

# The Development and Exploration of Music Clubs in Colleges and Universities

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**Abstract:** *From the macro perspective (the experiences and achievements of some 985 Project and 211 Project in organizing and building music clubs) (985 Project refers to the construction of advanced universities by the Communist Party of China and The State Council of the People's Republic of China at the turn of the century. 211 Project refers to the construction project of about 100 key disciplines and majors in order to face the 21st century and meet the challenges of new revolutionary technology, the central government focuses the efforts of central and local parties to build a group of higher education institutions.) and the objective perspective (the limitations and constraints in organizing and building music clubs in general colleges and universities at the present stage), the author will explain how general colleges and universities can develop and build music clubs with their own characteristics according to their own objective conditions and take advantage of their strengths and weaknesses. After the establishment and construction of music clubs such as vocal ensembles and instrumental ensembles, the rehearsal and performance venues are chosen according to the conditions of ordinary colleges and universities, and rehearsals and performances are held within a fixed period of time after the confirmation of conductors and arrangers, thus greatly enriching the material and cultural life of college students.*

**Keywords:** *Vocal ensembles, instrumental ensembles, formation, rehearsals, performances*

## 1. Introduction

Since entering the 21st century, with the continuous expansion policy of college students in China, various college clubs have flourished. Among them, music and dance clubs are especially influential. From the analysis of the author's observations during more than ten years of teaching at the university, it is more difficult to prepare for the construction of music clubs. With the exception of a few specially recruited art students from Project 985, the basic profile of the quality of students in the first batch of undergraduate and the second batch of undergraduate is more or less the same. The aerobics or group dance classes will achieve certain results after a short period of training. But the music clubs is different, in short, that there are too few students who can sing without being out of tune and too few who can play an instrument. Therefore, the level of performance or singing of music clubs is often a major factor in measuring a college's ability to teach cultural quality and the overall artistic quality of its students. The author's research direction is the construction, construction and development of the foundation of music clubs in colleges and universities. In the following, the author will analyze the foundation construction, building and development of music clubs in colleges and universities from three aspects, vocal, instrumental and the combination of vocal and instrumental music.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. *There are two types of vocal music*

#### 2.1.1. *Solo*

Solo singing is the main vocal activity as a form of artistic expression.

#### 2.1.2. *Chorus*

Chorus is a form of artistic expression mainly in the form of chorus rehearsal

## **2.2. *There are two types of instrumental groups***

### **2.2.1. *Electro-acoustic instrumental ensemble***

Generally, there is a singer in the ensemble of electro-acoustic instruments, and the singer is the main lead vocalist. Other basic configurations include an electric guitar (sometimes connected to a speaker or folk guitar), an electric bass with a drum, and an accompaniment keyboard or synthesizer (synthesizer often provides more sound options and accompaniment effects).

### **2.2.2. *Natural sound instrumental ensembles***

Such groups generally have few or no electro-acoustic instruments. Sometimes just a microphone connected to a speaker as a mode of sound release, if it is in a relatively formal concert hall or performance venue, there is no need for microphones as well as speakers. Natural sound instrumental ensembles are also divided into orchestral-based instrumental ensemble and non-all-orchestral instrumental ensembles.

## **3. Vocal category**

Vocal music is an art and a science, and the singer is an artist who performs with the relevant organs of his body as “musical instruments”(Cao & Huang, 2004)<sup>[1]</sup>. It is generally divided into two kinds, Solo singing and Chorus.

### **3.1. *Solo singing***

In general, most colleges and universities often hold recreational vocal karaoke competitions in order to enrich the students’ extracurricular entertainment. It is not excluded that such competitions can also screen out students with relatively excellent singing skills and perfect voice quality. At the same time, the final winner is often very popular among students. But the essence of the club is to reflect the unity and love among college students, to help each other, and to make progress together, not to present the artistic expression of a single individual. That’s why vocal clubs are often in the form of chorus.

### **3.2. *Chorus***

There are many different kinds of choral singing if you break it down. For example, the traditional four-part chorus; three-part chorus; two-part chorus and so on. At the same time, due to the difference of gender, chorus is also divided into homophonic chorus and mixed chorus. If you distinguish by performance form, it is divided into with instrumental accompaniment and a cappella. Except for professional music schools, most student chorus are not professional Chorus, so let’s start with the chorus “with instrumental accompaniment”.

#### **3.2.1. *Accompanying instruments***

If the rehearsal course is compact and there is a fixed rehearsal time every week, in order to ensure the effect of rehearsal and performance artistry and to achieve the degree of reduction in the probability of mistakes or errors in performance, the author does not recommend the use of fixed rhythm accompaniment to rehearsal and performance. At this stage in the chorus of colleges, universities and Project 211 and Project 985, the piano is a common accompaniment instrument, which is also related to the conditions of school funding. In less privileged schools, the accompaniment instrument becomes electric piano or electronic keyboard with accompaniment. The actual real results from the performance, if the rehearsals are demanding enough and the artistic skills of the chorus students are complete enough. It is possible to accompany the chorus entirely with accompaniment tapes, or with an electronic keyboard with accompaniment function. If connected to the speakers, the performance venue’s music effect is better. The final performance of the sound effects and artistic level will also reach a relatively high level. Some high school or university chorus sometimes add drums as percussion accompaniment, combined with keyboard instruments with pitch (piano, electric piano or accordion), with sufficient rehearsal time and rehearsal conditions, as well as high level rehearsal teachers and conductors (and even composers and orchestrators, etc.). Such a chorus already considered a very top chorus in domestic colleges and universities.

European and American countries including Japan and Korea in Asia. It has been a world leader in campus Chorus art groups. The author have watched some of the world’s top colleges’ chorus in videos

of classical music or elegant music on WeChat official account. (There are arts colleges and universities as well as other professional colleges and universities in the arts and sciences) these choruses have reached a very high artistic level in terms of pitch and polyphony and the singing talent of their students. Most of these students receive a relatively well-developed musical education and musical literacy from an early age. Students who excel in vocal performance and singing are selected at an early age for a full range of roles. From elementary school or even kindergarten, they join the school Chorus and move up through the ranks, from middle school to high school to college. This all-round advantage is all about the accumulation of time and artistic cultivation. Involving the topic the author is exploring today, these higher Chorus are very attentive to the accompanying instruments, and it is common to have a small orchestra with one or two instruments or a combination of several instruments. There are various kinds of instruments such as stringed wind, keyboard, piano and accordion. The percussion even uses timpani, military drums and cymbals. Some of the Chorus of art colleges and universities use symphonic music as accompaniment, and the overall size of the performance even exceeds 200 people. Most of the Chorus in China's colleges and universities generally start with the formation of Chorus from freshman orientation as a start. Of course, some colleges and universities with large enough enrollment will directly recruit students who are good at vocal arts, so that both cultural and artistic specialties of such high level students will significantly improve the level of rehearsal and performance of the Chorus in colleges and universities. When it comes to the accompaniment instruments, students can be selected from students with talent who are suitable for the accompaniment instruments. Regardless of the size, as long as students with vocal singing potential and accompaniment instruments are fixed, and insist on rehearsals and regular performances for years and years, the level will become higher and higher. The above will have achieved the purpose of enriching students' campus life, showing the modern college students' quality education style, and improving the education level of our colleges and universities comprehensively.

### ***3.2.2. Employment of various teachers related to the formation and development of Chorus***

The selection and appointment of teachers involved in Chorus is relatively complex, which is closely related to the size and configuration of the Chorus. In addition to the strong financial strength of 985 Project as well as 211 Project. Other general universities often have only one teacher for their college Chorus. There is no piano accompaniment, nor any other musical instrument accompaniment. Some are simply downloaded from the Internet or other sources of accompaniment tapes. Some simply do not have an accompaniment, called by the glorified name of a cappella. Once the conductor teacher's musicianship is not high, there are many problems with pitch and rhythm. When it comes to school-level performances, as well as various festival performances, teachers tend to cope with the situation and simply perform for the students or teachers and leaders of the school. Anyway, the audience is very amateur, everyone on the lively, as long as the show is finished. It is simply not possible to promote the Chorus to participate in higher level performances or competitions, and it is difficult to reach the grand hall and can not achieve glory for the school. This is often due to the lack of attention from school leaders and the serious lack of funding. The author believes that: the higher level of college Chorus often have a fixed rehearsal and conductor teacher, the teacher qualification is not important, the important thing is that the rehearsal teacher must be a professional college graduate of vocal music department (Many vocal instructors for variety shows and professional group singer level instructors are also not qualified to teach, as they are always performing on the front line and have a lot of practical experience, or even acting as rehearsal and conducting teachers in local Chorus. Such teachers are often more qualified than the vocal teachers in colleges and universities, they know more about vocal or Chorus rehearsals and performances, and can keep up with the trend of the times). It must be a professional person doing a professional job. As for the accompaniment instruments and the form of accompaniment, it is often the chorus teacher who makes the corresponding changes and adjustments according to the rehearsal form and performance needs of the chorus.

## **4. Musical Instruments**

According to the author's years of experience in organizing and rehearsing college instrumental ensembles, as well as participating in keyboard orchestras and forming bands and chamber music combinations when the author was a student; after graduating and working, the author has studied and analyzed various instrumental ensembles in the world through various channels such as the Internet and videos, and the instrumental ensembles are basically divided into three categories: instrumental ensembles with electric sound (electric piano, electric guitar, electric drums and other plug-in instruments, which need to be connected to speakers to complete performance rehearsals) and natural sound (all rely on human body operations to play, not directly connected to speakers, at most with the

help of microphones connected to speakers to complete the musical performance), and instrumental ensembles combining natural sound instruments and electric sound instruments. Many of the musical instrument ensembles active in today's society relative to the market are a combination of electric and natural acoustic instruments. Most natural acoustic instrumental ensembles are found in municipal, provincial and national orchestras. The Central Conservatory of Music, Conservatory College of China, Tianjin Conservatory of Music and other nine major conservatories as well as some art colleges or teacher training art colleges have their own symphony orchestras. There are also some 985 Project that directly hire music teachers to conduct, rehearse, compose and so on, due to the annual recruitment of various musical instrument students, it is easier for school to organize the orchestra. Of course, such orchestras also have the addition of electro-acoustic instruments. The author will give a basic explanation and introduction of these three kinds of instrumental ensembles from different perspectives.

#### ***4.1. Electro-acoustic instrumental ensembles***

Familiar to the public, the general electro-acoustic instrumental group with a singer, the singer is the lead vocalist, the other basic configuration for the electric guitar (sometimes can also be connected to the speaker folk guitar) and electric bass and drums and backing keyboard or synthesizer (synthesizers often provide more timbral options, there are backing effects, here does not give excessive detail). Although there are sometimes other types of electric instruments and even natural instruments added, the four instruments mentioned above are the most dominant band configuration. The whole group is called a band. For example, in the 90's, the "Black Panther Band" and "Tang Dynasty Band", which are particularly famous in Chinese mainland had the same instrument configuration, but with the addition of singers (sometimes even more than one singer), so they could not be called purely instrumental groups. In those days, bands mainly played and sang in the style of rock music. This type of band in today's colleges and universities is of varying standards, sometimes with absurd and bizarre styles, and often with content and values that are not of high musical appreciation value. Here the author do not recommend nor explain further.

#### ***4.2. Natural sound instrumental ensembles***

These ensembles generally have few or no electro-acoustic instruments. Sometimes they only use microphones connected to loudspeakers as a mode of sound release, and if they are in a relatively formal concert hall or performance venue, they do not need microphones and loudspeakers. Natural sound instrumental ensembles are also divided into those that are mainly orchestral and those that incorporate other instruments.

##### ***4.2.1. Orchestral-based instrumental ensemble***

Orchestra is the product of the development of instrumental music and vocal music. Before the 16th century, European instrumental music was subordinate to vocal music, but after the 17th century, instrumental music was separated from vocal music and became a separate musical category, as instrument-making techniques improved and opera emerged. Many composers began to experiment with composing their own instrumental works, musical genres such as the dance music, capriccio and the concerto appeared one after another. Since orchestral music has been developed for hundreds of years, orchestration as well as composition have formed a relatively complete system of orchestration and composition. After its arrival in China, especially after the founding of the people's Republic of China, orchestral music has developed greatly in China. In particular, each province, municipality directly under the Central Government and autonomous regions have their own relatively complete, relatively high level and large scale orchestras representing local culture. However, it is not so easy to implement the training of orchestras in colleges and universities. After all, there are many conditions for a college or university to have an orchestra, including human, material and financial resources. In particular, the overall level of arts education in the country is limited, especially in orchestral music, and there are few teachers teaching orchestral music in the training industry inside and outside the school, so there are fewer students in this area, which also leads to fewer students with the ability to play orchestral instruments in the university later. This brings us to the more powerful domestic 985 Project, both in terms of faculty strength and the quality and quantity of students enrolled, and the rich and varied educational backgrounds of students in the schools. The country has also invested sufficient financial and human resources in the 985 Project, especially for the large number of art students recruited each year, the reserve is very sufficient. Therefore, almost all the 985 Project have their own orchestras, some of which have more than 50 members, and the performance effect is also up to or

close to the symphony performance effect. So the author's point is not aimed at these strong colleges and universities. Other ordinary colleges and universities in China or private colleges and universities can find another way out completely. Symphonic performance effect is not the only way out for orchestras, conductors and teachers can totally reduce the scale and narrow down the configuration of orchestras to chamber music on it. Chamber music also belongs to the branch of Western orchestras, which has developed over the centuries and is divided into three types by instrument type: string quartet, woodwind quintet, brass quintet, etc. It is important to emphasize that classical music is relatively rigorous and disciplined. In the 21st century, the development of instrumental music is progressing day by day. For example, a combination of percussion, strings and keyboards. This combination form of above instruments is generally moderate, warm, lyrical, probably because the piano and aluminum piano are soft percussion instruments, the music played in this form has a light, magical, ethereal effect. The types and expressions of these instrument combinations are gradually diversifying<sup>[2]</sup>. The orchestra with a complete and standardized orchestra, and the orchestra with symphonic performance effect can only be found in professional groups or professional colleges.

#### **4.2.2. Non-all-orchestral instrumental ensembles**

With the diversity and diversification of musical expression in the 21st century. According to the author's attention and research for many years, there are more and more instrumental ensembles of the association type in colleges and universities. Some of the better ones are the keyboard orchestra of Renmin University and the accordion orchestra of Peking University.<sup>[3]</sup> This is also in line with the current situation of keyboard instruments, which are more trained in terms of social instrument training. Since keyboard instruments are relatively easy to teach, more children choose keyboard instruments as their initial musical instruments. The keyboard ensembles of Renmin University and Peking University are more likely to use the accordion as the main instrument. It is also because the accordion is a convenient instrument to carry, rich in harmony and easy to play. The strength of these two universities is undeniable, as they have developed keyboard orchestras on top of the orchestras they already have. The richness of their student clubs is completely ahead of other ordinary universities in China. Therefore, as the majority of ordinary colleges and universities, without the ability to form an orchestra, they can also find another way to form a relatively suitable instrumental ensemble by using other types of instruments. The author will elaborate on the last issue of this paper.

### **5. Exploration and Suggestions on the Development Direction of Instrumental Ensembles in General Universities**

Unlike most of the 985 Project in first-tier cities, the vast land of China is full of ordinary colleges and universities in provinces, cities and second- and third-tier cities, as well as ordinary young people who do not have very high scores in the entrance exams but also have dreams in mind. Therefore, music clubs in colleges and universities also have the obligation and responsibility to improve the aesthetic cognition and music cognition of ordinary college students. The author will elaborate and suggest the formation and implementation of the weakest link of the music clubs in the universities, namely the "Instrumental Ensembles".

#### **5.1. The formation of instrumental ensembles: The formation of general instrumental ensembles is divided into two directions.**

##### **5.1.1. The first type is to specifically recruit students with the ability to play instrumental music**

And it is a purposeful recruitment, as the author mentioned earlier in this article. Directly recruiting students with special skills in orchestral playing (including brass, woodwind and strings). After all, orchestral ensembles are relatively well matched and standardized, and have a history and experience in the development of music history. If the number of students recruited is really limited, recruit them as much as possible. Secondly, conductors and teachers can recruit other instruments, such as piano in keyboard music (you can take electric piano instead of piano in rehearsal performance), electric piano, accordion, etc. In general there are more students studying higher melodic instruments (flute, violin trumpet, etc.). In an instrumental ensemble of about 20 people, the addition of two or three such "laye's already provides a richer tone for the instrumental ensemble's performance. If there are four or five such musicians, a better sound will be achieved. It would be nice to have the rest of the musicians for the bass/middle instruments (cello, trombone, or single or double reed). If this is not possible, other non-orchestral musicians (keyboard musicians are more appropriate) can be recruited to fill in the vocal parts and lay down the bass. Keyboard instruments, in particular, have a wide range of sound and can

play harmonies and utilize different timbres. To take a step back, if conductors don't recruit any musicians for orchestral instruments, then the conductors will focus on keyboard instruments. During the author's time as a school orchestra teacher, the author also used to add guitar to the keyboard orchestra. It also received a relatively new acoustic effect during the performance. The formation of the above instrumental team is mainly based on Western instruments, this attempt to integrate Chinese and Western instruments with each other has not been done, the author hope to have the opportunity to try it in the future.

### ***5.1.2. The second type of instrumental ensemble formation is less recommended***

It is to select students who are relatively basic in musical instruments or have a little bit of musical literacy among the students at school. This way of formation will directly lead to two results: either the students learning the instrument will have different levels of learning, making it difficult to achieve practice and rehearsal in a short period of time. Either that, or even if they reach the level of practicing ordinary music, their level is still limited and they have difficulty in expressing the musical connotation of the piece just for the sake of rehearsing and playing. But if you choose a keyboard instrument with relatively fixed pitch, it will be slightly better. Again, it may be necessary to include an electric instrument for effect. The remaining orchestral instruments that are relatively unstable in pitch and difficult to grasp are also more difficult to learn, and more difficult to reach the level of orchestra rehearsal music. Therefore the way instrumental ensembles are formed in general colleges and universities should be determined according to the school situation and the annual enrollment.

## ***5.2. Rehearsal and performance of the instrumental ensemble***

### ***5.2.1. Rehearsal***

After the instrumental ensemble is formed, it is not necessary to rehearse the music immediately. Rather, the composition teacher has to make appropriate selections and arrangements according to the configuration of the instruments in the orchestra, which is actually the most important part before rehearsal. The orchestra rehearsal is a group activity, so the arrangement needs to be roughly divided into three parts: high voice, middle voice, and low voice to arrange the music. Some orchestras, due to their large size, may also have other auxiliary voices. Before rehearsal, it is best to assign a vocalist to each section to organize the rehearsals among the members. When the piece is well rehearsed, the conductor will organize and direct the entire orchestra to rehearse together. Normal orchestra rehearsals should be held once or twice a week. Since rehearsals often encounter a variety of problems, it is important to schedule enough practice time to solve them.

### ***5.2.2. Performance***

With sufficient practice time and rehearsal time, then a higher level performance will come into being. In general, instrumental music clubs in colleges and universities usually perform in on-campus concert halls or auditoriums of similar venues. The author believes that the performance of instrumental music is more suitable to be performed indoors as opposed to an empty off-site performance venue. It is best to have a stage about 30cm high to present the performance. You can determine whether to use speaker according to the sound transmission effect in the room. The standard concert hall should have a certain reverberation, stage decoration is best mixed with wood materials, will obviously play the effect of Receiving and playing sound. If it is a venue like an auditorium, it needs to be surrounded by appropriate decoration that conforms to the relevant rules. To prevent the stage effect is too empty and the mix is too strong. The author in many years to observe the performance of many colleges and universities of the instrumental ensemble, as well as the network information query. No matter what kind of instruments are used to form the orchestra, if a keyboard instrument similar to a synthesizer is added appropriately, it will often receive unexpected effects. This also adds a variety of possibilities for the expressiveness of the piece. However, the percussion should also stand alone, with two or one percussionist, and use drums and cymbals as the main percussion instruments to add to the expressive power. If you take the fixed percussion accompaniment of keyboard instruments, it will be very rigid and not flexible enough. It is not possible to improvise in rehearsals or performances.

## **6. Conclusion**

The above is the author's theoretical elaboration on the relative practicality of music clubs in colleges and universities. Although the author has elaborated and argued from two aspects: vocal ensemble and instrumental ensemble. However, with suitable works and arrangements, the two can be

perfectly combined to achieve the best stage performance and effect.

Each generation of college students continues to present a diverse range of personalities and hobbies. As the times are changing, college music educators should also keep up with the times and keep up with the trend of the times. It is also hoped that all universities can fully realize the importance of music clubs for college students, increase the construction and investment in music clubs for colleges and universities, and get better and better in academic evolution and spiritual world enrichment and improvement, so as to comprehensively promote the practical teaching of colleges and universities as well as the improvement of the cultural life of college students, and truly make education a necessary fundamental and future hope for national development.

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