

Inheriting National Culture and Exploring New Ways of Teaching

Exploration on the Integration of National Music into Sight Singing and Ear Training Teaching

Rong Xing

Kunming University
Kunming, China

Abstract—The teaching of sight singing and ear training is a basic music course with the purpose of understanding, comprehending and grasping the language of music structure. The traditional sight singing and ear training in colleges and universities is mainly based on Western textbook system and western music composition materials, and the application rate of national music works is low. On the one hand, it is not conducive to the spread and development of Chinese traditional music culture. On the other hand, there is also a lack of fully understanding on the national culture for the students. This paper explores the significance, value and feasibility of integrating national music into the teaching of sight singing and ear training. Based on the practice of the subject, this paper proposes to apply the national music material to perfect the teaching system, teaching methods and innovative ideas of sight singing and ear training.

Keywords—national music; sight singing and ear training; teaching materials; teaching methods; innovation

I. INTRODUCTION

Most of the teaching content and methods of contemporary Chinese music education (especially music education majors in colleges and universities) are designed based on Western music theory. The theories and materials of the western music education system have been used extensively in the teaching ideas, training methods, teaching materials, etc. Under this circumstance, the level of cognition of national music by Chinese music majors has been declining. However, from the perspective of the accumulation of music culture and the extensiveness and richness of knowledge gained during the growth of students, the influence and particularity of Chinese national music cannot be ignored or indispensable. From the development of students' musical ability, national music can provide diversified support for the development of students' sight singing and listening ability with its unique aesthetic and musical characteristics. Therefore, the integration of national music into the teaching of vocal and ear training is not only the need for the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese music, but also an effective way to enhance the study of sight singing and ear training of music students. In this paper, it also comprehensively analyzes the feasibility,

application value and teaching strategies of integrating national music into sight singing and ear training, and hopes to provide theoretical and practical methods for the teaching of sight singing and ear training in college music education.

II. THE FEASIBILITY OF APPLYING NATIONAL MUSIC IN THE TEACHING OF SIGHT SINGING AND EAR TRAINING IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

A. *The Mode and Tonality and the Beats and Tempos of the National Music Can Meet the Special Needs of Sight Singing and Ear Training Teaching*

Tonality and beats is the core content of the music professional singing practice. The traditional teaching mode mostly uses piano performances and demonstrations to guide students to practice. The use of national works for tonality and beats practice is very low. The author summarizes the each year's sight singing joint examinations of local and neighboring provinces, in which the proportion of national music works only accounts for about 30%. Overall, the utilization rate of ethnic music is low. Chinese national music has accumulated a lot of practical experience and theory in the historical development, and has more prominent Chinese cultural characteristics.

In terms of tonality, the traditional music of the nation is mostly five-tone, and the main material of modern students' sight singing learning is Western music or modern national music (generally Western major and minor tones). Students will have a certain sense of strangeness when using national music to practice their ears. In sight singing practice, there are often deviations from the grasp and understanding of traditional national music [1]. With the help of traditional national music, students can make up for the lack of contact with Chinese unique national music. On the one hand, it can help students better understand national music, and on the other hand, it can provide students with richer tonal learning materials. For example, in the "Fig. 1" below, the five-tone composition is used in the example. The teaching uses the partial sound method to compare with the seven-tone style to enhance the students' perception of the national music tonality.



Fig. 1. Five-tone partial tone processing composition example.

In terms of beats, the traditional national music refers to the beats as the orderliness (corresponding to strong beats, subsidiary strong beat and weak beats respectively), which is different from the beats and tempos of Western music. The actual emotional expression is also quite special. In the teaching of sight singing and ear training in colleges and universities, it pays more attention to the development of students' rhythm [2]. The traditional Western music sight singing and ear training can better grasp the beat. But compared with the contemporary rhythm of Chinese national music (as a result of the indeterminate beat, there is a significant fast playing and slow singing feature in the composition shown in "Fig. 2"), where there is a lack of freedom. It is difficult for students to express the characteristics of the works by using the beat characteristics of Western music to interpret the national music works. Therefore, students can better master the rhythm of national music beats and tempos only through a large number of national music sight singing and ear training learning.



Fig. 2. An example of the excerpts composition of Erhu music "River of Sorrow".

B. The Temperament and Interval of National Music Can Meet the Special Needs of Ear Training

The intonation and the pitch are the basic elements of the temperament, and the musical laws under different regional cultures have obvious differences. Traditional sight singing and listening exercises usually use piano to reflect the pitch, which makes students have a shallower understanding of the pythagorean intonation. The legal system of Chinese national music is determined by a unique sound chamber. Different from the linear characteristics of western monophonic sounds, the actual singing shows a unique continuous gradient sound process (sound changes are smooth and few discontinuous, In "Fig. 3", the grace notes are more in the slowly chasing-cattle music type of Anhui folk music feature, which reflects the smooth gradual change of the sound cavity to a large extent). This special music system is difficult to

accurately express through the simple twelve-average law. It is difficult to make students understand and master the unique laws of national music by using western music works and Western instruments for sight singing and ear training. The use of national musical instruments (especially ethnic wind and stringed instruments) to play national music for the teaching of sight singing and ear training can better enable students to feel the unique temperament of national music.



Fig. 3. An example of the excerpts composition of Anhui folk music "A Forest with Straight Roots".

The interval is the basic method to enhance the students' understanding of the interval and composition in the teaching of sight singing and ear training. This part of the study is a difficult point for many students to learn. Insufficient mastery of the interval can easily affect the student's level of vocalization (for example, the performance without the accompaniment often appears to be inaccurate). The structure of Chinese national music has a very rich and varied structure, with four or five intervals being the most common, and a variety of intervals are also affected by the tonality. Personally, the rich and varied structure of national music can provide more materials and help for students' ear training, and help students master the melody of national music.

C. The Musicality and Aesthetic Characteristics of National Music Provide Additional Support for the Teaching of Sight Singing and Ear Training

The musical improvement of the interpretation of the student's works in the sight singing and ear training is mainly to grasp the singing tunes. In traditional Western music singing, the technique of singing is relatively limited, while the unique method of national music has a high degree of flexibility, which can beautified by a variety of pronunciation methods. For example, there are many contemporary high-pitched deviation treatments in Uyghur traditional Muqam music, and the resulting temperament and effect are very significant. From the point of view of the sight singing and ear training, the national music material can provide more abundant vocal techniques, and can also provide more effective support for the learning and understanding of the quarter tone and neutral tone.

The core function of the sight singing and ear training is to enhance the ability of listening and singing. In the process of sight singing and ear training, students can access a large number of works. In the contact and learning of multiple works, students can continuously expand the perception and

understanding of music diversity. [3] Therefore, it is more effective to enhance students' musical aesthetic ability. If the teachers simply use Western music for sight singing and ear training, the chances of students touching national music will decrease, which will reduce the diversified development of students' aesthetics. The introduction of national music works throughout the teaching can enhance students' interests on diversity and diversification of their learning works, thus enhancing students' interest and motivation.

III. THE PROMINENT SIGNIFICANCE OF APPLYING NATIONAL MUSIC IN THE TEACHING OF SIGHT SINGING AND EAR TRAINING IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

A. *Enhancing the Learning Affinity of Sight Singing and Ear Training with Localization and Inclusiveness*

In modern society, the development of culture has a typical multi-trend, as is the music culture. For music educators, the contact with multi-music culture is the basis for students to learn the modern development of music culture cognition. The author found in the work that many music majors in colleges and universities have the first contact with the Western music system in the music enlightenment and basic learning stages. In the subsequent studies, it is usually based on this. On the one hand, it is less active in contacting national music. On the other hand, the value of national music hasn't been paid enough attention.

This kind of problem has a great hindrance to students' music learning. From the perspective of sight singing and ear training, the materials that students are exposed to are all produced under the characteristics of Western nationality and Western cultures, and most students do not really understand the ethnic background, regional cultural background, and background of the times of the works. Therefore, there is a sense of distance between the learning works that is difficult to eliminate. However, there is no such problem in ethnic music. Students have more ways to experience and understand the creative background and unique culture of national music, which can reduce the alienation between students and works, thus improving the overall affinity of the study of sight singing and ear training learning.

B. *Providing Diversified and Distinctive Materials for the Teaching of Sight Singing and Ear Training*

Combined with the previous analysis of the feasibility of applying national music in the teaching of sight singing and ear training, national music can mainly expand and extend the coverage of traditional sight singing and ear training, provide special learning materials for some difficult learning points that are difficult to solve by traditional training methods, and solve some of the obstacles of students' sight singing and ear training.

First of all, there are a large number of types of works in the national music that are unique in form and style. These works can enrich the types of works in the students' sight singing and ear training, and enhance the diversity of students' music techniques and musical aesthetic development. For example, the melody of the special form of

national music is very unique, and the character of the singing tunes is vivid. Through the study of such works, the rhythm experience of the students can be significantly improved. For example, the lyric works are more in the emotional expression, and the relative music beat processing is more flexible. The introduction of such works can significantly improve the understanding of the rules of national music tempo, and carry out more accurate practice in the interpretation of national music.

Secondly, the Chinese people have a large number of folk songs in the thousands of years of development, which can provide a rich and very characteristic variety of materials for the sight singing and ear training. Combined with the previous analysis, national music can make up for the tonality, mode, rhythm, beat, temperament, and interval of Western music in the sight singing and ear training. This kind of material can provide rich demonstration cases on the one hand, and it can also provide more accurate technical case references on the other hand.

For example, in terms of tonality and mode of music, some students have more contact with the Western music system, but they have insufficient understanding of the differences between different tones and modes. The differences in ethnic music styles are quite different. For example, the tone structure of "Meng Jiangnv" and "Autumn Harvest", which both belong to Anhui opera, is significantly different (shown in "Fig. 4" and "Fig. 5"). The former has a five-degree relationship between the upper and lower sentences. The listening experience is sweet and soft. The latter's upper and lower sentences are mostly four-degree. The listening experience is rather rough. This subtle structural difference is difficult to distinguish effectively by Western music's major and minor tones. Therefore, reasonable intervention in national music can help students better understand the mode and tonality characteristics of the works.



Fig. 4. Excerpts of the composition of the Anhui folk song "Meng Jiangnv".



Fig. 5. Excerpts of the composition of the Shaanxi folk song "Autumn Harvest".

For example, in terms of temperament and interval learning, music majors generally emphasize the pitch of singing music, while Chinese folk music has many special pitch deviations. This is not a mistake, but a relatively special technique. It mainly enhances the flexibility of singing and the sense of rhythm of music interpretation. Traditional sight singing and ear training teaching is rarely used in the practice of pitching when using only Western music temperament standards, but such processing is very common in traditional Chinese national music, such as the Uygur folk song "Lailiguli", where there is a neutral tone ("Fig. 6"). This pitch migration process not only presents the characteristics of national music, but also enriches the students' aesthetics of music. At the same time, it provides students with a newer understanding of music style and applies it to the interpretation of other works.



Fig. 6. Excerpts of the composition of the Uygur folk song "Lailiguli".

C. Promoting Students' Music Aesthetics and Cognitive Development of National Music Culture

Skills' learning is not the only goal of music education. Teachers should pay attention to the cultural communication function of music education [4]. Students should pay attention to the aesthetic cognition and enhance the demand in the development of comprehensive music literacy.

As far as teachers are concerned, music teaching also needs to complete the inheritance and development of music culture. The introduction of national music can be used as the dissemination of music culture. The student's sight singing and ear training learning process is used as a channel for cultural perception. By adding ethnic music to the

teaching of sight singing and ear training, students can effectively be spread with the national music culture.

For students, music learning is inseparable from the development of music aesthetic cognition, otherwise it can only become a mere imitator which is mechanical and has no independent thinking and understanding ability. The increase of the sight singing teaching of national music can effectively enhance the students' aesthetic and diversified development conditions, stimulate students to actively improve the aesthetic consciousness and concept, and lay a good ideological foundation for the deep-level music professional learning in the future.

IV. SUGGESTIONS ON THE APPLICATION OF NATIONAL MUSIC IN THE TEACHING OF SIGHT SINGING AND EAR TRAINING IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

A. Enriching the Sight Singing and Ear Training Material System with National Music

In the introduction of folk music in the teaching of sight singing and ear training, the teachers must first do a good job in the improvement of the teaching material system. Specifically, they should pay attention to the following two aspects:

First is to enrich the diversity of teaching materials. That is to add the teaching materials of sight singing and ear training, balance the proportion of Western music and national music materials, so that students have the opportunity to more contact with national music, expand students' horizons, enhance the aesthetic diversity of students' music, and promote the interest and motivation of students' sight singing and ear training.

Second, based on the complementary value of ethnic music in the practice of singing and singing, the content structure of the sing-along and ear-training materials need to be moderately adjusted. The previous analysis pointed out that national music has certain complementary functions in the sight singing and ear training. Educators should proceed from the relevance of skills education, arrange appropriate ethnic music materials to effective positions, and scientifically make up for the defects in the realization of Western music materials in specific sight singing and ear training objectives, thus ensuring the professionalism of textbooks.

B. Innovating Teaching Methods Around the Characteristics of National Music

Each music system has its own advantages and disadvantages. Teachers should change the inherent concept, transform the "old" of traditional music into the "new" element in the development of modern music, and break through the inherent teaching mode of Western music centralization. The choice in teaching should avoid simplicity. It is necessary to focus on the respective advantages and characteristics of Western music and traditional Chinese folk music system, make up for each other, and simultaneously enhance the quality of sight singing and ear training. For example, comparing modern

music with national music in the unique tone, pitch, and rhythm, on the one hand, it can provide a new atmosphere for teaching activities, and on the other hand it can enhance the effect of students' sight singing and ear training.

It is also recommended that teachers choose national music works with local characteristics for teaching. For example, in Yunnan, teachers can choose Yunnan national minority music for sight singing and ear training. For example, the rhythm of Yunnan Hani music works is very flexible, and can be used as a material for rhythm beat variation training. For example, in the "Meng Song Cottage", there are more rhythm changes (as shown in "Fig. 7"). The teacher can organize the rhythm changes and record them, instruct the students to remember the beat node and feel the expression of the change in the sight singing and ear training, so as to be close to the creative intention of the work in the extension. Another example is the "Toasting Song", which is common in Yunnan. It originally is a monophonic folk song. Teachers can add the rhythm part to build a zweiklang sight singing and ear training condition, which can take into account special techniques and rhythm control. The key value of local national works as a preference is to further enhance students' affinity for the study of sight singing and ear training. Based on the familiar national music forms and works, furthermore, the scientific music theory is used to examine the characteristics of the works, and the professional music training methods are used to master the interpretation methods of the national music works, thereby enhancing the interest of students in folk music learning.



Fig. 7. Excerpts of the composition of the Hani folk song "Meng Song Cottage" in Yunnan.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, the core value of applying national music in the teaching of sight singing and ear training is reflected in two aspects: the first is to make up for the individual problems that may exist in the teaching of sight singing and ear training based on Western music, and to enrich the students' skills by enriching the effect of students with rich materials and unique cases. The second is to further deepen students' understanding and comprehension of national culture, help students to establish a more perfect musical aesthetic concept, and provide ideological support for their future music learning. In addition, teachers are also recommended to give priority to local works when choosing national music works, which can enhance students' affinity

and acceptance of the works, and further enhance the cohesiveness of the new type of sight singing and ear training.

REFERENCES

- [1] Du Yaxiong, Similarities and Differences Between Chinese and Western Basic Music Theory [J]. *Musicology in China*, 2018 (1): 26 - 30. (in Chinese)
- [2] Hou Jun, Cultivation of Music Sense in the Teaching of Sight Singing and Ear Training [J]. *Music Work*, 2018 (6). (in Chinese)
- [3] Cheng Yingying, Li Wenjia, On the Significance of Sight Singing and Ear Training to the Teaching Practice of Music Education Department Students [J]. *Music Work*, 2018 (5). (in Chinese)
- [4] Zhao Su, Returning to the Essence, Then It Will Have Beginning and the End — Rethinking the Essence of the Major of Solfeggio and Ear Training and the Course of Solfeggio and Ear Training [J]. *People's Music*, 2018 (7). (in Chinese)