

Research on Music Singing Module Teaching in Senior High School under the New Curriculum Standard

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Abstract: *The new standards of high school music curriculum has brought a series of changes in the concept of curriculum, its design and evaluation etc. Accordingly, the revised teaching materials also make relevant changes under the guidance of the music curriculum standards. Thus singing, as one of the compulsory modules, needs to be adjusted accordingly in teaching.*

Keywords: *New Senior High School; Music Curriculum Standards; High School Singing Module Textbook published by People's Music Publishing House; Teaching Research*

1. Introduction

With the introduction of music curriculum standards for senior high schools in China in 2017 and the revision in 2020, Shaanxi Province of China also ushered in a new College Entrance Examination mode in the autumn of 2022, and began to use the new teaching materials of People's Music Publishing House. This paper is an exploration of the teaching process of singing module for high school music teachers in Shaanxi Province under the guidance of the new curriculum standards as well as the new teaching materials.

2. Changes of the Singing Module in the New Music Curriculum Standards of High Schools

Curriculum Standard is a teaching guide formulated by the state, which includes the nature of the curriculum, the curriculum objectives, the content standards, and the suggestions on conducting teaching etc. There are continuity but also differences existing between two versions in the General High School Music Curriculum Standards, Experimental version in 2003 and the revised one in 2020.

In the general framework, the 2022 edition adds new sections on "Curriculum Structures" and "Academic Quality". The new additions cover the "curriculum design ideas" and other content of the 2003 edition, proposing the cores of the module are aesthetic perception, artistic expression, and cultural understanding. These have also been integrated with the three dimensions of emotional attitude and values, process and method, and knowledge and skills from the previous curriculum standards. The content standards have specific elaboration for the compulsory modules and optional modules, and elective modules. The implementation suggestions in the 2020 revision provides relevant recommendations on teaching and evaluation, academic level examinations and so on.

2.1 Changes in Curriculum Structure and Credits of the Singing Module

According to the 2003 edition of curriculum standards, Music Appreciation worths 2 credits, and is given priority to open to students, and the other five modules (singing, performance, composition, music and dance, music and theatre) worths 1 credit each, which is gradually offered to students. In the revised edition of 2020, there are six compulsory modules, including music appreciation, singing, performance, music creation, music and dance, music and drama, each worths 2 credits (1 + 1) and 36 hours (18 + 18), which requires students to complete at least 2 credits in the compulsory module.

2.2 Changes in the Content of the Singing Module

In the 2003 edition, the singing module is described as "an effective way to cultivate students' abilities

in musical expression and aesthetics”, and in the 2020 revision it is described as “an important way to develop students’ artistic expression literacy”. There are various aspects in artistic expression literacy, including the ability to participate in individual or group musical expression; the ability to deepen one’s understanding of music; the ability to improve performance skills in musical practice and performance; and the ability to cultivate team spirit in collective performance activities.^[1]

As seen from the changes in the curriculum standards, the teaching requirements and teaching methods are also in need of change under the guidance of the new guiding policies for teaching.

3. Changes in the High School Singing Module Materials of People’s Music Publishing House

Under the guidance of the new curriculum standards of 2017 edition, the 2019 edition of the new singing module textbook for ordinary high schools has been adjusted compared with the 2009 edition.

3.1 Changes in the Structure of the Units

The module has been increased from seven units to ten, and the structural framework has been adjusted, adding new units such as “Beautiful Life”, “Deep Affection for Hometown/Strong Homesickness/Strong Nostalgia” and “Charm of Traditional (Chinese) Opera”.

3.2 Changes in the Repertoire

Some tracks have been added or subtracted. For example, tracks such as Call My Baby Name, Auld Lang Syne and Hallelujah were deleted, and tracks such as Athletes March, Give You Some Color and The Grand Mansion Gate were added.

It can be seen from the changes in teaching materials that the changes reflect the teaching requirements of moral education, focusing on the core literacy of music discipline in senior high schools, and carrying forward the excellent traditional Chinese culture and advanced socialist culture education, etc.

3.3 Research on Teaching Singing Module

Singing is an important way to enhance students’ artistic practice and artistic expression. The singing module is positioned not only for singing, but also for appreciation. By appreciating and singing outstanding works of different genres, themes and forms, students can stimulate their interest in singing and learn singing methods. This can be seen in the cases below

Case 1

In “Charm of Traditional Opera” (Unit 10, 2019 edition of the singing textbook published by People’s Music Publishing House), the works are appreciated with the theme song of the TV series The Grand Mansion Gate and practiced with the theme song of the TV series Hu Xueyan. From the content of the unit, it is required to understand the characteristics of Beijing opera singing, and to experience the charm of Beijing opera rhythm in Beijing songs 1, as well as understanding the relevant Beijing opera knowledge, and love excellent traditional music.

In the teaching process, the work The Grand Mansion Gate is appreciated. The theme song of this TV series interprets the regional culture of Beijing School with Beijing accent and rhyme through the development course of the pharmacy “Baicao Hall”, a century-old Chinese brand. It should be noted that this work also appears in “Chinese Film and Television Music” in Unit 6, Section 11, of the 2019 edition of senior high school Music Appreciation textbook of People’s Music Publishing House. This also demonstrates that each module in high school module teaching is related and complementary as the same work would appear in different modules with different teaching objectives. In the music appreciation teaching material, through the appreciation and understanding of musical pieces such as The Grand Mansion Gate, we can understand how influence imposed by the match between the music style and the TV series or movies. While in the singing module, the focus is on the cadence relationship between Beijing accent and Beijing rhyme, singing style and method, timbre application, etc. The songs incorporate different musical elements such as Beijing opera, Pingju Opera, Henan Opera, drum song of

¹ Beijing songs are songs with the addition of musical elements of Beijing opera, which are an improvement and innovation of Beijing opera.

Peking, Bangzi Opera, folk songs, and popular songs, which are integrated smoothly and coherently. In teaching, teachers lead students to explore the singing tune of songs, sound timbre, lyrics, rhythm and beat, and other characteristics, and finally understand the vividness in characters. For example, in Paragraph A, “Laugh at birth, love opens two gates, troubled times and troubled souls”, Free Measure2 of Beijing Opera is used. The pitch of the first character is located at the level of Re in two-lined octave. When singing, it is necessary to control the breath and emphasize words at a slower speed.

The theme song of the TV series *Hu Xueyan* (a practical work in this unit)—*Love Complaint*, is a work of traditional Chinese opera style. Due to the unique timbre of the singer Liu Huan, it has become a popular opera song with Beijing rhyme style. When learning it, we should first understand the opera songs, which are musical forms that draw on traditional opera with significant characteristics and can reflect the unique elements of that opera and integrate them into modern popular songs. Beijing songs are the representative of opera songs.

When singing this song, the front appoggiatura and upper mordent must be noted. In the music score below, the appoggiatura and the modified keynote are in a two-degree progression, and the voice should be concentrated when singing. Mordents' duration should be appropriate, not too long, and their fluctuation frequency should be slightly slower by means of traditional opera. (Music Score 1 is shown in *Figure 1*)



Figure 1: Music Score 1

When teaching the singing, the comparison method can be adopted. Teachers sing without mordents first, and then use the singing method with mordents, so that students can notice the difference. When singing the lyrics “Boat” and “Eyes”, the rhythm of Beijing Opera should be stronger, emphasizing the exaggeration of pronunciation/diction/enunciating words and pure accent. In terms of pronunciation, the “i” sound should be as forward as possible, with nasal resonance; and the “a” sound should be pronounced with the risorius lifted and the lips slightly opened horizontally.^[2]

Case 2

In Unit 6, “Barcarole on the Wusuli River” (2019 edition of the singing textbook published by People’s Music Publishing House) enables students to appreciate the the singing style of Hezhen nationality and picture the scenes of the fishermen working and harvesting, meet the requirements aesthetic perception of core literacy. The students can have a better understanding of the types of choral art.

Under the goal of aesthetic perception, the first step in the teaching is to provide students the background knowledge of the Hezhen nationality. It is the oldest ethnic minority in Northeast China and the only existing ethnic minority that retains a “fishing and hunting culture”. The direct translation of the word “Hezhen” in Manchu means “People of the East”. Hezhe people has their own language and they use Chinese as well because of their long-term communication with Han nationality. This can be seen in the songs of “Jialingkuo”³ and “Yimakan”⁴. Listening to the music segment - the introduction part, the lyrics of “A-Lang-He-He-Ni-Na” comes from the tune of “Jialingkuo”. The piano accompaniment melody in the introduction part uses upward and downward links to create a picture sense of sparkling water waves on the river surface, which makes people immerse themselves in the life of Hezhe people. The song is sung by tenor lead and mixed four-part chorus, and the main melody of the three verses is sometimes sung by tenor voice, and sometimes sung by contralto voice and soprano voice. Especially in the third section, the soprano voice sings the main melody, and the other three voice parts sing along, making the music seem more cheerful and simple, which makes people feel the love and praise of Hezhe people for life. When listening to the work, students are guided to pay attention to the changes in musical mood brought about by the singing form, and compare the same song in solo form.^[3]

In the artistic expression of core literacy, students can experience the call of “A-Lang-He-He-Ni-Na” when singing. ^[4]The students will be divided into groups, one group stronger and the other group weaker, to creating an echo effect. Teachers can also try to divide boys and girls into groups by timbre distinction,

² Its rhythm is free, and it can be freely played according to the lyrics.

³ The general name of Hezhe folk songs means minor and ditty. It is a kind of lyrical song with pure emotion and softness, which has been selected into the intangible cultural heritage list.

⁴ “Yimakan” is a type of Hezhe folk songs. It is a form of rap without musical instruments and relies on oral transmission.

with girls singing first and boys simulating the echoes. (Music Score 2 is shown in *Figure 2*)

mf $\dot{5}$ $\dot{6}$ $\dot{6}$ $\dot{7}$ $\dot{6}$ $\dot{5}$ $\dot{5}$ | $\dot{5}$. $\dot{5}$. | $\dot{5}$. $\dot{5}$ 0 | $\dot{1}$ $\dot{2}$ $\dot{2}$ $\dot{2}$ $\dot{1}$ $\dot{1}$ $\dot{1}$ | $\dot{1}$. $\dot{1}$. | $\dot{1}$. $\dot{1}$ 0 |

A-lang he-he-ni-na A-lang he-he-ni-na

Figure 2: Music Score 2

After the introduction, the first line of the song “The Wusuli River is long and long” should be sung with a coherent breath. Most of the phrases in this song are relatively melodious and gentle, so it is important to keep the breath uniform in the overall handling of the breath. Students are suggested to smile and relax their throats. In the articulation of lyrics, for example, in the sentence “The blue river is full of waves”, the second word “lan (blue)” requires clear articulation and a sense of lightness, not dragging, to reflect the description of the scenery in the song. Students can read these two reduplicated words in language first. When reading the second “lan (blue)” word, they should pay attention to the fact that the two words are homophonic, and the reading time of the second word is shorter than that of the first word.^[5] In singing, the second word is polyphonic, adding the feeling of finals (of a Chinese syllable). Through the comparison of reading and singing, students can experience the use of vocal cavity. (Music Score 3 is shown in *Figure 3*)

mf $\dot{5}$ $\dot{6}$ $\dot{6}$ $\dot{7}$ $\dot{6}$ $\dot{5}$ $\dot{5}$ | $\dot{5}$. $\dot{5}$. | $\dot{5}$. $\dot{5}$ 0 | $\dot{1}$ $\dot{2}$ $\dot{2}$ $\dot{2}$ $\dot{1}$ $\dot{1}$ $\dot{1}$ | $\dot{1}$. $\dot{1}$. | $\dot{1}$. $\dot{1}$ 0 |

Wu-su-li ri-ver long and long, blue water waves are

breaking on shore

Figure 3: Music Score 3

By appreciating and singing this song, students have been able to understand the relevant knowledge of the song as well as the life of Hezhe people, and grasp that nature is the space where human beings live and from which many works of art originate on the level of cultural understanding of core literacy. The artists show the scenes of life to the audience through artistic processing, creation and re-practice based on the original ecology.

In the practice of singing teaching in senior high schools, it is necessary to study the curriculum standards and analyze the teaching materials. Meanwhile, it is also necessary to attach great importance to cultural understanding on the basis of paying attention to artistic expression in the study of new singing modules, so as to better explain the “core literacy” in teaching.

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