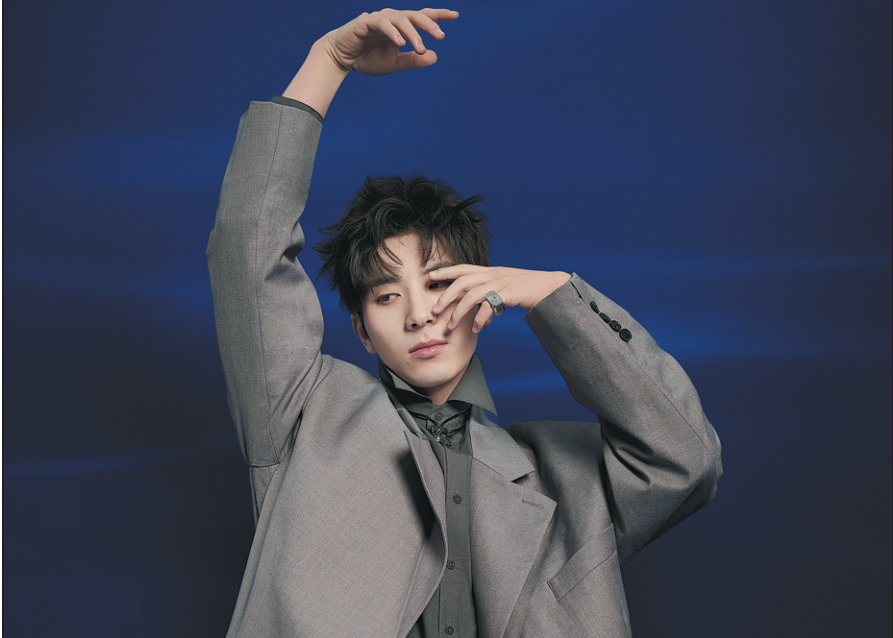


YOUTH

GOLDEN TENOR

A young singer, who starred in a TV talent show, releases a much-anticipated single in the pop-opera subgenre, **Xing Wen** reports.



Above: The cover of singer Cai Chengyu's newly released single *Amore Mio, Dormi Bene*. **Right:** Cai performs at a gala last month. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The young *bel canto* tenor Cai Chengyu's unexpected foray into classical singing began by chance.

During the final music class of his first year at Sucheng No 1 Middle School in Suzhou, Anhui province, his classmates egged him on to perform a song in front of the entire class. As he finished his impromptu performance, his music teacher recognized his natural ability to sing and encouraged him to consider pursuing a career in music.

Inspired by the suggestion, Cai decided to pursue his passion for singing and enrolled into the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 2015 where he nurtured his passion for classical music. Three years later, he debuted on *Super Vocal*, a talent show in China produced by Hunan Satellite TV for classically trained singers, where his vocal abilities led to a large following. After that he started to experiment with singing by using techniques that blend elements of both pop music and classical *bel canto* singing, or in other words, adopting the pop-opera singing style.

"I have been longing to create innovative pieces in pop opera by taking inspiration from classical masterpieces," Cai, 25, says.

Last month, he released a new single in the subgenre, titled *Amore Mio, Dormi Bene*, which draws inspiration from Schubert's *Lullaby*. The inspired song has two versions, one in Chinese and the other in Italian.

"The Chinese version features an instrumental arrangement with a regretful tone and incorporates pop music elements into the chorus for a more contemporary interpretation. The Italian version, on the other hand, embraces a classical style and expresses a sense of nostalgia," he explains.

The song has a vocal range spanning nearly two octaves, and Cai's vocal prowess is on full display, as he navigates both lower and upper registers with ease.

Producer Liu Huiyi enriches the single's conventional classical music arrangements with the piano, strings and harp. He incorporates electronic elements into the mix, seamlessly fusing classical style and



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Cai Chengyu, *bel canto* tenor

contemporary pop elements.

In Cai's quest to pursue the "pop-opera style", he has dedicated years to exploring new possibilities and pushing the boundaries of his craft.

"I want to incorporate a blend of musical genres, including electronic, rock and traditional Chinese folk music into my songs," he says, adding that he has contemplated collaborating with *suona* players, who are skilled in playing the double-reed woodwind instrument, for his live performances.

By embracing a diverse range of musical influences, he believes that he can connect with a broader audience, particularly among the youth, and create music that transcends cultural boundaries.

Cai has more than 1.7 million followers on Sina Weibo and is called "golden tenor" by his fans.

The young singer has already per-

formed at major cultural gigs such as the Spring Festival Gala, one of the most-watched annual events in the country, participated in several variety shows, as well as starred in classic operas, including *Don Giovanni*, *La Traviata* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

He says he hopes his songs would ignite within those listeners who are not familiar with the art of opera a passion to attend theatrical presentations of classical music and operatic performances.

"A larger audience for opera would inspire us performers and foster the development of the operatic industry," he says. "For me, the subtle, exhilarating communication that takes place between the audience and performers is truly captivating."

He adds that with the improvement of living standards in China, the opera audience is developing. In recent years, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, where Cai is pursuing his master's degree, has not only been regularly rehearsing classic Western operas, but also working to create original Chinese operas.

"I believe that everything in this industry is moving in a positive direction," he says.

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Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

Fostering a new generation of China's mathematical experts

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A mathematician said the true ascension of a country in mathematics does not lie in following other countries, but rather in finding a correct direction for itself. It is necessary to recognize China's strengths, and the next three years will see its rise in mathematics.

Speaking of mathematical studies, Shing-Tung Yau is a name that embodies expertise as he is the first Chinese-born mathematician to win the Fields Medal, the highest international award for the subject. He delivered a speech at the Shanghai Master Forum on Science under the theme of the present and future of mathematics in China, which was held in Fudan University on Friday.

"Basic science is diverse, but the foundation of basic science lies in mathematical science and theoretical physics. Mathematics is the foundation of both physics and all engineering theories," Yau said, adding that any strong modernized country must achieve excellence in mathematics.

Looking back at the development of mathematics as a basic science, Yau said ancient China's mathematics level is not inferior to those of ancient civilizations in the world, and its main feature is the emphasis on application.

However, during the mid-Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the Renaissance in Western countries kicked off the unstoppable development of mathematics, which led to many outstanding mathematicians.

"We in China also have scholars who can match the world's top level. My mentor Shiing-shen Chern can be regarded as one of the greatest mathematicians of the 20th century," Yau said.

In 1946, Chern returned to China and began to cultivate a group of outstanding mathematicians. Later, he went to the United States again and tutored another batch of excellent Chinese mathematicians. In the mid-1980s, Chern become committed to cultivating top-level mathematical talents in China.

"Chern devoted all of his time in his later years into education, with

the mission of cultivating China's top mathematicians. This is my teacher's dream and also what we younger generations need to inherit," Yau said.

In 1979, Yau set foot in Beijing for the first time and discovered that China had a long way to go in terms of subject construction and talent cultivation compared to the West.

However, the situation soon improved as China started to send a large number of students abroad and invest more funds in science and technology, which was a far-sighted decision in Yau's opinion.

In recent years, many of Yau's students have returned to China and a lot of them are active in domestic mathematical study. He has also established multiple mathematical research institutions in China and organized mathematical competitions with different objectives and evaluation methods.

"Only by connecting with the international community can young scholars break free from mental constraints and follow the forefront of world development to forge their own path," Yau said.

Two years ago, in order to ensure the implementation of the YAU Mathematical Sciences Leaders Program, Tsinghua University's Qiuzhen College was established, with Yau serving as its dean.

His goal is to cultivate a group of top talent in China through this training program. And such talent should be able to lead the world's mathematical development and change the development of basic science.

To achieve this, Yau visited middle schools and even primary schools across the country to select students with outstanding comprehensive capabilities, mathematical potential and expertise as he found that almost all mathematical masters in history began to excel at the age of 13 or so.

To stimulate middle school students' curiosity about mathematical issues, Yau initiated the Shing-Tung Yau High School Science Award. In addition, he launched the Shing-Tung Yau College Student Mathematics Contest, which encourages



The Shanghai Master Forum on Science takes place in Fudan University on Friday. LIAO HENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: Chinese-born mathematician Shing-Tung Yau delivers a speech at the forum. An audience member asks a question. CHENG ZHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

college students to independently study basic mathematics not narrated in the classrooms or textbooks, aiming to cultivate their true ability to conduct scientific research.

As a related field of applied mathematics, artificial intelligence has recently attracted widespread attention. Yau believes that AI cannot be completed without mathe-

matics, and the mathematics discipline will also usher in new opportunities and challenges in the era of AI.

Challenging the viewpoint that

"mathematicians will be replaced by AI", he said that AI cannot replace top mathematicians because the data collected by AI tools are all based on human thinking. Therefore, new breakthroughs cannot be achieved at the current stage.

Yau said that if we want to achieve a real breakthrough in the field of AI, applied mathematicians in China must have a deeper understanding of basic mathematics.

"Only by steadily doing basic research and forging one's own path can we fundamentally solve the 'bottleneck' issues," Yau said.

Yang Aicong, a high school student in the second year of Fudan University affiliated high school, loves mathematics and has won a silver medal in the national middle school mathematics Olympiad.

After listening to Yau's lecture, he said: "Mathematics is a subject that I am very interested in. When choosing my major in university, and in the future, I have made the decision to study combinatorial mathematics."

"As a student of data science, we need to have a clear understanding that the underlying mathematical foundation of data science is modern probability theory and statistics," said Ding Zepeng, a graduate student of the big data college in Fudan University, after listening to the lecture.

He added that facing the current AI trend, students and researchers should not only keep up with research in cutting-edge fields and broaden their horizons, but also settle down to solidify mathematical and theoretical foundations.

The Shanghai Master Forum on Science, based on gathering and disseminating scientific thoughts, was initiated by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Shanghai Committee.

To shape Shanghai into a scientific and technological innovation center with global reach, the forum will generate "Four ONEs" including one journal, one series of books on the frontiers of science, one series of audio-visual media and one science and technology think tank.