

# Research on Strategies for Cultivating Performance Artistry in Vocal Singing Instruction in Higher Education

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**Abstract:** *In vocal singing instruction, enhancing students' performance artistry has been a topic of significant interest in the industry. As vocal singing instruction is a highly practical performance-based course, advancements in science have led to diversified approaches in singing education and training. With students acquiring a certain level of vocal skills, the question of how to improve their performance artistry has become a pressing concern in the industry. Performance artistry, which involves the ability for secondary creation, directly impacts the emotional resonance of vocal singing. Singers must possess excellent performance artistry to present their singing content in the best possible manner, captivate the audience's attention, convey the charm of vocal singing, evoke empathy, and achieve the desired artistic effects. In recent years, some studies have found that intuitive thinking ability and empathy skills have a positive influence on performance artistry. Therefore, as educators in higher education vocal programs, it becomes necessary to explore strategies for developing performance artistry in vocal students. This article attempts to explore the development strategies for performance artistry in vocalists from the perspective of intuitive thinking ability, with the hope of facilitating better communication with vocal learning and teaching professionals.*

**Keywords:** *higher education vocal instruction; vocal singing; performance artistry; intuitive thinking ability; empathy skills; development strategies*

## 1. Introduction

Vocal music is a form of artistic expression within the realm of music, closely linked to the performance and presentation of vocal art. The presentation of vocal singing art involves the fusion of singing and stage performance. In the actual process of singing, there is a particular emphasis on the singer's tonal beauty and the artistic expression of the performance. Consequently, vocal performance requires singers to possess not only enchanting voices and exceptional singing techniques but also captivating and emotionally resonant performance artistry. This combination aims to attract audiences through singing and elevate art through performance. However, an analysis of the current state of vocal instruction in higher education reveals that contemporary institutions primarily focus on imparting singing techniques and theoretical knowledge while often neglecting the development of students' inherent performance artistry. This has resulted in many students possessing exceptional technical skills but delivering subpar performances, unable to interpret the essence of vocal works effectively. To address this issue, educators need to thoroughly examine the relationship between vocal singing and performance artistry, recognize the importance of cultivating performance artistry in higher education vocal instruction, pinpoint the underlying causes of the existing deficiencies in performance artistry development within vocal instruction, and design performance artistry cultivation programs tailored to the characteristics of vocal education. These programs can then be integrated into practical teaching activities, effectively ensuring the outcomes of higher education vocal instruction and achieving the objectives of talent cultivation.

## 2. Performance Artistry in Vocal Singing

Firstly, vocal singing is a form of artistic expression in which performers present vocal music to the audience. It encompasses both singing and performance, and good performance artistry is a crucial ability for ensuring the effectiveness of vocal performance art.<sup>[1]</sup> In vocal performances, singers initially convey the inner emotions of a piece through beautiful voice and language, creating an immediate auditory appeal and impact on the audience. Performance artistry, on the other hand,

involves expressive elements such as eye contact, facial expressions, and body movements, which vividly convey the main ideas and soul of the piece. These two aspects are interwoven and indispensable; one cannot be neglected without affecting the overall performance. Only when they are perfectly combined can vocal singing, as we know it, be achieved. Therefore, performance artistry plays a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of vocal performances, making it a key focus in the training of vocal arts talents. Hence, it is necessary to discuss strategies for improving performance artistry in vocal singing.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **3. Strategies for Cultivating Performance Artistry in Vocal Singing**

#### ***3.1 Alleviating Psychological Burdens***

Vocal singing involves performing vocal expressions for an audience, which can subject students to various psychological pressures during performance activities. Such pressures can lead to performance anxiety and nervousness, significantly impacting the effectiveness of vocal singing. Consequently, vocal performers need to possess strong psychological resilience for performing and adapt effectively to various challenges.<sup>[3]</sup> The cultivation of performance artistry is mainly based on teaching relevant techniques and conducting singing exercises during the performance process. This approach helps students avoid negative emotions during actual performances, manage their emotions effectively, alleviate nervousness, and boost their performance confidence. It enables students to immerse themselves in the state of vocal singing, maintaining a positive mindset and ensuring the smooth progress of performance activities.

#### ***3.2 Deep Understanding of the Essence of Vocal Works***

The successful execution of vocal singing activities requires a comprehensive understanding of vocal techniques, characteristics, and, most importantly, the essence of vocal works. The essence of a piece forms the soul of vocal singing, and singers can only convey the emotional essence of a work to the audience if they deeply comprehend it.<sup>[4]</sup> Effective performance artistry enables students to deeply resonate with the audience during singing, evoking strong emotional responses. Therefore, a thorough understanding of vocal works and their essence is essential for singers to reproduce the emotional content during performances effectively.<sup>[5]</sup>

#### ***3.3 Effectively Motivating Student Engagement***

Student engagement reflects their attitude toward learning and is a critical aspect of their overall learning experience. To achieve effective talent development and educational goals in vocal singing, it is crucial to ensure students' active engagement and initiative in the learning process. The cultivation of performance artistry involves teaching students various techniques and exercises that require them to actively participate in singing and express themselves emotionally. In this learning context, students are encouraged to explore the depth of vocal works, promoting critical thinking and enhancing their learning capabilities.<sup>[6]</sup> Moreover, performance artistry development entails practical exercises and activities, moving away from traditional lecture-based teaching. This approach allows students to actively think, engage in practical exercises, and develop their learning skills, ultimately motivating their initiative and enthusiasm in the learning process.<sup>[7]</sup> It fosters a positive classroom atmosphere and optimizes the outcomes of vocal instruction in higher education.

### **4. Shifting Perspectives in Vocal Music Teaching at Universities**

#### ***4.1 Enhancing Creative Teaching Methods***

Teachers play a pivotal role in the realm of education, and to effectively cultivate students' performance artistry in vocal singing, university vocal music educators should first recognize the significance of performance artistry in teaching. They should integrate performance artistry awareness into their teaching practices. To achieve this, experiential elements should be incorporated into the teaching process, and students should be encouraged through more interactive methods. Departing from traditional didactic teaching approaches, educators should encourage students to actively engage in the learning process.<sup>[8]</sup> By facilitating discussions about emotional expression, interpretation, and other relevant topics related to vocal performance content, educators can gradually foster students' ability to

express themselves and engage in secondary creative processes.

#### ***4.2 Emphasizing Practical Experience in Teaching Activities***

An analysis of the current state of higher education reveals an issue with a predominant focus on theoretical instruction over experiential learning in vocal singing education. Typically, vocal music educators prioritize the theoretical aspects of vocal singing, often relying on verbal explanations and imitation as the primary teaching methods to address students' performance artistry. This situation has long been a challenge for vocal music educators.<sup>[9]</sup> The enhancement of performance artistry remains largely theoretical and superficial. Converting this abstract teaching into a tangible form is a shared concern among vocal music educators. Therefore, this paper addresses these issues in the following sections.

### **5. Strategies for Cultivating Performance Artistry in Vocal Singing at Universities**

#### ***5.1 Breaking with Tradition: Simultaneously Focusing on Fundamentals and Performance***

Traditionally, the training of vocal singing has often neglected the development of performance artistry. During basic vocal exercises, the primary emphasis has been placed on vocal quality while overlooking the aspect of performance. Performance artistry should be intertwined with basic vocal exercises, where each vowel sound, in its purest form, should embody both vocal beauty and emotional expression. Imagine that, even during the most fundamental vocal exercises, if we place equal importance on the expressiveness of each vowel sound and maintain a pleasing facial expression and demeanor, then the combination of these vowel sounds, consonants, lyrics, and a beautiful melody will undoubtedly result in an impressive performance. Therefore, we believe that vocal educators and students should start with the simplest vocal exercises to cultivate a basic enthusiasm for performance artistry.<sup>[10]</sup> Over time, students will develop the ability to express their emotions boldly, ultimately leading to an improvement in performance artistry. To achieve this, teachers can design teaching activities that combine vocal exercises with performance training, encouraging students to engage in comprehensive performance artistry training during vocal classes.

#### ***5.2 Emphasizing the Musical Expression and Characterization of Phrases to Enhance Student Performance***

Strengthening students' performance artistry involves not only simple emotional expression but also the ability to express and characterize the musicality of phrases within vocal works. Musicality encompasses aspects such as tempo, dynamics, and rhythm. Among these, the mastery of elastic rhythm in music is crucial. Research suggests that flexible rhythm is a key element in showcasing the individualized performance artistry of renowned artists. Experienced performers, when playing the same piece with the same rhythm, deliver entirely unique and improvisational renditions, a phenomenon referred to by psychologists as intuitive thinking. Intuitive thinking is when artists utilize accumulated experiences combined with the present internal and external circumstances to make instantaneous decisions, resulting in unparalleled interpretations and leaving a distinct artistic impression on the audience.<sup>[11]</sup> In the context of musical performances, the performance artistry demonstrated by these artists is referred to as expressive performance. Therefore, we should aim to nurture singers in developing this form of performance artistry, which can be thought of as a type of intuitive thinking in the field of psychology. The successful manipulation of rhythm in music is essential to fully convey the content of vocal works and achieve an impressive and appropriate performance. To achieve this, educators should focus on developing students' ability to express and characterize the musicality of phrases within vocal works, enabling their overall growth and improvement in vocal singing abilities.<sup>[12]</sup>

#### ***5.3 Utilizing Campus Activities to Enhance Empathy Skills through Artistic Experiences***

Research has shown that empathy skills have a positive influence on a singer's performance artistry. In other words, the stronger a singer's empathy skills, the greater their performance artistry. Artistic experiences, in particular, have a positive impact on empathy skills. Therefore, singers should engage in various artistic activities, such as live performances, appreciating visual arts, visiting museums, reading, and attending high-quality artistic events to enhance their empathy skills. Improved empathy

skills allow singers to better understand the inner feelings of others and the characters within artistic works. Consequently, by enhancing empathy skills, singers can improve their performance artistry. It is recommended that educational institutions provide students with opportunities for artistic experiences and design multi-layered activities that align with students' individual circumstances. This approach effectively ensures that students can enhance their skills and development through active participation, ultimately promoting the improvement of vocal singing techniques and performance artistry. This, in turn, contributes to the advancement of vocal education at the university level and aligns with the objectives of cultivating applied artistic talents in the modern era.

## 6. Conclusion

Universities, as significant hubs for professional talent development, should not only assist students in acquiring theoretical knowledge and skills but also focus on their comprehensive growth. In the context of vocal singing education, educators must recognize that students' performance artistry and their singing skills are critical factors influencing their development. Therefore, in the implementation of teaching activities, it is essential not only to impart theoretical knowledge but also to address the strategies for enhancing performance artistry, a vital aspect of vocal education. Vocal educators should tailor diverse teaching activities to meet students' actual needs and development, staying updated with the times. By providing opportunities for students to practice their performance artistry in various contexts, educators can lay a solid foundation for the holistic development of their vocal singing abilities.

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