

# The Cultivation and Importance of Playing and Singing Skills of Children's Songs in the Context of "New Teacher-training"

## Taking Guangdong University of Education as an Example

Lirao Wei<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Music, Guangdong University of Education, Guangzhou, Guangdong 510303, China

\*Corresponding author. Email: 764867796@qq.com

### ABSTRACT

The current training model of basic music education major in normal schools is mainly based on the model of professional music conservatories, failing to emphasize the nature of teacher-training, and as a result, the trained normal students generally lack the most important playing and singing skills in the basic music education stage. This paper analyzes the existing problems in the training of music education major in playing and singing skills in colleges and universities and proposes specific implementation measures to improve the playing and singing skills of normal students majoring in music education. Efforts should be made to pay attention to and infiltrate the training of playing and singing skills in the teaching of piano basics, vocal basics, impromptu piano accompaniment, and music teaching methods. Through the holding of competitions and concerts, it can be extended from inside and outside the class to practice, thereby improving the comprehensive quality of students, adapting to the needs of basic education, and promoting the improvement of the quality of basic music education.

**Keywords:** *Playing and singing skills, Normal schools, Music education.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the "National Basic Skills Competition of College Students Majored in Music Education" hosted by the Ministry of Education in 1999, it has been successfully held for 20 years. As the only national competition for music education majors, this competition provides students with a sufficient platform for self-presentation, and has aroused great repercussions in colleges and universities across the country with its authority, orientation and professionalism. This competition is also known as the "pentathlon" competition. The competition is divided into five parts, one of which is playing and singing at the same time. As a part of the "pentathlon"

competition, playing and singing at the same time fully demonstrate its importance and role in the talent training plan. One may imagine that, in a music class in middle and primary schools, music teachers can skillfully sing the songs they teach with a sweet voice, while playing the piano gracefully, adding radiance to their singing. This kind of sound and emotional teaching can not only enrich children's spiritual world, but also stimulate musical thinking and musical intelligence, help cultivate and improve children's perception and creativity of music, and make students have a strong interest and love for music.

Nowadays, with the regulation of the market economy and the continuous expansion of college enrollment, graduates are facing more and more competitive pressure in finding jobs. The booming economy and society have put forward higher requirements on the abilities of basic music education teachers. Music class in basic music education is no longer just the teaching of

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knowledge and the dispensable self-study class that are often occupied by other subjects. Music class in basic music education is more about cooperation and interaction with students in depth, using professional expertise and combining creative game teaching methods to cultivate and stimulate children's potential and interest in art. Teachers must train college graduates with higher comprehensive music literacy and higher playing and singing skills in order to help them get a job successfully and increase their competitiveness in future operating posts.

## **2. PROBLEMS IN THE CULTIVATION OF PLAYING AND SINGING SKILLS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS MAJORING IN MUSIC EDUCATION**

### ***2.1 There Is a Big Difference in the Basics of Playing and Singing Among Students, and They Are Not Fully Aware of the Importance of Playing And Singing***

With the advent of the era of popularization of higher education, it is difficult to guarantee the quality of students in institutions of higher learning. Taking Guangdong University of Education, an undergraduate university in Guangdong Province as an example, in the freshman entrance assessment, most students have not come into contact with playing and singing at the same time before enrollment, and they also have a vague idea of what skills and abilities they should have in their future careers. Some students even think that playing and singing at the same time is a kind of performance that is not very professional, and mistakenly believe that it is a comprehensive performance because the player has no particular outstanding skill. In September 2017, the author tested the playing and singing ability of junior students in the Department of Music, Guangdong University of Education. A total of 78 students signed up to take the test and were divided into 2 groups, each with a three-hour assessment time. The assessment adopted a draw lots method, and the tracks played and sung were all from the music experiment material "Into the Music World" of Flower City Publishing House. Students chose a song from it and played it in a different mode within a tone mark of one rising and one falling key or a tone mark of two rising and two falling keys. Only 5 of the 78 students can perform the required tracks in a designated mode, and

among these 5 people, only 2 of them can play and sing at the same time. The author continues to reflect on the reasons for this phenomenon.

The traditional music education teaching model and teaching content have been referring to the model of professional music conservatories. Professional music conservatories are the cradle of cultivating actors and concert performers, and students from these conservatories are more focused on their professional strengths and expect to achieve something in the professional field. However, this situation doesn't apply to students in music education normal schools, because the main employment direction of students in normal schools is music teachers in middle and primary schools and teachers in music training institutions. Middle and primary schools require teachers to be familiar with kidology and educational psychology, be able to play and sing, and teach singing from the textbook, be good at directing the whole class to sing together, and often have strong organizational skills. Over time, some teachers and students in music conservatories in normal schools also pay too much attention to the training process and training results of individual skills, and as a result, some students tend to go overboard on one or some subjects. For example, students majoring in solo musical instruments put their energy on the learning of musical instruments; students majoring in chorus conductor put their energy on chorus conductor; students majoring in vocal singing put their energy on the learning of vocal singing; they are not clear about their future career planning and the abilities they need to have to be music teachers in middle and primary schools nowadays.

### ***2.2 Students Are Not Clear About Their Future Professional Orientation as Music Teachers, and Ignore the Importance of Playing and Singing in Basic Music Education***

According to the author's experience and feedback from working as an intern instructor in Guangdong University of Education for many years, 90% of the internship units mention that interns perform poorly in the playing and singing links in classroom teaching. Especially when the song needs to be transposed temporarily, these units find that some students' right hands can't find the melody, or can only find the previous melody and fail to find the next melody, which influence the consistency of the whole song. Sometimes when encountering "temporary rising and falling marks"

or "diacritic marks", students' finger reaction is slow, and they fail to find the position of the notes, resulting in failing to play the song completely and smoothly. In teaching practice, when teachers ask students to practice children's songs, many students mistakenly believe that now that they can play the difficult works of Liszt, Chopin, and Beethoven, it can be very easy for them to play and sing children's songs, which may lead to their low enthusiasm for practice. Some students mistakenly believe that they usually sing difficult works such as arias, and now they are more than enough to deal with children's songs. Due to the neglect of the importance of playing and singing at the same time, some students have good singing skills, but they always play intermittently, which affects the performance of singing; some students play well, but they can't find the tune when they sing, because their playing affects the singing. There is often a disjunction between playing and singing.

Especially when these students actually take the position of practice teacher, in the music classroom of the intern school, they will find it very difficult to combine playing and singing at the same time and to transpose freely at any time. It is also due to their deficiencies in this aspect that affect the overall learning effect of the class. Therefore, many piano students have become "dumb" in playing and singing at the same time. In fact, if these students can sing the intensity, beat, harmony, melody, rhythm, etc. of the song through their mouths during the process of playing and singing at the time, the blindness of playing the piano can be avoided to the greatest extent.

### **3. SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE PLAYING AND SINGING SKILLS OF NORMAL STUDENTS MAJORING IN MUSIC EDUCATION IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

#### ***3.1 Combination and Penetration of the Training of Playing and Singing Skills and the Basic Piano Lessons***

First of all, attention should be paid to the training of "playing" of the songs in the textbooks of middle and primary schools, and to achieve "the combination of playing and singing, and using playing to improve singing". Through performance, it not only trains students to control the piano, but

also requires students to sing the notes and melody of the song at the same time. Some students are unable to adapt to this training mode at the beginning, and there will be many problems, for example, the "playing" and "singing" can't be carried out at the same time. Some students play very well, but they can't find the tune when singing, and there is often a disconnection between playing and singing. When students are frustrated, they often blame the problem on the influence of "singing" on "playing", which distracts their attention. At this time, teachers should appropriately adjust teaching strategies and encourage students to try different methods for playing and singing training. For example: in classroom teaching, teachers can use the combination of piano and games to train students' listening, distinguishing and singing skills. In addition to mastering certain performance skills, teachers can also add content such as melody creation and adaptation, timbre simulation, etc., to train students to adapt a new melody tone or create a melody and play and sing in a short time. On the basis of having a certain performance, teachers should pay attention to cultivating students' practical teaching innovation ability, combine piano learning and playing and singing training to the greatest extent, enhance students' interest in learning, stimulate their potential, and highlight the penetration of playing and singing skills in the basic piano lessons. Then, there should be innovation in assessment methods. In the piano class, in addition to the traditional reciting music book and playing, teachers can also add theme creation with playing and singing, games and singing, etc. The assessment is not limited to solo performances, but can be conducted in multi-players or groups. Finally, by observing students' responses and feedback on teaching effects, teachers should constantly adjust and innovate reform content, optimize teaching plans, combine these newly added content with exams, and explore in practice teaching.

#### ***3.2 Combination and Penetration of the Training of Playing and Singing Skills with Basic Vocal Music Courses***

First of all, teachers should strengthen the students' training in "singing" the songs in the textbooks of middle and primary schools. When students play and sing, they mainly sing in a sitting position. If they hold their bellies and dent their chests, their breathing will be affected, and their voices must be stifled and they will fail to sing. If

students hold their shoulders and stretch their necks, they will fail to use their breath. If students are in a lazy state, the singing voice will inevitably be weak. Therefore, how to maintain the correct sitting posture is particularly important. The vocalization, resonance, words in singing, and breathing movements of singing are concentrated on the head, cervical spine, and torso, while the piano playing is mainly done by the fingers and limbs, and the waist is the key to support the singing breath and shift the focus of piano playing. Since playing and singing is a complex control exercise, the posture of playing and singing must be in a natural and stretched status. Middle and primary school textbooks are mainly children's songs, and the main singing method of children's songs mainly uses child's voice. Generally, children's songs are characterized by small ups and downs, short length, vivid images, and emphasizing emotional expression. The so-called child's voice should be bright, soft, melodious, and breath-supporting. When students inhale, they need to pay attention to the sense of standing upright of the spine and the unimpeded air. They have to make the feeling of spreading their wings and taking off. At the same time, they have to contract their abdomen and push the thoracic diaphragm up back to its original position.

### ***3.3 Combination and Penetration of the Training of Playing and Singing Skills and Music Teaching Methods***

The famous composer and music educator Kodaly believes that early music education is very important for children's enlightenment education. Children should receive collective education, and teachers should learn to create a collective musical environment for children. This requires music teachers to have a comprehensive quality and a good ability to control the rhythm and atmosphere of the class. It is an innovative attempt to use Kodaly's music teaching method to guide the learning of playing and singing for normal college students. It has brought a new inspiration for improving the playing and singing skills of normal students. Guiding the teaching of playing and singing from the perspective of Kodaly's ideological teaching theory is helpful to improve the teaching quality and enrich the teaching content of playing and singing. Kodaly believes that if children learn to sing before learning musical instruments, they will be prepared for more musical abilities. The author believes that this point of view and the teaching of combining playing and singing

advocated in this paper are complementary to each other. Teachers can add Kodaly's unique gesture reading course to the basic playing and singing teaching, allow students to combine the content of the teaching method, and better explore and convey the humanistic connotation and artistic nutrition of children's songs in middle and primary school textbooks. The understanding and attention to the work before playing and singing works is a kind of enrichment of personal aesthetic experience, and it also improves the students' music aesthetic ability.

### ***3.4 Combination and Penetration of the Training of Playing and Singing Skills and Impromptu Accompaniment Classes***

The impromptu accompaniment class is based on the knowledge of music theory and piano performance skills such as harmony and musical form, and requires students to use the knowledge they have learned to accompany songs. However, according to the test conducted by the author in the department where she teaches in the previous paper, most students fail to play and sing songs together freely. Some students are good at piano and play very fast. They hum and sing in a low voice, with no sense of musicality. Some students have good vocal music skills and want to show their singing voice, but they often make mistakes on playing the piano, or can't find the position of the melody, making the whole song discontinuous and very incomplete. In the teaching improvement plan of playing and singing, it is centered on advocating "the combination of playing and singing, and using playing to improve singing" to coordinate the relationship between playing and singing. For students who "can play but can't sing", it is necessary to guide students to choose the form of accompaniment sound-type with the melody first, and then transit to the lyrics after they are very skilled in singing the melody. These students may sing the song skillfully first, and add the accompaniment part after recitation. For students who "can sing but can't play", it is recommended that they choose the accompaniment sound-type without melody first, and the accompaniment part only needs to be beats. And they should first consider the choice of the main triad, and after they are very familiar with the position of the keyboard, they can choose the sub triad and change the accompaniment sound-type.

### **3.5 Organizing Playing and Singing Competitions and Concerts, and Extending from Inside and Outside Classes to Practice**

The slogan of "teacher-training" in music teaching in higher normal schools has been called for many years. Playing and singing are also the most important skills necessary for music teachers in middle and primary schools. Higher education places too much emphasis on the training of individual skills, and often overlooks the fundamental basis of normal students — "teacher-training". In addition to in-class learning and extra-curricular exercises, schools can also hold regular playing and singing competitions and concerts to attract students' attention to this content in this way, dig out some talented students, form a value orientation, call on more students to participate in the training of playing and singing, and stimulate students' enthusiasm and interest. At the same time, the results of the competition will also promote and influence the reform of the curriculum.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

In summary, in the future development of teaching, the reform of music education curriculum should continue to take students as the main body, combine market demand and employers' feedback, radiate to other disciplines on the basis of improving the training of playing and singing skills, innovate teaching ideas, enrich teaching methods, and make the course content more practical and more accurate docking with professional standards, so as to reflect the practicality, innovation and openness of education for normal students, and really cultivate professionals who are suitable for children's music teaching.

## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

This paper is independently completed by Lirao Wei.

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