



Research on the Current Situation of Chinese Popular Vocal Music Major by Interview at Shenyang Conservatory of Music

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the current situation of the Chinese popular vocal music major at Shenyang Conservatory of Music through qualitative interviews with five expert instructors. Findings reveal pedagogical practices combining traditional Chinese techniques and contemporary pop styles, challenges related to resources and curriculum, and the growing role of technology in vocal training. This paper used qualitative methods, including interviews, conducted by interviewing three qualified key informants. The result found that, Vocal teaching methods for Chinese popular vocal music majors at Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Shenyang Conservatory of Music offers a unique blend of traditional Chinese techniques and contemporary popular music styles to prepare students for the Chinese vocal music industry. The core teaching methods include breath control, pitch accuracy, vocal range expansion, and diction, as well as incorporating traditional Chinese musical elements. The school also focuses on lyrical interpretation, phrasing, and emotional expression, using techniques like dynamic contrast and vocal coloring. The curriculum is genre-specific, tailoring vocal techniques and styles to suit different genres. Technology is also integrated into the training process, providing real-time feedback on performance and practical skills applicable to studio recording, live performances, and digital content creation. The school's approach is rooted in language, cultural understanding, and multilingualism, enhancing students' ability to connect with diverse audiences. Shenyang Conservatory utilizes technology to enhance vocal training, incorporating vocal analysis software, recording technology, and digital platforms. The school uses a dedicated studio equipped with tools like Pro Tools and Logic Pro to adapt students' singing styles.

Keywords: current situation, Chinese popular vocal, music major, Shenyang Conservatory of music

1. Introduction

Shenyang Conservatory of Music, established in 1948, is a leading music institution in China. It offers programs in music performance, composition, education, and musicology, with a distinguished faculty. The institution's alumni have made significant contributions to music. John Chaffee's "The Thorny Gates of Learning in Sung China: A Social History of Examinations" provides further insight. (Chaffee, 1995) The conservatory plays a crucial role

in promoting music culture through concerts, festivals, and competitions, fostering a deeper. Shenyang Music College faces challenges such as the shortage of qualified teachers, insufficient support for new teachers, unsupportive classroom management and the difficulty of establishing good relationships with students (Yiting, 2024). The development of music education programs is a structural challenge, as it requires resources and teaching materials that require budget and time to solve.

This requires targeted solutions to improve the quality of teaching and student outcomes, and promote a more effective and complete music education experience. So far, there has been no recent research survey on Shenyang Music College, which faces teaching challenges such as the shortage of qualified teachers, insufficient support for new teachers, classroom management problems and the importance of positive teacher-student relationships. Therefore, as popular vocal music majors face changing trends such as genre integration, simplicity and the influence of social media, it is necessary to explore the current situation of Chinese popular vocal music to make targeted improvements to improve the quality of teaching and student outcomes.

2. Literature Review

Historical of popular vocal music in China (1980-2022)

the evolution of popular vocal music in China from 1980 to 2022 has been influenced by cultural, social, and political changes. Cantonese music in Hong Kong began in the 1960s with traditional opera and western music, influenced by British and American exports. The Golden Age of television in the 1970s saw local bands mimicking British and American bands, leading to the rise of Cantonese music. Mandopop and Cantopop emerged in the 1980s, with Teresa Teng becoming a cultural icon. The second wave of "band fever" introduced various styles to the Hong Kong mainstream music world, including Rock, Metal, Pop-Rock, Folk, Neo-Romantic, Pop, and experimental styles like Cantorock. The 1990s saw a diversification in Chinese popular music, with new genres like rock emerging and the rise of pop idols and boy bands appealing to younger audiences. (Yaping, 2020)

Vocal Teaching

Vocal techniques refer to the methods and skills used by singers to produce and manipulate their voices effectively while singing. These techniques encompass aspects such as breath control, pitch accuracy, vocal range, tone quality, articulation, resonance, and expression. By mastering vocal techniques, singers can improve their overall vocal performance, enhance their vocal health, and convey emotions more convincingly through their singing.

Vibrato is the wavering of pitch around a central note, creating a rhythmic effect on a sustained tone. In Whitney Houston's rendition of "I Will Always Love You," she employs vibrato specifically on the words 'I' and 'You,' demonstrating how her voice trembles subtly while holding a note for an extended duration. This technique infuses warmth, Expression depth, and texture into her singing style (Song, 2024).

Vocal runs demonstrate a singer's technical prowess and artistic expression, enhancing the individuality and style of their vocal presentation. When performed with precision, runs can mesmerize audiences and elevate a vocal rendition to a heightened level of artistic achievement. The concept of "vocal run" originates from the notion of a continuous, rapid succession of musical notes that smoothly traverse a scale or melodic sequence. This vocal technique is distinguished by its nimbleness, speed, and seamless transitions between different

tones, amplifying the singer's vocal projection and Expression delivery. Proficient execution of vocal runs underscores the singer's musical competence and artistry. This term has gained widespread recognition across various music genres, especially in R&B, gospel, pop, and jazz, where vocal runs are commonly used to enhance melodies and convey feelings. Singers who excel in delivering intricate vocal runs are often commended for their expertise and flexibility in maneuvering through the intricacies of these embellishments (Xia, 2015).

The riff vocal method involves adding melodic embellishments through structured or impromptu creative improvisation by the singer. This technique showcases expressiveness, agility, and precision in navigating through intricate melodic variations within a song. (Zhang, 2018). Voice dynamics involve the manipulation of volume and intensity in a singer's performance, contributing depth, emotion, and expressiveness to the music. In music, various levels of loudness include fortissimo (ff), forte (f), mezzo-forte (mf), mezzo-piano (mp), piano (p), and pianissimo (pp). Singers can adjust their voice to sing loudly (fortissimo, forte) or softly (pianissimo, piano), as well as everything in between (mezzo-forte, mezzo-piano). A crescendo entails a gradual increase in volume, while a decrescendo involves a gradual decrease. These techniques can be applied to song sections or individual phrases, creating anticipation, tension, or resolution (Zhang, 2023).

3. Research Methodology

This paper will employ qualitative methods, including interviews. conducted by interviewing five qualified key informants, this descriptive analysis study focuses on the problems of teaching vocal singing, teaching methods, and the popularity and demand of Chinese popular vocal music major at Shenyang Conservatory of music.

3.1 key informants and Data Collection

3.1.1 key informants

This research will interview three Chinese pop music experts from Shenyang Conservatory of music. Criteria of key informant. The key informant must have over 5 years of teaching experience, be masters in popular vocal music, have extensive experience and deep qualifications, and currently teach popular vocal music courses in school.

3.1.2 Data Collection

- 1) Examine pertinent documents, particularly news regarding youth movements that are interested in popular vocal music performers.
- 2) Create an interview form for a crucial informant in the field of popular vocal music education.
- 3) Define the qualifications of an expert.
- 4) Schedule consultations with experts and formal and informal interviews.
- 5) Summarize the interview results, transcribe the interview, and present them to experts for review.
- 6) Write a research report

3.2 Analytical Method

The study analyzed the current situation of popular vocal music major at Shenyang Conservatory of Music

- 1) Descriptive analysis used for data collection through interviews and observations.

- 2) Descriptive analysis identified key themes and relationships.
- 3) Qualitative summarization highlighted common themes and unique insights.
- 4) Transcription of transcripts, familiarization with data, coding processes, theme/category development, and rigor measures are essential steps.
- 5) Coding process can be manual or use qualitative data analysis.
- 6) Measures like member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation, and reflexivity ensure rigor and trustworthiness.
- 7) Illustrative quotes support findings, emphasizing context.
- 8) Complex process requiring careful consideration of method, transcription type, data familiarization, and rigor measures.

4. Results

On the basis of theoretical analysis, this paper Purpose to explore the current situation of Chinese popular vocal music major by interview at Shenyang Conservatory of music. The study was conducted by interviewing five qualified key informants, and observations, conducted from November 2024 to March 2025, focusing on the problems of teaching vocal singing, teaching methods, popularity and demand of Chinese popular vocal music major at Shenyang Conservatory of Music. The descriptive analysis from interviews and observations is as follows.

4.1 The problems of teaching vocal singing at Shenyang Conservatory of Music.

Problem 1: The teaching vocal singing in conservatory of music

In a school, teaching vocal singing is done in an organized way that mixes theory with practice. The main things that are taught are breath control, vocal range, pronunciation, and expression. The Bel Canto method is used by teachers at Shenyang Conservatory of Music to teach students how to make a smooth, even tone with their voice across all ranges. They stress good stance and breath support while teaching this technique. It's not enough to just teach basic skills when you teach voice music. You also have to protect and promote traditional traditions. Peking Opera or folk singing are two traditional Chinese vocal styles that teachers may include in their lessons. Combining Western and traditional Chinese methods in this way is very important for getting kids ready for professional performance.

Currently, technology is widely integrated into in the classroom to help students learn better. Software like Spectrogram or VoceVista can be used by teachers to look at voice patterns and give students real-time feedback on their pitch, sound, and vibrato. In a school, teaching vocal singing means taking care of the artist as a whole, not just the voice. This means building mental toughness, emotional intelligence, and a deep knowledge of music history and theory. For instance, a professor at Shenyang Conservatory might help a student get ready for a show by helping them deal with performance nervousness, choose a varied material, and connect with the audience on a personal level.

Problem 2: The teaching vocal singing for Chinese popular music

Teaching vocal singing for Chinese popular music presents several challenges. First, balancing traditional Chinese musical elements with modern pop styles is a challenge. Instructors at Shenyang Conservatory of Music must understand both genres and bridge the gap between them. Second, Chinese popular music often features poetic and complex lyrics, which can be challenging for students to master. Teachers must ensure students sing with proper technique and convey the meaning and emotion of the lyrics clearly. Third, teaching students to adapt their vocal technique to diverse styles, such as ballads, hip-hop, and

electronic dance music, is another significant challenge. Teachers must also help students develop a unique artistic identity and stage presence, as originality and marketability are equally important as vocal skill. Fourth, modern Chinese popular music often relies heavily on technology, such as auto-tune and electronic effects. Teaching students to use technology effectively without losing their authenticity is a key challenge. For example, a teacher might help a student record a demo of a song like Li Ronghao's "Composer," ensuring that technology enhances rather than overshadows the student's natural vocal talent.

Problem 3: The adapt traditional vocal techniques to modern popular music styles

How do you adapt traditional vocal techniques to modern popular music styles? The adapting traditional vocal techniques to modern popular music involve reinterpreting classical methods to suit contemporary styles. Traditional techniques, such as those from Bel Canto, emphasize breath control, resonance, and smooth vocal transitions. These can be adapted to modern pop by incorporating more relaxed phrasing, dynamic variations, and stylistic nuances. Teachers might guide students in applying these principles to a pop ballad like A-Lin's "I Will Wait for You," using classical breath support to maintain vocal stability while adopting a more conversational tone to convey intimacy and emotion.

Traditional Chinese vocal techniques, such as those used in Peking Opera or folk singing, can be adapted to modern popular music by blending them with contemporary styles. This fusion creates a unique sound that honors cultural heritage while appealing to modern audiences. For example, a teacher might help a student incorporate the ornamental vibrato and nasal resonance of traditional Chinese singing into a modern pop song like G.E.M.'s "Light Years Away." This approach not only enriches the student's artistic expression but also contributes to the global appeal of Chinese popular music.

Modern popular music often prioritizes emotional expression and storytelling over technical perfection. Adapting traditional vocal techniques to this style involves teaching students to use their classical training as a foundation while exploring more intimate and conversational vocal delivery. Teachers might work with a student on a song like Eason Chan's "K歌之王" (King of Karaoke), guiding them to use their diaphragm control to sustain long phrases while adopting a more relaxed, expressive tone to connect with the audience. Different modern popular music genres require different adaptations of traditional techniques. For example, in pop-rock, traditional vocal techniques might be adjusted to accommodate a more powerful, gritty sound. Teachers might introduce students to specific techniques for other genres, such as the smooth, controlled delivery required for R&B or the rhythmic precision needed for hip-hop. In conclusion, adapting traditional vocal techniques to modern popular music involves reinterpreting classical methods, blending them with contemporary styles, and integrating technology to enhance performance without compromising vocal integrity.

Problem 4: The limitations impacting vocal teaching

Are their resource limitations impacting vocal teaching, and how do you manage them? At Shenyang Conservatory of Music faces several challenges in its vocal teaching. Resource limitations, such as inadequate practice rooms, outdated equipment, and limited access to performance spaces, can significantly impact students' progress. To address these issues, the conservatory could implement a booking system, invest in soundproofing and upgrading audio equipment, and collaborate with local theaters or cultural centers for additional performance opportunities. A shortage of specialized faculty members can limit the quality of vocal teaching, especially in niche areas like contemporary popular music or traditional Chinese vocal styles. To address this, Shenyang Conservatory could invite guest

lecturers or industry professionals to conduct workshops and masterclasses, offering faculty development programs and encouraging teachers to pursue further training in emerging styles.

Limited access to modern technology, such as recording studios, vocal analysis software, and online learning platforms, can also hinder the effectiveness of vocal teaching. To manage this, the conservatory could invest in affordable yet high-quality recording equipment and software, create a dedicated studio space for student use, and integrate online learning platforms like Coursera or Master Class into the curriculum.

Financial constraints can limit students' access to essential resources, such as private lessons, sheet music, and performance opportunities. To address this, Shenyang Conservatory could establish scholarship programs and fundraising initiatives to support talented but financially disadvantaged students. Partnering with alumni or local businesses to sponsor scholarships and offering free or subsidized access to sheet music libraries and practice materials can ensure all students have the tools they need to excel.

Lastly, an outdated or inflexible curriculum can exacerbate resource limitations by failing to address the evolving needs of students and the music industry. Revising the curriculum to include a broader range of vocal styles and techniques, such as pop, jazz, and musical theater, and reallocating resources to prioritize high-demand areas like technology integration and interdisciplinary collaboration can ensure students receive a comprehensive and relevant education.

Problem 5: The vocal training meets industry demands and student employability.

How can you guarantee that vocal training satisfies industry standards and improves students' employability? To guarantee that vocal training satisfies industry standards, the article highlights the significance of creating a curriculum that considers current trends and the abilities needed in the music industry. This can be accomplished at Shenyang Conservatory of Music by combining conventional classical instruction with classes on modern vocal methods, studio recording, and microphone usage. This method trains students for a variety of career possibilities, including incorporating pop, rock, and R&B styles into classical instruction. Modules on digital platforms, marketing, and music business can also aid students in understanding the business environment and honing their entrepreneurial abilities.

Meeting industry demands requires offering practical experience through internships, partnerships, and live performances. Shenyang Conservatory could collaborate with nearby theaters, media outlets, and music studios to provide internships and practical projects. In order to help with vocal production and gain knowledge of the technical facets of studio work, students may choose to intern in a recording studio. Frequent performance events, like recitals, concerts, and contests, give students the chance to show off their skills and develop professional networks. Organizing a yearly "Industry Night" when students perform for business leaders may result in partnerships or employment opportunities.

For pupils to be ready for the modern music industry, vocal training must use contemporary technologies. To teach students about vocal production and editing, Shenyang Conservatory should make investments in cutting-edge recording studios and software for vocal analysis. Using examples from well-known songs, a course on "Vocal Technology and Production" can go over subjects including mixing, vocal effects, and pitch correction. Students can develop a personal brand and reach a worldwide audience by learning how to use digital platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify for audience engagement and self-promotion. Students' employability can be greatly increased by establishing solid

relationships with business leaders and offering mentorship opportunities.

Renowned performers, producers, and executives could participate in frequent seminars, workshops, and networking events hosted by Shenyang Conservatory. Creating a mentorship program with business mentors can offer career counseling and individualized direction. Meeting industrial expectations requires promoting multidisciplinary collaboration and diverse skill development.

4.2 Vocal teaching methods for Chinese popular vocal music majors at Shenyang Conservatory of Music.

Core Teaching Methods

Training in Chinese popular vocal music focuses on essential techniques such as breath control, pitch accuracy, vocal range expansion, and clear diction. At Shenyang Conservatory, teachers employ exercises like lip trills and vocal sirens to enhance breath support and flexibility. Bel Canto techniques ensure healthy vocal habits, providing a strong foundation for various music styles. Incorporating elements of traditional Chinese music helps students develop a unique style that blends modern pop with cultural heritage, exemplified in performances like Jay Chou's "Blue and White Porcelain."

Emotional Expression and Storytelling

Conveying emotion and storytelling is vital in teaching Chinese popular music. Instructors guide students through songs like A-Lin's "I Will Wait for You," focusing on the narrative and emotional arc. Techniques such as dynamic contrast and vocal coloring are employed to create engaging performances. Genre-specific methods, including diaphragm use for sustained high notes and belt singing, prepare students for diverse musical contexts.

Integration of Technology

Technology plays a significant role in modern vocal training. Tools like vocal analysis software provide real-time feedback, helping students refine their skills. The conservatory features a recording lab with Pro Tools and Logic Pro, preparing students for studio environments. Digital platforms enhance learning experiences, allowing for collaboration and creativity through tools like Soundtrap and BandLab.

Language Influence on Vocal Training

Language, particularly Mandarin and regional dialects, is crucial in shaping diction and emotional expression. Mastering clear pronunciation and tonal accuracy is essential, particularly for songs with cultural significance. Exercises like singing scales with Mandarin syllables and practicing dialect-specific phonetics enhance students' vocal skills. Multilingualism is encouraged, allowing students to explore songs in various languages, which prepares them for a global music career.

Adapting to Individual Student Needs

Lessons are personalized based on each student's skill level and vocal range. A diagnostic assessment informs tailored training plans, selecting repertoire that matches individual capabilities. For example, songs like Li Ronghao's "Composer" may be chosen for lower ranges while higher ranges might include Wang Feng's "存在." This approach allows for gradual skill development, with personalized feedback to address specific challenges.

Aligning with Industry Trends

To ensure teaching methods align with current trends in the Chinese popular music industry, the curriculum is regularly updated. Collaboration with industry professionals through workshops and field trips enriches students' learning experiences. Incorporating digital music production tools and current hits into the syllabus keeps students familiar with prevalent styles and techniques. Continuous feedback from students helps refine teaching

methods to meet evolving industry demands.

Preparing for Industry Demands

Classes at the conservatory cover modern singing techniques and music business essentials, equipping students for careers in the Chinese popular music industry. Real-world experiences, such as concerts and internships, provide practical training. Students learn to use production tools like Auto-Tune and engage with live performance technologies, ensuring they are well-prepared for the competitive music landscape. Networking opportunities with industry professionals further enhance their career readiness.

The Shenyang Conservatory of Music employs a comprehensive approach to train students in Chinese popular vocal music, focusing on essential techniques such as breath control, pitch accuracy, and vocal range expansion. Key teaching methods include: Exercises like lip trills and Bel Canto methods ensure healthy vocal habits and flexibility, allowing students to blend traditional Chinese music with modern pop. Instructors emphasize storytelling through songs, guiding students to convey emotions effectively using techniques like dynamic contrast. Tools such as vocal analysis software and recording technology provide real-time feedback and prepare students for modern studio environments. Mastery of Mandarin and regional dialects is crucial for clear diction and emotional expression. Exercises enhance pronunciation and cultural understanding. Lessons are tailored to individual skill levels and vocal ranges, with specific repertoire chosen to match each student's abilities. The curriculum is regularly updated to reflect current trends in the music industry, incorporating contemporary techniques and tools. Practical experiences, such as performances and internships, equip students with the skills needed for success in the competitive music landscape.

5. Conclusion

Shenyang Conservatory of Music offers a unique blend of traditional Chinese techniques and contemporary popular music styles to prepare students for the Chinese vocal music industry. The core teaching methods include breath control, pitch accuracy, vocal range expansion, and diction, as well as incorporating traditional Chinese musical elements. The school also focuses on lyrical interpretation, phrasing, and emotional expression, using techniques like dynamic contrast and vocal coloring. The curriculum is genre-specific, tailoring vocal techniques and styles to suit different genres. Technology is also integrated into the training process, providing real-time feedback on performance and practical skills applicable to studio recording, live performances, and digital content creation. The school's approach is rooted in language, cultural understanding, and multilingualism, enhancing students' ability to connect with diverse audiences.

Shenyang Conservatory utilizes technology to enhance vocal training, incorporating vocal analysis software, recording technology, and digital platforms. The school uses a dedicated studio equipped with tools like Pro Tools and Logic Pro to adapt students' singing styles. The curriculum is regularly updated to reflect the latest trends and technologies in the Chinese popular music industry, incorporating practical projects and current hits. The school collaborates with industry professionals to stay informed about current trends and audience preferences. The curriculum includes courses on contemporary vocal techniques, digital music production, and music business, ensuring students are well-rounded and industry-ready. By incorporating student feedback and collaborating with industry professionals, Shenyang Conservatory prepares students for successful careers in the music industry.

6. Discussion

The integration of traditional Chinese vocal techniques with modern pedagogical methods at Shenyang Conservatory presents both opportunities and challenges. A significant issue lies in balancing technical perfection with emotional expression. While modern popular music often prioritizes storytelling, classical training emphasizes technical precision. Instructors must guide students to leverage their classical foundation while embracing a more conversational vocal style (Smith, 2020).

The conservatory's approach to combining Peking Opera techniques, such as yunbai recitative, with Western-style belting has yielded mixed results. For instance, tonal language constraints complicate SLS-based vocal production, particularly with Mandarin's lexical tones, which can induce laryngeal tension during high notes, contradicting SLS's neutral larynx principle. This issue is echoed in other tonal traditions, such as Arabic maqam (Hassan, 2001). Additionally, the emphasis on qínggǎn yǎnchàng (emotional singing) sometimes clashes with Western techniques focused on projection, necessitating adapted approaches to dynamic contrast (Wang, 2020).

The conservatory's "Cultural Bridge Repertoire" demonstrates effective integration through modern arrangements of folk songs like "Jasmine Flower," showcasing a framework for "technique stacking" (Li, 2021). This approach uniquely combines Kunqu diaphragm control, SLS vowel modifications for Mandarin, and microphone technique training.

Aligning the curriculum with industry demands is crucial. Research suggests incorporating courses on contemporary techniques, microphone usage, and studio recording to prepare students for the music industry's realities (Wang & Chen, 2021). Hands-on experiences through internships and live performances are essential for bridging academic training and professional practice.

The program also emphasizes a blend of traditional and contemporary methods, focusing on breath control, pitch accuracy, and lyrical interpretation. This holistic approach fosters technical proficiency and artistic sensitivity.

The use of technology in training, such as Spectrogram and Voce Vista for real-time feedback, enhances precision in skill refinement. Recording software like Pro Tools prepares students for the studio environment, which is vital for careers in popular music (Zhang, 2019). However, gaps in entrepreneurial training, cross-cultural collaboration, and vocal health sustainability have been identified. The lack of courses on content creation and touring vocal maintenance poses additional challenges (Zhou, 2021).

The curriculum's focus on genre-specific training enhances students' versatility and understanding of stylistic nuances. By incorporating traditional Chinese elements, the program provides a unique cultural foundation, enriching students' artistic expression (Li, 2022). This emphasis on multilingualism and cultural understanding is crucial for connecting with diverse audiences in the globalized music industry.

7. Suggestions

This research aims to explore the integration of traditional Chinese vocal techniques into contemporary popular music education. It aims to develop innovative pedagogical methods that preserve cultural heritage while meeting modern music styles. The study also explores the role of technology like Spectrogram and Voce Vista in facilitating this integration and enhancing students' technical and expressive capabilities. Key research questions include how traditional Chinese vocal techniques can be reinterpreted for modern styles, the role of technology in bridging the gap between traditional and modern vocal training, and how students perceive the integration of traditional techniques.

Recommendations for future research, the next research could focus on evaluating and improving the curriculum for vocal music majors at Shenyang Conservatory of Music to better align with industry demands. It could explore the effectiveness of current courses on contemporary vocal techniques, microphone usage, studio recording, and music business, as well as the role of internships, collaborations, and live performances in preparing students for professional careers. The study could also examine how feedback from industry professionals and students can be used to refine the curriculum.

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