量能持續下去，而不受到年度預算的限制。

## 張聰明，一個象徵女性自主的集合名詞

張聰明，在一般人的心目中恐怕只是一位在百年前勇於嫁給外籍宣教士的女子，後人對她的瞭解也遠不及馬偕，但張聰明在梁越玲的筆下，角色比人物生動，情節也比故事精彩。

張聰明在劇中是位相當鮮活、有主張的女子，再加上馬偕是一位外籍宣教士，激盪出更多面向，彼此拉扯，強化戲劇的張力。因此，曾慧誠對於作品的切入方式，是專注在聰明的角色，馬偕反而次之。「越玲也是女性，因此她可以細膩地刻劃當時的女性，不論是在保守的社會體制、教會文化、家庭等結構裡所扮演的角色。」

在大架構底下，是容許有些創作的空間，是經由創作者的轉譯。曾慧誠提到：「劇本裡加入了一些杜撰的情節，都是聚焦在刻劃聰明的角色。譬如說五股坑的鄉親在教堂外對馬偕謾罵、丟石頭，聰明極力護衛馬偕，卻遭潑灑一身豬糞，就是要讓觀眾瞭解聰明不是一位普通的傳統女性，而是擁有果決、前衛、具正義感的人物，希望藉由馬偕的存在，連結聰明與臺灣這片土地的關係，包含了傳統禮教的束縛、自由戀愛的覺醒、女性主義的啟蒙。」

影像的存在，無疑是要讓觀眾產生更多的共感，相信這也是很多跨界製作的訴求之一，此次邀請了鄭雅之擔任影像統籌，的確為歌劇演出增添視覺風采，有助於觀眾從張聰明的故事激起反思，提醒眾人公民身份在當代社會的意義與責任，試圖引發更深層的體會與複雜的思辨。

只是似乎在影像呈現的同時，與《蔥》的核心產生了離心力，這恐怕也是創作者在有限的資源下，還要端出開放性與多元觀點，必然面對的理解差異問題。《蔥》的影像絮語是歌劇的垂直座標？還是外掛敘事？至今討論尚未停歇，但這也是曾慧誠對《蔥》的期許，用視覺來回顧這一世紀以來的臺灣史。而梁越玲把「張聰明」的定義拓增為「臺灣」，是一個代表獨立、自主、博愛的「集合名詞」。



導演曾慧誠認為在劇本裡加入了一些杜撰的情節，都是聚焦在刻劃張聰明的角色，就是要讓觀眾瞭解張聰明不是一位普通的傳統女性，而是擁有果決、前衛、具正義感的人物。



「在地化」一直是北市國的核心目標之一，總希望能藉由國樂的演繹，連結在地的人，《蔥仔開花》所有演唱者在臺語的語韻上，的確下足功夫。

## 戲裡戲外、躑躅於邊界，國樂需在地化

「國樂西化」或「國樂交響化」從 20 世紀中葉以降，一直是眾聲喧嘩、攻訐不休的議題。國樂收編西樂的做法與形式，不僅可以通往創作與環境的辯證上去思考，還能擴充民族之間、各群體相異共存的課題。或是採用大型合奏的概念，用交響化的形式吸引不同的族群，未嘗不可。

浮凸國樂的在地化特質，一直是北市國的核心目標之一，總希望能藉由國樂的演繹，連結在地的人文情感。陳鄭港強調「其實從 1949 年開始，很多大陸音樂家來臺，把漢人傳統音樂藝術化的經驗帶到臺灣，也形塑了之後現代化國樂發展過程中的奠基工程。」就《蔥》的特質來看，的確是運用西方的總體藝術形式，為國樂寫下另一番新意。

但，倘若需要用西方形式為民族器樂「借力使力」，就更要在傳統的力道上下功夫。譬如加上歌劇的序曲或是前奏曲是兩全其美的做法，既依循了歌劇的形式，也讓樂團有更多表現的機會，藉以突顯民族器樂的聲響，亦可加上某些樂器的獨奏，唸歌、南北管戲曲、民歌、歌仔戲的元素，都能還原一百年前臺灣的景況，並且增加趣味性。

顏綠芬對於《蔥》持肯定的看法，「其實這是國樂團推出的第 3 部臺語歌劇了，從錢南章《李天祿的四個女人》跟布袋戲結合，這樣的題材也很有開創性；顏名秀《我的媽媽欠栽培》也是很驚豔，用了歌仔戲演員與古典聲樂家，加入了一些傳統戲曲元素。《蔥》在臺語語韻，運用的很細膩精確，只不過在合唱的部份，歌詞聽起來有點華語化，或許在唱的部份可以再轉化一下慣用語。」

馬偕本人喜歡吟詩，也具音樂素養，常以詩歌牧養門徒，最著名的例子就是採用平埔族的旋律，填上《路得記》當中拿俄美的故事來傳唱，借用鄧雨賢 1933 年所寫的《月夜愁》，此外，譬如《永遠與主居起》、《我認救主無驚見誚》都是馬偕喜愛的詩歌，直接借用這些素材其實是再自然不過的事。顏綠芬建議「也可以直接加上一些鑼鼓或傳統戲曲元素，如南管、北管、《桃花過渡》等，其實更合理、更親切，就像莫札特就直接把小步舞曲放入《唐·喬望尼》，都是很好的例子。嗶啞的部份運用的很漂亮，但不免還是過度西樂化，可以善用「音樂話劇」(melodrama)<sup>1</sup>，也是可考慮的方式」。

<sup>1</sup> Melodrama，源自於希臘悲劇，是指歌劇有背景音樂的對白，在 1770 年代風行於法國與德語地區，貝多芬、韋伯都曾在歌劇裡使用過。

鄭德淵本身精通箏樂演奏，對於音樂聲學更是鑽研甚深，他認為「國樂團早已開始多元發展了，但如果是將國樂全盤西化，其實就無法顯出特色。其實有時可能會希望在虛與實之間，能有更大的空間，3 小時真的太滿了，需要一點空間，也可以增加一些音色較為獨特的樂器，譬如彈撥樂器，或是加上一點嗩吶、三弦，就是西洋樂器無法取代的。」鄭德淵以國樂人的觀點出發，一再強調音色的處理，是國樂演奏的關鍵，當代作曲家也為國樂創作，主要是看重國樂器具有獨特的音色，「不論是音色或力度的張力可以再多做一點，如果是嗩吶，就讓它土一點都好。」

合唱團，是西方歌劇形式的重要表徵，從他們的服裝、道具、走位、歌唱、排列、位置等，猶如希臘悲劇的合唱隊。曾慧誠將合唱團設定為當地的民眾，就是以當代人的角色，在一個老舊的空間，一起讀張聰明的故事，他認為空間能拉扯住歷史與時間，但這是一個浩大的工程，因此合唱團員的所有配備與角色定位都有其功能性。「合唱團員的設定對群演的部份需要極細膩的處理，光是走位就是挑戰的事，因為他們的走位都不是在自己的歌曲裡，而是發生在主角的歌曲裡。我原本設定他們是拿 iPad、電話、書，之所以改成筆記本原因是他們必須要記住自己的走位，因為人數很多，如果 40 個一起移動，畫面是很驚人的，可是對他們來說負擔就超級大了。」因此在舞台上的每一個細節，都是經過精心設計的，且環環相扣。

總之，歌劇的存在代表了一個世代的集體意識。《慈》的首演為國人產製國樂臺語歌劇劃下了一個新的里程碑，從百年前的張聰明故事拉出一條軸線，藉以回望女性獨立自主的抗爭、跨越宗教與民族的藩籬，並且延續博愛仁慈的精神。《慈》集合了眾人豐沛的藝術能量，用音樂、用舞台、用生命、用熱情，為臺灣的歌劇史展開了另一部宏觀的全景圖。

## 馬偕與在地化聖詩

音樂，在基督教禮拜中佔有相當重的份量；歌唱，是教會主日崇拜進行時不可或缺的一環，會眾透過詩歌的吟唱，對上帝的讚美、感恩，傳承聖經的意涵，並且產生內省，自我審視，也能凝聚信徒之間的向心力，因此基督教常被稱為是「歌唱的宗教」。

加拿大長老教會承襲蘇格蘭自由教會傳統，以加爾文主義的神學基礎，力主改革宗教傳統與人文主義之間的密切關係，以及奧古斯丁神學信仰與知識的關聯

馬偕是加拿大長老教會派至海外的第一位宣教士，於 1872 年抵達淡水，開始在長達 29 年的宣教生涯，一般人皆稱為「馬偕博士」或「偕牧師」。馬偕的一生被以「寧願燒盡，不願朽壞」讚賞，他的座右銘為「攏是為基督」，終其一生從事傳道、醫療、教育的工作，將西方文明思考引入臺灣的傳統社會裡，並且娶張聰明為妻，成為臺灣女婿。他在北部臺灣開設台灣基督長老教會，興辦牛津學堂、淡水女學堂、皆設有音樂課程，也強調聖詩在地化的理念，對於臺灣基督教音樂教育有極大的貢獻。

誠如新教對於會眾口唱心合的重視，經常使用換詞歌曲（contrafacta），《拿俄美》即為一例，就是借用現有的旋律所改寫的臺語聖詩，其他如《我目擲起向天》、《天下遍遍各邦國》、《我認救主無驚見誦》、《真主上帝造天地》、《永遠與主居起》等等，都是馬偕經常用以牧養信徒的聖詩。

# Timeless Arts : Appreciation and Heritage — A Review of *Formosa Bloom*

Text / LIU Ma-Li ( PhD, Department of Music, National Taiwan Normal University )

Image / Taipei Chinese Orchestra



Jeannie Chiang (left) as Tiunn Tsho-Bing and Siao-Cheng Kong (right) as Rev. MacKay. Their performance in Bloom is a testament to their exquisite professional capability.

Showcase and theatre offer intelligentsia and the public an opportunity to congregate, interact, exchange opinions, and express ideology. Amongst which, opera is probably the most encompassing of all performing arts forms. It is motivated by the ideology of politics, economy, and society. From all the heated discussions and feedbacks, *Formosa Bloom* (hereinafter referred to as *Bloom*) has proven to be a success that attracted new audiences who may develop an interest for Chinese music.

This is the 150th anniversary of Rev. MacKay's arrival in Taiwan as for a missionary. Many productions are staged in commemoration of his life and work. Taipei Chinese Orchestra (TCO) also awed the audiences with the annual production *Bloom* this July. The opera is scheduled to tour at Opera House, National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts (Weiwuying) in November. TCO invited CHENG Te-Yuan, professor of the Chinese Music Department, Tainan National University of The Arts, doctor/writer CHEN Yao-Chang, YEN Lu-Fen, professor of the School of Music, Taipei National University of The Arts, composer LEE Che-Yi, director TSENG Hui-Cheng, and the Arthur to take part in the post-show talkback at Taipei Lecture Hall in August. CHEN Cheng-Kang, general director of TCO was the moderator. They delved into discussions on audience feedback, academic philosophy, and creative concepts. Hopefully the Kaohsiung performance in November will be even more impressive.



The three fictional ghosts are: the angle of love and kindness who represents TIUNN Tsho-Bing, the devil of malevolence and hatred, and the spirit of flexibility and adaptation. They are played by three local vocalists in Taiwan (from right to left: CHENG Hai-Yun, Julian LO, and CHEN Hui-Ju).

## The Opera+ Intertextual Creation

Opera is the most complete art form with music as the main mean of expression. Music in itself is an abstract organism filled with all sorts of abstract images, actual events, fantasy scenes, and timeless truth echoing and inflicting limitless, rich and diversified emotional experiences.

LEE Che-Yi admits that creating music is a complex process. Fortunately, Librettist LIANG Yue-Ling and director TSENG Hui-Cheng are both long-time partners whom he trusts and understands. He decided to create the music based on the libretto (text). “Truth to told, I am quite impressed by the level of perfection. Director Liang certainly did a great job integrating all those historical facts into a single show on stage — *Bloom*. Choosing what’s needed from a sea of materials is never easy. We realized what a feat it would be to try and trim the libretto down to an acceptable length when we first read it. I tried changing the tempo of music to speed things up, but the final work is still three hours long. A three-hour-long opera is a definite challenge to both the audience and the performers. Unless it’s something like Wagner’s opera. Those timeless classics have earned the love and understanding of a specific group of fans already. New creations can hardly achieve this kind of success. We hope that after several revisions, the final version of *Bloom* may be able to make the audiences forget the passing of time while immersed in opera.

Doctor / writer CHEN points out that people’s attitude towards theatre and opera is very different than that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “The length of Wagner’s opera is probably quite unacceptable to the modern audience. People are used to opera performances over four hours long back then. As the society changes, any opera that goes on for more than three hours is frowned upon. Two and a half hours is probably the most acceptable length for an opera today.”

Whether or not 3 hours is too long for an opera is actually quite subjective. The length of the opera is determined by many intricate factors, “In Europe or US, national opera houses or companies have professional teams specialized in the production of opera. They have the luxury to produce an opera without time restraint, a suitable venue, and available resources to make the best better. As the opera is performed on stage, there may even be 2.0 or 3.0 versions that follow. As we all know, art is a growing progress. Director CHEN has high hopes for the prospect of opera art in Taiwan.” *Bloom* is a large-scale production that requires devotion and attention in every detail. They had to constantly go back to the beginning and start again. The outbreak of Covid-19 further interrupted the process. “After all, the production team consists of 150 opera practitioners on stage and off stage. Large scale productions are by nature complex. The limited rehearsal space forced the production team to divide into three sections during rehearsal. The hardware and equipment in these respective venues posed quite a challenge for both rehearsing and final presentation.”

Generally speaking, the production of large-scale pieces like opera involves many objective and subjective requirements. To produce an opera with a single year’s budget seems reasonable at first glance. However, the arrangement actually puts a harness on creative energy. “We hope to prolong the production phase to three to five years, giving us enough time to mold and shape the details and smooth out all the rough edges. Classics cannot be rushed. Time is an essential element in the making of classics. The performing arts industry in Taiwan made this almost impossible. All the opera productions are subjected to limit imposed by the annual budget system. If these restrictions can be lifted, I might be able to challenge myself even more and try to make further breakthroughs.” LEE hopes that creative energy will continue to flow without being intercepted or cut short by the restriction of annual budget plans.

## TIUNN Tsho-Bing, A Collective Noun for Women’s Autonomy and Welfare

To many people, TIUNN Tsho-Bing is probably just a woman brave enough to become the wife of a missionary. They have their eyes on her husband, Rev. MacKay, not her. LIANG Yue-Ling gives flesh and blood to her character as TIUNN Tsho-Bing. The makes the plot of the opera far more intriguing than the real story.

In *Bloom*, Tiunn Tsho-Bing is lively, assertive and knows what she wants. Rev. MacKay is a missionary from foreign land. Their story is full of conflict, struggle, and dramatic tension. Director TSENG focuses on the growth of TIUNN Tsho-Bing, not her husband. “Yue-Ling is also a woman. She gives a detailed and dynamic portrayal of women back then and an insider’s look into women’s role into the relatively conservative social structure, church culture and family in the past.”

There is room for creative fiction under the main story line as all great creations do. The librettists use their own imagination to fill in the blanks and achieve desired results. Director TSENG mentions that “there are some fictional plots in the libretto written to highlight the strength of our heroine. For example, when the people of Wugu district were shouting, screaming, and throwing rocks at Rev. MacKay outside the church, she tried to protect him but was assaulted by a bucket of pig poop. This little anecdote means to show the audience that TIUNN Tsho-Bing is not a traditional female character but someone who is determined, forward thinking and righteous. Through Rev. MacKay, she established a relationship with the island. She was once bound by feudal ethics, but later had the courage to choose her happiness in marriage and learned to defend the rights and welfare of women.”

The use of visual stimuli is to make a stronger impact on the audience. It is one of the many approaches of cross-discipline productions. Makayla Ya-Chih, the image designer is commissioned to add visual stimulation to the opera work, making it easier for the audience to live vicariously through our heroine and reflect upon her life’s story. As the civilian of the modern society, we have responsibilities to shoulder. Hopefully the opera will prompt people to dig deeper into the sensory experience and start to speculate and form opinions of their own.

Problem is that the visual part of *Bloom* seems to have the opposite effect on what the story is trying to convey. This may attribute to the scarcity of resources. The opera wishes to introduce a sense of freedom and possibility and multiple views from different aspects. When too much is on the plate, the audience may feel confused. It begs the question that, is imagery the vertical coordinate of opera or a plug-in for narration? To this day, it is still an on-going debate. Director TSENG means to document the history of Taiwan over the last century with visual presentation. Librettist LIANG wishes to substitute TIUNN Tsho-Bing with Taiwan as a “collective noun” for independence, autonomy, and fraternity.



The chorus in *Bloom* consists of common community members at the time. They gather in an old and shabby space to read the story of TIUNN Tsho-Bing.

### Chinese Music Must Boldly Adapt to Local Culture Onstage and Offstage

A series of heated discussions and diversified opinions about whether or not Chinese music should adapt from western music or adopt the form of symphony rose in mid-twentieth century. As far as artistic creation and circumstances go, incorporating elements from western music has its merits. It enables us to identify, learn about, and empathize with the culture clash between racial groups or communities. Chinese music with a touch of symphony has a good chance of attracting the attention of audiences from different communities.

TCO aims to adapt Chinese music to local culture, hoping that the community may find something they can identify with in the repertoire and in turn fall in love with the art form. Director CHEN stresses that, “Chinese music virtuosi started coming to Taiwan in 1949. They were highly experienced traditional music artists who laid the foundation for the development of modern Chinese music.” *Bloom* in itself takes inspiration from the western Gesamtkunstwerk – the total work of art. The opera marked a new beginning for Chinese music.

To leverage the western music form and achieve success in ethnic instrumental music, a deeper understanding of traditional aesthetics and techniques is indispensable. For example, adding overture or prelude to new Chinese music pieces can turn out to be a triumph. The final production befits the name of opera and the orchestra enjoys more exposure. The beauty of Chinese music will be further heightened through the use of instrumental solo pieces, music verses, bei guan and nan guan xiqu (traditional Chinese opera), folk songs, and Taiwanese opera. They transport the audiences back to a hundred years ago and makes the entire concert experience more fun and memorable.

YEN Lu-Fen has great faith in *Bloom*. “It is actually the third opera presented in Taiwanese by TCO. *The Four Women in Puppet Master LEE Tien-Lu's Life* by CHIEN Nan-Chang is a highly original and spectacular work enriched by the art of hand puppetry in Taiwan. *My Mom Needs an Education* by YEN Ming-Hsiu celebrates the beauty of traditional Xiqu. It is performed by Taiwanese opera artists and classic vocalists. *Bloom* explores the artistry of the Taiwanese language in full. The prosody of Taiwanese is handled with great delicacy and precision, though the lyrics of the chorus sound a little too Mandarin-like. The overall effect would certainly be more impressive if the wordings were authentically Taiwanese.”

Rev. MacKay loves poetry and music. He often shepherds his flock with hymns and songs. The most notable example is that he sings the story of *Naomi from Book of Ruth* with the traditional melody of the Pingpu tribe. He also borrows the melody of DENG Yu-Xian's *Moonlight Sorrow* for his other hymns. His favourite hymns include “*Forever with The Lord*”, and “*I Am Not Ashamed to Own My Lord*”. These are great materials that can be incorporated into the opera without much alternation.

YEN Lu-Fen suggests that “adding drums and other traditional Xiqu elements such as nan guan, bei guan or *Peach Blossom Takes the Ferry in Bloom* will give it a more authentic feel. Just like Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's integration of minuet into *Don Giovanni*. The use of suona is a nice touch. However, the overall effect is still too much influenced by western music. To strike a balance, adopting the form of melodrama<sup>1</sup> might be a feasible way to address the challenge.”

CHENG Te-Yuan is an excellent guzheng player and an expert in musical acoustics. He believes that “Chinese orchestras have long been exploring diversity and other potential. Too much western elements will rid Chinese music of its lustre. It will be ideal to have a little more room for manoeuvring or freedom. Three hours of compact performance can be exhaustive. Leaving small blanks or employing instruments with unique timber such as plucked string instruments, suona, or sanxian are excellent choices for they possess a special charm that western instruments lack. From a Chinese music artist's point of view, CHENG Te-Yuan cannot stress the importance of timber enough. It is the key to a successful Chinese music performance. Modern composers write for Chinese music because they are fascinated by the unique timber of these instruments. “Dial up the power on timber or tension can make a huge difference. If we add suona to the mix, make sure it is as worldly and approachable as possible.”

Chorus is an integral part of western operas. The chorus in *Bloom* resembles that of a Greek chorus in costume, prop, blocking, singing, arrangement, and position. Director TSENG wants a chorus made up of common local people back then. They gather in an old and shabby space to read the story of TIUNN Tsho-Bing. He believes that a space can contain or trap history and time. It is an overwhelming job to put together such a chorus in the opera as everything from who they are, what they carry to how they carry them have certain implications.” The extras playing chorus members are under a lot of pressure as well. Even blocking the scene can be quite disastrous. They are not moving around whilst singing. As a matter of fact, they are doing so when the main characters sing. At first, I had them carry around iPads, phones, and books. Later the items were switched to notebooks because the extras had to remember complicated blockings for forty people at a time. A large chorus may be impressive on the move, but at the same time, it is a torture to remember when and where and what to do for such a large party.” To ensure smooth transition, every detail on stage is carefully planned out and intricately interlocked.

All in all, opera represents a collective identity of a generation. The debut of *Bloom* marks the beginning of Chinese music operas in Taiwanese that are produced by Taiwan artists. The opera starts with the story of our female protagonist 100 years ago. She takes us through fights for women's independence and rights, and across the boundaries of religion and race with a kind and generous soul. *Bloom* is the artistic synergy of all participants. They paint a grand panoramic view of the Taiwan opera history with music, stage, life, and ardent passion.

### Rev. MacKay and The Cultural Adaptation of Hymns

Music plays an extremely important role at church services. Singing is an integral part of Sunday services. The congregation praises the lord, expresses their gratitude, and discover the intended meaning of bible verses through hymns and songs. They reflect upon themselves and feel a sense of belonging through singing. This is why the Christian faith is often called a singing faith. The Presbyterian Church in Canada inherited the worship of the theological system of Calvin from the Free Church of Scotland. The church believes in the close connection between the reformation and renaissance humanism, and Augustine of Hippo's theological claims on knowledge.

Rev. MacKay is the first missionary sent overseas by the Presbyterian Church in Canada. He arrived in Tamsui in 1872 and stayed for the next 29 years preaching the Lord's words. People call him Dr. Mackay or Rev. MacKay, praising his virtue as he, “rather burn out, than rust out.” He believes in, “All for Christ”. Throughout his life, he preached, treated people's illnesses, and educated the ignorant, introducing western civilization to the traditional Taiwanese society. His wife Tiunn Tsho-Bing was from Taiwan. He established the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in the North and founded the Oxford College and Tamsui Girls' School. He devoted himself to the adaptation of hymns to local culture. At the same time, He contributed greatly to the advancement of Christian music education in Taiwan.

The protestant believes in sing and make music from your heart to the Lord. They are quite proficient in contrafacta. Naomi, for example, is an adapted hymn in Taiwanese. Others like “*I will lift up my eyes*”, “*From Greenland's Icy Mountains*”, “*I am not ashamed to own my Lord*”, “*God Created the World*”, “*For Ever with the Lord*” are all hymns Rev. MacKay sang constantly with his congregation.

<sup>1</sup> Melodrama originates from Greek tragedy, referring to spoken dialogues with self-contained music. It is highly popular in France and Germany in the 1770s. both Ludwig van Beethoven and Carl Maria Friedrich Ernst von Weber uses melodrama in their opera.