

The Teaching of Chorus Courses in Chinese Higher Education

Lin Xiaofang,

Nicha Pattananon and Thanomsri Saengthong

Bangkokthonburi University, Bangkok, Thailand

Corresponding Author, E-mail: nicha.musiced@gmail.com

Abstracts

Chorus is a collective form of musical expression as a form of vocal expression in which the human voice is used to express musical works. It not only refers to those larger and more complete choral works but also includes all vocal singing forms except opera. This makes chorus an easy-to-implement, easy-to-accept, and attractive collective musical activity. A good chorus rehearsal or performance can improve musicians' musical ability, collective cohesion, and aesthetic ability. Participating in the chorus is both performing and appreciating music. Nowadays, educators in ordinary colleges and universities in various regions of China pay more and more attention to the development of chorus teaching for students' comprehensive quality.

Keywords: The Teaching of Chorus Courses; Chinese Higher Education; China

Introduction

The origin of the chorus is very early, almost germinated, and developed with human civilization at the same time. In the West, there has been a chorus in today's sense, at the latest, in ancient Greece and Rome. After the Middle Ages, people used the chorus to sing polyphonic music with multiple voices. The emergence of polyphonic music laid the foundation for the later generation of the polyphonic chorus. In a word, as far as the Western chorus is concerned, it traces its development history, which can be briefly divided into the following stages:

The first stage is the ancient Greek period. Hymns in the ancient Greek period—this period can also be said to be the prototype of the development process of the chorus. The singing form of collective aura appeared around the 6th century BC. The singing content must be religious themes, and the singing method is mainly based on unison. In the plays of this period, the chorus was mainly monophonic, integrated with other arts. The basic feature of the chorus at this stage is monophonic music, mainly in unison.

The second stage was the choral art of the Middle Ages. Christian Music in the Middle Ages - opened the prelude to Christian music and established the position of chorus in the history of Western music. At the end of the 11th century, religious music developed further, and multi-voice music appeared, forming polyphonic music. The earliest polyphonic music was called "Organon." The trend of polyphonic music development laid the foundation for the polyphonic chorus. It also made a powerful attempt to develop a multi-part chorus in later generations.

In the third stage, the chorus of the Renaissance. The multi-voice chorus of the Renaissance, that is, the Western chorus, has entered an extremely magnificent multi-voice chorus, and chorus works are also emerging in an endless stream with various themes, metrical

* Received: October 27, 2022; Revised: November 2, 2022; Accepted: November 3, 2022

psalms, hymns. The penetration of secular music made the chorus art in this period show a variety of charm and development.

The fourth stage is the chorus of the Baroque period. During the maturity and development of the chorus in the Baroque period, a new form of combining music and drama emerged, namely opera. With the birth of opera, the chorus took place in opera performances and created world-renowned works such as Handel's "Israel in Egypt" and "Messiah," of which "Hallelujah" in "Messiah" has been praised by the world and continues to this day.

In the fifth stage, the chorus of the classical period. Secular music in the classical period occupied an important position. During this period, the art of chorus has also been greatly developed, and scenes of chorus music participating in large-scale activities have appeared. It is more cautious about using gradual acceleration and gradual slowing down. The main genres are Messiah, Symphony Chorus, and Requiem. For example, the composer Beethoven's Ninth Symphony "Chorus" added human voices to expand the work. The expressive force has opened up a new world for the creation of later choral works.

The sixth stage is the choral art of the romantic period. The choral art of the nineteenth century entered the period of Romanticism. The high nationalism sentiment mainly influenced the choral art of this period. People paid more attention to national music, and national choral art was favored. At the same time, secular music attracted people's attention during this period, and large-scale choral works began appearing. Artists such as Schubert, Weber, Liszt, and Mendelssohn created numerous choral works. These works generally discriminate into more grandiose and long melodies. The rhythm is more lively, and the chorus combination is freer.

In the chorus of the modern period, from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the art of the chorus gradually transitioned to the modern period. Many chorus art schools emerged during this period, such as Impressionism, Expressionism, and Neoclassicism. Impressionism's expression techniques are relatively concise, and at the same time, it also gives people a sense of erratic and hazy. Impressionist artists require people to grasp the impression of a certain moment; expressionist musicians use a lot of intense, tense, stern, and so on. Harmonious notes and complex and exaggerated rhythms express people's deep inner contradictions, conflicts, anxiety, fear, pain, and other emotions, deliberately highlighting new artistic expression techniques. Compared with expressionism, neoclassicism emphasizes the balance between emotion and art form. However, they oppose expressionism for the sake of expression. They also attach great importance to the importance of form. They believe that form is the main thing compared to emotion. In addition, the chorus of the modern period has several genres, such as neo-romanticism and contingency. In a nutshell, the main artistic features of the modernist chorus are the richness of chorus combination styles, the full excavation of voice expressiveness, and the extensive use of dissonant chords (Reames, 2001 : 122-135)

Chorus is a vocal genre requiring the coordination of multiple music parts. From the point of view of sound types, it includes different categories. The children's choir consists of children who have not changed their voices, including the chorus of the boys' and girls' organization of the primary school and the chorus of the boys' and girls' organization of the lower middle school. Chorus has two basic parts: high and low parts. According to the singing needs of a specific choir, each part can be further divided into the first and second parts. The number of parts can be divided into two parts chorus, three parts chorus, and four parts chorus. From the perspective of style, the chorus includes lyric chamber music and drama (Powell, 2015 : 233-243)

For example, the mixed four-part chorus adapted from Brahms' Lullaby has the characteristics of a lyric chamber music chorus; The Blue Danube chorus adapted from the waltz of Johann Strauss is characterized by dance and scherzo. The "Guess Tune" adapted from Yunnan folk songs is lively and humorous. "Singing Two Small Cowboys" presents a sense of praise and narrative. Of course, symphonic choral pieces with rich emotional color are another category, including Xian Xinghai's "Defending the Yellow River" and so on. Large-scale symphonic choruses and oratorios, similar to the above choral genres, develop their concerts according to the changes in characters and the advancement of the story. As a whole, the genre and style of the chorus usually need to be determined in combination with the song. Therefore, the singing content is very rich. The chorus genre is common. According to different genres, the choral chorus can be divided into the religious choral chorus, symphony chorale chorus, and folk song choral chorus. Because of each type of chorus's different characteristics and singing styles can be divided into the lyric, choral joke, and dramatic chorus. According to the principles of composition, from the point of view of musical structure, the chorus includes three types, the first is the tonic chorus, the second is the polyphonic chorus, and the third is Acappella chorus.

In a word, the chorus of choral music developed into the modern music of the 20th century and experienced from being dependent on the opera to being completely independent of the opera stage. It became an important part of professional and popular cultural life that other artistic performances cannot replace. The chorus's development at this stage profoundly impacts the West and even the world.

Teaching methods of chorus courses

The first is a study on the teaching skills of teachers in chorus courses. Scholars such as Napoles pointed out in the article "The Influence of Piano Playing on the Ability of Pre-service Teachers to Discover Errors in Choral Scores" that in chorus teaching, if chorus teachers play while listening, they will distract themselves, especially in the low voice of students. Compared with the high part, the mistakes of the chorus are more difficult to find. Therefore, they suggest that chorus teachers rely only a little on the piano and other instruments when rehearsing a piece early to distinguish better the mistakes students made during the practice process. In "Shaping Identity Through Choral Activities: Perception of Singers and Conductors," Durrant emphasized that choral teachers should have the ability to demonstrate. Choral teachers should be able to demonstrate the rhythm, intonation, rhythm accurately and sound quality of chorus works. The suggestions in this article may not seem surprising, but they have a very important reminder in our specific chorus classroom. Especially in rural schools, due to practical factors such as teachers' professional skills and limited chorus facilities, in many places, students are more likely to watch related videos in the chorus classroom. The chorus teaching by letting students watch chorus videos is undoubtedly not in person. The sense of experience is intuitive (Colin, 2005 : 88-98)

In the existing literature, the Kodály music teaching method is often discussed and applied to chorus teaching. "Music should be the core of curriculum teaching. It is a basic subject alongside mathematics and language. Any comprehensive education is inseparable from music education." This is the Hungarian musician and educator Zordan Kodaly in the 20th century. One of the teaching ideas is presented on the first half of the page. This concept spirit has been inherited and developed over more than 100 years. Kodály is not a step-by-step text-based teaching method, but he advocates a spiritual, metaphysical philosophy about musical development. The greatness of Kodály is not only that he summarized the teaching methods in

practice in the 20th century and made the theory of music teaching method systematized but also that he put these ideas into practice in the music classroom, which improved the learners' musical literacy and education. Musical ability. As we study Kodály's teaching philosophies, we will find that most of Kodály's ideas are sourced and built on children's music education. For example, he advocated that "participation in music is the best way to learn; children's music education depends on their instructors, so instructors must be the best musicians and educators; what is learned in school will never be Forgotten by the child..." and so on. However, in practice, nearly a hundred years after the formation of the theory, it has been found that it is also applicable to adult music teaching activities. For example, it is widely used in adult vocal music training, especially in chorus training. Today, children and adults can use the Kodály method in their curriculum to improve their musical abilities. Combined with Kodály's teaching ideas, we should pay attention to singing and natural Acappella vocals and view music education as an art and skill everyone can access and learn. In the research of Kodály's music teaching method, we found that apart from emphasizing the importance of music in shaping personal integrity, Kodály paid more attention to the quality of personal voice. Singing is the main teaching method he admires to improve the universality of the public learning music. He specifically pointed out that the highest manifestation of high-quality sound and music is the vocal cords that are guided correctly. Chorus is the highest form of expression in singing. The instructor in chorus rehearsal is the conductor. The conductor can harmonize and concentrate the players' voices during the training to spread the music in the best way, bring the music enthusiast to everyone, and make the singers enjoy it for a lifetime. Have a love for music. The basic training methods in Kodály music teaching method include the first key solfa method, rhythmic time value syllable reading, alphabet notation, Colvin gestures, systematic sight-singing training for listening, reading, and writing, excellent training materials, pentatonic scales training, and other important educational methods (Braudy & Caporella, 2019 : 2556-2575)

The main problems that arise in chorus training are:

1) Rhythm problem. Before singing, it is necessary to be familiar with the rhythm of the work. The short sixteenth notes appear in them, which often cause unevenness in singing. The dotted notes in the rhythm need to be sung accurately, resulting in a cluttered effect in group singing. The singing speed of some rhythmic styles is unstable, such as the notes of the first sixteen and the eighth and the first eight and the sixteenth notes, which are often indistinguishable when singing.

2) Tone problem. Tone recognition problems are exposed in multi-voice singing, resulting in chord dissonance. Due to the difference in singing state and singing position, timbre problems often occur. In addition, in chorus training, the atmosphere's mobilization and the state's maintenance are also very important.

3) Pitch problem. Problems such as inaccurate chromatic singing, unstable interval singing of harmony, and incoherence of horizontal or vertical melody in works often occur.

4) Spectrum problems. The lack of sense of sight-singing ability and major and minor functions of the players led to the inability to consciously form a good reading ability in the process of the visual spectrum.

5) Due to the different starting points of music learning, the choir members have different musical qualities. In the early stage of choral training, the learning progress and efficiency could be higher, especially when exposed to new works. In traditional chorus training, no targeted training methods are added, so the memory ability of the players cannot be deepened. In training, the single explanation method lengthens the training period, the repeated error rate

is high, and the rehearsal time is wasted. For example, when reading music and playing rhythm, the mastery of the chorus members at the same time is far different, and the players with a weak foundation will sing along and fish in troubled waters.

6) After the chorus members have a preliminary understanding of the rhythm and rhythm of the work, their focus is shifted to the conductor's gestures. It takes time for the chorus members and the conductor to get in touch. A good choir should cultivate tacit understanding and use some means to make the players understand the conductor's gestures and intentions more quickly. In singing, the team members generally do not consciously and emotionally process the work but rely more on the conductor to convey "instructions." Certain gestures of the command make conditioned responses.

Because of the above obstacles in choral rehearsal, using the Kodály music teaching method can greatly solve these problems or shorten the training time to solve these problems. Necessary in chorus training. Using the Kodály music teaching method in chorus training enables the players to express and interpret a piece of work well in the rehearsal with a small amount of time. When the Kodály music teaching method has not been widely used in chorus training, problems in chorus rehearsal, such as pitch and rhythm, will still be corrected. However, the method is relatively simple, and teachers spend time in the process of correction. , the team members' awareness of error recognition in memory is not deep enough, which leads to the subsequent correction of mistakes and a longer error recognition cycle.

The advantages of the Kodály music teaching method in choral training are:

1) Intuitive image of teaching means. For example, learn how to stabilize the beat and rhythm through the Kodály method of music. As a whole set of teaching theories, the practical support of the Kodály teaching method lies in practice. The training characteristics of visualizing theory in the Kodály teaching method make it easier for the team members to understand when they receive the commander's instructions so that the problems in training can be solved efficiently.

2) Face the problem head-on and propose a variety of solutions. In chorus training, the players need clear instructions from the conductor, and the conductor should learn simple and clear training methods through his system. For example, the assistance of gestures and alphabet notation, simplifying the rhythm to improve the accuracy of the rhythm, and cultivating inner hearing through multi-voice aural recognition and model singing.

3) The Kodály teaching method has developed the players' potential in various aspects of the chorus training - in terms of music memory ability, the players can have a deep memory of the pieces of music through the alternate cycle of the parts in the compound training. Develop inner hearing by guiding team members to develop their creative auditory imagination.

4) Using the Kodály teaching method, the training activities to develop the physical coordination ability of the players have improved the trainers' interest in the rehearsal content. The compound training of melody pitch, rhythm slap, and polyphonic hearing focuses on the players' music experience. It not only activates the rehearsal atmosphere but also makes the players more focused on rehearsal and fundamentally achieves the purpose of improving the efficiency of chorus rehearsal.

The chorus training course is collective. A good chorus trainer must train a good voice within a certain time, and efficiency is the priority. Not only must there be a way to shape the sound, but at the same time, the players must remember what a good state is and improve their timbre memory ability.

The development of Chinese choral art

The development of the Chinese chorus followed the spread of Western Christian music in China and the development of the modern education system in the early 20th century. It is closely related to the emergence and rise of the "School Music" movement. The singing method of chorus songs also changed from the original chorus to the multi-voice chorus. At that time, most of them were group singing, whether it was singing "school music" or singing military songs. However, this way lays a solid foundation for developing a multi-voice chorus. Although China is not the birthplace of the chorus, Chinese opera has also permeated the musical elements of the chorus, such as chorus and chorus, all of which have the characteristics of the chorus. China has a vast territory, many ethnic groups, and various types of music. Some ethnic minorities have their chorus forms, such as the original ecological auxiliary melody of Miao ancient songs and other multi-voice parts, which have the characteristic factors of the chorus. Since ancient times, people have sung chants when working, pronounced one after the other, but the same sound is produced. This singing form is also a simple chorus form. Looking back on the chorus development in China, it has gone through a hundred years of twists and turns. The rise of school music in the "May Fourth Movement" in the 20th century promoted the development of the chorus from scratch. Some primary and secondary schools created chorus works, which enriched children's extracurricular activities and life (Ding, 2021 : 74-76)

After the reform and opening up, people's economic conditions gradually improved. With the continuous need for spiritual life, chorus, as a form of collective singing, has been welcomed by various regions. China's chorus career has appeared in a new situation. There are choirs in almost all primary and secondary schools, amateur choral groups, and various industries. Many professional conductors have devoted themselves to the chorus career, which has promoted the level of the Chinese chorus to a professional and high level (Li, 2020 : 70-71)

To sum up, with the development of a whole new culture and education in China, the Chinese chorus has been running through all kinds of music creations in China. It has also paid more and more attention to the music life of people of all walks of life, especially in all walks of life. The love of chorus art on the youth stage occupies a large proportion.

The teaching of chorus courses in Chinese higher education

Direct research on the teaching of chorus education in colleges and universities, such as curriculum setting, teaching content, teaching objectives, teaching design, and teaching reform, is "intuitive" and "practical."

Research on "Introduction to the Teaching of Chorus and Conducting in Colleges and Universities" selects four representative colleges and universities, namely: higher professional colleges (China Conservatory of Music and Shanghai Conservatory of Music), higher normal colleges (Capital Normal University and Liaoning Normal University) the University). From the current situation of the chorus and conducting in these four colleges and universities, detailed analysis and research on the curriculum, teaching content, teaching objectives, and other aspects are carried out. The chorus of foreign colleges and universities (Hungarian national higher professional colleges) is also tracked and introduced to the current command situation, such as Kodály teaching. Looking at the current situation of chorus teaching in China's colleges and universities from the current situation of chorus conducting teaching abroad. It reveals that the chorus and conducting teaching in colleges and universities in China

still needs to be continuously improved regarding curriculum settings and teaching concepts (Zou, 2018 : 174-175)

Chorus Class Teaching Design in Higher Normal Colleges mainly designs the teaching design of chorus classes in higher normal colleges and universities from three aspects. The first chapter focuses on this article's writing background and reasons. The second chapter focuses on discussing the author's plan for the teaching design of the chorus course in higher normal colleges from six aspects. The third chapter is the author's summary statement on the teaching design of chorus courses in higher normal colleges and universities, selects some problems existing in the teaching of chorus courses in higher normal colleges and universities, and gives some suggestions for popularizing chorus education on campus.

Research on the Teaching Reform of Chorus and Conducting in Teachers Colleges demonstration and the combination of theory and practice to compare the teaching system of "Chorus and Conducting" courses at home and abroad, the teaching research of chorus and conducting in higher normal schools, and the countermeasures of teaching reform. In addition, he has also discussed in detail the aspects of teaching reform and put forward his own unique conception and implementation plan in terms of teaching reform measures. Starting from the theoretical analysis, he designed and applied the feasible theory to the practice of teaching reform of the "Chorus and Conducting" course.

The current situation of chorus courses in Chinese college education

The education at the China Professional Conservatory of Music is mainly focused on developing personal and professional skills. The chorus is compiled in basic music courses such as solfeggio, harmony, and musical analysis as a compulsory course. Individual conservatories that have established conducting departments have chorus conducting majors. The Conducting Department of the China Conservatory of Music has the most standardized curriculum for the choral conducting major of all Chinese music conservatories. The learning content of the basic course for students is equivalent to that of an orchestra conductor and composition majors, and chorus literature singing, vocal music, score reading, introduction to the chorus, digital bass, keyboard harmony, and chorus intonation. Chorus work arrangements are also specially offered for chorus conductor majors. The chorus education in normal colleges and universities takes students majoring in music education as the teaching object. The compulsory common course of the chorus is offered in the first and second grades of the university, mainly teaching the knowledge about the chorus and the singing of works. After entering the third grade, some students can be transferred to the training of chorus conducting professional courses after examination, but most of them only learn some gesture signal techniques. In recent years, more and more colleges and universities have begun to set up music majors and recruit music majors. Most music majors in such colleges and universities are based on vocal piano. Choral education is also established here as an integral part of the Music Fundamentals curriculum. The main chorus courses are appreciation of choral works, chorus, ensemble, and conducting and training (Zong, 2012 : 216-217)

Colleges and universities are the places where students receive the most information. On the one hand, the development of chorus education improves the students' aesthetic cognition ability, and on the other hand, promotes the students to develop self-discipline consciousness, which is beneficial to the college students to form a correct world outlook, outlook on life, and values. Developing chorus education in colleges and universities and cultivating excellent chorus conductors is the best way to improve the average level of chorus education and chorus art in China. The current chorus education curriculum in China's colleges and universities is

concerned mainly focuses on three courses: appreciation of choral works, singing of choral works, and chorus conducting method. These courses play a complementary and integrated role in each other.

1) Appreciation of chorus works. The teaching content is divided into three parts. The chorus's origin and the historical chorus's types and forms. The development trend of the chorus in the world today. The appreciation of choral works is more than just a simple appreciation of choral works or a work analysis class. Some schools also think it is enough to study chorus singing and choral conducting. So, they do not include this course in their syllabus editing or only put it as a restricted elective course for majors after compulsory courses such as choral composition singing and choral conducting courses. However, this is not the case. Through this course, students appreciate many choral works and understand the history, types, and forms of the chorus world trends. At the same time, through the correct guidance of teachers, students gradually build up their interest in this course and subsequent courses, establishing that the aesthetic concept of chorus sound makes up for the lack of singing skills and their inability to sing by themselves. Therefore, the establishment of the course plays a pivotal role in chorus singing and chorus conductor training.

2) Sing chorus works. After the chorus work appreciation class, students can enter the chorus work singing course. The content is to train students' singing abilities. Multi-part auditory training is to sing works of various historical periods, countries, and styles. Some teachers need some clarification in their understanding of this course. They regard the singing of chorus works only as a chorus rehearsal course and this course as a conductor rehearsal course, which only trains students in command gesture skills. This course should be systematically taught with the analysis of comprehensive knowledge such as sight-singing, harmony, musical form, language, and body rhythm to lay a solid foundation for learning chorus conducting skills.

3) Choral Conducting. Conducting is a comprehensive art that integrates theory, creation, and performance. The training of command method requires the conductor to make a profound analysis of each piece and, on this basis, propose a vivid and feasible rehearsal plan. Therefore, the content of the chorus conducting method course is divided into two parts. Prepare for desk work of command. The conductor's desk work is the preparatory work that the conductor must do after getting the score and rehearsing the chorus. Conductors need to be familiar with the score and analyze the era and style of the work. The deeper the conductor's analysis of the work, the better he can understand the composer's conception. With the accumulation of his usual understanding of music, he can re-create the work and move the audience to arrange the work plan of each link in the production process of the work. Notation styles deal with the conducting skills required for each stage of rehearsal. Students conducting knowledge in school is limited, so they must strengthen their musical accomplishments and rehearse accurately so that the composer's achievements can flourish in the second creation.

Conclusion

The development of chorus education in Chinese colleges and universities is divided into four modes: the popularization of college quality education centers, choral education in professional music colleges, choral education in music majors in normal colleges and universities, general, choral education in the direction of music majors in colleges and universities. The art popularization course of the quality education center of colleges and universities is set up to improve full-time college students' artistic and quality accomplishment.

In terms of chorus education, there are public elective and restricted courses such as chorus appreciation, chorus training, and chorus conducting, which are offered to students from different majors. Electives of college students. The center will also set up one or two student choirs for long-term effective choral training. The singing level of some university student choirs has surpassed that of professional colleges and reached the international first-class level.

References

- Colin, D. (2005). Shaping Identity Through Choral Activity: Singers' And Conductors' Perceptions. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 24 (1), 88-98.
- Ding, Y. (2021). Teaching Exploration of Choir in Ordinary Colleges and Universities: A Case Study of the Tsinghua University Student Art Troupe Choir Student Team. *Art Review* (02), 74-76.
- Harris, P. B., & Caporella, C. A. (2019). Making a university community more dementia friendly through participation in an intergenerational choir. *Dementia (London, England)*, 18 (7-8) :2556-2575.
- Li, C. (2020). The role of university aesthetic education in promoting the all-round development of college students. *Cultural and educational materials*, (20), 70-71.
- Powell, S. J. (2015). Masculinity and choral singing: An Australian perspective. *International Journal of Music Education*, 33(2), 233-243.
- Reamesn, R. (2001). High School Choral Directors' Description of Appropriate Literature for Beginning High School Choirs. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 49(2), 122-135.
- Zong, Z. (2012). Analysis of choir teaching countermeasures in colleges and universities. *Grand Stage*, (12), 216-217.
- Zou, J. (2018). Research on the teaching practice of choral singing characteristics of college art education. *Music Composition*, (10), 174-175.