

The Surveying on Piano Performance Learning for First Year Student at Music Conservatory in Yunnan Arts University

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Abstract

First-year students in piano performance lack off the necessary foundational skills because lack musical experience during their secondary school years. These impact students' comprehension of piano performance. Effective teaching methods are help students' more skills and performance abilities.

The objectives of this study was to surveying the piano performance learning for first-year student at Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University. Qualitative research methods were used in this research. By collecting information from classroom observation and in-depth interviews with 3 teacher as key informant from all teacher 23 person and from 83 students in 2 class were selected by using random sampling for 1 class and then use the purposive sampling method to screen out 10 students in the selected class for samples. Gathering data and analyze for separate issues such as location, classrooms, teaching tools, and examinations. To analyze and synthesize data results. Observation form and interview form that used as tools this time has been already evaluated by experts.

A study of piano performance lessons for first-year students at Yunnan University of the Arts found that there were suitable places and facilities for learning. The ratio of teachers to students specialized in piano for performance is 1 to 3. There are classrooms for theoretical study. practical classroom Adequate room for performances, complete with learning equipment. Teachers are focusing on proper posture for playing, which is important. There is a teaching style that emphasizes the basics of theory and practice in a step-by-step manner. Teachers utilized a range of teaching styles to ensure the learner was at the core of the instructional planning process for each topic. The teaching method is one-to-many. Emphasizes understanding and memory according to the steps of the learning process. Use teaching strategies from the exercises book to enhance understanding, and there is sufficient time for students to review the content learned and practice. The midterm exam and final exam used a test to measure theoretical knowledge and a practical test with real performance. Students thus gain knowledge and can put it into practice in acting.

Keywords: Surveying; Piano Performance; First year student

Introduction

Piano performance entails the artistic rendition of music using a keyboard instrument, such as the piano. The performer manipulates the keys with their fingers, causing hammers to strike the strings and produce notes. This form of performance encompasses solo, ensemble, and accompaniment pieces across a wide range of musical genres, from classical to pop. Mastery of piano performance demands both technical proficiency and expressive capability, enabling performers to convey emotions and interpret the subtleties of music effectively. Piano playing occupies a pivotal role in music creation, education, and performance, serving as a cornerstone of the music world's foundation. It represents a profound form of artistic expression, communicating the beauty and emotion of music through a blend of technique and interpretation.

The pivotal roles of music education and performance serve to ignite individuals' passion for and dedication to music. In higher education, piano studies are commonly integrated as a fundamental component of music courses. These encompass a diverse array of subjects, including music theory, piano technique, music history, and music appreciation. The overarching goal is to nurture students into becoming exceptional pianists, music educators, or professionals in the music industry. Within piano education, emphasis is often placed on individualized instruction, with students receiving personalized guidance from seasoned piano instructors.

In China, numerous colleges across various regions offer comprehensive advanced arts programs, with a particular emphasis on piano education. Yunnan Province is renowned for its commitment to fostering musical talent. Students are encouraged to actively engage in music education to prepare themselves for future careers in the field. Yunnan University of the Arts stands out as an esteemed institution, earning recognition for its excellence in the arts. As one of the eight provincial comprehensive arts colleges in China, it holds a prominent position as a comprehensive advanced arts institution in southwest China. The university has garnered notable accolades, including first place for provincial teaching achievements and gold medals in prestigious competitions such as the 5th National Golden Bell Choir Competition and the 13th CCTV Young Singer TV Grand Prix for the Bel group. Additionally, Canto, a vocal group affiliated with the university, has been honored with the "Five People" project award from the Central Propaganda Department and a gold medal from the national choral singing competition. These accolades serve as a testament to the institution's commitment to excellence in promoting musical arts education. (Yunnan Arts University, 2023)

The Music Conservatory in Yunnan Arts University offers a specialized piano performance course. Students who enroll in this program are required to possess basic skills and knowledge in piano. However, it has been observed that many first-year students express a desire to study piano performance in order to advance their education in specialized higher education institutions. Unfortunately, it has been found that most of these students lack the necessary foundational skills. They may still lack these skills or experience difficulties in

continuing. Furthermore, many students also lack musical experience during their secondary school years. These deficiencies significantly impact students' comprehension and mastery of piano performance. Effective teaching methods are crucial in addressing these challenges and in nurturing students' skills and performance abilities.

The related paper reviewing as following;

Zhao, Z., & Cleesuntorn, A. (2022) Found that the before and after experiment differences in piano performance scores (including piano performance skills) and self-efficacy of the experimental group students were significant compared with the control group, and the two were correlated. Therefore, the blended piano lesson plan is an effective way to improve students' piano performance. In addition, students' self-efficacy is also a related factor that affects students' piano performance scores.

Thelma, L. C. (2001) The results of the study showed that among the 564 respondents, 58% learned piano as children, 15% learned piano as both children and adults, and 3% learned piano only as adults. Most people who took piano lessons as children said their parents decided to start them. Adults are motivated to start or resume piano lessons primarily for skill development and personal enjoyment. The study also found that three-quarters of respondents reported receiving personal benefits from piano playing, and more than half continued to play.

Baptiste, C., Frédéric, B., Marcelo, W., & Caroline, P. (2017) The researchers conducted a study in the context of piano performance. The results showed that participant classification increased with practice, indicating that individual timing characteristics are affected by learning and that timing and movement variability are structured. Furthermore, studies have also shown that movement features classify individual performance better than timing features.

Sofia, S., Heidi, F., Jordi O. G., & Maria, V. S. V. (2013) The study found that older adults who received piano training achieved significant improvements on the Stroop test, which measures executive function, inhibitory control and divided attention. Additionally, trends toward increased visual scanning and motor abilities were observed. Finally, in this study, piano lessons helped reduce depression, induce positive emotional states, and improve mental and physical quality of life in older adults. Overall, the findings suggest that playing the piano and learning to read music can be effective interventions for older adults, helping to promote cognitive reserve and improve subjective well-being

The researcher therefore realizes the importance of the basics of playing the piano to help develop students' potential and enhance their skills. This teaching model studied will be an important body of knowledge used as a guideline for developing piano performance skills. Make students fully qualified be a good musician and can be used as a career in the future

Research Objective

This research aimed to surveying the piano performance learning for first-year student at Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University.

Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative research methods at the Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University. In-depth interviews with key informants were conducted to gather essential information for data analysis. The process is the following:

Population and Sample

Teacher: Teacher was selected as the key informant. There are 23 piano teachers in the Music Conservatory, of whom 3 were selected based on the criteria.

Student: There are 83 first-year piano students at Music Conservatory, and they are divided into two classes, with 43 and 40 students, respectively. Selected from the population by using random sampling for 1 class and then using the Purposive Sampling method to screen out 10 students in the selected class. 10 students from the test scores were then selected from this group for samples, interview about Piano Learning, Learning Motivation.

Research Tools

Observation Form: This form was used to observe the piano performance class of first-year students.

Interview Form: Three teachers from the Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University, were interviewed as key informants, along with 10 students selected as samples from the piano performance class.

IOC Form: The observation form and interview form were developed with input from three experts to ensure their validity and reliability.

Data Collection

The researcher used two main data collection methods; observation, and in-depth interviews method that using the form were explain on above and already verified with IOC by expert.

Data analysis:

Gathering data and analyze for separate issues such as location, classrooms, teaching tools, and examinations. To analyze and synthesize data for research results.

Research Conceptual Framework

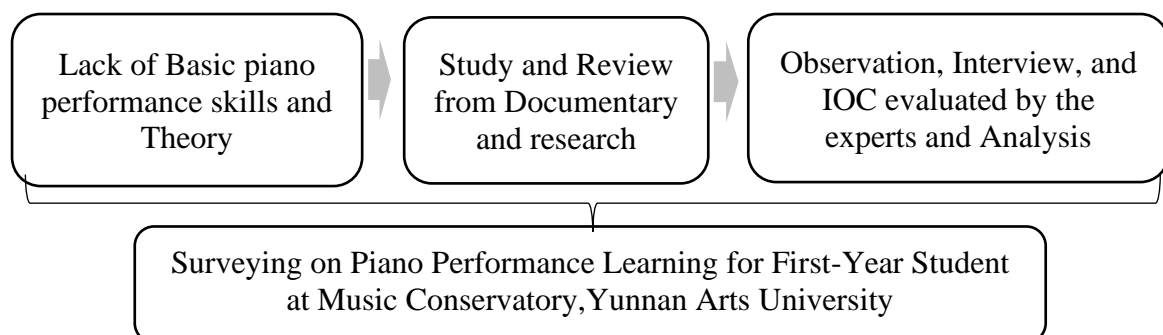


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework

Research Results

For the stated objective, the research aimed to survey the piano performance learning experience of first-year students at the Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University. Out of a total of 252 teachers, 23 are dedicated to piano performance instruction. Similarly, out of 308 first-year students, 83 are majoring in piano performance.

Location

The Music Conservatory at Yunnan Arts University is situated in an environment rich in educational resources and academic ambiance. Moreover, students can engage and collaborate with peers from neighboring universities, fostering the promotion and advancement of music education. The campus boasts of a serene and picturesque setting, providing students with a tranquil and distraction-free learning environment away from the urban hustle and bustle. This conducive atmosphere enhances concentration, allowing learners to fully immerse themselves in their studies. Additionally, the serene surroundings offer an effective remedy for stress, promoting relaxation and well-being among students. The campus spans a large area, offering ample space for various activities and amenities. These factors collectively contribute to the creation of a conducive academic atmosphere and a peaceful learning environment. Moreover, they facilitate positive interactions with the surrounding environment, enriching the overall educational experience.

Classroom

The Music Conservatory at Yunnan Arts University boasts a six-story piano room building, providing students and instructors with an expansive and professional learning environment. Each floor houses 50 piano rooms, totaling to 300 available rooms. These rooms are equipped with high-quality instruments, including Casio electric pianos, Yamaha upright pianos, and grand pianos, offering students a wide range of choices. The instruments are meticulously tuned and maintained to ensure consistent sound quality and playing experience.

Designed as dedicated spaces for individual practice and the refinement of piano skills, the piano rooms are soundproofed to prevent disturbances to other students and neighboring rooms. Additionally, each piano instructor is allocated a dedicated piano room furnished with two pianos. This setup allows instructors to utilize one piano for demonstrations while using the other for one-on-one instruction with students.

Furthermore, the campus features various other types of classrooms and piano rooms. Medium-sized studio classrooms, for instance, are spacious enough to accommodate larger groups of students and are equipped with multiple pianos to facilitate group teaching and ensemble practice. These classrooms are outfitted with state-of-the-art audio equipment and music playback systems to ensure that every student can fully engage with the music being taught.

Moreover, the entire piano room building includes shared learning areas where students can engage in collective practice sessions, ensemble training, and interactive communication. These areas are equipped with multimedia amenities such as audio equipment, projection screens, and computers to cater to diverse learning needs and facilitate collaborative learning experiences.



Figure, 1 Piano Classroom



Figure, 2 Public learning exchange classroom

Piano basics Skill

In the Piano Basics course for first-year students, learners will gain essential foundational knowledge to develop a comprehensive understanding of music structure and performance. Through piano technical training, students will refine their hand positioning, hand shape, and finger techniques, while also honing their ability to control dynamics, speed, timbre, and power. These exercises are instrumental in establishing a stable foundation for piano playing and enhancing students' proficiency and expression.

The curriculum for first-year undergraduate piano majors encompasses the following skills, as outlined in Table 1: Piano Basics for First-Year Students.

Table 1 The content for first-year student piano performance majors

Content	1 st semester	2 nd Semester
1	The basic piano teaching necessary understanding of keyboard and staff, basic training of hand positions and hand shapes.	Basic piano teaching: further training of hand positions and hand shapes to enhance familiarity with the keyboard.
2	Music theory and basics of music theory: basic knowledge of note notation, tonality, and rhythm.	Music theory and basics of music theory: basic rhythm and tonality learning, and expanded note notation training.
3	Piano skills training: practice of basic skills such as scales, arpeggios, and finger changes.	Piano skills training: exercises on finger skills to improve finger flexibility.
4	Sight-singing and ear training: training to learn basic intervals, rhythm, and melody.	Sight-singing and ear training: further train the listening, singing and singing abilities of intervals, rhythms and melodies.
5	Repertoire learning: Choose one or two simple etudes or short works to learn and perform.	Repertoire learning: Choose one or two moderately difficult etudes or short works to learn and perform.
6		Piano playing skills and performance: Learn basic playing skills, such as speed control, tone expression, etc., and perform small performances in the class.

Teaching tools

The tools utilized by first-year piano majors at the Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University include textbooks, teaching plans, and lesson plans. Here are the main textbooks prescribed for these students:

Textbook: The main textbooks for the first-year student in piano major at the Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University are;

1. Textbook for Musicology Undergraduate Majors in National General Universities and Colleges: Piano 1, help students understand the piano keyboard and piano skill comprehensive. By focusing on practice techniques and keyboard usage, students can better master piano playing skills and expressive abilities. Exercises were included in this book such as finger independence, scale, and arpeggio exercises, and more.

2. Basic Piano Tutorial 1, organized in accordance with the regulations of the Ministry of Education and mainly intended for university teachers and students with a foundation in music theory. This textbook organically combines basic knowledge of music

theory and harmony with piano lessons. The strengthen their understanding and application of these concepts through keyboard harmony exercises. Such exercises can help students better grasp the connection between the piano keyboard and the notes, and improve their skills and abilities on the piano. Therefore, the pace of this tutorial is not suitable for children who have no musical and cultural foundation.

3. Hanon Piano Fingering Practice, a popular teaching material for piano learners. The special feature of this book is that each piece of music is accompanied by a detailed video explanation, this book focuses on practicing the balanced coordination of the left and right hands, and trains the speed, strength, and independence of the fingers.

4. Czerny Preliminary Piano Tutorial (Opus No. 599), has basically become a must-learn opus for every piano learner basic stage. Technical learning is from shallow to deep, rich and comprehensive. Among these 100 piano etudes, technical topics include scales, chromatic scales, double tones, arpeggios, chords, rhythms, two-hand crossing, alternating hands, five-finger exercises, Alberti bass and various ornamental tone exercises. It can be said that the main technical topics of piano technical learning have been included, laying a solid foundation for subsequent intermediate stage learning.

5. Czerny Piano Fluid Etude (Opus No. 849), an indispensable and important teaching material for piano students from beginner to intermediate. After students have studied. The main techniques of this book focus on five-finger sound patterns, scales, short arpeggios, broken chords, decorative tones, vibrato, repeated tones, chromatic scales, etc. It is an excellent textbook for training students' playing ability in a targeted manner.

6. Czerny Quick Piano Etudes (Opus No. 299), as an intermediate-to-advanced etude, this book requires students to have higher and higher skill levels, and the difficulty of the exercises gradually increases. It focuses primarily on finger strength and speed, finger independence, and wrist relaxation. Students need to practice to master how to maintain the flow of the music at high speeds and play the music with ease. In this book, students will learn the comprehensive exercises of scales and arpeggios, third scale exercises, chromatic scale exercises, voice holding exercises, decomposed octave exercises, echo exercises, ring finger exercises, and rapid sentence passing exercises, etc.

Teaching Plan

Teachers follow the process of the lesson plans systematically as follows.

1. Goal Setting: Begin each class by clearly defining the learning objectives. These goals could involve mastering a new piece, refining specific techniques, or grasping the expressive nuances of a composition. Ensure that students fully comprehend what they will be focusing on during the lesson and establish clear objectives for achievement.

2. Demonstration: As an instructor, initiate the class with a demonstration of the music or technique to be studied. Pay close attention to technical intricacies, musical expression, and proper hand positioning. Captivate students' interest through effective demonstration, illustrating correct playing methods and musical expression.

3. Breakdown Exercises: Dissect music or techniques into manageable sections or segments, guiding students through each step of the learning process. Ensure students grasp the notes, rhythm, and technical demands of each section. Gradually integrate individual segments to facilitate understanding and performance of the piece.

4. **Technical Training:** Tailor exercises to target specific technical aspects of music. These may include finger dexterity drills, scale and arpeggio practice, and rhythm exercises. Through focused technical training, students develop proficiency in essential techniques and enhance the accuracy and fluency of their playing.

5. **Musical Expression:** Foster students' appreciation and expression of music. Encourage attention to emotional expression, dynamic variations, and tonal changes within the music. Through emotional guidance and interpretation, facilitate students in delivering music with infectious expression and emotion.

6. **Listening and Evaluation:** Listen attentively to students' performances and provide constructive feedback. Encourage students to actively assess their own playing, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Offer positive reinforcement and guidance to aid students in refining their musical skills and expressive abilities.

7. **Practice Guidance:** Offer strategies for effective practice outside of class. Provide methods for efficient practice, time management techniques, and self-assessment strategies to empower students in independent practice sessions.

8. **Play and Share:** Foster a supportive classroom environment by inviting students to showcase their performance achievements during class. Provide opportunities for students to perform and encourage them to share their musical and learning experiences with their peers. This not only allows students to showcase their progress but also cultivates a sense of community and collaboration within the classroom.

9. The piano classroom teaching method integrates technical training, musical expression, feedback, and practice guidance to facilitate comprehensive development of students' piano skills and musical comprehension. Furthermore, by promoting opportunities for students to play and share, they enhance their self-confidence and expressive abilities, fostering a deeper connection with music and their own musical journey.

Lesson plans

For piano performance classes at the Music Conservatory, Yunnan Arts University, first-year students undergo two semesters of basic piano knowledge and skill training. Each semester spans 18 and 16 weeks, respectively, with three classes per week. The curriculum includes teaching and learning activities, along with midterm and final exams. Lesson plans prioritize fundamental piano skills, music theory, and simple or short musical pieces.

Throughout the two semesters, students learn etudes of varying difficulty levels. The first semester focuses on easier etudes, while the second semester introduces medium to hard level etudes. Assessment exams, including midterm and final exams, are conducted between semesters, comprising paper tests and practical exams. Additionally, review exercises are integrated to assess and track student progress. Furthermore, students have dedicated time for daily practice outside of class.

The core content of the curriculum encompasses piano fingering skills, including hand positions, hand shapes, and improve finger flexibility. Moreover, students learn essential music theory concepts such as listening and singing, intervals, rhythms, melodies, tempo control, timbre expression, rhythm and tonality comprehension, extended notation training, arpeggios, sight-singing, and ear training. These elements collectively form the foundation for students' development as pianists and musicians.

Based on the teaching process outlined above, the evaluation of academic performance will be conducted through Midterm and final exams. The Midterm examination comprises two components: a written examination and a practical performance assessment. In the written examination, students are expected to demonstrate their comprehension and application of music theory knowledge on the test paper. Meanwhile, the practical performance assessment requires students to perform one or more pieces within the examination time to showcase their piano skills and musical expression ability.

Both the written and practical tests are graded out of 100 points, and a passing grade of 60 points or above is required to successfully pass the exam.

In the final exam, students can expect an assessment similar to the midterm exam, albeit with a broader scope in the written portion, covering all materials studied throughout the semester. The performance assessment section mirrors the midterm exam, requiring students to perform a series of pieces to showcase their advancement in technique, expression, and musical comprehension. This examination serves as a relative assessment of students' learning progress and performance within the class. It serves as a motivational tool for students to strive for excellence while offering schools and teachers insights into the overall learning dynamics of the class.



Figure, 3 Music Conservatory classroom piano instruction

Teaching result

Teacher: Performance piano instruction is concentrated in content. Starting with teaching and developing basic skills in playing the piano correctly. Build an understanding of relevant music theory to enhance skill development. There is a teaching format that emphasizes lectures, practice, training, and regular follow-up. In addition, there is a comprehensive academic evaluation measure, so that students will be able to understand and help build more confidence in playing the piano.

Student: Students are more motivated and enthusiastic about learning, and are more determined to develop their piano playing skills and musical knowledge. This helps them develop their skills very well. Studying also has time for adequate and appropriate practice. Gain confidence in participating in performances Participating in competitions and is fully usable.

Discussion

A study of piano performance lessons for first-year students at Yunnan University of the Arts found that there were suitable places and facilities for learning. The ratio of teachers to students specialized in piano for performance is 1 to 3. There are classrooms for theoretical study, practical classroom, Adequate room for performances, complete with learning equipment. What was found from the study is Focusing on proper posture for playing is important. As Pongvikran Mahittipong (2018: 18) said, proper posture is It is an important basis for instilling good characteristics for playing the piano to get used to it. There is a teaching style that emphasizes the basics of theory and practice in a step-by-step manner, consistent with Chayaporn Ekthammasutte (2014: 92) said advocates, teachers must possess knowledge, understanding, and expertise in pedagogy, utilizing a range of teaching styles to ensure the learner is at the core of the instructional planning process for each topic. The teaching method is one to many. Emphasizes understanding and memory according to the steps of the learning process. Use teaching strategies from exercises to allow students to practice from examples to enhance understanding. As Chinese science communication (2024) said that humans receive information which will lead to connections between interest, memory, understanding, and problem solving. Learning plan, Emphasis on the basics of good piano skills. Theory that affects piano practice for better development. and there is sufficient time for students to review the content learned and practice as Xiao Yao (2022: 68) said students equipped with self-management skills and fundamental training methods can enhance learning efficiency, fostering self-discipline, confidence perseverance, independent thinking, and honing time management and organizational abilities. For each semester, have a midterm exam and final exam. It is a test to measure theoretical knowledge and a practical test with real performance. Students thus gain knowledge and can put it into practice in acting.

From all the above This study clearly shows that basic theory and skill practice are important for developing knowledge and skills in playing the piano. As Jaroslav Novak (2019) said, when you are playing an instrument and performing you need to be able to read music, memories music, and sight read. A knowledge of music theory will make all of these things easier.

Recommendation

Theoretical Recommendations:

Teaching piano performance to first-year students serves as a foundational standard in piano education, emphasizing fundamental principles. This approach can be widely adopted, allowing teachers to tailor the curriculum to focus on student needs, personal experiences, and independent teaching methods. Such customization enables students to achieve tangible results and apply their learning empirically. This lesson plan is particularly suitable for piano majors with basic musical skills, allowing for further development at an advanced level.

Policy Recommendations:

The content and curriculum of this institution adhere to the guidelines set by the Ministry of Education of China, ensuring comprehensive coverage for undergraduate students. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate more advanced skills and techniques to foster educational progress.

Practical Recommendations:

The textbooks, lesson plans, and learning strategies proposed herein serve as foundational suggestions derived from our university's research. However, other institutions may have their own guidelines for teaching and learning management, aimed at optimizing student benefits. The research findings presented in this work can serve as practical teaching guidelines, with teachers required to make appropriate adjustments based on students' individual characteristics. While the teaching content and evaluation methods outlined may not be universally applicable across all fields of study, they offer valuable insights for effective pedagogy.

Future Research:

There are still some issues that are problematic and interesting for the development of piano playing, such as playing the piano for solo performances. A study of satisfaction in learning piano and the success of students who study piano in university entrance exams or for careers. These things will help add content to your studies and help create a higher standard of learning.

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