

The Study of Musical and Dance Improvisation Teaching in Higher Normal University

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Keywords: Musical Dance Improvisation; Art Education; Actual Practice.

Abstract. The study of musical dance improvisation teaching in higher normal university originated from the basic requirements of “carrying out game-oriented art activities” proposed by the Courses Standard of the Arts, and the basic fundamental philosophy of “subject integration” advocated by Music Curriculum Standard. The study is also generated by the common and typical practical needs in the dance teaching practices of higher normal universities. The paper explored the necessity, feasibility, practical teaching principle and actual practice of music and dance improvisation teaching in higher normal universities, from the aspects of theory and practice according to disciplinary theories including art education, dance education and musical education psychology. Based on the subject selection requirements, the paper mainly employed the methods such as literature research, experimentation, questionnaire survey, statistical method, analogy and so on, and essential reasoning, analysis, demonstration and summarization were carried out.

Introduction

The study of music and dance improvisation teaching in higher normal university originated from the basic requirements of “carrying out game-oriented art activities” proposed by the Courses Standard of the Arts, and the basic fundamental philosophy of “subject integration” advocated by Music Curriculum Standard. The study is also generated by the common and typical practical needs in the dance teaching practices of higher normal universities. How to solve the problems of unbalanced actions, poor sense of rhythm, unable to choreograph and so on in actual teaching practices? How to correctly understand the game-oriented art activities? How to make students experience dance art in games? How to make teaching more interesting by proper and feasible teaching methods, and improve students’ interests in learning art? How to make dance closely connected with music? Due to the questions above, the important issue facing with dance educators in higher normal universities is chosen as the subject. The author expect to solve the common problems faced with students during dance teaching in higher normal universities, improve the teachers’ quality of teaching, cultivate talents with innovation ability and good at game-oriented art activities, and promote the healthy development of art education in higher normal universities, through examining the theories and practices of the selected subject.

It turned out that the practice research of music and dance teaching mainly focuses on art education of senior, middle and primary school, while few studies are related to the theoretical and practical research on higher normal universities, based on the review of relevant documents about art education research of higher normal universities in the past fifteen years in China.

About books: as a special form of dance, there is none monographs in musical and dance improvisation, but some parts of those books have referred to the contents of it. Such as the book *Collected Works of Jia Zuoguang's Dance Art* written by Wen Zhang, Lu Wei, Guan Zhengwen. On page 69 to 75 of the book, it mentioned that brief introduction of impromptu dance, which expressed by Jia Zuoguang that impromptu dance refers to the dance that dancers can express their real feelings and talents in a complete song, and complete their performances in a song they never heard of. It is a dance performance inspired by melody, rhythm, speed, and effects of chord of the music; on the page 156 to 159 in the third section of the forth chapter *Impromptu Dance Creation Practice* of the book *Dance and Dramatic Performance* edited by Zhang Jinhua and Huang Mingzhu, it mentioned the contents of musical improvisation; Li Danna, Xiu Hailin and Yin Aiqing mentioned "original music" in their book *Music Education Theory and Practices of Carl Orff*, and Cai Jiaomin, Yang Limei also mentioned "body rhythm" in their book *Music Education Theory and Practices Dalcroze*. Although they did not make lots of statement, they provide some help for the paper. The author proposed the meaning of musical and dance improvisation, that is, the musical and dance improvisation is not only "improvisational" but a dance improvisation closely integrated with music, by combining Jia Zuoguang's "impromptu dance", Carl Orff's "original music" and Dalcroze's "body rhythm" theory. It is an improvisation practice stimulated and perceived by rhythm, melody, theme, tone and chord of the song, and experience, perceive and understand music from listening and body movements. Musical and dance improvisation pay more attention to feel and experience the impromptu of music from inner heart. The paper further discussed the topic according to the topics above.

Significance of Research

The research is of great practice and positive significance in cultivating art talents in primary and secondary school.

The research is of guiding significance in solving the realistic questions of teaching practices in higher normal universities.

The author hopes that the method of musical and dance improvisation can be widely adopted in teaching practices of higher normal universities

Study and principle of musical and dance improvisation teaching in higher normal universities. musical and dance improvisation is put forward by integrating, Carl Orff's "original music", Dalcroze's "body rhythm" theory, and Jia Zuoguang's "impromptu dance". The musical and dance improvisation is not only "improvisational" but a dance improvisation closely integrated with music, It is an improvisation practice stimulated and perceived by rhythm, melody, theme, tone and chord of the song, and experience, perceive and understand music from listening and body movements. Musical and dance improvisation pay more attention to feel and experience the impromptu of music from inner heart.

"Original" music education theory is advocated by the famous German composer, music educator Orff in contemporary world. The original music is close to the soil, natural and organic, and can be learnt and experienced by everyone. It is never pure music, but closed connected to movements, dance and language, and a music must be joined by men.

The music education concept of body rhythm is created by Swiss educationist Dalcroze who found out that a few students lack musicality and thus lack artistic performance during his teaching career in the Geneva School of Music. The key reason of lacking sense of music is lacking rhythm sensation. In his research, he discovered that rhythm can not only be noticed by hearing but also

body. Traditional music education neglected rhythm teaching as well as the feeling of nerves and muscles, and its education method of only using ears is highly imperfect. Hence, Dalcroze created his unique training system

“Dance improvisation” refers to the dance in which dancers can express their real feelings and talents in a complete song, and the dancers complete their performance without hearing the song before. It is a dance performance stimulated by melody, rhythm, speed, and chord effects.

“Improvisation” refers to creation inspired by the things and situations around us. It is a spontaneous action of creation suddenly inspired by the current circumstances. It is of a certain randomness, but not casual.

“Musical improvisation” belongs to “restrictive improvisation” training in the “impromptu practice” of European and American modern dance. “Restrictiveness” refers to that the dance immediately responds by dance without conception under the restriction of a song or some element. The training method is borrowed to cultivate students’ instinct feeling of music elements (rhythm, melody, chord and so on) according to the educational objectives of art education in higher normal universities, and to improve their expressive force and creativity of rendering nature to dance movements.

To sum up, the author thinks that musical and dance improvisation a dance improvisation closely integrated with music. It is an improvisation practice stimulated and perceived by rhythm, melody, theme, tone and chord of the song, and experience, perceive and understand music from listening and body movements, Musical and dance improvisation pay more attention to feel and experience the impromptu of music from inner heart, and is an activity always accompanied by inventions and originality and has the traits of flexibility, smoothness and imagination.

The important responsibilities and functions of higher normal universities are to serve elementary education and cultivate qualified teaching talents for middle and primary school. In June, 2001, Curriculum Reform Outline of Elementary Education (trial implementation) issued by Ministry of Education explicated aiming at higher normal education, that “Normal universities as well as other universities and organizations which bear the responsibilities to cultivate elementary teachers and training tasks should adjust training objectives, major setup, curriculum structure, and teaching methods according to the goals and contents of curriculum reform of elementary education”.

Training objectives of the new curriculum should meet with requirements of the modern era, and make students master elementary innovation spirit, practical ability, scientific and humane qualities and environmental awareness; possess the basic knowledge, skills and methods for lifelong learning; have strong body, good psychological quality, form healthy aesthetic taste and lifestyle, become the new generation with dreams, morality, education and disciplines. The concrete performances are:

1. Alter the courses which pay too much attention to knowledge-transference, stress on forming active learning attitudes, and make the process of gaining basic knowledge and skills also the process of learning and forming correct values.

2. Change the current situations that the curriculum structure focuses on disciplines, has too many subjects, and lacks conformity, and set up comprehensive courses in order to meet with various development demands of the students and embody the balance, comprehensiveness and selectivity of the curriculum structure.

3. Change the current situations that the curriculum structure is “difficult, complicated, partial, and old” and emphasize book learning, strengthen the connections between course contents and

students' daily life, focus on their learning interests and experiences, and select the basic knowledge and skills for students' lifelong learning.

4. Change the current situations that the course implementation stresses reception learning and mechanical training, advocate students actively take part and experience personally, cultivate students' ability to acquire new knowledge, the ability to analyze and solve problems and the ability of communication and cooperation.

Art courses are new courses generated from the educational reform, and are also energetic as well as comprehensive. The art courses in elementary education are more comprehensive, and new courses will pay more attention to the sound development of students' personalities; make the best of students' experiences and sociocultural resources; encourage students to carry out embodiment, exploration and reflection study; provide them with interesting, rich and colorful contents and information; broaden their horizons for art; improve their comprehensive quality; make art learning more fun and easy; and make each of them gain the feeling of success.

Music is the oldest, most universal and affectionate form of arts for human beings, and is an important form for people to realize thought and emotion expression and communication through specific acoustic structure. It is also the integral part of human spiritual life. Perception, expression and creation of music are the reflection of the basic quality and ability of human beings. Music education takes aesthetics as the core part to act on people's emotional world, and it is the important way to implement aesthetic education as well as the required course in elementary education.

Music education takes aesthetics as the core part to act on people's emotional world. Its basic value lies in that students can fully experience the beauty and rich affection embedded in the music sound, through the aesthetic activities such as listening to, expressing and creating music. Students can be attracted, enchanted in the ideal state of truth, goodness and beauty expressed by music, and the function and effect of enlightening wisdom, complement emotion are effectively played, in order that the students can form healthy and noble aesthetic taste as well as positive attitude towards life, and lay good foundation to lifelong interest in music, art and life.

"Traditional dance teaching pays more attention to body movement skills training rather than aesthetic emotion experiences; pay less attention to the influences of students' interests; don't advocate game-oriented teaching activities; neglect students' learning methods or even neglect its importance. It has a gap with modern teaching concepts and the requirements of current education reform." The traditional dance teaching neglects the training of student's active learning ability and the ability of dealing with the society; ignores students' ability and thinking training, the formation of correct values, cultivation of students' humanistic quality, individual differences of students groups. However, all those above are necessary in the new education reform. How to change the traditional dance teaching, which pays more attention to body movement skills training rather than aesthetic emotion experiences and neglect finding new learning methods, becomes an important subject for dance teaching reform in colleges and universities.

The discussion about artistic synesthesia appeared in early western theory of literature and art. Aristotle in ancient Greece firstly mentioned the phenomenon of artistic synesthesia in his work *Psychism*. He thought that sound can be divided into "sharp" and "deep" which is the result of comparing with sense of touch because hearing is similar to sense of touch. Berkeley also mentioned that there are relations among people's senses in his work *New Theory of Vision*, which is synesthesia. He said: "we have to admit that the lending the medium of light and color can imply space, shape and movement into our mind, and also bury any concept expressed by literature in your

mind.” Italian modern aestheticians Croce also had an excellent statement about synesthesia: “there is another eccentric saying that picture can only create visual impressions. The flush on cheeks, the warmth of the youth’s body, the blade point of a sharp knife, freshness and sweetness of fruits and so on, are all impressions which can come from pictures, but are they visual impressions? If a person has no sense of hearing, touch, smell and taste but only sense of sight, then what’s the meaning of a picture to him? The picture we saw and is believed to be seen only by eyes, is only a color palette full of colors painted by the painter.”

The discussions about artistic synesthesia above provide psychological basis for the study of musical and dance improvisation, and also make it possible in practice that “dance is visible music , and vice versa.”

The close relationship between dance and music is basically that dance cannot be without music, and is always showed accompanied by music. Zakharov, the famous dance drama choreographer and dancer of the former Soviet Union, said: “music and dance are closely related, but how close are they?”

Rhythmicity of music and rhythmic movement of dance

Melody of music and the singing quality of dance movements

Concord of the music and the interweavement of dance

In terms of the close relationship between music and dance, it can be concluded that dance is indeed closely interrelated with music. The dance teaching of higher normal universities should pay more attention to music, which is not only the development needs of dance itself, but also the needs of present art education reform and development. The practice of musical and dance improvisation is feasible in higher normal universities, and the relevant research in its theory and practice is also very essential.

Paying more attention to the development function of teaching to develop students’ creative thinking is one of the most important subjects in modern teaching theories. Faced with the changes in the new century, how to cultivate innovation consciousness, innovation spirit and innovation ability are the focus to promote quality-oriented education. Creativity is the most important part of human ability, and is also the major goal of dance education to enhance people’s mental development. Creativity is critical to human development and indispensable to social development. The achievements created by creativity have brought human beings abundant, cozy material conditions, but questioning current status, breaking the conventions, and challenging traditions are not pleasant to do during the process of creation. The process of creation means “taking risks” or even “making mistakes”. So, the basic principles to encourage creations are to allow questioning current status, breaking the conventions, and challenging traditions as well as taking risks and making mistakes. But in real dance teaching situations, it is often seen that individualistic dance movements are not allowed so that the creativity of the students have been greatly restrained. The teaching methods of musical and dance improvisation provide a good creative environment for students and teachers to enjoy the democracy right to dance with your mind and music and shape free body. It should be known that creativity is based on imagination. People can only have surprising and unexpected ideas when they have free minds, and have creation in their minds. However, free mind come from free body---- Body is the carrier of the soul. The task of dance education is to offer free body to the educated, and make them bear the highest wisdom in their body. It should be that the free body drives the free human nature, to influence free creation.

Musical and dance improvisation is a dance improvisation closely integrated with music, and also demands the participation of teachers and students, which means every one join in the performance rather than being an audience. Musical and dance improvisation should follow the rule of participation of teachers and students. The participation here is different from the reception of artistic practice, but an active practice to actually and effectively employ the knowledge of experiencing, discovering and sensing music and dance with your heart. In terms of the two arts with the most lyricism, art learning is not only knowledge but also inner experience. People without personal participation in art activities cannot have the pleasant experience of art aesthetic. The participation is shown from the three aspects: firstly, from its nature, participation of musical and dance improvisation is active and creative; secondly, from its method, the participation should be with all one's heart and in all-around, and it is not only movement but also should include senses of sight, instinct, and speech and each sense is of great importance; lastly, from the results, the participation can develop the participant's ability of music and dance, and make him acquire the pleasant experience of art aesthetics.

Musical and dance improvisation teaching, aiming at people's mental development, should pursue the principles of natural and real emotional expression, the best morality and ethics and the unity of inner and outer beauty.

Pursue the natural and real emotional expression

Pursue the best morality and ethics

Pursue the unity of inner and outer beauty

The training goals of higher normal universities are future teachers, thus musical and dance improvisation teaching should make it the ultimate goal to highly unify the knowledge skills of dance and its practice. The musical dance teaching principle in primary and secondary school should be deduced from students' active participation, the close cooperation of teachers and students, and the practice of the relation between learning and teaching in dance teaching. This principle of normality is embodied in three aspects during dance teaching: 1. Follow the principle of step by step, from the easier to the more advanced; 2. The principle of combining sensibility and rationality; 3. Follow the principle that classroom should be consistent with the stage.

Musical and dance improvisation is a dance improvisation closely integrated with music. It is an improvisation practice stimulated and perceived by rhythm, melody, theme, tone and chord of the song, and experience, perceive and understand music from listening and body movements, Musical and dance improvisation pay more attention to feel and experience the impromptu of music from inner heart, and is an activity always accompanied by inventions and originality and has the traits of flexibility, smoothness and imagination. Rhythm is the main and important part of music and dance, the basis of dance movements, the essential elements of music, and meanwhile, music rhythmized dance improvisation is also the basis of Dance improvisation such as music melody and music theme. Improvisation teaching practices should be based on the teaching principle of from the easier to the more advanced, and the easy rhythm improvisation practice should be carried out first.

The five project practices of rhythmic movement:

The practice of relaxing muscles and breathing

Improvisation practice of combining making rhythm with body language

Improvisation practice of combining stress with body language

Improvisation practice of combining speed, vigor and body language

Improvisation practice combined with specific music rhythm types.

Conclusions

The author is always interested in practical operations especially implementing improvisation teaching related to music and dance teaching in higher normal universities, based on requirements of the subject and needs of the reality teaching. Therefore, the paper tries to research a series of problems related to music and dance teaching in higher normal universities. The conclusions are:

1. Musical and dance improvisation a dance improvisation closely integrated with music. It is an improvisation practice stimulated and perceived by rhythm, melody, theme, tone and chord of the song, and experience, perceive and understand music from listening and body movements, Musical and dance improvisation pay more attention to feel and experience the impromptu of music from inner heart, and is an activity always accompanied by inventions and originality and has the traits of flexibility, smoothness and imagine.

2. Improvisation has internal connection with game art, and is not only an important form but also an important supplementary form of game art.

3. The author thinks that the positive meaning of musical and dance improvisation is that it can improve the sense of rhythm and the sense of coordination; exploit practitioners' potential of music and dance quality; contribute to the coordinated development of body and mind.

4. The author specially explored deeply in the practical operation of musical and dance improvisation.

5. The study raised a thought and points from the view of practical teaching in classroom, and there remain a lot of problems, such as: the study of curriculum provision of musical and dance improvisation and medical research in musical and dance improvisation. The author thinks that, there will be more comprehensive, profound and scientific studies of musical and dance improvisation with the development of the research team as well as the research.

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