

On the composition and performance of The Song of Burying Flower from the TV series Dream of the Red Chamber

Yaru Bu^{1*}

¹Philippine Women's University/1007

*[Yaru Bu, 13615360681@163.com](mailto:Yaru.Bu,13615360681@163.com)

How to cite this article: Yaru Bu (2024) On the composition and performance of The Song of Burying Flower from the TV series Dream of the Red Chamber. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 6671-6680.

ABSTRACT

The 1987 version of the hit TV series *Dream of the Red Chamber* has had a great influence in China. The film adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, aside from being a classic work of literature in its own right, marks a breakthrough in its development. It greatly enriched the content and form of literary dissemination and expanded the realm of *Dream of the Red Chamber* within the film and television art domain. Wang Li Ping, in particular, took four years to craft the first 13 episodes of film and television art and earned widespread acclaim. The series' unique artistic charm and the representative songs are truly inspiring and delightful. This paper aims to introduce the literary masterpiece *Dream of the Red Chamber* and delve into the 1987 TV adaptation of it to shed light on Wang Li Ping's successful adaptation and songwriting for *Dream of the Red Chamber*. It will approach this topic through an examination of major aspects such as the creation background, lyrics, singing and emotional processing.

Keyword: Dream of the Red Chamber, The Song of Burying Flower, Songwriting

Introduction

Inaugurating the boundless cosmos, who sowed the seeds of affection? All for the sake of profound sentiments under the moon's gentle caress. Yet, alas, the heavens lament, the heart aches with the passing days, and in moments of solitude, one attempts to convey their simple feelings. Thus unfolds the mournful tale, known as Dream of the Red Chamber. These few lines suffice to paint a genuine portrait of Bao Dai's love in this classical Chinese masterpiece. In just a few verses, it captures the essence of the love between Baoyu and Daiyu in the classical Chinese masterpiece. Whenever one reads this poem, it feels as though they have immersed themselves in this realm and deeply experience the sorrows and joys of youthful love.

Authored by Cao Xueqin, Dream of the Red Chamber is a literary masterpiece of profound philosophical and artistic significance. It holds an irreplaceable position in both Chinese and world literary history. Wang Liping's creation of thirteen theme songs for the 1987 TV adaptation of Dream of the Red Chamber serves as the finishing touch that contributes significantly to its literary and artistic representation. Particularly, in the composition of The Song of Burying Flower one gains a profound appreciation for the unique artistic value within Dream of the Red Chamber.

Chapter 1: Background of The Song of Burying Flower

1.1 Dream of the Red Chamber and its 1987 TV Adaptation

Dream of the Red Chamber authored by Cao Xueqin during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, is of an autobiographical nature. Throughout the novel, the author subtly conceals reflections on life "born in splendor, perishing in decline." A tapestry-like narrative structure is employed to weave multiple threads into a complex tapestry of story development. Cao Xueqin abandoned the traditional concept-driven character portrayal in novels but instead drew close to life with unreserved, unvarnished realism, which bestowed upon the work a high degree of artistic authenticity. The novel is crafted with exceptional artistry, while the language attains the pinnacle of

ancient Chinese novelistic language artistry, which highlights the distinctiveness of the novel in the literary creation of its time. Moreover, Cao Xueqin's realism in his writing style exposes the decay and decline of feudal society and the darkness and wickedness of feudal powers, which represents a powerful critique of the feudal system and reveals the inevitable trend of the decline of feudal families in that era. *Dream of the Red Chamber* opened up a new path for Chinese literary creation and made an indelible contribution to the development of contemporary literature.

The adaptation and widespread popularity of the 1987 TV version of *Dream of the Red Chamber* captured immense love and acclaim nationwide. This not only unprecedentedly promoted the dissemination and influence of the novel but also drove its music onto the stage of art. It earned the favor of countless artists and enthusiasts of both the series and its music. The musical composition for the 1987 TV adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* radiates boundless artistic charm. The songs exhibit a unique artistic expressiveness within the narrative to illuminate the entire television series.

1.2 Wang Liping and Dream of the Red Chamber

Wang Liping, a native of Changchun, Jilin province, is a nationally acclaimed composer. The music for the 1987 TV adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* represents Wang's pioneering work. It stands for four and a half years of dedicated efforts, during which he invested all his energies into research and composition. He delved into every aspect of the story with great care, including character traits, plotlines, and emotions, and ultimately produced thirteen musical compositions: "Introduction", "Prelude", "In vain", "Burying Flowers", "Red Bean Song", "Qing Wen Song", "Autumn Window and Rainy Eve", "Inscriptions of Three Pieces", "Song of Zilingzhou", "Sighing Xiangling", "Smart and Tired", "Dividing Flesh and Bone", and "Good Enough Song".

Each of his thirteen songs carries the classic resonance of *Dream of the Red Chamber*. General Secretary Xi once remarked in a literary symposium, "Throughout history, every literary masterpiece is the crystallization of accumulated efforts. The charm of literature is invariably the reflection of internal richness. All enduring works and timeless classics are bound to be the result of unwavering determination and wholehearted dedication." These words not only lend support to Cao Xueqin's "Dream of the Red Chamber" but also to Wang's creation of thirteen songs for the 1987 TV adaptation. Particularly, Wang's composition of *The Song of Burying Flower* demonstrates a profound integration with the novel's characters and storyline. He painstakingly speculated and researched the psychological activities of each character and often shed tears during his deep immersion in the creative process. The musical compositions for the 1987 TV adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* as the finishing touch, reach extraordinary heights and drive *Dream of the Red Chamber* to even greater level.

Section 3: The Creative Significance and Influence of The Song of Burying Flower

The music of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, to date, is the solitary complete and systematically adapted artistic work based on a classical masterpiece. In the musical composition for the 1987 TV adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, many songs arouse deep resonance that captivate our hearts. When I, as a student majoring in national vocal arts, sing these pieces with heartfelt dedication, I feel as though I have become immersed in the scenes and unable to extricate myself. Perhaps, this is the essence of Wang's composition. The one among these thirteen musical interludes, that leaves the most indelible impression with significant influence and emotional impact, is undoubtedly the profoundly poignant *The Song of Burying Flower*. Its melody permeates the entire television series with a substantial impact.

The story of *The Song of Burying Flower* finds its inception in the novel's portrayal of "Daiyu Buries the Flowers" long before the 1987 TV adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* was filmed. 1962 Yue Opera version had already vividly presented the story in the form of a stage play. In the Yueju version of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, "Daiyu Buries the Flowers" occupies a large amount of space. Characterized by a theatrical style of interpretation and a rich display of stage artistry, it became a highlight of the entire production. Notably, it also laid the groundwork for future creative adaptations. *The Song of Burying Flower* is a poem universally praised throughout the ages in *Dream of the Red Chamber* and stands as one of the most artistically successful compositions. Originating from the twenty-seventh chapter of the novel, it reads, 'Droplets of green dew playfully adorn Lady Yang; among the painted butterflies, a swallow mourns fading petals.' Lin Daiyu visits Bao Yu at night, and due to a mistaken identity by Qing Wen, she refuses to open the door, suspecting Baoyu. Filled with sorrow, grief, and a sense of injustice, she sees, beneath the flower mound, the withered flowers as a reminder of their ill-fated life. From the depths of her heart, she pens *The Song of Burying Flower*. This poem serves as a quintessential representation in shaping the character of Lin Daiyu, as well as an embodiment of Daiyu's

lamentation over her own fate. The televised adaptation of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* in the 1987 version, coupled with Wang's perfect musical composition, vividly and flawlessly portrays the story of "Daiyu Buries the Flowers. As the most influential and expressive song in the whole series, *The Song of Burying Flower* conveys emotions with unparalleled richness and delicacy with admiration, affection, and enduring popularity. Wang invested one year and nine months in the composition of *The Song of Burying Flower*. When he mentions his songwriting for *Dream of the Red Chamber* his emotions are exceedingly complex. Each song for *Dream of the Red Chamber* was hard-won; the music did not spring from his imagination but was painstakingly sought within the pages of the book. Wang once remarked that if Cao Xueqin had been a composer, he would have written in a similar vein. The songwriting for *The Song of Burying Flower* feels more like an excavation from between the lines of ' *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Conclusion

The lyrics and melodies of The Song of Burying Flower evoke heartbreak with every line, and even decades later, its artistic charm remains undiminished. *Dream of the Red Chamber* was Cao Xueqin's lifelong creation and dedication, and Wang Liping, through thorough study of the original work, unearthed and composed a musical rendition that fully embodies the ideas within the original work. It vividly reflects every part of Wang's dedication to his creative process. At the same time, the music of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, also displays the richness of the novel and provides insight into the breadth and depth of social life at the time. Moreover, it serves as a defence of the ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty. In every aspect of his literary and artistic achievements, it radiates boundless charm.

After a period of study and research, together with the successful solo concert dedicated to *Dream of the Red Chamber* held last semester, I have not only gained a solid understanding of the songs from *Dream of the Red Chamber* but have also gained a deeper insight into this classical masterpiece. The composition of music for *Dream of the Red Chamber* has not only enriched and developed the literary and cinematic arts related to the novel, but also fully embodies the profound and extensive nature of Chinese culture with a profound impact on future generations. Let us, the younger generation, devote more efforts to the learning and promotion of traditional Chinese culture and art in our future study. Additionally, from the creative process of *Dream of the Red Chamber* and its music, it is essential to be aware that success is not achieved overnight but requires diligent cultivation. that every ounce of effort put in will yield its own reward. We must uphold a meticulous, patient, and persevering spirit in everything we do.

References

- [1] Cao Xueqin. Gao E. *Dream of the Red Chamber* [M].
- [2] Li Jinwen. On the Characterization of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* [M].
- [3] Liu Liang. Appreciation of the poetry of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* [M]. Changchun: Jilin Photography Publishing House, 2003, 9.
- [4] Sun Weike. Introduction to Artistic Aesthetics [M]. Yunnan: Yunnan University Press, 2007, 7.
- [5] Zhou Lei. TV series *Dream of the Red Chamber* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1987, 9.
- [6] Sun Weike, *The Dream of the Red Chamber and Poetic Wisdom* [M].
- [7] Li Ningning. A preliminary exploration of the musical works of Wang Liping's "Dream of the Red Chamber" [D].
- [8] Sun Weike, *Aesthetic interpretation of Dream of the Red Chamber* [M]. Yunnan: Yunnan University Press, 2007, 7.
- [9] Li Guangbai. History of Redology [M]. Guangzhou: Guangdong Education Publishing House, 2010, 5.
- [10] Guo Yu-Shi. Guo Yushi's Collected Works - A Historical Manuscript on the Study of the *Dream of the Red Chamber* [M]. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 1978.

Author Bio

Yu Yaru Bu, a member of the CPC, is from Qingzhou, Shandong province. In 2013, she graduated from the Yunnan Arts University. Thereafter, she pursued a postgraduate program in vocal performance, mentored by Professor Zhang Jiying. She specializes in the study and research of vocal folk singing.

Appendix

葬 花 吟

曹 雪 芹 词
王 立 平 曲
杨 露 希 配 奏

稍强

(1)

(3)

1.花 谢 年 花 飞
2.一 年 三 百

(6)

飞 横 天, 红 消 香 断
六 十 日, 风 刀 霜 剑

(10)

有 谁 怜? 葬 丝 软 系
严 相 逼: 明 烟 鲜 娇

(14)

18
飘 香 楼， 落 絮 轻 沾 泊。

(18)

22
扑 绣 窗。

(22)

26
窗。 花 开 易 见。

(26)

29
落 难 寻， 阶 前 愁 独。

(29)

33
弹 花 人！ 独 倚 花 窗 偷 酒 斟， 酒 上。

(33)

37

空枝见血痕, 愿奴膝下生双翼, 随花

(37)

41

飞到天尽头。

(41)

43

天 尽头, 何

(43)

45

处 有 香 丘?

(45)

47

天 尽头, 何

(47)

49

处 有 香 丘? 未 着 锦 囊 收 抱

(49)

52

得, 一 杯 净 土 塘 风 波, 质 本

(52)

55

结 来 还 结 去, 强 干 污 岸 船 渠 沟。

(55)

59

尔 今 死 去

(59)

63

依 收 带, 未 卜 依 身

(63)

67
何 日 能 令

(67)

70
那 花 人 笑 痴,

(70)

73
他 年 那 依 知 是

(73)

76
谁 天 尽

(76)

78
失 何 处 有 香

(78)

80

丘? 天 尽

(80)

82

头, 何 处 有 香

(82)

84

丘? 试看春残花雨落, 便是红颜老死

(84)

86

时, 一朝春尽红颜老, 花落

(88)

91

人亡两不知! 花落人亡两不

(91)

94

知! 花 落 人 亡

f

This musical system covers measures 94 to 96. The vocal line (treble clef) begins with a half note '知!' followed by a melodic phrase for '花 落 人 亡' (Flowers fall, people die) over a half note. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes in the left hand and chords in the right hand. A forte (*f*) dynamic marking is present in measure 95.

(94)

97

西 不 知!

mf *pp*

This musical system covers measures 97 to 100. The vocal line (treble clef) has a half note '西' followed by a half note '不' and a half note '知!'. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and transitions to pianissimo (*pp*) in measure 99. The right hand features sustained chords, while the left hand has a simple harmonic accompaniment.

(97)