

Compiling the French Art Song Teaching Guidebook for High School Students at Wenzhou Art School, Zhejiang Province, the People's Republic of China

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Abstract

This paper's research purposes are: (1) To compile the French art song guidebook for teaching high school students at Wen Zhou Art school, Zhe Jiang Province, The People Republic of China; (2) To use the guidebook for teaching students in experimental group; (3) To evaluate effectiveness of teaching by using guidebook.

This paper's research methodology is a mixed research method of qualitative and quantitative research. The author interviewed three expert teachers, learned their teaching methods, and on this basis compiled a French art song guidebook for extra class. Interviewing 12 students who need to learn French art song lesson from Wen Zhou Art school (in Zhe Jiang, China) and 6 students randomly selected as experimental subjects to construct an experimental group, and used the guidebook to teach them.

Research findings were guidebook consists of 4 parts, a total of 16 lessons, at each part, there are 4 lessons, with the final lesson constituting a formative test. A good guidebook should have the following points: (1) The course plan is reasonable, and the teaching difficulty is appropriate; (2) Learning activities are interesting, interesting in content and focus on students' cooperation; (3) Learning materials are comprehensive, including sheet music, examples, and song recommendations; and (4) Good design, proper use of color. Guidebook for use of the students' professional French art song learning, should take the initiative to evaluate students' learning status and class observation and feedback, in the teaching process should be given more initiative

Keywords: Compiling; French Art Song; Guidebook; High School Students; Wenzhou Art School; Zhejiang Province; the People's Republic of China

Introduction

Art songs and opera selections are both important categories of vocal performance (concerts/albums) and vocal teaching activities. These two forms are often juxtaposed or intersected in performance and pedagogical practice, although strictly speaking they are two forms with different genre affiliations and artistic qualities. The former, by its very nature and tradition, belongs to the realm of chamber music, an intimate art; the latter belongs to the realm of theatre music (or stage music), a public art (Lu, 2007).

The tasks that music undertakes in these two genres are very different. In opera, music takes on a variety of functions such as characterisation, triggering dramatic action, rendering atmosphere and reflecting the script (Coleman, 2008).

In art songs, on the other hand, music is often only required to render atmosphere and reflect the lyrics. In this sense, the music of an opera aria expresses not only the lyrical content of the divertimento itself, but also the very deep and broad dramatic content beyond that divertimento. For example, the emotional tone of the whole drama, the musical style, the characterisation of the roles, etc., are projected in equal measure in the vocal melodies and orchestral accompaniments (Wang, 2008).

The music of an art song, however, need not (though it is not impossible) have these dimensions. One of the important qualities of the art song is that it is a blend of music and poetry, and the relationship between the two is such that they mirror and reinforce each other to a greater degree than in the opera. In opera, because music has the function of shaping images and triggering dramatic actions, it can only be partially close to the words, and even contradicts the words of the script when necessary. In addition, the accompaniment of an art song (most often the piano) often needs to be closely integrated into, reflect, and participate in the creation of the mood of the poem, and can have nothing to do with the lyrics. It can be (and often is) a "commentary" on the content or characterisation of the drama, when it (the accompaniment) is only responsible for the drama at a macro level, and is outside of the lyrics. In short, the differences in attributes lead to a series of differences in theoretical research, performance and teaching activities.

The above summarises the differences between art songs and opera selections in terms of genre attributes. In view of these differences, the choice of repertoire for French art song vocal teaching should be based on specific training priorities. Generally, for the lower grades of vocal students, the training strength of art song singing should be increased. Because art songs require less "performance" than opera selections, students can temporarily put aside such "performative" factors as grasping the character and maintaining dramatic tension, and concentrate on their own experience and training of singing (Yi, 2006).

In addition, the selection of art songs with a narrower range, fewer fluctuations, and less intensive physical work helps students to lay the foundation for scientific voice movement. Once students have a good concept of voice and a foundational understanding/expression, they can then introduce training in opera arias or reprise singing. Of course, at the operational level, the training of both vocal and performance qualities has to be tailored to the specific audience of the work as well as to the students. Do not follow the rules, and be flexible. However, while showing their individual styles, singers should always take the "attributes of the genre" as the fundamental reference for decision-making (Zheng, 2006).

Wenzhou City Art School, founded in 2007, boasts a strong faculty comprising renowned educators, including a national excellent teacher and senior instructors constituting 80% of the staff. With 1 doctoral student, 13 master's degree holders, and 9 faculty members trained abroad, the school prioritizes quality education and effective teaching methods. Emphasizing connotation development and creating a rigorous academic atmosphere, it has cultivated specialized programs and distinctive artistic brands. This dedication has led to high-quality student growth, enhanced teaching quality, increased parent satisfaction, and improved social recognition.

Since 1999, after the introduction of the policy of expansion of colleges and universities, under the premise of ensuring that the traditional culture of colleges and universities remain unchanged, the enrolment of music majors in the arts has also been expanding (Zhang, 2022).

The "art examination fever" has become widespread among high school students in Wenzhou. Many lack artistic talent or training and seek shortcuts to pursue music studies due to poor academic performance. Attending a high school of the arts becomes crucial for average students aspiring to pursue music education at the university level.

Wenzhou art school according to the music examination test content to open the curriculum, respectively: music theory, listening, singing, the main four main course content. Teaching content is mostly based on this to carry out the college entrance examination education.

The benign development of music and art high school can not just shout slogans, but also to overcome the difficulties to reform the development of art high school in the process of certain shortcomings. This fundamentally promotes the development of the school, but also for the future development of students to play a role in promoting. Both to ensure that the rate of further education, but also to the overall quality of national music is a great improvement (Tong, 2008).

In the content and manner of teaching French art song music to art school students, the knowledge and skills imparted by teachers in the classroom do not only require the teacher to have professional competence beyond what is required for teaching in secondary schools, but also a high caliber of textbooks for guidance, that is, guidebooks. It is therefore very important to compile a guidebook for French art song music in teaching in art schools.

This study is innovative. Taking the compilation of the study manual as the subject, it can improve and consolidate the problems existing in the study of popular vocal performance by obtaining the corresponding teaching methods through many experiments. This is to promote the progress of theory from the experience derived from practice, and also to use the compilation of theory to further promote the teaching practice to be more professional and scientific.

Research Objectives

1. To study French art songs singing technique from key informants.
2. To write the guidebook of French art songs.
3. To teach students in Wenzhou Art School by using the French Art Song Teaching Guidebook.
4. To find out the result of teaching by using the French Art Song Teaching Guidebook.

Research Methodology

This research is a mixed research method of qualitative and quantitative research.

Research tools

1. Interview form
2. Guidebook
3. formative test
4. Summative test
5. Performance test
6. IOC form

Data collection

As far as this research is concerned, the researcher uses formative tests and summative test to collect data during the experiment, including the above semester final exam grades of two groups, formative tests on the experimental subjects after every three lessons, and the result of summative test.

Conceptual Framework

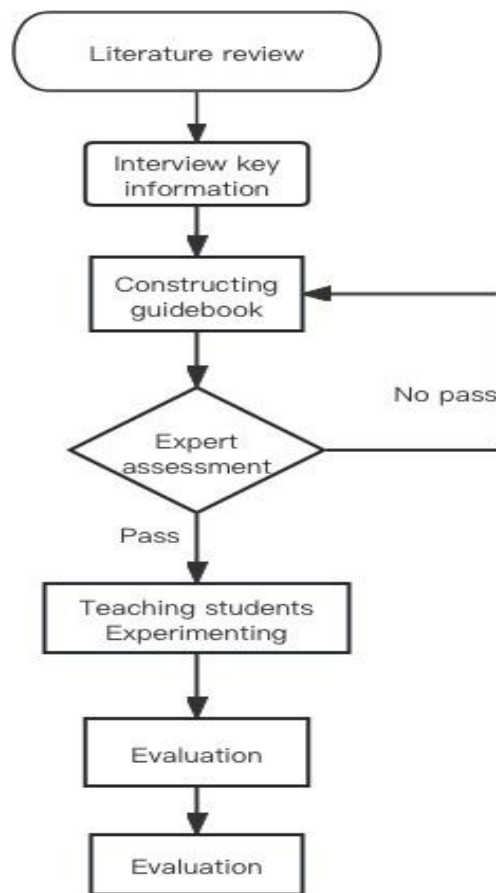


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Findings

To study French art song singing technique from key informants

Through interviews with three experts, the researchers brought together valuable insights about teaching French art songs and wrote an instruction manual for students at Wenzhou Art School. This instruction manual covers many aspects, including the development of vocal skills, curriculum design, emotional expression, the adjustment of vocal skills, assessment methods, and the role of multimedia learning materials. In the interviews, the experts emphasized the importance of focusing on respiratory control, vocal skills, pitch, rhythm and listening training in the early stages of vocal music teaching. The instruction

manual involves historical background introduction, basic skills training, song learning and practice, and stage performance training. In addition, experts highlighted the importance of helping students understand and express the emotions and emotions of French art songs, as well as teaching correct vocal skills appropriate to suit the singing needs of French art songs. A well-designed multimedia instruction manual can provide comprehensive learning resources, enhance learning motivation and interest, promote independent learning and self-assessment, deepen the understanding of the cultural background, and improve skills and performance levels. Assessing student learning progress involves observing singing performance, listening to audio recordings, checking practice logs or progress reports, and conducting class quizzes. Overall, the instruction manual aims to fill the gap in the teaching resources of students in Wenzhou Art School and provide them with systematic and scientific knowledge and training of singing French art songs.

To write the guidebook of French art songs

The French art songs represent the beautiful fusion of poetry and music, and the composer draws inspiration from the literary works to create the emotional melodies that enhance the lyrical content. The choice of poetry plays a crucial role in shaping the style and expression of these songs, and composers choosing works that resonate with their artistic feelings. From the structural elegance of Panathian poetry to the emotional depth of symbolist literature, each poetic tradition leaves a unique mark in the musical works. In addition, the unity of poetry and accompaniment in French art songs is obvious. The piano is not only an accompaniment, but also an indispensable voice, weaving its own narrative together with the vocal music. This symbiotic relationship between poetry and music leads to a profound and immersive musical experience in which every note and word harmoniousl together to evoke a variety of emotions and themes. Thus, French artistic songs are a proof of the enduring connection between literature and music, providing listeners with a glimpse into the cultural landscape of France's rich and artistic heritage.

The expert evaluated the instruction manual before entering the experimental phase. First, they focus on the completeness and accuracy of the content, and believe that the instruction manual is comprehensive, which not only introduces the historical background and development of French art songs, but also provides detailed singing skills and emotional expression guidance, as well as knowledge of French grammar. Secondly, the experts affirmed the structure arrangement and logic of the instruction manual, believing that its organization was clear and highly logical, which provided a good framework for students to gradually master the key points of learning. Third, experts hold a positive attitude towards the practicality and operability of the instruction manual, believing that it provides rich theoretical knowledge and background introduction, and combines specific examples and exercises to help students apply what they have learned to the actual singing. In addition, the use of multimedia elements also enhances the practicality and attractiveness of the instruction manual. In terms of innovation and forward-looking, experts believe that the instruction manual adopts multimedia form and combines modern teaching methods to provide students with a more vivid and intuitive learning experience. At the same time, the instruction manual also focuses on the latest development trends and research directions of French art songs, and provides students with cutting-edge learning resources. Although the instruction manual performed well in multiple ways, the experts also made suggestions, including adding a wider variety of exercises and interaction sessions and further improving the French grammar content. To sum up, the instruction manual

provides students with a comprehensive and systematic learning guidance of French art songs, which helps them to better master singing skills and emotional expression, and have a deep understanding of the connotation and cultural background of French art songs.

To teach students in Wen Zhou Art school by using the French art song teaching guidebook

Through the research and expert interviews with Wenzhou Art School, this study is dedicated to developing a guide for teaching French art songs applicable to the school. Wenzhou Art School has a long history and rich cultural heritage in music education, but it has only been open for six years for French art songs to require both music theory and French knowledge. This is mainly because the course has very high requirements for teachers, requiring a high level of French teaching and music teaching ability. Through the preparation of this guide, it aims to provide students with more comprehensive and scientific learning resources for French art songs, and promote the teaching quality and level of French art song courses in Wenzhou Art School. The guide covers French pronunciation, background history, and emotional expression, aiming to help students better understand and interpret French art songs. Through the discussion with experts and teachers and combined with their own teaching experience, the compilation of the guide is more close to the needs of students, but also adds rich multimedia elements and interactivity, so as to improve the interest and effect of learning. Finally, the actual effect and feasibility of the guide will be evaluated through the teaching experiment and stage test of the students, so as to provide strong support and guidance for the French art song course of Wenzhou Art School.

To find out the result of teaching by using the French art song teaching guidebook

Through the teaching experiment conducted in Wenzhou Art School, the researchers have achieved positive results. The experimental results show that the guide is clearly written, the content difficulty is moderate, and reasonably divided into three parts, the arrangement order is logical, and attracts the attention of students. Thinking about teaching problems from the perspective of students can stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and make them more actively participate in learning activities. In addition, the teaching of the theoretical knowledge of French may require more professional content, and perhaps provide more professional French training for French art song teachers in advance to make theoretical learning more effective. The design of the guide is simple and clear, the choice and collocation of colors are in line with the aesthetic standards of contemporary students, and the illustrations are vivid. The etudes selected in the guide are moderate in difficulty. Through the teaching methods of music score and audio, they make up for some students' weak ability to identify music, and greatly improve the learning efficiency of students. After the experiment, the average score improved, indicating that the guide is suitable for students at Wenzhou Art School. However, students at different levels show different degrees of improvement, and therefore, the students' pre-existing learning basis may need to be considered when designing the guidelines. To sum up, this guide has achieved good results in improving students' learning efficiency and teaching quality, and has been recognized and affirmed by experts and teachers.

Discussion

Pay attention to the combination of theory and practice

The "Guidebook to French Art Songs" demonstrates exceptional craftsmanship in its integration of theory and practice, with each chapter encompassing both theoretical instruction and practical singing exercises, enabling learners to gain a deeper understanding and mastery of the essence of French art songs. This is because the main content of French art songs is poetry, which greatly tests cultural literacy. Therefore, the seamless integration of theory and practice is an issue that needs to be addressed during the compilation of textbooks. This viewpoint is consistent with the perspectives of three key informants, Zhao Jing, Yan Hanyan, and Li Xiaoyan: music theory plays a pivotal role in the performance of French art songs. It not only deepens singers' comprehension and emotional connection to the works, but also enhances their singing skills and artistic expression, serving as the key to creative interpretation and adaptation of songs. Currently, the most prominent issue in the teaching of French art songs is the scarcity of theoretical textbooks. To address this issue, authoritative experts should be invited to formulate the content of textbooks based on training models and teaching objectives, drawing on the essence of French art song textbooks both domestically and internationally, and adapting them into new textbooks suitable for Wenzhou Art School. Only by doing so can the development of French art songs become more sophisticated.

Adapt to Different Conditions and Levels of Students

The "French Art Song Guidebook" is tailored for high school students at Wenzhou Art School, covering various aspects such as singing techniques, emotional expression, and stage performance arts. The reason why this book can adapt to students of different conditions and levels is that each student has unique vocal conditions and learning backgrounds. In the early stages of compiling the textbook, we emphasize students' self-perception of musical works; while in the advanced stages, the focus should be on controlling the voice to adapt to the musical works, convey different emotions, and make the expression of art songs richer and fuller. The content of the advanced-level materials should equip students with the ability to change their musical thinking, refine and enhance their own and others' musical works according to the intended effect of the piece; analyze, evaluate, and compare musical fragments; communicate thoughts and feelings with expressive language and musical memory; and justify their viewpoints. The "French Art Song Guidebook" is exactly such a textbook that progresses step by step from the basics to the advanced level, aiming to help high school students at Wenzhou Art School deeply understand and master the unique charm of French art songs, thereby laying a solid foundation for their future development in the field of music and art (Li, 2001).

The Universality of the Content

The "French Art Songs Guidebook" introduces the diverse styles and singing techniques of French art songs for high school students at Wenzhou Art School, with flexible and extensive content that aims to satisfy their diverse learning needs and interests. This is because French art songs are abundant in styles, each with its unique singing method. Therefore, learning French art songs aims to cultivate students' understanding and grasp of French art song styles, further enhancing their musical literacy and making their interpretation of songs more artistic. In the three-year teaching process at Wenzhou Art School, the implementation of teaching methods for French art songs should focus on students' "individuality," "creativity," and "pioneering spirit." Innovation and creation are the teaching goals of art song education (Wang, 2014).

Test and Evaluation Mechanism

"French Art Song Guidebook" has set up tests after learning chapters 2, 3, and 4. Through multiple tests and student feedback, researchers have continuously adjusted and improved the content of the guidebook to make it more in line with actual teaching needs and enhance teaching effectiveness. Similarly, "Popular Music Singing Manual" has also established tests after each chapter. By repeatedly testing students and collecting feedback, researchers have continuously adjusted and optimized the content of the manual to better meet the practical teaching requirements and improve teaching outcomes. This approach helps to fairly evaluate teachers' efforts, encourages them to continuously improve their teaching methods, and enhances the quality of teaching. More importantly, through post-class evaluations, teachers and students can compare their performance with the teaching objectives, identify their shortcomings, and make up for them, thus promoting a virtuous cycle in the entire teaching process.

Recommendation

1. Practical Recommendations

To enhance students' stage performance abilities and self-confidence, teachers should actively encourage their participation in various singing practice activities, including open classes, intimate concerts, and other similar events.

2. Recommendation for future research

Due to the development and changes in students' learning situations, the content of the manual needs to be regularly updated, including the latest singing techniques, teaching resources, and so on.

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