

“The Musical” Courses Applied for Teaching the Popular Singing Major Students at Xi'an Conservatory of Music in Shaanxi Province of China”

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Abstracts

"The Musical" is a modern stage comprehensive art form in three aspects: vocal music, dance, and performance. The objectives of this article were to propose "The Musical" to be "The Musical" course put in the popular singing curriculum for Teaching the students majoring in popular singing at Xi'an Conservatory of Music, Shaanxi Province, China. The teaching popular in China is to use the imported form of the western musical to express the Chinese people's life and emotion according to the Chinese people's aesthetic habits and contemporary performance techniques, that is, to localize the music script. China's musical plays are based on China's local history or new creation stories, and the musical works of local people are taken as the starting point. Music styles, choreography, and dance beauty absorb the essence of Western musical drama. It is not a real "The Musical" course. A new course, "The Musical," in the curriculum would help the popular singing students have more abilities in popular singing, in acting, more professional, and more interesting, especially, the teaching would be more effective.

Keyword: “The Musical” Courses; Teaching the Popular Singing; China

Introduction

The development of “musical” teaching in China since 1994, there have been nearly 30 musical majors and courses in art colleges. High and secondary art colleges have successively established musical majors, and many primary and secondary schools have also set up musical appreciation and rehearsal courses. However, compared with the opening of other music majors, the total proportion is still small. At present, through the application and development of musicals in colleges and universities in China, new problems of musical teaching and talent training have been derived simultaneously, such as the current curriculum of musical majors, teaching means, a compilation of teaching materials, and talent training ideas and methods. Its actual development speed is not very fast, and the employment rate of graduates is also relatively difficult. These are problems that can be directly witnessed at present. The current situation of musical teaching in China can be divided into two types. One is that music is only used as an artistic practice in other vocal music majors. The main experiments in domestic colleges and universities mainly rely on the personal preferences of teachers or the needs of school performance tasks, which require students to rehearse and use. As a fixed integration into vocal music courses, there are few; the government also creates Chinese-themed musical works to meet political and publicity needs. College teachers and students or performance groups are the main body to undertake the performance task,

including the later musical performance and recording. In terms of teaching materials, few books on musical songs are issued, and almost no guiding teaching materials for musical singing teaching can be adopted and applied. In domestic vocal music teaching, musicals are not comparable with traditional singing methods such as Bel Canto and national singing in terms of quantity and quality. There is no national musical syllabus or unified teaching material planning in China. Many of our brother colleges and universities have set up a major in musical theater in the past ten years. Its training direction and method have always been the subject of discussion. The focus of discussion and communication is whether the repertory course should become the core course in teaching and how to make the repertory course better.

Popular music originated in Europe and then developed and expanded in the United States. It gradually formed jazz, blues, rock and roll, and other styles and directly promoted popular music to the world through the media. With the rapid development of popular music, a new singing form, popular singing, came into being. The most important ideological practice of popular music in the 20th century was music genre classification. Music is roughly divided into classical and popular music, and musical values become the focus of discussion. In the 20th century, different ideologies demonstrated that the universality, complexity, and originality of artistic music were the core qualities that were central to the construction of musical ideologies, not because they were false or wrongly reflected. Music is valuable for two reasons (Vendafreddo, 2012 : online).

In China, it began to spread widely in the 1930s. It used to be called "popular singing." Later, it was changed to "popular singing" in line with international standards. Because it has the characteristics of popularity, life, creativity, and diversity, at the same time, it is simple and clear and expresses its feelings directly. The melody and rhythm are very distinct. The content and subject matter are mainly about love, family affection, and inspiration, and they express the self-feelings and psychological experiences of Contemporary people in different styles. The singing style pursues natural and casual, emphasizing singing with the most authentic voice to reflect the individuality and characteristics of the voice. The performance has a strong improvisation and provocation. It mainly uses the microphone and other sound equipment to expand the sound effect. It often uses dance, harmony, electronic band accompaniment, and some high-tech means to render the stage atmosphere. It is a comprehensive performing art integrating music, body, dance, and performance. It is loved by the public, especially young people, and has a broad mass base. However, this does not mean that popular singing lacks professionalism and artistry. For example, Chinese art colleges and universities have successively opened bachelor's degree courses and master's degree courses in popular singing. It is also easier to achieve the conversion of true and false sounds, the display of continuous across the sound area, and the singing skills of colorful impromptu parts with systematic and professional training (Shi, 2021 : 112–124).

The “Musical”

The musical is a kind of modern stage comprehensive art form, which combines narrative-based drama performance with beautiful popular vocal singing and diversified dance body movements. It integrates the assistance of stage art, such as clothing, scenery, and lighting, to form the overall stage effect. Musicals are mostly integrated into popular singing majors in domestic colleges and universities in China. Some colleges and universities have set up separate musical majors to cultivate talents who meet society's needs. There are several aspects to the study of musicals.

After the founding of new China, the government adopted a policy of inclusiveness, absorption, and development of many foreign art forms, endowing them with the cultural characteristics and spirit of the Chinese nation. It successfully realized the localization development of foreign art and spread Chinese culture to the world through foreign art rooted in the mainland. Ballet, opera, drama, and other stage art forms spread from the West have achieved localized development in China. The musical is a popular art form that is easy to understand. Compared with ballet, opera, and other stage arts, the artistic expression form of musicals is closer to the people and more entertaining. This flexible and popular art form makes the communication content of musicals more acceptable to the public, and its localization development and communication are more conducive to promoting the construction of China's spiritual civilization. In addition, the musical is a world-renowned modern urban art. Its development can also reflect the modernization and internationalization of China's urban development and show the world the style of China's urban spiritual civilization development. Therefore, vigorously developing musicals and accelerating the wide spread of musicals in China fully meet the new needs of China's spiritual civilization construction, such as strengthening cultural construction and improving cultural soft power. The smooth spread of local original musicals is a great help in constructing China's spiritual civilization. Original plays can carry China's traditional culture, national spirit, and socialist morality and values, spread healthy spiritual content to the audience in the form of teaching in fun, improve the national moral and cultural quality, and resist the adverse effects of a foreign culture. Excellent original musicals can also be spread abroad to undertake the mission of cultural exchange and improve the influence of Chinese culture in the world.

Under the quality educational environment, musicals have gradually entered more art colleges to cultivate students' comprehensive aesthetic level. This paper introduces the strategies of musical teaching from vocal music, drama, and dance to further improve the effectiveness of musical teaching (Ren & Yang, 2020 : 113). In order to conduct better research on vocal music teaching, we first analyze the performance characteristics of musicals, leading to the significance of integrating musicals into vocal music teaching, hoping to promote the development of vocal music teaching further (Chen, 2015 : 256). The convergence of conservatoire-style training with academia has witnessed an explosion of practice as research (PaR) projects or what in some academic quarters constitutes research, which in practice led or practice.

When the actors fully understand the inner mystery of the characters, fully grasp the ideological and emotional logic of the characters and can deeply experience the psychological characteristics of the characters, it is possible to naturally "achieve that the external image of the characters is greater than that of the musical characters. It is a creative process of dramatic characters based on realistic narrative aesthetics, emphasizing the organic integration of various performance elements, skills, and role-building. The

expression of melody, rhythm, and harmony in drama is of great significance to the overall performance of drama. Therefore, the vocal performance of musical actors is not allowed shown, just like the general popular singers. They must express important emotions and stories through singing.

The importance of musical singing has yet to be reflected in China. It lacks a set of systematic and scientific musical singing teaching methods and has been arguing about "how to sing musical" and so on through the research and discussion of the background and development history of musicals, the observation and thinking of some classic foreign musicals, the study and analysis of the singing of famous musicals, and through the observation and understanding of some original domestic musicals, as well as through their attempt and practice of some classic musicals. This kind of singing method is based on a certain Bel Canto. It is mainly based on the singing style of popular songs, which is consistent with the connotation of realistic drama spirit and aesthetic pursuit of musicals. Most foreign musicals have adopted this singing method. This singing method is used to train musical skills in foreign professional music colleges. We can better analyze the creative techniques and ideas of excellent foreign classical musicals and the emotional expression of music, help us study and learn the common singing methods and practical performance skills of European and American musicals, and help to provide a more scientific singing state and performance mode for Chinese musicals. It helps provide some inspiration and thinking for developing original Chinese musicals.

Learning musicals can cultivate students' emotions during the performance, teach students how to show their emotions, and integrate them into the plot of musicals. Students can also master different ranges by learning musicals, which will bring much convenience when learning vocal music. It will lay a solid foundation for students to learn vocal music and train their ability to grasp melody and sing songs. The study of musicals will bring a better learning atmosphere for the study of vocal music. Carrying out the course of musicals in Colleges and universities can mobilize students' enthusiasm (Dong, 2018 : 199).

As a comprehensive art form deeply loved by students, musical plays play their unique music value and teaching resource advantages in the development of music teaching in colleges and universities. Therefore, as a teacher, we should actively integrate and optimize musical content, highlight musicals' teaching characteristics, make musicals perfectly integrated into the music teaching classroom in colleges and universities, and create a lively, interesting, and widely participatory ecological music classroom. At the same time, in the specific teaching practice, we should realize the teaching objectives of relying on musicals to revitalize new music teaching methods, enhancing the interaction between teachers and students, and playing the role of quality education in music teaching, to show the significance and value of musicals in the development of music teaching in colleges and universities.

The Formation and Characteristics of Chinese Original Musical

The musical is a modern stage comprehensive art form. The drama performance is based on narration, with beautiful and popular vocal singing and diversified dance body movements, and with the assistance of stage arts such as clothing, scenery, and lighting to form the overall stage effect. The three most important elements of musical drama are drama, music, and dance. The selected themes often have a broad public aesthetic foundation. They are closely combined with the political background and the times' fashion to meet the

audience's psychology (Qian & Wang, 2003 : 54).

The Chinese musical uses the imported form of the western musical to express the Chinese people's life and emotion according to the Chinese people's aesthetic habits and contemporary performance techniques, that is, to localize the music script. China's musical plays are based on China's local history or new creation stories, and the musical works of local people are taken as the starting point. Music styles, choreography, and dance beauty absorb the essence of Western musical drama and achieve the international integration mode.

Over the past 40 years, musicals such as *wrong ride*, *the heart of fragrant grass*, *butterfly*, and *Humen destroy smoke* have integrated local Chinese themes with traditional folk art, coupled with the stage presentation form of musicals, which has a certain attraction to the audience. From the performance level of musicals, commercial musicals require huge investments and high expenditure, and the overall development process is slow. In recent years, due to less investment, the main creators are mainly schoolteachers and students, which has a rising trend, but the overall number still needs to grow.

The Effect of "The Musical" course of Musical in China on the Popular Singing Major

- **Providing a New Teaching Plan for Popular Singing Major**

Traditional popular singing courses mainly focus on vocal music training. The professional curriculum of domestic colleges and universities is mostly divided into two parts: voice course and work course. Compared with traditional popular singing courses, "The Musical" courses add dance courses in body training and performance courses in speaking lines. "The Musical" course recommended in this paper is a new training content of creation in the three aspects of vocal music, dance, and performance of ordinary musical courses.

Zhou (2019 : 32) Stated that "The Musical" can provide music teachers with new ideas for popular singing teaching and establishes a training program in a theoretical sense to learn and improve.

In "The Musical" musical, both teachers and students may participate in the primary creation of the musical script or the secondary creation in the rehearsal of the musical. This new teaching content will help cultivate students' creative levels and greatly stimulate students' enthusiasm for independent creation. It has reformed teachers' original single teaching plan content and provided a new innovative teaching plan for teachers' teaching.

The combination of "The Musical" and the popular singing teaching was practical and practical. The construction of "The Musical" course of bringing a new way to teach popular singing majors in domestic universities. It also renewed the teacher's teaching plan to meet the development and progress of practical teaching.

- **Enriches the Classroom Teaching Mode**

The establishment and maintenance of the two roles of teachers and students had become fixed and rigid in class. The unchanged teaching mode made students easily slack off, and there was aesthetic fatigue in their perception. Moreover, the supplement to the original musical course changed the relationship between the teacher and the student.

Students could write and display their lyrics and music according to their own experience, experience, or choice of historical theme and pass on their thoughts through music. They could also find partners in listening to other students' works to practice the purpose of the play. Teachers did not just teach knowledge but had more choices: to be the creator of "The Musical" to be the role rehearsal of "The Musical" class. These choices changed the teaching mode of teachers and enhanced the original teaching effect.

In popular singing, teachers should take the theoretical teaching of singing as the foundation, take the practical teaching as the auxiliary mechanism, and guide students to have emotional resonance in singing. Teachers should use diversified teaching measures to improve students' interest in learning (Wang, 2018 : 3).

The original teaching mode of popular singing majors in domestic universities was rich in the original creative music course. Teachers and students were students of the times and teachers and friends. This rich teaching mode promoted the development of popular singing majors in domestic universities.

- **Improving and Expanding the Professional Ability of Students Majoring in Popular Singing**

"The Musical" works have a wide range of ranges, and the timbre should be matched with the role. They have high requirements for the control of the strength of the singer's voice, and the emotional changes fluctuate greatly, which requires students to have a certain degree of vocal music foundation but also promote the basic vocal music training of students and play an important role in the vocal music training of pop performance and singing major.

Dong (2018 : 199) Discussed that "Musical" plays also have high requirements in the range, and in different musical plays, the range is different. Therefore, students can master different ranges by learning "The Musical," which will bring many conveniences when learning vocal music. It will lay a solid foundation for students to learn vocal music so that students can master tunes and songs more easily and happily.

In the teaching process of a popular singing major, the formal development is relatively single. The noumenon urgently demands diversified learning levels, such as noumenon singing technology, danceability, performance ability, and logistics. These are all required by popular singing graduates for social work in the future. In order to achieve the training of these abilities, if need to achieve the comprehensive ability through some training means "The Musical" one of the best ways to learn and improve.

"The Musical" is a highly comprehensive art, so when learning musical aria, we should not only pay attention to singing but also learn dance, performance, dance beauty, modeling, lighting, script, scenery, and props. Through such a process, students can learn their professional and related knowledge, learn from each other and integrate. Moreover, the musical rehearsal process needs the coordination of various links and departments. Students can exercise their ability of organization, management, and coordination in this work, and also can effectively improve their comprehensive quality to benefit in life (Wang, 2018 : 75).

The text mentioned above can summarize that through the training of "The Musical" courses, students can carry out the integrated practice, which is conducive to improving and expanding the professional ability of popular singing students. It includes involving different types of singing, which is conducive to popular singing students' main vocal music ability, learning dance and improving physical performance, learning and practicing script writing, practicing speaking lines, and cultivating comprehensive creative ability. Carrying out practical learning of scenery, prop modeling, and lighting to improve the ability of organization, management, and coordination.

- **Promote the Cultivation of Students' Personal Noble Character**

Integrating "The Musical" into the teaching of pop singing majors in domestic colleges and universities can give full play to the advantages of "The Musical" and meet the development requirements of artistic quality education. By selecting, creating, and performing Chinese original musical dramas with Chinese cultural tradition or praising history, students majoring in pop singing in domestic colleges and universities can obtain professional education and high-quality education during school.

Niu and Wang (2020 : 136–140.:) believe that "The Musical" plays an active role in purifying and cultivating students' aesthetic consciousness in modern aesthetic education.

The power of music is huge. Educating students' patriotic feelings and positive outlook on life through the power of music is one of the important ways of aesthetic education. The topic selection of "The Musical" course can be used as the source of creation by looking for positive and positive historical themes and contemporary touching advanced deeds so that the effect of the course can endow students with the significance of aesthetic education and promote and cultivate students' noble character.

In the long run, the construction of "The Musical" course has played an innovative role in promoting the educational development of the popular singing specialty. It can also extend the application to influence people's words and deeds through the performance and dissemination of "The Musical" so that people can obtain the guidance of positive energy and create a harmonious social atmosphere.

Teaching reform of students' popular singing

In Chinese colleges and universities music education, the enrollment of popular singing majors is growing. However, the problems in teaching are becoming more and more prominent, which must be addressed. The reform and innovation of traditional teaching mode is the only way. Chen (2015 : 54), in today's global multicultural era, "The Musical" is widely praised for its various forms of expression and characteristics of integrating multiple cultures. How to integrate musicals into vocal music teaching to enhance the artistry, dynamism, diversity, and interest of vocal music teaching should attract the attention of vocal music teachers and consider the selection of repertoire and the art from the two aspects of art and practice, it injects new vitality and practice into vocal music teaching, promotes the continuous progress of vocal music teaching, and cultivates specialized vocal music talents for the country.

How to improve innovation and diversify the development of popular singing major?

(1) It is possible to reform and add "The Musical" courses as required courses in the undergraduate stage of the national popular singing major and optional courses related to other music categories. Teachers can design the final exam of this course to organize small, medium, and large music performance reports. The results of the exam are credited for undergraduate study. Liu (2020) commented that: As a new type of music art, the public deeply loved popular singing. In teaching music in universities, it was necessary to find a teaching method suitable for its own characteristics. In popular singing teaching, students should still follow the traditional teaching concept. They needed to make more plans for their future development, and their teaching mode did not match modern development, so they needed to change the teaching concept.

(2) Organize colleges and universities to compile popular singing teaching materials, make up for the few professional teaching materials in China, compile and create a series of "The Musical" works, integrate them into the teaching practice teaching materials of popular singing specialty, and expand the accumulation of teaching materials. Liu (2020 : 158–160) cited that: there is also a weak link between selecting music teaching materials and teaching content. Only a part of the selected teaching materials has professional knowledge in theory, and there need to be more high-quality teaching materials in singing skills and practice. From the current teaching materials, the purpose and pertinence could be stronger and consistent with the direction and future career of the popular singing major. Therefore, the perfect combination of theory and practice is a key issue in textbook construction. In the construction of teaching materials, it needs to show the relationship between various disciplines and try our best to integrate them to form a relatively complete knowledge system, combine them with real life, and have both standardization and scientific. Only by ensuring the quality of teaching materials can we improve the quality of teaching.

(3) All innovations and reforms must sum up experiences and lessons. In order to better guide future practice, one should be paid full attention to and study feedback and performance analysis when the original musical is implemented in the classroom. Increase the collection of teaching evaluation or teaching feedback, collect and analyze the learning experience and performance practice feedback of domestic popular singing students in the "The Musical" course, and summarize and analyze to improve teachers' inspection and understanding of their teaching mode. This evaluation is more reasonable and direct. Ren and Yang (2020) mentioned: innovating music teaching evaluation methods to improve the quality of music teaching the improvement of music teaching quality needs to start from many aspects, not only paying attention to the whole education process but also cannot ignore the role of teaching evaluation. Through the development of teaching evaluation, teachers can understand the problems and doubts students encounter in music learning, and understand the student's learning achievements and shortcomings, to timely adjust the methods and improve the teaching plan in the next music teaching.

(4) The ideas of inheritance and innovation can be integrated into the classroom of college students. Regularly cooperate with the creation of Chinese "The Musical" with the themes, historical themes, or traditional festivals of China's national cultural traditions, and show more and better content with Chinese national characteristics and spreading Chinese traditional cultural ideas on the stage through musicals. Liu (2020 : 158–160) proposed that: there are many ethnic groups in China, and minority people are good at singing and dancing. Integrating ethnic elements and popular singing can increase the singing degree of the works and form popular songs with ethnic characteristics.

In recent years, the popular Chinese singing style has developed in an increasingly open, free, and inclusive direction. Colleges and universities are believed to be the cradle of talents and should be the place with the most innovative consciousness. College students majoring in popular singing should be responsible for inheriting the national culture through musicals.

Conclusion

Popular singing has been a new subject in recent years. It needed constant development and construction to be more mature. Due to the late start of popular singing teaching in Chinese universities, there needed to be a relatively perfect internationally acknowledged education system, teaching methods, and textbooks. How to better carry out popular singing teaching and train more talents in compound music to meet social needs? Its research and discussion are of great significance, and it also has a certain challenge and strong sense of the times. The integration and development of "The Musical" teaching mode are new paths for our teachers to explore the professional research and teaching field and establish a new subject. We need to think deeply about the significance of constructing "The Musical" courses and carrying out the teaching practice.

In teaching popular singing, it should be realized that the teaching research of the sound skill training level can neither meet the needs of teaching nor the development needs of popular singing as a discipline. It must constantly reform and improve the course in colleges and universities. The theme of this paper is to integrate the "The Musical" course into the popular singing curriculum, which is in line with the law of discipline development and is of great significance to the future planning of teaching methods of this discipline. Through analysis and summary, the construction of "The Musical" course can have a positive impact on the popular singing majors in Xi'an Conservatory of Music, domestic colleges, and other universities and put forward to promote the development of Chinese "The Musical" in the classroom so that the innovative thought has a clear center. It has the significance of adjustment and optimization for professional teaching.

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