



一舖清唱 唱出無伴奏合唱新聲音

Yat Po Singers Redefining A Cappella with a New Voice

是流行？是嚴肅？什麼才是 a cappella？香港人給這種流行的音樂玩意，起了個名字「阿卡貝拉」。幾個歌手，跨越唱歌，扮樂器扮鼓扮二胡，聲音要百變。十七世紀，a cappella 是「教堂風格」，到了現在，是多姿多采的無伴奏人聲組合。

What is a cappella? Is it a classical or popular style? Since the 17th century, a cappella was a term designated to unaccompanied church style, choral music. Now the old term has a new meaning. In addition to pure singing, singers now enjoy the freedom to do whatever they like with their voices.

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2010 年於上海演出之作品《石堅》。
Rock Hard, performed in Shanghai in 2010.

訪問無伴奏合唱劇團一舖清唱四位駐團藝術家及兩位藝術總監的主要原因，不獨因為他們都是性格獨特的型男，更因為一舖清唱是香港首支全職業的無伴奏合唱組合，再加上他們同時都是音樂創作人（兼CASH會員），這樣的身份在此音樂界別實屬罕見。而其首支作品《石堅》，更在2009年「CASH金帆音樂獎」獲專業評審選為「最佳正統音樂作品」。

無伴奏清唱組合首先面對的，是曲目。一舖清唱四位駐團藝術家，在團隊中都是表演者，但他們在正式加盟一舖清唱之前，都試過以不同形式，為自己的無伴奏組合創作。黃峻傑 (Keith) 說：「在成為一舖歌手前，我有試過編曲，主要是編給自己的無伴奏組合。」曾浩鋒 (Ronald) 與 Keith 一樣，都曾經改編歌曲，因為無伴奏合唱組合都經常演唱流行作品，但這些作品需要不少心思，移植到人聲組合去。「那是起初的學習階段，先去聽和看外國編曲的例子，幫自己編曲時會有很多啟發。」Keith 說。而陳智謙 (Raoul) 在大學時讀歌劇及聲樂系，創作就更為貼近正統音樂。

劉兆康 (Sam) 認為，為無伴奏合唱組合編曲與創作，最有趣的地方是創作要為演出者仔細調節。「如果演出者可以扮什麼聲音，你會刻意寫些音樂給他扮；他節奏感強，你也會隨之而創作。當你遇到的人不同，你會動腦筋順着演出者去創作，同一時間又想給他們帶來適當的挑戰。這是創作最有趣的地方。」

不過，一舖清唱的創作腦袋，其實是作曲家伍卓賢。他坦言自己清楚自己想說什麼，創作由始至終都是一個人的工作。「絕大部份的無伴奏合唱，都是唱着貼近流行或爵士風格的音樂，但是一舖清唱從開始已經是跳開流行，在尚大的創作空間去發揮，任何不同的曲風，其實都可以成為我們的聲音。」伍卓賢說，無伴奏合唱的有趣，就是因為它可以結合不同的元素。



與香港中樂團合作《中藥還需中樂醫》。
Herbal, Vocal or Motional, a collaboration with Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra.

Being cool is not the only reason to interview the four resident artists and two artistic directors of the Yat Po Singers; it is also on account of the group being the first professional a cappella ensemble established in Hong Kong, and the interviewees are all music creators (and CASH members). Such a combination is rarely seen in this music field. Also, their inaugural work *Rock Hard* received wide acclaim, including the "Best Serious Composition" of "CASH Golden Sail Music Awards" in 2009 that was voted for by professional judges.

The first issue that every a cappella ensemble has to encounter is the limited availability of repertoire. Before joining Yat Po Singers, each resident artist gained experience of music creation in a different a cappella stream of their own. "Before Yat Po, I tried arranging music for my own vocal group," Keith Wong said. "That was the time when I first learnt how to do arrangements. I listened to works from overseas, trying to get inspiration for my own arrangement." Keith added. Ronald Tsang shared the same experience since a cappella groups used to perform popular repertoire but the works needed to be rearranged to fit in vocal groups. As for the works of Raoul Chan, who studied Opera & Vocal Studies at university, they have the flair of serious music.

Sam Lau, another singer of Yat Po Singers, found where the most interesting point laid. "If a member in a group can imitate a particular instrument, I will intentionally write something for him. If he has strong rhythmic sense, I will customarily write rhythmic music. When you meet people of different characters, you will think hard on how to make music specifically for them and at the same time you pose some challenges to them. This is the most interesting point of creating music."

Although the four singers of Yat Po have experience in creating music, the creative brain of the ensemble rests with Ng Cheuk Yin, one of the co-artistic directors of Yat Po Singers and a commanding composer who possesses a clear mind and purpose in his own creations. "A lot of a cappella ensembles perform something like pop or jazz music. However, from the very beginning, Yat Po Singers does not confine themselves to pop, but rather, roams the vast space of creativity. Therefore, for me, any genre could be turned into our voices." Yin insists undertaking creative tasks on his own, and the joy of writing for a cappella offers the amalgamation of a variety of musical elements.



藝術總監趙伯承
Artistic Director Patrick Chiu



藝術總監伍卓賢
Artistic Director Ng Cheuk Yin

傳統與現代 闢新天地

開僻過音樂新領域，與伍卓賢同屬藝術總監的趙伯承，就得應付音樂技術上的要求。「伍卓賢的作品十分多變和吸引，我們除了要用心細嚼，還要仔細發掘音樂裏的風格和脈絡。」趙伯承繼而強調，將一舖清唱帶進劇場，就是希望聽覺與視覺同樣都有刺激，亦希望將這新視點帶給觀眾。而同一時間，負責形體與劇場元素的藝術總監伍宇烈，則從視覺、舞台技巧及身體着手，讓音樂在舞台上盡情發揮。

伍卓賢的音樂，不但挑戰傳統的音樂界綫，也給四位歌手帶來新視野。Raoul 說：「在成為一舖清唱隊員前，聽米高積遜的無伴奏 cover，以為無伴奏合唱就是這種音樂。而伍卓賢所寫的音樂挑戰了我的想法，它既非流行，又不傳統。」Ronald 接著說：「比如《石堅》，有很多感覺跟平時很不同，所以作為演出者，要花很多時間調較。」

經過七年時間，四位歌手成員加上三位總監，以這種獨特的音樂，闖出新的音樂天地。無伴奏合唱不獨是將流行音樂移植，又或者是為名曲擔替身，而是真正擁有自己聲音、自己作品的樂種。伍卓賢雖為創作的主腦，但是四位歌手以及趙伯承，也會為一舖清唱創作或編曲。其間，一舖清唱曾經主理一些需要專注於創作的項目，更是為了互相切磋的訓練項目。每位歌手曾各自創作一套半小時以上的劇目，由音樂到燈光服裝、演出意念至舞台構思，全都要自己一手包辦。除了如《石堅》的長篇劇及個人劇目，一舖亦不時與性質大異其趣的團體合作演出，趙伯承形容全隊人是不斷地創作。與一舖清唱合作演出過的團體，包括香港舞蹈團、香港中樂團甚至是八和會館，無伴奏合唱的創作可能，正不斷拓展。

演出與創作 共生成長

四位歌手更在這創作路途上，漸漸發展出自己的個人風格。歌手們在訪問中，互相形容對方的音樂：Raoul 的音樂帶着簡約與和聲的色彩，或許是讀音樂出身的緣故，有時甚至聽到歌劇的影響，樂譜上最多的卻是全音符；Keith 的音樂，少不了招牌的幾個和弦組合；Ronald 鍾愛的節奏，很容易就能分辨出來，但音樂卻同時不缺驚喜；Sam 的創意念天馬行空，想法與執行手法最令人意想不到。他們每位歌手，由接觸無伴奏合唱變成職業歌手，在表演者以外加上創作者的身份，是一個奇妙而自然的進程。

A Mixture of Traditional and Modern

With a totally new musical language, Patrick Chiu, also an artistic director of the ensemble, takes charge of the technicality in order to meet the music's demand. "Yin's music is extremely versatile and attractive. This requires us to study the music very closely to uncover the hints of interpretation and style." Patrick emphasised that the purpose of bringing Yat Po into a theatre is to have both audio and visual stimulation and to present a new perspective to the audience. At the same time, it is the task of the other artistic director, Yuri Ng, to help display the music onstage by designing the visuals, the stage appearance and body movements for the singers.

Ng Cheuk Yin's music does not only challenge traditional musical boundaries but also brings new insights to the singers. Raoul explained, "Before becoming a member of Yat Po, I listened to unaccompanied covers of Michael Jackson and equated that with a cappella. Yin's music, however, challenges my understanding; it is neither pop nor traditional." Ronald further elaborated, "Take *Rock Hard* as an example. It gave us a feeling which was very different from usual. Therefore, as performers we had taken a lot of time to make adjustments to ourselves."

After seven years, four singers and three artistic directors have created a new path with their fresh understanding of a cappella. It is no longer music that transforms pop songs or covers of super hits; it is a genre of its own with a unique voice. Though Yin is the creative brain, Patrick and other members of Yat Po are creative cells and shoulder some of the writing and arrangement tasks. In one project focused on creation, for the sake of exchange and training, each singer had to produce an a cappella theatrical performance of half an hour, from music to lighting plus costume and concept formation to stage line up, all being solely responsible for their own performance. In addition to feature-length performances like *Rock Hard* and projects like the one mentioned, Yat Po sometimes cooperates with other performing groups which are very different from them. Patrick described their team as a non-stop creative team. Some of the collaborating groups included Hong Kong Dance Company, Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra and even The Chinese Artists Association of Hong Kong, the best known union of Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong. The possibility of a cappella is stretching to different kinds of art forms.

談到這裏，遙遠地提醒我們，歷史上的作曲家，大都是身兼表演者。音樂的演奏與創作，是互相需求的共生關係。雖然四位歌手在一舖清唱成立以來不斷創作和編曲，但是他們在創作上，並不是一個團隊，而是四位獨立的創作人。2015 年，一舖清唱與香港舞蹈團合作製作舞劇《在那遙遠的地方》，他們先計劃好每人負責的部份，然後各自工作；接着，大家將初稿分享，然後為演出微調修改，因為最終演出的，還是他們四人。

無伴奏合唱創作，仍有很大發展空間。不過，伍卓賢說，當中也有困難有待克服：「一般給樂器編寫音樂時，總有一些普世性的準則，例如音域、技巧要求等，你會知道職業樂手能應付什麼；但無伴奏合唱卻不同，因為每個人可以做的事，可以非常不同。於是，創作人得面對一些不定因素。」他形容，這不定因素其實是把兩面刃——缺點是每次創作，你得和歌手仔細溝通，而好處卻正來自這種溝通，因為創作人在創作時考慮到這些特質，所以作品必然會變得更為有趣。

無伴奏合唱已備受注意，音樂的空間日益拓展，之後將怎樣走？伍卓賢認為要看藝術家怎樣堅持，也要看政府、觀眾、支持者怎樣回應。要怎樣堅持？趙伯承說：「每個組合經過幾年之後，就要想自己的藝術路。這問題的答案，結果離不開創作。因為這不單是說組合要有屬於自己的作品，而是就算這組合只做 cover，也要找到做 cover 的風格，為已有的歌曲添加新的領域。我很希望聽到組合再深入地思考聲音的運用。因為我們不是單單只求似哪些樂器，扮得像真度有多高，而是各種聲音放在一起時，組合要怎樣處理聲音，使它帶出音樂的情感，讓音樂自然流露。」趙伯承寄語希望香港有更多有個性、發展出自己藝術路向的無伴奏合唱組合。

Creating and Performing: A Symbiosis

The four singers of Yat Po have developed their own creative style. During the interview, they talked about each other's musical style. Raoul's music demonstrates minimalism and harmonic tones. May it be the influence of education or even of Western operatic music, his music is always filled with long semibreves. Keith's music is adorned with his unique usage of chord progression. Ronald's favourite rhythms and grooves can easily be distinguished yet his music rarely lacks surprise. Sam's creativity pops up as if from nowhere and often links up with many unthinkable ideas and execution details. Growing from amateur singers to professionals, performers undertaking creative tasks, the process is indeed fascinating and natural.

Here is a timely reminder. Most composers in the past were also extravagant performers. Performing and creating pose demands in a symbiotic relationship. Though the four singers compose and rearrange from time to time, they do not create as a team but as four individuals. Take the dance production of *Voices and Dances of the Distant Land* by Yat Po Singers and the Hong Kong Dance Company in 2015, they split up the tasks and worked independently. Later, they shared their drafts and made adjustments to accommodate performance. After all, the singers are the ones who eventually perform.

Along with many new possibilities to explore, Ng Cheuk Yin said there were also difficulties. "When you write for instruments, there are universal rules for musicians to abide by; range and techniques through which both creators and professional musicians know what can be done and what cannot. A cappella however, is highly customised for performers, as every performer's strength is different. Creators have to tackle some uncertainties during composition." Yin believes this uncertainty is not necessarily a hindrance. In view of this uncertainty, a composer needs thorough communication with performers. This communication in turn brings excitement to the music after taking the performer's abilities into account.

How does a cappella develop? For Ng Cheuk Yin, it depends on how artists persevere, and how the government, audience and supporters respond to sustain this art. How to persevere? Patrick said, "Every ensemble must shape their artistic identity after being established for a few years. The answer to this identity, however, is always related to creation. This does not only mean ensembles need to have their own music. Even if one is specialised to do covers, one has to find their own style in order to bring new perspective to the covers. I personally wish a cappella ensembles would think about how voices are used. We do not succeed purely by how good we can imitate a musical instrument, but also how our voices carry the music and emotion naturally by using a balance of all these voices." To conclude, Patrick wishes to see more a cappella ensembles have their own calibre in the future.



黃峻傑
Keith Wong

陳智謙
Raoul Chan

劉兆康
Sam Lau

曾浩鋒
Ronald Tsang