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Song Zuying and Official Pop Stardom in the PRC

Currently a leading singer in the national folk (*minzu*) style, Song Zuying performed with the internationally renowned tenor Plácido Domingo at the closing ceremony of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and with the pop star Jay Chou at the CCTV Chinese New Year Gala 2009. These collaborations highlight the tension between the 'elitism' of representing China and the 'vulgarity' of mass music.

According to Nimrod Baranovitch, official singers are denied individuality and transformed into the voice of a force bigger than themselves. On the other hand, Song's "Enchanting China" concert in Beijing's Bird Nest in July 2009 was the first solo concert by a state-sponsored singer. As such, it highlights a second tension: that between performing the Chinese nation and Song's individual star persona. How does Song Zuying negotiate these tensions? What does her success tell us about the current state of mass and popular music in the PRC?