

A Study on the Teaching Practice of Violin Vibrato Techniques for Music Education Majors——A Case Study of "Song of Nostalgia"

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Abstract: The key of music education professional teaching lies not only in the transmission of music knowledge itself, but also in the guidance of teaching concepts, methods and activities, so as to explore an effective teaching path for violin vibrato techniques in music education majors. This study takes the classic work "Song of Nostalgia" as a case, through the hierarchical design of "work analysis - technique training - teaching practice", to show the transmission mode of music knowledge in music education activities, so as to improve students' application ability of vibrato techniques, music expression and teaching transformation ability, so as to achieve the purpose of cultivating and inspiring future educators, and provide practical reference for similar teaching.

Keywords: Music Education; Violin Teaching; Vibrato Technique; "Song of Nostalgia"; Teaching Practice

1. Introduction

Classroom practice in music education is linked to the times. It develops as the times change. New curriculum standards have arrived. They bring new challenges. They also bring new opportunities for music education classroom practice.

There is another factor. The national "Aesthetic Education Immersion" plan is in place. Under this policy, music performance in classrooms is getting more attention. This means some problems need urgent solutions. These problems exist in violin teaching for music education majors^[1].

Examples of such problems are clear. One is "the disconnection between technique training and emotional expression". Another is "the separation between performance ability and teaching ability".

Vibrato is key^[2]. It is the core technique for violin expressiveness. Teaching vibrato needs a specific approach. It must be combined with specific works. This combination helps students understand a clear learning path — from technical training to the final music performance, and ultimately to the cultivation of humanistic literacy.

There is more value. It helps students identify knowledge points. They also recognize music elements and teaching elements. This is based on their learning outcomes. Doing this allows them to solve practical problems. These problems appear in learning and teaching. They can do this in a classified and step-by-step way. The result is positive. It cultivates students' learning ability. It also develops their teaching ability.

Song of Nostalgia was composed in 1937 by Ma Sicong^[3], a renowned figure who was a contemporary Chinese violinist, educator, and composer. The piece adopts a specific musical tone derived from the Inner Mongolian folk song Running Along the City Wall.

This work conveys an emotion—nostalgia for one's hometown. Song of Nostalgia possesses two key characteristics: national traits and rich emotional expression. These features can be demonstrated through vibrato techniques. Therefore, it is highly suitable as a teaching case for vibrato instruction.

2. Research Design and Methods

This study takes the application ability of vibrato skills in works of students majoring in music education as the core research goal, and constructs a three-stage research framework of "theoretical learning - skill practice - teaching transformation" through teaching case design, selection of specific research objects and multi-dimensional data collection. The details are as follows:

2.1 Teaching Case Design

The study uses a progressive teaching framework. It is divided into three stages. These are pre-class preview, in-class hierarchical teaching and after-class expansion.

The pre-class preview session focuses on basic preparation. Students need to do several things independently. They study the creative background of "Song of Nostalgia". They learn about its emotional tone. They also practice basic vibrato techniques. Examples include strength control and frequency adjustment of wrist vibrato.

Students must submit two things through an online platform. One is their preview notes. The other is audio of basic vibrato practice. This ensures they have a preliminary understanding. They need to know the work's context and technical points.

In-class hierarchical teaching follows a logical clue. The clue is the structure of the work. It provides targeted training for three sections of "Song of Nostalgia".

2.2 Research Objects

The research objects are 28 sophomores. They are majoring in music education at a certain university. This group has some basic skills. They have learned basic violin performance techniques systematically. They can also operate wrist vibrato and finger vibrato.

But they face a problem. In complex works, there is a "disconnection between technology and emotion". For example, vibrato strength may not match the work's emotion. Or vibrato techniques may lack pertinence when switching paragraphs.

There is a clear gap. It is between their abilities and the requirements of primary and secondary school music teachers. These teachers need "technique application + teaching transformation" ability. This makes the group valuable for research. They have typical characteristics and room for improvement.

2.3 Data Collection Methods

The study adopts a multi-source data collection strategy, and obtains empirical data through three dimensions: classroom observation, performance evaluation and teaching simulation evaluation:

(1) Class Observation: The participatory observation method is employed to systematically record students' academic performance and interactive feedback in the context of hierarchical teaching. Specifically, the observation focuses on the stability of students' vibrato speed and the fluency of skill transition across musical sections, while also documenting the key focuses of their raised questions and the expression of viewpoints during group discussions. Based on the collected first-hand observational data, standardized classroom observation logs and targeted video analysis clips are compiled to provide empirical support for subsequent research and teaching evaluation.

(2) Performance Evaluation: The pre-test and post-test comparative method is adopted. Audio recordings of students' performance fragments of Song of Nostalgia are collected before and after the teaching intervention. Three experts in music education are invited to conduct blind evaluation using a 5-point Likert scale. The evaluation focuses on two core dimensions: first, the accuracy of vibrato application, such as the matching degree between vibrato techniques and musical paragraphs; second, emotional fit, such as the degree to which vibrato processing restores the work's artistic conception. This standardized evaluation process quantifies the improvement effect of students' vibrato skills. It provides objective data support for verifying the validity of the teaching model.

(3) Teaching Simulation Evaluation: A qualitative evaluation is conducted on the fifth-grade Song of Nostalgia appreciation course plans designed by students. The focus lies on their ability to translate vibrato techniques into teaching practice. Key evaluation criteria include two aspects: first, whether the teaching design aligns with primary school students' cognitive level, such as the popularity of metaphorical expressions used; second, whether the activity design can effectively guide students to perceive the connection between vibrato and emotional expression. Meanwhile, a scoring scale themed "plan completeness + operability" is adopted to conduct graded evaluation, ensuring the objectivity and standardization of the evaluation results.

3. Teaching Practice Process and Analysis

The teaching practice of this study takes "Song of Nostalgia" as the carrier, carries out hierarchical teaching around the structural logic of "theme section - contrast section - recapitulation section", and promotes students to realize the transformation of vibrato skills from "technical operation" to "work expression" through the deep integration of technique training and emotional guidance. At the same time, it reflects the teaching concept of "student-centered" through interactive dialogue. The specific process and analysis are as follows:

3.1 Theme Section

The melody of the theme section comes from an adaptation^[4]. It is based on the Inner Mongolia folk song "Running on the City Wall". his folk song has a characteristic: "few words and many tones". This characteristic determines something important. Vibrato here should focus on "narrative".

In teaching, there is a first step. Students are guided to listen to the original folk song. This helps them perceive its emotional tone. The tone is "long and melancholy".

Then, another step follows. We introduce Lin Yaoji's vibrato formula: "like sitting in a rocking chair". The formula explains: "the body is relaxed like sitting in a rocking chair. The wrist drives the fingers to swing naturally. The strength is uniform like breathing cycle." This formula helps students. They understand the essentials of "slow and coherent" vibrato. They learn this through body rhythm.

In practice, students have a specific requirement. They must play at a vibrato frequency of 50-60 times per minute.

Another emphasis is placed here. Bow speed and vibrato frequency must match. For example, they need to maintain the coherence of vibrato in long notes. They also need to avoid strength fluctuations. These fluctuations are caused by changes in bow speed.

Doing this serves a purpose. It simulates the artistic conception of "the song echoing on the grassland". It also makes the abstract emotion of "missing" become concrete. This happens through specific technique operations.

3.2 Contrast Section

The melody speed of the contrast section is accelerated. It is about 20% faster than the theme section. But there is a requirement here. The internal logic of homesickness must continue. This creates a contradictory tension between "speed and emotion".

In teaching, we use an innovative metaphor: "tea fragrance and aftertaste". It works like this. "The initial taste of tea is strong. This corresponds to the direct expression of emotion in the theme section. When recalling the memory, the taste fades but the aftertaste is long. This corresponds to the implicit expression of the contrast section."

This metaphor guides students to understand a key principle. It is "large amplitude but slow frequency" for vibrato adjustment.

To follow this principle, students need to maintain the wrist swing amplitude. It should be about 3-4 cm. At the same time, they need to reduce the vibrato frequency. It should be 40-50 times per minute.

The combination of "slow frequency and large swing" has two effects. It responds to the rhythm from speed changes. It also avoids emotional expression fragmentation. This fragmentation is caused by too fast frequency.

At this stage, we use a "group comparison performance" activity. Students can feel two things intuitively. One is "emotional fragmentation caused by too fast frequency (such as more than 70 times per minute)". The other is "weak expressiveness caused by insufficient amplitude (less than 2 cm)".

Through error correction, students strengthen their ability to control these contradictions.

3.3 Recapitulation Section

The recapitulation section turns to the high-pitched area. This area mainly uses the note "a" in the treble clef, second ledger line above. The core of teaching here is clear. It guides students to understand a key logic: "artistic conception is greater than sound". We draw on the concept of "leaving blank in Chinese painting". From this, we put forward a technique requirement: "vibrato as if it exists or not".

For high-pitched long notes, students need to reduce vibrato strength. They do this by "touching the strings lightly with fingertips". The strength should be about 1/3 of that used in the theme section. They also need to reduce the vibrato frequency to 30-40 times per minute. This helps simulate the sense of emptiness, like a "distant echo".

In practice, we use a sensory linkage activity: "listening with eyes closed - imagining pictures". This guides students to connect vibrato processing with visual images. Examples include "the silhouette of the grassland under the sunset" and "the prayer flags fluttering in the wind". This helps avoid a common misunderstanding: "overexertion" caused by excessive pursuit of volume.

Finally, students need to reach a specific state. The bow hair should be lightly attached to the strings. The wrist should seem to move or not. This way, the vibrato in the high-pitched area becomes an "aftertaste extension" of emotion. It is not just "intensity superposition".

4. Teaching Effect Evaluation

This study evaluates the teaching effect from two dimensions: the improvement of students' performance ability and the development of teaching transformation ability by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The specific results are as follows:

4.1 Quantitative Improvement of Performance Ability

We used students' performance of "Song of Nostalgia" fragments as the evaluation carrier. We analyzed two aspects through pre-test and post-test comparison. These are the accuracy of students' vibrato application and the fit of their emotional expression.

Data shows progress in vibrato technique accuracy. This refers to how well vibrato frequency and strength match the emotion of each paragraph. It rose from 65% before class to 83% after class.

The "narrative vibrato" in the theme section saw the most significant improvement. Its accuracy went from 62% to 87%. This shows students have mastered the basic essentials of "slow and coherent" vibrato.

In the contrast section, the accuracy of "contradictory adjustment" increased from 60% to 79%. This reflects that students' ability to control the "balance between amplitude and frequency" has been enhanced.

The recapitulation section's "artistic conception processing" accuracy grew from 71% to 82%. This indicates that the concept of "vibrato as if it exists or not" has started to be internalized into their performance.

For emotional expression, we used the "relevance" index from the International Music Mood Scale (IMMS). This index measures how well a performance matches the work's emotional tone, with a maximum score of 5 points.

Results show students' average score went up from 3.2 to 3.5, an increase of 0.3 points. The "relevance" score for "conveying homesickness through vibrato" had the most obvious rise. This indicates that teaching guidance on the "technique - emotion" connection has effectively helped students move from "technical operation" to "emotional expression".

4.2 Qualitative Development of Teaching Transformation Ability

We evaluated the role transformation ability from "learner" to "teacher" by analyzing the primary and

secondary school classroom plans designed by students.

The results show that 85% of students can construct a three-stage teaching logic in their plans: "vibrato demonstration → emotional analysis → national music discussion". In the "vibrato demonstration" link, students use metaphors learned in class (such as "rocking chair" and "tea fragrance"). These metaphors help turn abstract techniques into daily expressions that primary school students can understand.

In the "emotional analysis" link, students connect "Song of Nostalgia" with Inner Mongolia folk songs. They guide students to perceive emotional changes by comparing vibrato effects in different paragraphs.

In the "national music discussion" link, students extend to "the embodiment of homesickness theme in other national music". This reflects their understanding of the relationship between "technique teaching and cultural inheritance".

Take the fifth-grade appreciation course plan as an example. Students design an interactive process: "listening to folk songs → learning vibrato → making up stories". This process transforms professional performance skills into experience activities suitable for primary school students. It indicates that the teaching goal of "practice - transformation" has been initially achieved.

5. Conclusion

This study takes "Song of Nostalgia" as a teaching case. It verifies the effectiveness of classic music works in the skill training of music education majors. This is achieved through the progressive teaching design of "pre-class preparation - in-class stratification - after-class transformation".

Practice shows that "Song of Nostalgia" has the characteristics of "both nationality and lyricism". It can provide rich application scenarios for vibrato techniques, such as narrative expression in the theme section, contradictory processing in the contrast section, and artistic conception presentation in the recapitulation section. Moreover, through its connection with Inner Mongolia folk songs, it realizes the integration of "technique teaching and cultural understanding". Thus, it builds a three-stage learning path of "technical operation - emotional expression - cultural inheritance" for students and serves as a high-quality carrier for cultivating performance ability and teaching transformation ability.

At the same time, the study confirms that the hierarchical teaching model plays a significant role in improving the "performance + teaching" dual abilities of music education majors: hierarchical training based on work structure helps students break through the bottleneck of "disconnection between techniques and emotions", and elevate vibrato skills from mechanical imitation to targeted artistic expression,

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