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The Contemporary Value of the "Youthful Interpretation" of the Piano Self-accompanied Singing Course in Normal Universities

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Abstract

The piano self-accompaniment and singing course in normal universities is a core course for the cultivation of music education students and a key teaching ability for future music education. With the advancement of the teaching reform of this course, the primary task is to maximize the aesthetic and moral education value of the self-accompaniment and singing course, focusing on the contemporary "youth-oriented interpretation". The nature of the self-accompanied singing course is highly consistent with the core of ideological and political education, which is to cultivate virtue and nurture talent. Through the training of self-accompanied singing skills, it aims to improve the technical and artistic skills of singing and playing, as well as to deepen the understanding of the cultural connotations of music. The comprehensive educational goal of this course is to cultivate the younger generation's identification with and confidence in Chinese music culture through self-accompanied singing. It holds significant practical value and significance for contemporary music education.

Keywords

Piano self-accompaniment and singing; Youth-oriented interpretation; Value

1. Introduction

Self-accompanying singing refers to the act of playing the piano accompaniment while singing the lyrics. It is a highly demanding comprehensive ability. Its development is facing difficulties and challenges: for students, those who study piano only focus on playing the piano well, and those who study vocal music only focus on singing well. Few students pay attention to the combination of piano and vocal music, and naturally lack interest in self-accompanying singing. For students (Wang, 2025) who have self-accompanying singing courses, they have few practical opportunities, and only perform at the end-of-year assessment of the course. For teachers (Ibid), they pay more attention to students' professional learning in each subject in teaching, and less attention to the connection and integration between different subjects. They fail to guide students to develop their comprehensive abilities in a timely manner. Some schools have set up self-accompanying singing courses, but there are no norms for the selection of teaching materials. Some teachers do not design personalized teaching plans when teaching, and students cannot experience the fun of it, thus failing to arouse their enthusiasm.

2. The Aesthetic and Ideological Value of Self-accompanied Singing Courses in Normal Universities

Aesthetic education aims to enhance people's ability to recognize, understand, appreciate, and create beauty through

education. Music education is an important way to implement aesthetic education. As a core skill for primary and secondary school music teachers, self-accompanied singing conveys music to students through the beauty of the sound of the piano, singing, and emotions, in order to achieve the goal of cultivating people through beauty. The aesthetic standards of self-accompanied singing can be unified through the beauty of posture, tone, coordination, emotion, and the natural beauty of singing, to convey the emotions and formal beauty of musical works, cultivate the aesthetic perception and creativity of normal university students, accumulate aesthetic experience, establish a correct artistic aesthetic view, and meet the teaching needs of "cultivating people through beauty" in primary and secondary schools.

The ideological and political education in courses requires integrating values into teaching, guiding students to stand firm in times, uphold cultural confidence, and deepen their sense of patriotism and political identity. First of all, it is necessary to clarify that the courses must be in line with the goal of cultivating high-quality, professional, and innovative primary and secondary school teachers. That is, the goal is to cultivate talents with strong patriotic feelings, solid basic skills, high improvisational creativity, and good comprehensive qualities, laying the foundation for 'multi-skilled and specialized, all-round development' in teacher education.

2.1 The artistic characteristics of singing and playing one's own accompaniment

Self-accompanied singing requires the performer to simultaneously handle singing and piano accompaniment, achieving an organic unity of "playing" and "singing". The core lies in integrating the harmony and texture of the piano with the expressiveness of vocal music to form a multi-layered musical expression, rather than a simple superposition. For instance, during the performance, the dynamics and patterns of the piano accompaniment should correspond to the emotional fluctuations of the singing, creating a dynamic balance. It demands the integration of multi-dimensional abilities, requiring students to comprehensively apply knowledge of music theory, sight-singing and ear training, improvisational accompaniment, keyboard harmony, and other multidisciplinary skills. Besides basic piano playing and vocal techniques, one must also master the abilities of rapid sight-reading, multi-part thinking, and overall control of musical structure. Unlike fixed-score accompaniment, self-accompanied singing often requires the improvisational arrangement of harmony and texture according to the style of the song.

The purpose of this course is to achieve a high degree of integration of singing and playing on the piano through continuous training in vocal works (Ji, 2018). The purpose of the piano improvisation accompaniment course, on the other hand, is to enable the performer to improvise the arrangement of a new piece without preparation and express it in the form of piano accompaniment. The core of the training lies in the ability of improvisation and temporary arrangement on the keyboard. These two courses train students in different aspects and therefore cannot be confused or substituted for each other. When performing self-playing and singing, the performer is both the player and the singer, requiring them to complete singing and piano accompaniment simultaneously, achieving a perfect fusion of "playing" and "singing". The key lies in combining the expressiveness of vocal music with the harmony and texture of the piano to form a multi-layered musical expression, rather than a simple superposition. For example, before playing and singing, the corresponding harmony should be matched and the appropriate accompaniment texture should be selected; during the performance, the changes in the intensity and patterns of the piano accompaniment should correspond to the emotional fluctuations of the singing, while coordinating the movements of the fingers and the voice to achieve the coordinated cooperation of various parts of the body, with the accompaniment driving the singing.

2.2 The necessity of "youth-oriented interpretation" of self-playing and self-singing

The concept of "youthful interpretation" is one that pertains to the fields of culture and communication. It mainly refers to the process of interpreting and presenting a certain thing (such as cultural phenomena, artistic works, social issues, etc.) from the perspective, values, aesthetic tastes, and expression methods of young people. This concept emphasizes understanding and respecting the uniqueness of young people and their significant role in cultural inheritance and innovation in contemporary society.

This course in normal universities as an important practical course for music education majors; its teaching concepts and methods directly influence the professional qualities of future music teachers (Zhang, 2025). Therefore, conducting a "youth-oriented interpretation" of this course is of great significance.

Firstly, "youth-oriented interpretation" can be regarded as a bridge connecting traditional teaching with the

demands of contemporary society. With the progress of the times, the cognitive scope, aesthetic tastes, and learning methods of contemporary students have undergone significant changes. Growing up in the digital age, they prefer online learning methods. Currently, students can receive a vast amount of information every day through social media, short video platforms, and other channels. Therefore, they have higher requirements for the contemporary relevance and affinity of teaching content. By innovating the teaching content in line with the cognitive characteristics of young people, it can effectively stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and enhance their classroom participation. Through youth-oriented interpretation, traditional teaching methods can be organically integrated with contemporary music education concepts, breathing new life into the ancient teaching content. Secondly, youth-oriented interpretation is one of the important ways to cultivate innovative music teachers. It helps students develop the ability to view traditional teaching content from an innovative perspective, laying a foundation for their future teaching innovation. Future music teachers not only need to master professional skills but also possess innovative thinking. Thirdly, "youth-oriented interpretation" embodies the educational concept of "student-centeredness". Traditional self-accompanied singing teaching often focuses on skill training while neglecting students' individualized needs. In contrast, youth-oriented interpretation emphasizes starting from the students' perspective, paying attention to their aesthetic preferences, cognitive characteristics, and growth needs, making teaching more closely aligned with students' actual situations and improving teaching effectiveness.

3. The Curriculum Construction of "Youth-oriented Interpretation" in the Self-accompanied Singing Course of Normal Universities

The "youth-oriented interpretation" of this course refers to integrating the course with the characteristics, demands, and cultural background of the new generation of youth, and innovating the course content and teaching methods. This requires the course to not only focus on imparting musical skills, but also to cultivate the innovative thinking, aesthetic ability, and emotional expression ability of normal school students, in order to meet the demands of the new era for music education talents.

3.1 Theoretical basis for the interpretation of youthfulness

From the perspective of aesthetic psychology, this course in normal universities should meet the demands of young people's music aesthetics for "immediacy" and "emotional resonance". As an art form, music can serve as an important carrier for young people to express themselves and seek recognition. In a fast-paced living environment, the youth tend to pursue fresh and trendy musical elements. They long to express themselves and showcase their individuality through musical works that can quickly evoke resonance and stir emotions (Xie, 2024).

The "immediacy" reflects the young people's urgent desire for self-expression. When listening to music, young people often experience intense emotional experiences such as being moved, excited, or sad. Through social media, music platforms, and other channels, the latest music works and information are promptly pushed to meet the young people's immediate aesthetic needs. "Emotional resonance" reflects their tendency to choose music works that can touch their hearts and evoke resonance, so as to express their emotions and relieve stress. This resonance not only comes from the melody, rhythm, and other elements of the music itself, but also from the emotions and ideological connotations conveyed by the music. Young people find elements in music that are in line with their thoughts and emotions, thereby satisfying their needs for a sense of belonging and identity. "Self-playing and self-singing enable the performer to make the greatest emotional investment and the deepest expression of the work during the performance, and finally achieve the highest unity of the artistic work. Through the performance of self-playing and self-singing works, the performer can also convey highly expressive and infectious music to the audience, allowing the audience to enjoy the most beautiful experience. Since the performer assumes the dual roles of playing and singing at the same time, they can more directly and completely convey the emotional connotations of the musical work. This directness makes the music expression more genuine and natural, and is more likely to evoke the audience's emotional resonance, forming a strong artistic appeal.

From the perspective of educational sociology, there is a close connection between the "youthful interpretation" of this course in normal universities and the cultural identity recognition of the new generation of normal students. Normal students who grew up in the background of informatization and globalization have the cultural characteristics of openness, diversity, and innovation. They pay more attention to individual expression, emotional communication,

and teamwork, and have a more open and inclusive attitude towards music education. On the one hand, the construction of the course and the selection of its content should conform to the cultural characteristics and needs of the new generation of youth. In the course practice, normal students can display their cultural characteristics and individual charm by participating in group cooperative learning, sharing their musical insights, creative works, and performance practices. This helps normal students better integrate into the course learning, enhancing their learning interest and participation. On the other hand, through course learning and practice, normal students can more deeply understand and identify with their cultural identity, enhancing their cultural confidence and sense of belonging. Through the learning and practice of the self-accompanying singing course, they can not only acquire professional skills and cultural knowledge in music, but also improve their cultural literacy and aesthetic ability. These accumulations will help them better play their role in the future education field and help form a more positive and confident cultural identity recognition.

From the perspective of music education, the "creative transformation" of improvisational accompaniment and singing with playing aims to adapt to the learning needs and characteristics of contemporary young students through innovative teaching methods and content. Incorporating diverse musical cultural elements, works of different styles and periods, as well as music from various ethnic groups and regions in the teaching content can broaden students' musical horizons. Singing with playing not only requires students to master solid music theoretical knowledge but also demands their flexible practical application skills. Increasing practical rehearsal opportunities can enhance students' practical application abilities. Measures such as diversified teaching content, innovative teaching methods, and a complete teaching evaluation system can better meet the learning needs and characteristics of contemporary young students and further complete the "creative transformation" of improvisational accompaniment and singing with playing.

3.2 The practical path of youth-oriented interpretation

Through efforts such as reconstructing the course concept and innovating teaching content, music teachers who possess both solid skills and good cultural literacy and musical aesthetic ability can be cultivated. Therefore, the integration of skills and cultural literacy, as well as the innovation of teaching methods and means, are of vital importance.

3.2.1 Curriculum concept reconstruction: from "skill-based" to "cultural immersion"

The "competency-based" approach emphasizes students' mastery and application of skills, while "cultural immersion" focuses on understanding and cultivating skills within a broad cultural context. In the self-accompaniment and singing course at normal universities, this shift means that students, while mastering the basic skills of self-accompaniment and singing, should also understand the cultural connotations and aesthetic values behind them. Teachers can choose a variety of songs, including not only classic art songs and children's songs but also some with popular elements to meet young people's pursuit of novelty, such as the selection of pop music, Chinese trend elements, and film and television original soundtracks. They can also utilize multimedia teaching equipment and technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) or body movement, to allow students to learn and create in immersive scenarios, enhancing their interest and participation. Through group discussions, role-playing, and other methods, students can learn and communicate interactively, fostering their cooperative abilities.

3.2.2 Innovative teaching content: a more integrated curriculum system

In addition to emphasizing the integration of skills and cultural literacy, the self-accompanied singing and playing course in normal universities should also focus on the innovation of teaching methods and means, such as using multimedia teaching equipment and technology for situational teaching. Through efforts in aspects like curriculum design and integration, teaching method and means innovation, and evaluation system construction, we can cultivate music teachers who possess solid skills, good cultural literacy, and musical aesthetic ability.

3.2.2.1 Technical module

The training of technical modules is closely related to the improvement of students' practical abilities. First, the simplification and practical application of keyboard harmony should be emphasized. "Improvisational accompaniment focuses on the practical application of keyboard harmony. Therefore, in improvisational accompaniment, the main issue is still the application of harmony. One can start with popular chords and pentatonic scales. The progression of popular chords is easy to understand and easy to handle. In the self-playing and singing course in normal

universities, it can help students quickly grasp the basic rules of harmony and improve their improvisational accompaniment skills. During teaching, one can analyze the chord progressions of classic popular songs to help students understand the functions and connections between different chords, and combine keyboard practice to enable students to quickly and accurately play these chords on the keyboard. In addition, students can be encouraged to try to arrange chords for their favorite popular songs; the pentatonic scale is a commonly used scale in traditional Chinese music, with unique national charm and aesthetic value. In the self-playing and singing course in normal universities, combining the pentatonic scale with keyboard harmony can enrich the expressiveness of harmony and, at the same time, inherit and promote national music culture (Liu, 2016). During teaching, one can first introduce the basic characteristics and structure of the pentatonic scale to students, and then guide them to try to adapt classic folk songs to the pentatonic scale. During the adaptation process, students should be reminded to pay attention to the selection and arrangement of chords to conform to the harmonic characteristics of the pentatonic scale. Secondly, it is the control of breathing and the handling of musical phrases in singing and playing. In the process of cultivating the ability of self-playing and singing, students should master certain vocal basics, including the principles of singing, singing posture, and breathing (Ibid.) Good control of breathing is the foundation of singing. In this course in normal universities, methods such as abdominal breathing in vocal teaching can be used to help students maintain stable and sustained breathing during singing. This, combined with playing movements, can also help improve the stability of playing; correct handling of musical phrases is conducive to the expression of musical emotions. Through the analysis of the handling of musical phrases in classic musical works, students can be guided to understand the contrasts and connections between different phrases, improving their perception and expression of music. At the same time, combined with singing and playing practice, students can accurately express the ups and downs and changes of musical phrases during playing.

3.2.2.2 Cultural module

The construction of the cultural module aims to broaden students' musical horizons through diverse musical works and deepen their understanding and appreciation of different musical cultures. From two dimensions: the mutual infiltration of Chinese works and Western classics, and the mutual infiltration of popular works and classic works. By incorporating Chinese musical elements such as folk songs and opera music into the curriculum, students can learn about the creative techniques of national works and deeply experience the charm and style of traditional Chinese music through self-playing and singing. Select some classic pieces from the history of Western music, and by comparing the similarities and differences in melody, harmony, etc. between Chinese and Western music, help students understand the musical expression methods and aesthetic concepts in different cultural backgrounds, and encourage students to try to integrate Chinese and Western musical elements in their own creations. Popular music works have diverse styles. Representative popular music works, such as popular songs in recent years, can be selected. The contemporary atmosphere and popular elements can enhance students' interest while exposing them to more diverse musical styles. Classic works are carefully composed in terms of melody, harmony, structure, etc., and have high artistic value, often containing rich historical and cultural connotations. Through learning, students' musical literacy and aesthetic ability can be improved. Adapt and innovate classic works by integrating popular elements to form a unique musical style (Yang, 2024).

3.2.2.3 Innovative teaching methods: digitalization and interactivity

With the continuous development of artificial intelligence technology, AI accompaniment software is increasingly widely used in the field of music education. In the self-accompanying and singing courses of normal universities, AI accompaniment software can analyze the input melody in real time, accurately determine the pitch, rhythm, and timbre of the melody, and automatically generate harmonies that match it. This helps students better understand and master the arrangement of harmonies. Students can also compare their own arrangements with those generated by AI to identify shortcomings and make improvements. In addition, AI can quickly switch between different modes, providing students with rich transposition practice materials. Students can practice self-accompanying and singing in different modes to improve their transposition ability and musical expression.

Project-based cooperation and collaboration are important ways to cultivate students' team spirit and collaboration skills. Through group cooperation, students can jointly complete a self-accompanying and singing project, such as creating a song or arranging a concert. In group cooperation, each student can take turns playing the roles of lead singer and accompanist, such as one person singing and multiple people improvising accompaniment. The setting of

different roles helps students fully understand all aspects of self-accompanying and singing, promoting communication and cooperation among students. During the practice process, students need to listen to each other, evaluate each other, and jointly propose solutions to problems.

3.2.2.4 Optimization of the evaluation system: dynamic and diversified

Process-oriented evaluation emphasizes continuous attention to students' learning process, aiming to assess students' performance during the learning process, promptly identify problems and provide feedback, thereby promoting the improvement of students' skills. In the self-accompanying singing course in normal universities, process-oriented evaluation should particularly focus on the following aspects: assessing whether students' handling of musical phrases is aesthetically pleasing, including the choice of timbre and control of dynamics. Encourage students to step out of their comfort zones and try different playing and singing styles, and evaluate their ability to personalize expression. Observe students' body language and facial expressions during self-accompanying singing to assess whether they can correctly express musical emotions and enhance stage presence.

Outcome-based assessment emphasizes the evaluation of students' learning achievements. By setting specific practical scenarios, it examines students' comprehensive abilities in self-accompanying singing. In the self-accompanying singing course of normal universities, outcome-based assessment can be conducted in the following practical scenarios: Simulation of primary and secondary school classrooms: Assess whether students can design appropriate self-accompanying singing teaching content based on primary and secondary school music textbooks and interact with students, including the selection of songs and the application of teaching methods. "Teaching in primary and secondary school classrooms with self-accompanying singing will have better and better teaching effects. Why? Because the teaching process itself is a process that both teachers and students enjoy together. Teachers and students can have a deep spiritual experience, feel the beauty of music, and better achieve the true goal of 'aesthetic education'. Community performances: Encourage students to participate in the planning of community performance programs in real community performance environments and assess their abilities in self-accompanying singing skills, song selection, stage performance, etc.

A dynamic and diversified evaluation system can comprehensively assess students' abilities in self-accompanying singing skills and musical emotional expression, which is conducive to promoting students' all-around development. Process-based assessment enables teachers to promptly identify potential problems students encounter during the learning process and provide targeted guidance and assistance. After class, teachers can adjust their teaching based on feedback to improve teaching effectiveness. Outcome-based assessment can test students' self-accompanying singing abilities in real environments, comprehensively and objectively reflect students' learning achievements and progress, and enhance students' practical abilities and stage performance.

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the musical and artistic features of the self-accompanied singing course, this paper proposes reform paths for the contemporary interpretation of the course for young people from aspects such as teaching content, key and difficult points, teaching design, teaching methods, and teaching evaluation. It aims to adjust the teaching syllabus and achieve the contemporary educational goals of the piano self-accompanied singing course, thereby effectively cultivating high-quality talents for basic music education.

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