

Application of Performance Assessment in the Vocal Teaching of Normal Universities

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Abstract—Performance assessment is a new kind of evaluation method, which differs from the traditional method and directly evaluates the behavior of ability (tendency). Applying performance assessment to vocal teaching in normal universities breaks through from the subjectivity, randomness and oneness of evaluation method for vocal teaching, and makes it more objective, scientific and just. The necessity and feasibility of applying performance assessment to vocal teaching in normal universities are argued theoretically and practically in this paper.

Keywords—performance assessment; vocal teaching; application

I. INTRODUCTION

Performance assessment requires students to apply the knowledge acquired before to the fulfillment of a task or the settlement of a matter in a given real or simulative circumstance, and then to assess the mastery degree of students' knowledge and skill and the development status of their ability in such aspects as problem solving, critical thinking and communication and cooperation. Really put forward and truly valued in the 1980s and 1990s, performance assessment is introduced into China in the beginning of 20th century and firstly popularized in such subjects as Chinese, Science and English and gradually applied to other subjects later. Breaking the limitation of traditional evaluation, performance assessment pays attention not only to students' knowledge and skills tested in written examinations but to their ability of problem solving and thinking especially that of knowledge application.

Vocal teaching is an indispensable course for students in normal universities. A document named the *Teaching Guidance Outline on Music (Teacher Education) Curricula for Undergraduates at Colleges and Universities in China* is issued by the Art Room from the Education Department in 2006. It points out that as a main course in developing students' basic ability in the future music education, *Vocal* is a required course launched on the foundation of cultivating music educators and relates directly to the singing teaching in basic music education. By integrating knowledge, skill and artistry, this course plays an important role in developing

students' music talent and improving their music expression. Meanwhile, the *Teaching Guidance Outline on Music Education* shows a specific requirement on the evaluation of music education: combining students' singing skills with the evaluation of their vocal knowledge; laying emphasis on the evaluation of students' ability to understand and analyze music works as well as their singing skills and artistic expression; connecting formative evaluation with summative assessment; paying attention to a comprehensive evaluation on students' learning attitude, process, result and ability as well as assignment accomplishment; associating teachers' self, mutual and peer evaluation; adopting the examination method marked by singing, observing and writing; grading students by usual performance and final test scores. In the guidance outline, it is obvious that the evaluation on teaching and learning in vocal activities is emphasized. On the other hand, the guidance outline affords the contents and modes for participants in vocal teaching. In most vocal teachings, however, they are evaluated in a relatively single way. In other words, the evaluation is test, which is students' singing graded by teachers in final exams. Therefore, an effective and objective system of evaluation has not yet come into being.

II. THE NECESSITY AND FEASIBILITY OF APPLYING PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TO VOCAL TEACHING

A. The Necessity of Introducing Performance Assessment into the Vocal Teaching in Normal Universities

In the present teaching and learning system, problems are widely existed, mainly including the following points: teachers and students make light of the evaluation system; students even teachers of vocal teaching do not have a definite goal and evaluate the vocal teaching in a single way; teachers lead the evaluation and students do not conduct self evaluation; no communication is done in the teachers and students' evaluation. These problems seriously impact the quality of vocal teaching and leads to the low motivation of teachers and students which impedes the long-term and healthy development of vocal teaching in normal universities. Therefore, basing on saving the essence of traditional evaluating methods, it is of especially importance to introduce other assessing methods like performance assessment.

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B. The Feasibility of Introducing Performance Assessment into Vocal Teaching in Normal Universities

Performance assessment conforms to the features of vocal courses in normal universities. Besides the mastery of relevant basic theoretical knowledge in vocal music, mastering the performance skills in music works is more important. The skills themselves in vocal like breath, articulation and resonance performed by students in the learning process need teachers' feasible performance assessment which is done by directly observation and thus promotes their progress in the vocal learning. On the other hand, vocal learning is not simply a training course but involves the relevant music knowledge including that of the solid basic music skills, good Solfeggio ability, high cultural awareness and a healthy body. concerning with the teaching quality in normal universities, these factors penetrate through students' vocal learning and cannot be evaluated by written examinations. The introduction of performance assessment can make it easy for the reason that it is a test of students' ability of understanding in real or simulative circumstances. Students can choose different music works and modes according to their individuality to perform. And the relevant factors are obvious, which together with their performances provide reference for students' self evaluation and teachers' assessment.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR VOCAL TEACHING IN NORMAL UNIVERSITIES

A. The Evaluation Goal of Vocal Teaching in Normal Universities Is the Primary Concern in Designing the Teaching Evaluation Task

The settlement of the goal can refer to the *Teaching Guidance Outline on (Vocal Music) Curricula*, which sets the goal of vocal courses namely the theoretical mastery of basic vocal and the improvement in aesthetic ability and art accomplishment of vocal music. To master correct singing method and have a certain singing ability, and to understand the relationship between singing and language to reach a degree that songs can be sung in mandarin or other languages is required for vocal learning. To appropriately interpret the content and style of a song, students should learn to analyze and process songs in order to gain the ability of singing style-different songs. By combining with the piano teaching, students should discriminate a right or wrong articulation and self play and sing. By learning adolescent vocal characteristics and the knowledge of vocal exercises and voice caring during vocal changing period, vocal students should acquire the ability of mastering the basic teaching method and independently coaching and teaching vocal music. As a teacher professing vocal music, he must know his students well and set a customized teaching goal for different students. Without doubt, teachers and students should work together in this settlement of teaching goal. On one hand, to develop students' generality in such aspects as basic music knowledge and vocal theory; on the other hand, to pay attention to the individual development and to assign tasks in order to make them challenge difficulties. The present academic year system can be continually used to make evaluation goals. For instance, in the first academic year, students should be a master of the

basic singing postures, positive mental state of singing and good singing habits. They are also required to value the middle sound area, preliminary grasp such singing skills as breath and articulation and have certain performance ability. In the second academic year, students should know the correct singing method and their use, and have the ability of aesthetic appreciation and develop the ability of analyzing and processing works gradually. By intensifying the middle sound area and expanding the sound range, students should obtain such effects as continuity, fluency, accuracy and perfect rhythm. In the third academic year, students should be able to unify the sound area and expand the sound range, able to analyze and understand independently; and students should know the basic theories and skills well, choose relatively difficult songs and qualify to sing songs of differing styles. In the last year, students should master the correct singing skills and have the ability of learning, teaching and singing independently; students should sing accurately and vividly and recreate, as well as apply certain vocal knowledge and perform great skills independently in solving the professional problems.

B. To Clarify the Content of Evaluation

The content of performance assessment in vocal teaching should manifest the spirit of three-dimension goal namely knowledge and skill, process and method as well as emotional attitudes and values. In teaching practice, performance assessment expresses itself in the following points: by learning knowledge and improving ability, students have a good and positive emotional experience; thus their inspiring for knowledge spurs them to dedicate to their learning. When he is designing the content of vocal teaching, the designer should take the three-dimension goal as a reference so as to carefully refine and prudently demonstrate evaluation content, which contributes to scientific, comprehensive and specific evaluation content. After defining the evaluation content, one or two content should be selected for observation and recording which can't be assessed from all aspects and total experience. It is also of great importance to let students know the evaluation content so that they will know where to put emphasis.

C. The Designing of Evaluation Criterion for Vocal Teaching In Normal Universities

Detailed grading rules are significant to performing tasks. For performance assessment, we usually sets up corresponding regulations and grading rules to evaluate students' reaction and answers, while the performing tasks are developed from the evaluation goal which aiming at assessing the degree of students' accomplishment of tasks. By transforming the evaluation goal and combining it with a specific analysis of students' worse and better performance, then the criterion and detailed grading rules will be established. Stiggins once said that the criterion of evaluating behavior performance is the most important aspects among the effective performance assessment. He thinks that "if a teacher cannot recognize a reasonable behavior performance to be worse or better, he is not qualified for guiding students in their task fulfillment or even assessing their behavior." [8] Therefore, a thorough and just evaluation criterion, as well as an assessment in every session should be designed for vocal teaching in normal

universities. Not only students' mastery in basic vocal knowledge but also their non-intellectual factors should be included into the evaluation category. When the evaluation criterion is designed, both the too much complexity and simplicity should be avoided for the sake of students' enthusiasm and the specific evaluation content. The evaluation criterion has at least three features: firstly, the various indexes which decide students' performance must be included; what's more, every assessing rule should concretely describe how to differ students' performance. Lastly, whether to grade integrally or analytically has to be clearly defined. The assessment portfolio and record chart are usually adopted forms.

IV. THE SPECIFIC APPLICATION OF PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT IN VOCAL TEACHING OF NORMAL UNIVERSITIES

A. *The Preparation*

The first thing is to let teachers gain an insight into performance assessment. The long-term use of traditional way, namely single test to evaluate teaching results in vocal teaching, so teachers are strangers to performance assessment. By breaking the bondages of traditional thoughts and suckling from the nectar of fresh things, as well as understanding its function and significance, the new assessment method can be popularized. Moreover, introduce performance assessment to students. Make sure that the students would understand the vital role performance assessment played in their growth with their participating in it.

B. *To Construct the Specific Tasks of Performance Assessment*

Initially, starting in the first year of college, the evaluation task should allow students to understand the overall objective and specific one in every academic year required in the outline of vocal teaching. One assessment portfolio for each student is prepared to record a long-term study. And the students are told that all learning materials are put inside that portfolio to arouse their attention. Next, for the differing personality of each student, tasks in each phase are assigned in four academic years, and the corresponding evaluation on the accomplishment of tasks should be given. For instance, student A, whose learning goal in the first academic year is to accomplish ten valises, fifteen vocal music, ten Chinese songs and five foreign songs (art songs and original singing).

V. THE SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION OF PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The following quantization tables are put into the portfolio of students: 1. The performance record table should include the essential assessments of teaching process (the explaining of vocal theory, the process of vocal practice, the singing of songs, the assigning and checking of homework) and learning attitude (whether to actively finish the homework, whether to practice cooperatively, and whether to energetically discuss and summarize), as well as the evaluation on students and brief summaries. 2. The assessment form for tasks in each phase. Two or three task tables can be made in every semester, the main purpose of which is to have students aware of the process

and state of their vocal learning and to make teachers directly perceive students' progress and imperfections. The content of the task form is the mastery of vocal skills (skills like breath, articulation, resonance and emotion expressing) and other aspects. And the grading evaluation should be applied to assess students' mastery of vocal skills. For example, singing with good breath support and smooth breathing, or breathing stiff even not breathing and breathing occasionally is respectively graded to three degrees. Students' learning attitude, content and methods also should be assessed in the task tables. If a student could do well in arranging new songs, quality, rhythm, language and emotion, he is graded to the first degree. If a student could basically do the arrangement of new songs and have some inaccurate rhythm and the normal quality, he is assessed to the second degree. The third degree occurs when there is no new song but a poor quality. Of course, a general assessment which incorporates the finished songs, learning attitude and effects as well as obtained ability is included in the task tables for each phase. 3. The assessment form in the end of a semester. In the application of performance assessment in vocal teaching, the traditional vocal tests at the end of a semester can be still used, which is in the scope of performance assessment. For instance, it can be divided into grades, such as, with a good breathing state, singing freely uses skills, coherent sound and has a strong musical expression; singing uses the skills but not to the skilled extent, pursuing for sound state but ignoring the emotion and being stiff on the stage; being basically integrating, singing uses blunt singing skills, and is lack of emotional expression and expressive force; singing is integrated but without skills and emotions; singing cannot be finished and has wrongs in rhythms and lyrics. According to the specific situation, respectively grades are done and so are summative comments and suggestions.

Therefore, according to the above arrangement, the following files are put into the portfolio of every student: weekly class record (18), task tables in each phase (3), and summative evaluation tables (1). In the four academic years, the eighty-eight files would objectively and justly assess the performance of vocal students, which avoids the imperfection caused by the evaluation of final scores and incorporates the learning process, ability and effects of vocal students into the evaluation system.

VI. THE COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE APPLICATION OF PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TO VOCAL TEACHING IN NORMAL UNIVERSITIES

A. *The Application of Performance Assessment in Vocal Courses*

On one hand, it conducts to clarify students' goals in vocal learning. In the past, the orally setting goal is vague and uncertain in every semester and academic year. However, in the tasks of performance, portfolio and task tables specify and actualize the goals in every stage. And the true task performance matches relatively high with the complex learning goal. On the other hand, performance assessment can also evaluate students' learning process. It is one of the important effects of school education that students are able to apply the learned knowledge and skills to solve problems and

lead a useful life but not just to answer questions. Hence, to apply performance assessment to vocal teaching can evaluate both the process and effects of students' learning.

B. The Suggestions for the Application of Performance Assessment to Vocal Teaching in Normal Universities

Although performance assessment is of great benefits to vocal teaching in normal universities, teachers and students are not familiar with its concepts and application. Therefore, it is very necessary to generalize it among the school and introduce its procedures and successful cases so as to have people aware of its value and significance. Since teachers are dominating roles in class, their familiarity with the features, concepts and operation of performance assessment immediately affects its reliability and validity. That is why teachers should be trained specifically and increasingly.

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