

Studying Chinese Ancient Poetry Artistic Songs in Tang Dynasty for Teaching 2nd-Year Students at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China

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Abstracts

Chinese ancient poetry refers to a kind of verse genre formed before Qing Dynasty, with specific metrical norms, and has the tradition of poetic education. The objectives of this study were (1) To study Chinese ancient poetry artistic songs in Tang Dynasty and Caruso Bel Canto singing theory; (2) To compile a guidebook of Chinese ancient poetry artistic songs in Tang Dynasty with Caruso Bel Canto singing theory; (3) To teach 2nd-year students major in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China in the experimental group according to the guidebook and teaching plan; (4) To evaluate the teaching effects after teaching 2nd-year students major in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China. This research was mixed-method research. The population for the experimental research was 90 2nd-year students major in Bel Canto vocal performance, at Shenyang Conservatory of Music, China. The sample was consisted with 12 students, selected by random including 6 males (3 bass and 3 tenor) and 6 females (3 alto, 3 soprano), conducted in the experimental group in the 2nd semester of 2023.

The findings were: Teach 2nd-year students major in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China in the experimental group according to the guidebook and teaching plan. The whole teaching process lasted for 16 weeks, with 90 minutes in weekly session. The vocal performance course targeted at 2nd-year students majoring in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music has shown positive teaching effects. Participants exhibited notable improvement in their overall performance, with significant progress seen in theoretical knowledge, singing skills, and quality of voice. While some areas such as pronunciation and music performance may require additional attention, the overall results indicate that the course has been effective in enhancing participants' understanding and performance in vocal performance.

Keywords: Chinese Ancient Poetry Artistic Songs, Tang Dynasty, Shenyang Conservatory of Music

Introduction

Poetry is a kind of literary and artistic language, which expresses the ancient and elegant artistic conception and deep literati feelings. Chinese ancient poetry is a bright pearl in Chinese culture, containing unique ethnic customs and charm. Artistic song is the musical product of the European Romantic period, which is a kind of ballad popular in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th century. Characterized by lyrics mostly from famous poem, focusing on the performance of people's inner world, strong expressive tune, complex performance and composing techniques, artistic songs are composed for specified voicing parts, i.e., soprano, alto, tenor, bass. In the meantime, accompaniment occupies the critical position in artistic songs, mainly by piano and occasionally by other instruments. Chinese ancient poetry artistic song is a kind of artistic solo song rising in the history of Chinese modern music since the 20th century. The lyrics are selected from Chinese ancient poetry handed down from ancient China. It is a combination of Chinese and Western music creation. In 1920, when the musician Qingzhu was studying in Germany, he composed *The Great River Goes East* 《大江东去》 with Su Dongpo's poetry *Niannujiao Theme: Reminiscing Olden Days at Chibi* 《念奴娇·赤壁怀古》 and Western composition techniques.

The vocal music performance major in art colleges and universities is the cradle of training singing talents in the new era, and shoulders a lofty historical mission. The teaching mode of vocal performance major in art colleges and universities needs to be changed to suit the development law of contemporary vocal music art. However, at present, most universities in China basically follow the teaching model of the 1990s, which only focuses on the training of students' vocal music techniques, but lacks the cultivation of students' comprehensive quality and ability such as music concept, internal aesthetics and stage practice.

Therefore, this study sought to study Chinese ancient poetry artistic songs in Tang Dynasty as the breakthrough point, using Caruso's Bel Canto singing theory to compile the guidebook for teaching 2nd-year students major in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China, and evaluating the teaching effect, so as to enhance students' musical ability and other comprehensive abilities.

Research Objectives

To study Chinese ancient poetry artistic songs in Tang Dynasty on Caruso Bel Canto singing theory.

To compile a guidebook of Chinese ancient poetry artistic songs in Tang Dynasty with Caruso Bel Canto singing theory.

To teach 2nd-year students major in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China in the experimental group according to the guidebook and teaching plan.

To evaluate the teaching effects on teaching 2nd-year students major in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China.

Research Methodology

The current study is characterized by qualitative research and quantitative research, to study documents about Chinese ancient poetry artistic songs in Tang Dynasty, make in-depth interviews with experts in the field of Bel Canto singing, and teach students major in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music in China. The population for the experimental research was 90 2nd-year students major in Bel Canto vocal performance, at Shenyang Conservatory of Music, China. The sample was consisted with 12 students, selected by random including 6 males (3 bass and 3 tenor) and 6 females (3 alto, 3 soprano), conducted in the experimental group in the 2nd semester of 2023.

Research Findings

1. Teaching experiment

Through interview and document research, the guidebook was completed, and it was applied to the vocal performance course for 2nd-year students with vocal performance major in the 2nd semester in 2023. The experimental group includes 12 students as the final samples, including 6 males (3 bass and 3 tenor) and 6 females (3 alto, 3 soprano).

2. The teaching experiment consisted of 8 chapters. The whole teaching process lasted for 16 weeks, with 90 minutes in weekly session.

3. Evaluate the teaching effects

2.1 Results of pre-test

2.1.1 Overall performance

The tests were scored by the researcher, the coach teacher and 5 experts after using the guidebook of Chinese ancient poetry artistic songs in Tang Dynasty with Caruso's Bel Canto singing theory. The evaluation of performance test was used the performance assessment method test was divided into 5 criteria: theoretical knowledge, singing skills (rhythm and melody), quality of voice, pronunciation, music performance, with a total score of 100.

Table 1 Pre-test results

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Average
B1	65	62	54	51	53	60	60	57.86
B2	60	58	56	53	57	60	60	57.71
B3	66	70	71	68	68	69	69	68.71
T1	65	65	73	65	65	66	66	66.43
T2	54	55	62	50	52	62	62	56.71
T3	53	55	62	51	51	61	61	56.29
A1	58	66	73	66	70	68	68	67.00
A2	63	76	78	75	79	72	72	73.57
A3	61	65	66	70	73	72	72	68.43
S1	61	60	66	64	66	65	65	63.86
S2	52	58	59	45	56	56	56	54.57
S3	65	70	68	62	63	63	63	64.86
Average	60.25	63.33	65.67	60.00	62.75	64.50	64.50	63.00

Table 1 presents the results of a pre-test conducted by multiple teachers (T1, T2, T3) and experts (Expert 1, Expert 2, Expert 3, Expert 4, Expert 5) on various participants (B1, B2, B3, A1, A2, A3, S1, S2, S3). The average scores for each group and the overall average are also provided.

Looking at the average scores, the overall average performance across all participants is 63.00. This indicates that, on average, participants achieved a moderate level of performance in the pre-test.

Analyzing the performance of the different students, participant A2 achieved the highest average score of 73.57, indicating a relatively strong performance. On the other hand, participant S2 achieved the lowest average score of 54.57, indicating a weaker performance compared to other students. Ranging from 56.29 to 68.71, the average scores across the different groups suggest a moderate level of performance overall, with some groups performing better or worse than others.

2.1.2 Students' performance in each score range

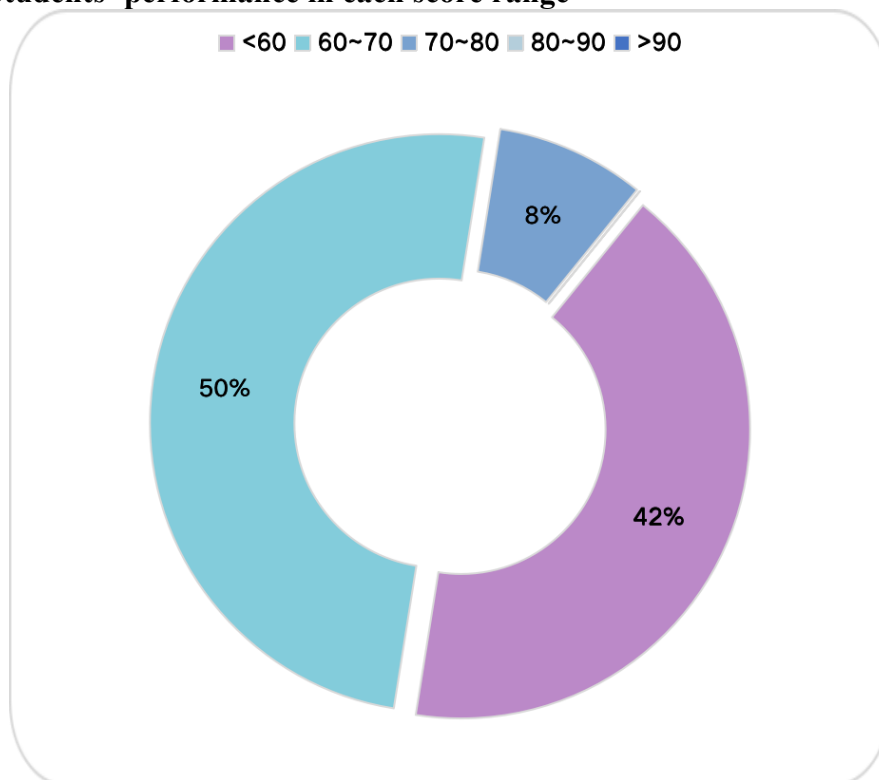


Figure 1 The percentage of score range

From the Figure 1, there are 5 students who scored below 60, indicating a relatively weaker performance in the pre-test. This suggests that these students may require additional support or intervention to improve their understanding and performance.

Furthermore, there are 6 students who scored within the range of 60 to 70. This range represents the majority of the students and indicates a moderate performance level. These students may have a foundational understanding of the subject but still need further development or refinement of their knowledge and skills.

There is only 1 student who scored within the range of 70 to 80, implying a relatively stronger performance compared to the other score ranges. This student may have a solid grasp of the subject matter and could potentially be more advanced in their understanding.

It is worth noting that there are no students who scored within the range of 80 to 90 or above 90. This suggests that none of the students achieved a high or exceptional performance level in the pre-test.

The distribution of scores across these different ranges indicates a relatively wider range of performance levels among the students. The majority of students fall within the moderate range of 60 to 70, suggesting that additional support and further instruction may be beneficial to improve their understanding and enhance their performance.

It is worth noting that these results represent the performance of the participants in the pre-test and should be considered as a baseline for further analysis and improvement. Further analysis of individual strengths and weaknesses can be conducted to provide targeted support and enhance participants' learning outcomes.

Analyzing the scores for individual students, it can be observed that some students consistently perform well across all criteria, such as A2 and A3, who have relatively high scores in all aspects. On the other hand, some students, like T2 and T3, have lower scores across most criteria, indicating areas where they may require more focus and improvement.

Comparing the scores within each criterion, there are variations across students. For example, in the criterion of Theoretical knowledge, B3 has the highest score of 12.86, while T2 has the lowest score of 5.86. This suggests differences in students' knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of the subject.

Overall, the scores indicate that students generally have a moderate level of performance across the different criteria. The distribution of scores across the criteria shows areas of strength and areas that may require more attention and improvement. By further analyzing and addressing the specific strengths and weaknesses of individual students, targeted support and instruction can be provided to enhance their overall performance.

2.2 Results of final exam

2.2.1 Overall performance

Table 3 Results of final exam

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Average
B1	85	93	90	92	91	91	91	90.43
B2	85	89	95	97	96	94	90	92.29
B3	95	93	97	98	96	96	96	95.86
T1	88	89	90	93	91	91	91	90.43
T2	82	85	80	80	80	75	72	79.14
T3	90	90	80	80	80	80	80	82.86
A1	80	80	80	79	79	79	79	79.43
A2	80	80	80	90	90	89	89	85.43

A3	95	95	95	95	90	92	92	93.43
S1	84	95	95	95	94	89	89	91.57
S2	97	100	100	100	97	97	97	98.29
S3	80	85	85	84	86	89	81	84.29
Average	86.75	89.50	88.92	90.25	89.17	88.50	87.25	88.62

Table 3 presents the results of the final exam for different participants (B1, B2, B3, T1, T2, T3, A1, A2, A3, S1, S2, S3), as well as the scores given by teachers (Teacher 1, Teacher 2) and experts (Expert 1, Expert 2, Expert 3, Expert 4, Expert 5). The average scores for each group and the overall average are also provided.

Looking at the average scores, we can see that the overall average performance across all participants is 88.62. This indicates that, on average, participants achieved a relatively high level of performance in the final exam.

Analyzing the performance of the different groups, participant B3 achieved the highest average score of 95.86, indicating strong performance. On the other hand, participant T2 achieved the lowest average score of 79.14, indicating a relatively weaker performance compared to other groups.

Ranging from 79.43 to 95.86, the average scores across the different student suggest a considerable range of performance levels, with some groups performing better or worse than others.

Looking at individual scores, it can be observed that some participants consistently scored well across all the assessments, while others had more fluctuating scores. For example, participant S2 achieved consistently high scores (ranging from 97 to 100) across all assessments.

The overall results of the final exam indicate a strong performance by most participants. Further analysis can be conducted to identify specific areas of strength and weaknesses, and targeted support can be provided to further enhance the participants' performance.

Analyzing the data, we can observe the following:

1. Theoretical knowledge:

- Participants demonstrated an average pre-test score of 10.73, which increased to an average final exam score of 17.73.
- The comparison score for theoretical knowledge is 7.00, indicating that participants showed an average improvement of 7 points from the pre-test to the final exam.
- The corresponding Effectiveness Index is 0.65, suggesting a relatively high level of effectiveness in improving theoretical knowledge.
- The Increasing Percentage for theoretical knowledge is 65.26%, indicating a significant growth in participants' understanding of theoretical knowledge.

2. Singing skills:

- Participants had an average pre-test score of 11.61, which increased to an average final exam score of 18.01.
- The comparison score for singing skills is 6.40, indicating an average improvement of 6.40 points from the pre-test to the final exam.

- The Effectiveness Index for singing skills is 0.55, suggesting a moderate level of effectiveness in improving singing skills.

- The Increasing Percentage for singing skills is 55.18%, indicating notable growth in participants' singing abilities.

3. Quality of voice:

- Participants had an average pre-test score of 14.23, which increased to an average final exam score of 18.24.

- The comparison score for the quality of voice is 4.01, indicating an average improvement of 4.01 points from the pre-test to the final exam.

- The Effectiveness Index for the quality of voice is 0.28, suggesting a relatively lower level of effectiveness in improving voice quality.

- The Increasing Percentage for the quality of voice is 28.20%, indicating a moderate increase in participants' voice quality.

4. Pronunciation:

- Participants had an average pre-test score of 13.65, which increased to an average final exam score of 17.18.

- The comparison score for pronunciation is 3.52, indicating an average improvement of 3.52 points from the pre-test to the final exam.

- The Effectiveness Index for pronunciation is 0.26, suggesting a relatively lower level of effectiveness in improving pronunciation.

- The Increasing Percentage for pronunciation is 25.81%, indicating a moderate improvement in participants' pronunciation.

5. Music performance:

- Participants had an average pre-test score of 13.27, which increased to an average final exam score of 17.46.

- The comparison score for music performance is 4.19, indicating an average improvement of 4.19 points from the pre-test to the final exam.

- The Effectiveness Index for music performance is 0.32, suggesting a moderate level of effectiveness in improving music performance.

- The Increasing Percentage for music performance is 31.57%, indicating notable growth in participants' music performance skills.

Overall, the data suggest that participants made significant improvements in theoretical knowledge and singing skills, with higher Effectiveness Index and Increasing Percentage. However, there was relatively less improvement in the quality of voice and pronunciation, as indicated by lower Effectiveness Indices and Increasing Percentages.

Based on the analysis of the data, we can draw the following conclusions regarding the teaching effects of the vocal performance course targeted at 2nd-year students majoring in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music:

1. Overall Performance:

- The average scores of participants in the pre-test were moderate, indicating that they had a foundation of knowledge and skills in vocal performance.

- In the final exam, the average scores significantly improved, demonstrating that participants made progress in their understanding and performance through the course.

- The overall average score in the final exam was relatively high, indicating that participants achieved a higher level of performance after completing the program.

2. Students' Performance in Each Score Range:

- All students improved their scores from the pre-test to the final exam, with none scoring below 60 in the final exam.
- A considerable number of students achieved scores above 90 in the final exam, indicating exceptional performance and remarkable improvement.

3. Students' Performance in Each Criteria:

- Participants demonstrated stronger performance in the criteria of quality of voice, theoretical knowledge, and singing skills, indicating progress in these areas.
- Pronunciation and music performance showed relatively lower improvement, suggesting a need for further focus and development.

4. Comparison Performance between Pre-test and Final Exam:

- All participants demonstrated improvement in their scores from the pre-test to the final exam, indicating the effectiveness of the course.
- The average comparison score and increasing percentage suggest significant improvement across the participants, reflecting the positive teaching effects.

In conclusion, the vocal performance course targeted at 2nd-year students majoring in vocal performance at Shenyang Conservatory of Music has shown positive teaching effects. Participants exhibited notable improvement in their overall performance, with significant progress seen in theoretical knowledge, singing skills, and quality of voice. While some areas such as pronunciation and music performance may require additional attention, the overall results indicate that the course has been effective in enhancing participants' understanding and performance in vocal performance.

Discussion

In order to promote the integration of ancient poems and art songs into the vocal music teaching in colleges and universities, colleges and universities must pay more attention to the teaching of ancient poems and art songs, and has a firm vocal talent in Chinese culture and self-confidence. On the one hand, colleges and universities should start by increasing investment in the teaching of ancient poetry and art songs.

Zhao (2021) thought they can increase investment in the education of ancient poetry and art songs, and cooperate with full-time vocal teachers to create personalized school-based teaching materials for ancient poetry and art songs. Reasonably design the teaching content of ancient poetry and art songs according to the different learning stages, and finally form a systematic teaching mode. On the other hand, colleges and universities should fully tap the existing teaching resources, and carry out the teaching activities of ancient poetry and art songs through interdisciplinary integration. For example: colleges and universities can organize Chinese teachers and vocal music teachers to jointly research and design the teaching content of ancient poetry and art songs to make up for the lack of vocal music teachers in traditional poetry and cultural knowledge; colleges and universities can also organize students to participate in lectures on traditional Chinese culture. The interest in poetry culture paves the way for the teaching of ancient poetry and art songs.

(2) Improving the teaching level of teachers' ancient poetry and art songs

If we want to improve the integration of ancient poetry art songs and vocal music teaching in colleges and universities, the key is to improve teachers' teaching level of ancient poetry art

songs. In the teaching process, teachers can combine the characteristics of ancient poetry and art songs to optimize their own teaching strategies from the following aspects.

Jin (2011) introduce reasonable choice of singing method. There are various types of ancient poetry and art songs, and the singing methods used are also different. In order to promote the integration of ancient poetry and art songs into vocal music teaching in colleges and universities, teachers must choose corresponding teaching songs according to actual teaching needs. For example: bel canto emphasizes vocal skills and pays attention to the resonance and penetration of the singer's voice. When teaching bel canto, teachers can choose the ancient poetry and art song "Apricot Blossoms in the Sky" as a teaching material. Students are required to use bel canto to complete the song, and guide them to correctly control the strength of breath and tone during the singing process. It reflects the sadness and lovesickness of the song. Another example: the national singing method pays attention to articulation and singing, which requires the singer to "according to the writing and singing" and "bringing the voice with emotion", and the timbre must have unique national characteristics. In order for students to master the key features of national singing, teachers can choose ancient poems and art songs such as "Yueren Song" and "Shejiang Picking Lotus" to guide students to practice, and let students embody rhyming by using coloratura and strengthening the articulation at the end of sentences, etc. Skills, improve their own national singing level.

Recommendation

1. Practical Recommendations

The genre of art songs was originally imported, and the writing of western art songs has strict rules. Western melodies are designed according to the severity and strength of the melody, while traditional Chinese poetry and music are tuned according to the melody and level. In comparison, the ancient poetry and art songs created by modern composers are relatively flexible. A good song is inseparable from the mutual support and matching of poetry and music. Only good words and good music can be regarded as an excellent work. In the works, we have to analyze the changes of harmony and music from different angles. Music is a further expression of words and a re-enrichment of the color of words. We use different methods to realize the expression structure of music and words, and find the internal relationship between them in the rhythm. For example, the emotionally intense part of the text is in the music remake, and the key words need to be given prefixes and emphasis when singing.

2. Recommendation for future research

The researchers who interest in this topic might explore the are of singing Chinese works which requires an organic combination of scientific singing and national style. It is the concept and pursuit of Chinese vocal music development in the past century. From the development of national vocal music theory, it can be seen that style expression and scientific vocalization are sometimes a pair of contradictions. In the 1950s, there was a debate between "local" and "foreign", and now there is a debate between "style" and "singing". In fact, soil and foreign, style and singing... are all different topics with the same dialectic relationship. Soil lies in the maintenance of style, and foreignness lies in the display of skills. It is impossible to maximize the artistic effect without the style of skills. Likewise, skill without style is meaningless and uninfected. Therefore, it is very important to learn from foreign scientific singing methods and inherit the traditional national style. When it comes to style and singing, people often simply understand it as two skins, a collage grafting relationship of one Chinese and one foreign. This superficial understanding can easily lead to the division and opposition of style and

singing. For example, some people think that "foreign singing" or scientific singing are just foreign things, or even "academic" things, which are not suitable for the expression of national style. Some people think that singing in traditional music is not scientific at all and not worth learning. These views are misinterpretations of the relationship between singing and style. In fact, scientific singing not only exists in bel canto, but also in national vocal music. National style also contains scientific singing. In the same way, bel canto is also inseparable from the specific national style expression. Negating certain singing principles and requirements common to the mutual learning of Chinese and Western cultures is not conducive to broadening our academic horizons, learning from bel canto, and using foreign things for China, and it is also not conducive to our pioneering and innovative exploration of the treasure house of vocal music of the Chinese nation, so that the past serves the present. Separating the style from the singing method will do all harm to our national vocal music career. The crux of many controversial thoughts lies in the lack of comprehensive understanding and objective understanding of the dialectical relationship between style and singing.

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