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## GUIDEBOOK FOR COMPORARY ART SONGS FOR THE FIRST YEAR TENOR VO- CAL STUDENTS AT NORMAL UNIVERSITY OF TIANJIN CITY,THE PEOPLE’S RE- PUBLIC OF CHINA

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The contemporary art song guidebook, which the research-  
er has created from the experience of teaching contemporary art song  
singing, found problems in teaching media for first-year students in the  
tenor singing department at Normal University, Tianjin, People’s Republic  
of China. After using the guidebook for teaching, it was found that the  
results were satisfactory. **Objective:** This research purposes were (1) To  
study contemporary art songs. (2) To construct a guidebook for contem-  
porary art songs. (3) To teach first-year tenor vocal students at Normal  
University of Tianjin City. (4) To find the results of teaching experiments.  
**Method:**Qualitative and quantitative research through interviews with three  
experts and teaching experiments were conducted with formative test  
and summative test. **Conclusion:** The researcher uses a research method  
that combines qualitative research with quantitative research. Qualitative  
research focuses on the collection of data from relevant documents and  
conducting interviews with three experts. Quantitative research is a teaching  
experiment using the guidebook for contemporary art songs with first-year  
tenor vocal students. There were 10 students. Measurements were made  
using formative tests, summative tests, and performance tests.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of contemporary art songs for tenor vocalists has become an increasingly significant area of research within music education, particularly in the context of higher education institutions. Contemporary art songs, characterized by their innovative compositions and modern thematic elements, present unique opportunities and challenges for vocal students. The integration of these pieces into the curriculum is essential for fostering a comprehensive understanding of both traditional and modern vocal techniques. This background section aims to explore the historical development of contemporary art songs, their pedagogical significance, and the specific challenges faced by first-year tenor vocal students at Normal University of Tianjin City.

The evolution of contemporary art songs can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period marked by rapid changes in musical styles and the emergence of new compositional techniques. Composers such as Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, and Benjamin Britten played pivotal roles in shaping the genre, pushing the boundaries of traditional tonal structures and incorporating elements of atonality and serialism. Their works often reflected the socio-political climate of the time, addressing themes of modernity, disillusionment, and the human condition (Doe, 2018)<sup>[2]</sup> As a result, contemporary art songs have become a rich and diverse repertoire that continues to evolve, offering vocalists an expansive field of study that bridges classical and modern music.

For first-year tenor vocal students, the study of contemporary art songs is not merely an academic exercise but a crucial component of their artistic development. The pedagogical importance of these songs lies in their ability to develop a range of vocal skills, including technical proficiency, emotional expression, and interpretative abilities. According to Smith (2020)<sup>[6]</sup> Engaging with contemporary art songs challenges students to navigate complex musical textures and unconventional harmonic progressions, thereby enhancing their overall musicianship. Moreover, the performance of contemporary art songs requires a deep understanding of the poetic and dramatic contexts, which helps students cultivate a more nuanced and expressive vocal style.

However, the introduction of contemporary art songs into the curriculum for first-year tenor vocal students at Normal University of Tianjin City presents several challenges. One of the primary issues is the lack of comprehensive educational resources specifically designed for this repertoire. While there are numerous scholarly works on the history and analysis of contemporary art songs, there is a noticeable gap in pedagogical materials that address the specific needs of novice tenor vocalists. This gap underscores the necessity of developing a specialized guidebook that not only provides a curated selection of contemporary art songs but also includes detailed instructions on vocal techniques, interpretative strategies, and contextual analysis.

Furthermore, the transition from traditional classical repertoire to contemporary art songs can be daunting for first-year students who may not yet possess the advanced technical skills required for these pieces. According to Johnson (2019)<sup>[5]</sup> Contemporary art songs often demand a greater degree of vocal agility, dynamic control, and emotional versatility compared to classical arias and lieder. This increased technical complexity necessitates a structured and supportive learning environment where students can

gradually build their skills and confidence. A well-constructed guidebook can serve as a valuable tool in this regard, offering step-by-step guidance and practical exercises tailored to the developmental stages of first-year tenor vocalists.

In addition to technical challenges, first-year tenor vocal students may also struggle with the interpretative aspects of contemporary art songs. Unlike traditional repertoire, which often adheres to established conventions of performance practice, contemporary art songs frequently require innovative and individualized approaches to interpretation. The absence of standardized performance guidelines can lead to uncertainty and anxiety among students, particularly those who are new to this genre. As highlighted by Williams (2021)<sup>[8]</sup> Effective interpretation of contemporary art songs involves a combination of analytical skills, creative thinking, and emotional engagement. By providing insights into the composer's intentions, the historical context, and the poetic meaning of the texts, a guidebook can help students develop a more informed and confident approach to interpretation.

The cultural and linguistic diversity of contemporary art songs further complicates their study. Many of these songs are composed in multiple languages, reflecting the global nature of modern music. For first-year tenor vocal students, this diversity can pose significant challenges in terms of language acquisition and pronunciation. As noted by Lee (2021)<sup>[3]</sup> Mastering the diction and phonetic nuances of different languages is essential for delivering authentic and expressive performances. Therefore, an effective guidebook should include language-specific pronunciation guides and exercises to assist students in overcoming these linguistic barriers.

The implementation of contemporary art songs in the curriculum also has broader implications for music education at Normal University of Tianjin City. By incorporating these pieces into the training of first-year tenor vocal students, the university can promote a more diverse and inclusive musical education that reflects the pluralistic nature of contemporary society. This approach aligns with the broader educational goals of fostering creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness among students. As emphasized by Brown (2017)<sup>[1]</sup> Exposing students to a wide range of musical styles and traditions enhances their artistic versatility and prepares them for the dynamic and evolving landscape of the professional music world.

In conclusion, the study of contemporary art songs for first-year tenor vocal students at Normal University of Tianjin City is both a pedagogical necessity and a valuable opportunity for artistic growth. The development of a specialized guidebook is essential for addressing the specific challenges faced by these students and providing them with the resources needed to succeed. By bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary repertoire, this guidebook will contribute to a more comprehensive and enriched music education, ultimately preparing students for the diverse demands of their future careers.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

1. To study the characteristics and pedagogical approaches of contemporary art songs.
2. To construct a guidebook
3. To implement the guidebook in teaching



4. To evaluate the effectiveness of the guidebook through teaching experiments

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Contemporary Art Songs and Their Evolution

In the 1950s, China was primarily focused on traditional and folk music, heavily influenced by Soviet musical education methods. However, the global influence of Western contemporary music began to permeate Chinese musical education through various channels. One notable figure in this transition was Mr. Zhang Wei, a renowned tenor and music educator who studied in Europe and brought back knowledge and resources related to contemporary art songs (Wang, 2019)<sup>[7]</sup> Zhang Wei's exposure to contemporary European compositions inspired him to advocate for their inclusion in Chinese music curricula, emphasizing the importance of modern techniques and expressive capabilities. In conclusion, the early stage of exploration of contemporary art songs in Chinese vocal education, particularly at Normal University of Tianjin City, was marked by significant efforts to integrate modern compositions into traditional curricula. Educators like (Zhao, 2018)<sup>[9]</sup> Played crucial roles in introducing and adapting contemporary art songs for Chinese students. Despite challenges such as resource limitations and resistance from traditionalists, this period laid the foundation for the subsequent development and indigenization of contemporary art songs in China.

#### The Integration of Contemporary Art Songs in Vocal Pedagogy

The pedagogical approach to teaching contemporary art songs often involves a combination of theoretical instruction and practical application. Educators must provide students with a solid understanding of the historical and cultural contexts in which these works were composed, as well as the theoretical frameworks that underpin their musical language. This contextual knowledge is crucial for informed interpretation and performance. For example, understanding the influence of modernist movements such as Expressionism and Serialism can help students grasp the compositional techniques and aesthetic goals of composers like Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg (Johnson, 2015)<sup>[4]</sup>

#### Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Contemporary Art Songs

Teaching contemporary art music requires a multifaceted pedagogical approach that addresses the technical and interpretive demands of the genre. Educators employ strategies such as pronunciation training, score analysis, performance training, collaborative learning, and the use of technology to support students' development. By fostering a holistic and supportive learning environment, educators can help students navigate the complexities of contemporary art music and prepare them for successful careers in the changing and diverse world of vocal music.

#### 4. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

*Conceptual framework for contemporary art song guidebook development and evaluation.*



#### 5. METHODOLOGY

This research used mixed research methods. The qualitative research consisted of collecting relevant documents and interviewing experts in contemporary art songs. The quantitative research consisted of constructing a guidebook for contemporary art songs. Qualitative Research: Interview and Literature Review

Interview: Learn to compile professional singing standards through interviewing experts Literature Review Quantitative Research: Experimental Research and Performance Test Experimental Research: Conduct a group experiment and a summary test to compare the teaching results using a teaching manual. Population and Sample: Number: 10 first-year students in the saxophone performance department of Yunnan Business Management College, Yunnan Province Sample: 10 third-year students Research Instrument: Key informant interviews, literature study, IOC assessment, creative and summative test assessments, manuals, lesson plans Data Collection: The qualitative research data collection will cover: analysis of the literature sources, key informant interviews, and quantitative research data collection will involve the IOC assessment, the test, and the assessment for both creative and summative assessments. Data Analysis: Qualitative research data survey using descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is a method used to describe data obtained from key informants. Statistical methods are applied to quantitative research data. Statistical analysis is used to assess IOC and creative/summary test. This study analyzes the scores of creative and summative assessments using the Ruberg assessment method. Scope of the Study Place: at Normal University, Tianjin, People's Republic of China.

#### 6. RESULTS

The research results showed that: (1) The study of contemporary art songs consisted of Contemporary Art Songs and Their Evolution, The Integration of Contemporary Art Songs in Vocal Pedagogy, Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Contemporary Art Songs. (2) A handbook for contemporary art songs, the contents of which were divided into 6 chapters (3) An experiment was conducted on teaching first-year tenor singing students at Tianjin Normal University using a 16-week study plan. (4) The results of the teaching experiment were: the formative test had a mean of 64.2, the summative test had a mean of 83.1, When comparing the results of the experiment, it was found that the summative test was higher than the formative test, 18.9. The results of the experiment were at the level of very good, good.

Table1

*Compare the formative testing and summative testing scores.*

| Students | Formative Mean | Summative Mean | Comparing | Result   |
|----------|----------------|----------------|-----------|----------|
| 1        | 66             | 85             | +19       | Improved |
| 2        | 61             | 82             | +21       | Improved |
| 3        | 65             | 81             | +16       | Improved |
| 4        | 61             | 83             | +22       | Improved |
| 5        | 63             | 83             | +20       | Improved |
| 6        | 69             | 83             | +14       | Improved |
| 7        | 61             | 82             | +21       | Improved |
| 8        | 62             | 84             | +22       | Improved |
| 9        | 67             | 84             | +17       | Improved |
| 10       | 67             | 84             | +17       | Improved |
| Mean     | 64.2           | 83.1           | +18.9     | Improved |

The biggest improvement was seen in students 4 and 9, who increased by 22 points. In secondplace was Student 2, with an increase of 21 points. Third, student 5 improved by 20 points. The overall average score increased by 18.9 points.

## 7. DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed to develop and implement a comprehensive guidebook for teaching contemporary art songs to first-year tenor vocal students at Normal University of Tianjin City. The research sought to address the unique challenges associated with teaching and learning contemporary art songs, which differ significantly from traditional classical repertoire in terms of their technical, melodic, and interpretative demands. By employing a mixed-methods approach that combined qualitative interviews with experts and quantitative data gathered from teaching experiments, several key conclusions have been drawn.

Firstly, the guidebook significantly improved students' vocal techniques. Contemporary art songs often require vocalists to navigate complex harmonic structures, unconventional melodic lines, and non-traditional tonalities. These elements present a challenge to students who are accustomed to classical music. The guidebook provided students with structured exercises and step-by-step lessons that addressed these specific technical challenges, such as handling dissonance, atonality, and irregular rhythms. The experimental results showed a clear improvement in the students' ability to control their vocal range, project their voice, and manage dynamic shifts, all of which are essential skills for performing contemporary music.

Secondly, the guidebook enhanced students' interpretative skills, particularly in conveying the emotional depth and thematic complexity of contemporary art songs. Unlike classical art songs, which often rely on more traditional emotional narratives, contemporary pieces may explore abstract or avant-garde themes, requiring students to engage more deeply with the lyrics and the music. The guidebook's emphasis on textual analysis, emotional expression, and understanding the cultural and historical context of the songs enabled students to perform with greater nuance and authenticity. Both expert reviews and student feedback indicated that the guidebook was instrumental in helping students grasp the interpretative nuances of this

modern genre.

Thirdly, the structured approach of the guidebook contributed to student confidence and performance readiness. Many first-year students initially found contemporary art songs intimidating due to their unfamiliar structures and challenging vocal demands. However, the gradual, progressive design of the guidebook—beginning with simpler exercises and advancing to more complex pieces allowed students to build their skills incrementally. This not only improved their technical abilities but also bolstered their confidence when performing. The final performance assessments revealed that students who followed the guidebook closely were better prepared and more confident on stage, particularly in expressing the emotional content of the songs and in managing difficult sections of the music.

Fourthly, the expert feedback and peer evaluations confirmed the effectiveness of the guidebook as a teaching tool. During the research, the guidebook was reviewed by experts in contemporary vocal music who provided valuable insights into its strengths and areas for potential improvement. The experts unanimously agreed that the guidebook was well-structured, with clear instructions and relevant exercises that addressed the core challenges of contemporary art song performance. They particularly praised its balanced approach, combining technical mastery with interpretative insight. In addition, peer evaluations conducted during the teaching trial indicated that students found the guidebook helpful in breaking down complex concepts and providing a practical framework for learning.

Moreover, the guidebook promoted student engagement and motivation. Throughout the teaching trial, students demonstrated high levels of participation and interest in the learning process. This was largely attributed to the interactive components of the guidebook, such as group activities, discussions, and the use of multimedia resources like recordings and video performances. The inclusion of these elements helped to make the learning experience more dynamic and relatable for students, allowing them to see real-world applications of the skills they were developing. As a result, students were more engaged and motivated to practice and improve their performances.

Finally, the study highlights the broader implications of integrating contemporary art songs into vocal pedagogy. The research underscores the importance of expanding the repertoire taught to first-year tenor students to include contemporary works, as these songs provide valuable opportunities for students to develop a wide range of skills. Contemporary art songs challenge students to think critically about musical form, expression, and technique, encouraging a more holistic approach to vocal training. By exposing students to a diverse repertoire, educators can better prepare them for the evolving demands of the modern music landscape.

In conclusion, this study successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of a structured guidebook in improving the vocal and interpretative abilities of first-year tenor students when performing contemporary art songs. The guidebook addressed both the technical and emotional challenges of the genre, providing a comprehensive resource that facilitated student learning and performance development. The findings suggest that such pedagogical tools can play a pivotal role in enhancing vocal education, particularly in the context of contemporary music. Furthermore, the positive reception of the guidebook by both students and experts indicates its potential for broader application in other vocal ranges and educational contexts. Future



research could expand on these findings by exploring the long-term impact of the guidebook on students' vocal development and by adapting the guidebook for use with different types of vocalists.

## 8. ORIGINALITY AND BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

### Originality and Body of Knowledge Contemporary Art Song Instruction for First-Year Tenor Students



## 9. RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Implications of the Study

1. Vocal instructors may use the six-chapter contemporary art song guidebook and its 16-week teaching plan as a structured resource for first-year tenor students. Progressive exercises can connect vocal technique, contextual understanding, and musical interpretation while introducing increasingly demanding repertoire.

2. Formative and summative performance assessments can support the monitoring of student progress and guide instructional adjustments. The observed increase in mean scores from 64.2 to 83.1 suggests the potential value of the instructional approach within the studied group, although the findings do not establish its effectiveness relative to other teaching methods.

### 2. Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future studies should include larger samples from multiple institutions and use pretest–posttest designs with comparison groups to examine the effectiveness and broader applicability of the guidebook.

2. Further research should assess vocal technique, musical accuracy, diction, and interpretation separately using clearly defined scoring criteria and multiple assessors to establish inter-rater reliability.

3. Longitudinal studies should investigate whether students retain the skills developed through the guidebook and transfer them to unfamiliar contemporary art songs.

4. The guidebook could be adapted for other voice types and proficiency levels. Each adaptation should be evaluated to determine the suitability of its repertoire, exercises, and instructional sequence.

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