

Current Situation of Cello Course in Xihua University, China

Liu Jiajun and Prasert Khunthongchan

Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand

Corresponding Author, E-mail: nicha.musiced@gmail.com

Abstract

Chinese and Western cello courses differ in teaching methods, materials, educational systems, and philosophies. Western cello education commonly employs traditional classical methods, such as the Suzuki method and European systems, focusing on music theory, technical skills, and classical repertoire. Chinese education also centers on classical music but incorporates traditional Chinese elements, with an emphasis on both technical proficiency and emotional expression. While both systems offer training through conservatories or private instruction, Western programs are more structured with degree programs, whereas China's system is more performance and competition-oriented. Western education encourages individual artistry, while Chinese programs emphasize collective cooperation, often under competitive pressure. In terms of repertoire, Western students explore classical and modern genres, while Chinese students integrate traditional folk music alongside classical pieces. Despite these differences, both systems foster unique cellists who align their training with personal goals.

Keywords: Current Situation; Cello Course; Xihua University; China

Introduction

There are some differences between Chinese and foreign cello courses in terms of teaching methods, teaching materials, educational systems and educational concepts.

Teaching methods and teaching materials:

Western cello education usually adopts traditional classical music teaching methods, such as Suzuki method, European education system, etc. These methods focus on the cultivation of technology, emphasize the study of music theory and skills, and focus on classical cello repertoire.

Chinese cello education is also based on classical music, but also includes elements of traditional Chinese music. Some Chinese cello schools and teachers may emphasize technical training, but also pay attention to musical expression and emotional communication. The Chinese education system also has its own teaching materials and teaching methods (Hu, 2020).

Education system and structure:

Western cello education is usually carried out in conservatories, music schools or private conservatories, with strict curriculum and degree programs. Students typically undergo years of systematic training in theory, history, performance and performance.

There are also conservatories and music schools for cello education in China, but some students may get music education through private teachers. China's music education system is also evolving, focusing more on student performance and competition results.

Educational philosophy and goals:

Western cello education emphasizes the balance of musical technique and artistry. Students are encouraged to develop a personal performance style and pursue a career in music.

Chinese cello education usually also emphasizes technique, but pays more attention to collective and team cooperation. China's music education system is also under more competitive pressure, with many students participating in music competitions to gain opportunities for higher education.

Music selection and variety:

Western cello education usually includes classical music, baroque music, romantic music and other styles, and students are also encouraged to explore different music genres, such as jazz, pop music and so on.

Chinese cello education has a solid foundation in classical music, but it also increasingly includes elements of traditional Chinese music, such as folk music ensembles, folk music, etc. (Xie, 2023).

Despite these differences, both education systems have their unique features, each helping to produce cellists with different musical backgrounds and skills. Many cello students choose an educational path that works for them based on their interests and goals.

Cello Course at Xihua University

Introduction to Xihua University

The music and dance majors of Xihua University have a school history of more than 30 years. In June 2017, the School of Music and Dance was established as a secondary independent unit. In July 2018, the college expanded and merged into one department and one major. So far, the scale of the college has basically taken shape, with three departments and five majors, including the Department of Music, Department of Dance, Department of Education, Musicology, Dance, Dance Performance, Preschool Education and Performance. Among them, the preschool education major is an applied demonstration major in local ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities in Sichuan Province, and the dance major is a school-level characteristic major. The Art Troupe of Xihua University under the Art Education Committee of the school is executed by the college (Duan & Chen, 2022).

The teaching and scientific research facilities of the college

The college is located in the seventh teaching building (art building) on campus, covering an area of about 5,000 square meters. There is an independent piano room building with 120 piano rooms, including 72 student piano rooms, 32 teacher piano rooms, more than 130 pianos, and two grand pianos; 7 professional dance classrooms; 3 multimedia music classrooms; 1 rehearsal classroom; 1 electric steel classroom; 1 independent small concert hall with 219 auditorium seats. There are three experiment/training rooms, "MIDI production laboratory", "digital piano laboratory" and "professional practice comprehensive training laboratory". Signed 5 practice bases.

Faculty status of the college

The college has a total of 82 faculty members, including 53 in-service faculty members and 29 part-time teachers. The college has a total of 43 full-time teachers, 60% of whom have a master's degree or above, 30% have an associate professor or above title, and 24% have overseas study and visit experience. There are thousands of repertoires, about 20 dance repertoires (winning), and several short plays.

The situation of students in the college

There are currently 1051 students in the four grades, including 297 students in music, 135 in dance, 140 in dance performance, 355 in preschool education, and 124 in performance.

In the past three years, the enrollment situation of the college has been good, and the annual first-choice application rate is between 120-130%. Students have a good learning style, the annual graduation rate is about 98.5%, the annual employment rate reaches 94%, and the employment unit feedback is high.

Teaching situation of the college

The college adopts a training mode that combines theoretical study, skill study, stage practice, field collection, and the second classroom "five in one". According to the students' own conditions, they give full play to their professional characteristics and attach importance to practical teaching.

In the past three years, the college has opened an average of about 1,200 courses per year, which not only meet the needs of college teaching, but also include school-level public elective courses such as music appreciation, chorus art, pedagogy, and educational psychology. Among them, Chinese folk dance style performance training (A), kindergarten organization and management, and preschool psychology are school-level key courses; solfeggio and ear training courses and pedagogy courses are included in the construction of school-level quality courses; two online MOOCs are also carried out. The doors are Dance Appreciation and Voice Education for Preschool Children (Zhong, 2018).

Achievements of the college

(1) Scientific research

Since 2017, the college has successfully applied for 1 National Art Fund project; undertaken and completed 13 provincial and municipal social science projects; 16 horizontal projects; published 36 scientific research papers and 3 CSSCI papers. Published 10 books, including 7 monographs and 3 edited or textbooks.

(2) Competition performance

Since 2017, teachers have guided students to win nearly 90 awards in international and domestic competitions. The "Dream of Biao" choir has won international awards for four consecutive years. In 2019, it participated in the 9th "Journey of Songs" International Chorus Festival Competition and won gold medals in two groups (mixed voice group singing and folk song group singing); the organizer of the dance department Students participated in the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the special art exhibition for college students, and won two first prizes (provincial and ministerial level). The college supports and leads students to go off-campus for music, dance, performance exhibitions and exchange activities for many times, which has been widely praised. Teachers and students of the Department of Performance participated in the 2019 Sichuan University College Student Campus Drama Season and won 5 awards.

(3) Organize and participate in the party

The college assists or independently organizes and undertakes about 30 concerts and evening parties in various forms every year. For example, in 2019, on the evening of August 22, the "Gathering under the National Flag" Sichuan-Hong Kong Youth "Gathering under the National Flag" hosted by the school The themed exchange activity has come to a successful conclusion. On September 10th, the twelfth "Xihua Autumn Rhyme" Gala was successfully held. On September 29, the "My Motherland and Me" cultural performance celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China ended perfectly. And the

school New Year's concert on the evening of December 26th. In the above activities, the teachers and students of the college performed their duties conscientiously, worked overtime, overcame difficulties, and completed the performance tasks excellently. The students of the Department of Dance of the college have been selected to participate in the recording of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala for three consecutive years. In 2019, some teachers and students of the college also participated in the CCTV "Flowers in May" National College and Middle School Student Art Performance, and China Education Television's "Flying Dreams. Tianjin University Youth Song Festival-West Hua University branch venue performances, etc.

Adhering to the spirit of Xihua University's school motto of "Seeking Truth", "Mingde" and "Excellence", the college takes "Mingde", "Great Talent", "Exquisite Art" and "Excellence" as its motto.

The Instrumental Music Teaching and Research Section is an independent subject direction under the Music Department of the School of Music and Dance. The goal of the subject is to deliver high-level graduate talents to major music schools and capable talents to various primary and secondary schools and social enterprises. Seven of the existing teachers graduated from well-known music colleges such as Sichuan Conservatory of Music. Has rich teaching and performance experience. In terms of professional design, there are two directions of major and general training, and now there are majors (guzheng, pipa, erhu, bamboo flute, zhongruan, sheng, flute, violin, cello, accordion, saxophone), etc.

In addition to scientifically and rationally arranging teaching courses according to the requirements of the teaching syllabus, the teaching and research section also sets up a variety of bands suitable for students to present themselves, such as folk orchestra, saxophone ensemble, accordion ensemble, national plucked strings and stringed instruments. Students at the school have participated in various provincial, municipal and school competitions and performances for many times, and have won unanimous affirmation: for example, Lu Hanshu won the first place in the instrumental music group in the 2016 "Pentathlon Competition for College Students in Sichuan Province". The erhu ensemble "Qingyin-Hebao Tune" won the first prize of the instrumental music professional group in the 8th "Sichuan Provincial College Students Art Festival" in 2017 (Cai, 2017).

Current Situation of Cello Course in Xihua University

Difficulties faced by the cello curriculum construction teaching system at the present stage

Not paying enough attention

Cello teaching is a highly professional and specialized subject. The school basically focuses on the improvement of skills and skills. The lack of understanding of the teaching system and one-sidedness lead the school to ignore its own important role in the cello course. It is believed that as long as the teacher's ability level is excellent, students can learn well. In addition, due to the school's contempt for the teaching of theoretical knowledge, the lack of timely update of the teaching materials, and the outdated content of the teaching materials, the construction of the cello teaching system also faces difficulties and omissions.

The quality level of the teaching staff needs to be improved

The main content of the cello class is the teaching of cello performance. Most teachers engaged in instrumental music teaching are prone to some misunderstandings: theoretical knowledge is not helpful for musical instrument learning; the most important thing in musical instrument learning is to study hard. Practice makes perfect is success... With the idea of "the master leads the door, the practice is in the individual" and ignores the guidance and analysis in the teaching process, the teacher's lack of action and low quality will curb the enthusiasm and autonomy of students in learning (Liu, 2016).

The teaching plan is not standardized enough, the curriculum setting is not reasonable enough, and the teaching content is monotonous and boring.

There seem to be some common phenomena in instrumental music courses: there is little explanation of theoretical knowledge, most of the time in class is spent on repeated performance exercises, there is little communication and interaction between students and teachers, and there is a lack of relevant music expansion explanations and art appreciation. In this teaching mode, students are unable to put emotion and expressiveness into the performance due to lack of understanding of the background of the creation of the music and the author's creative emotion, which makes the music played empty and meaningless, and the student is just a qualified luthier and not player.

Ideas and methods for the construction of cello course teaching system

Schools should pay more attention to the construction of teaching system

The school is the primary link in realizing the construction of the teaching system of the cello course, and plays the functions of organization and planning. In order to better implement the construction of the teaching system, schools must pay more attention to it. The first is to make full investigations, collect information on colleges and universities with complete teaching systems and better operations, investigate the implementation and operation of the cello teaching system in these colleges and obtain relevant data, and compare the system construction work of each school in the form of charts, combined with the actual situation of the school to formulate a teaching system construction plan that is in line with the school; the second is to continuously improve, build forums, post bars, and discussion groups on the school website, WeChat, QQ and other network platforms, expand the scope of speech, and collect students' views on the construction of the cello teaching system, Opinions, opinions and suggestions, open up and brainstorm. By collecting and sorting out useful opinions and suggestions, we will continuously improve and perfect the teaching system, and make up for the defects and deficiencies in the process of system construction in a timely manner; the third is to use the existing resources of the school to strive for opportunities to participate in domestic and foreign competitions, so that the cello talents of our school can be displayed on the display platform (Ma, 2014).

In addition, the untimely update of software and hardware is also one of the disadvantages in the process of system construction. From many examples of failed teaching system construction, it can be seen that the aging of software and hardware equipment is an important factor that prevents the construction work from being promoted. Therefore, schools must deal with it. Intensify. First, in terms of hardware, update the textbook version in time to keep up with new policies and measures for cello teaching, and add relevant equipment for cello teaching and training, which can provide calibration and assistance for tuning, techniques, and skills during cello training, testing and other help; second, in terms of software, the introduction of advanced information technology provides technical support for cello teaching and training.

Improve the overall quality and comprehensive ability of the teaching staff. Teachers are an important bridge connecting students and schools, and are direct participants and executors in the construction of the teaching system. If the strength of cello teachers is weak and the overall level of the teaching team is too low, it will directly affect the effectiveness of the construction of the teaching system. Therefore, improving teachers' comprehensive ability and quality level plays a vital role in the smooth and efficient construction of cello course teaching system. First of all, it is necessary to increase the requirements and strictly control the recruitment of teachers, so as to eliminate the unevenness of the school's teaching staff from the source; secondly, it is necessary to pay attention to the periodic training of the teacher team and the regular update of skills, which can increase training opportunities. Teachers are required to regularly or irregularly participate in relevant training and advanced studies at home and abroad; thirdly, cooperate with various art colleges to set up experience exchanges and art seminars, and hire senior cello experts at home and abroad or those with high artistic attainments in cello Scholars and lecturers, impart experience and innovate and promote the cello teachers in the school to improve the overall level and artistic quality of the cello teachers in the school; finally, implement an assessment and evaluation mechanism to regularly assess and evaluate the various abilities of teachers and formulate Assessment methods, setting rewards and accountability, in order to improve teachers' enthusiasm and standardize teachers' teaching behavior (Liu, 20216).

Standardize the teaching plan, reasonably set the curriculum and teaching content

The most basic and fundamental measures to realize the construction of the cello course teaching system are to standardize the teaching plan and rationally set the course and teaching content. If the teaching plan is not organized, the curriculum is too single, and the teaching content is boring, it will not be possible to form a closed loop of cello teaching, and the system construction will not be realized. Therefore, the key to the success of the construction of the teaching system is to standardize the teaching plan and rationally set the curriculum and teaching content. One is to change the current situation of one-sided practical training based on the principle of linking theory with practice, to strengthen the emphasis on cello theory teaching, and to improve students' cello skills as a whole by combining theoretical knowledge with practical exercises. The second is to add an art appreciation class. Through listening to and appreciating famous artists and famous songs, we can understand the stories behind the music, comprehend the artistic conception shown in the music and the emotions expressed by the author. The third is to add social practice experience, organize students to participate in concerts or watch national and international competitions, feel the atmosphere

and accumulate performance experience. The fourth is to provide more opportunities and platforms for students to display and compete, to improve students' competitive awareness and skill level, and to achieve double promotion of classroom effectiveness and teaching quality. Take Elgar's "E minor Cello Concerto" as an example. "E minor Cello Concerto", also known as "War Requiem", was composed by Elgar after the end of the First World War, although it was far away from Created in the flames of war and in a remote and quiet rural environment, the author vividly expresses the devastation after the war, people's fear of war, sadness and anger towards the instigators of the war. From the failure of the first performance to attracting attention and then being listed as one of the greatest cello concertos, this piece has great artistic appeal and historical significance. The four movements are analyzed one by one in stages and with emphasis, and the differences in mode, rhythm, and tune style among the four movements are compared and analyzed to complete the theoretical explanation of the piece. Guide and correct fingering skills and performance skills during cello training, and at the same time play the performance audio and video of this song in the training class, experience the artistic expression of this song from the auditory and visual levels, and comprehend the meaning expressed by the author Emotions and thoughts. In addition, if you have the opportunity and conditions, you can participate in the concert of the music to promote the experience accumulation of students' performance ability.

Emphasis on the cultivation and improvement of students' comprehensive quality and artistic quality

At this stage, educational concepts such as "quality education" and "comprehensive education" are constantly being raised and advocated, reflecting the new situation and new goals of my country's current education. In the new era, the state's emphasis on the integration, comprehensiveness, and quality of music teaching has put forward higher reform requirements and innovation goals for major art colleges, in order to achieve the purpose of cultivating and delivering high-quality music talents for the national music field. The cultivation of cello talents should not only have a solid foundation and strong professionalism, but also dabble in various art fields and music forms. For related content such as music encyclopedias, dramas, songs and dances, film and television music works, it is necessary to understand the artistic expressions and emotional expressions (Tian, 2015).

At the same time, in terms of improving students' comprehensive abilities, schools and teachers should intensify their efforts to guide and cultivate students' self-thinking and innovative abilities in music in a direction and purpose, so that students can improve their cello performance level and music literacy. All have been shaped and improved to achieve good results in the specialization and integration of cello teaching, and to achieve the smooth progress of the construction of the cello course teaching system while cultivating high-quality cello performance talents.

Conclusion

The cello curriculum at Xihua University faces several challenges, including a lack of emphasis on theoretical knowledge, outdated teaching materials, and a need for improvement in teaching quality. Teachers often prioritize skill development over theory, leading to monotonous lessons and limited student engagement. The curriculum lacks diversity, with minimal focus on music appreciation and performance expression, reducing students to mere performers rather than expressive musicians. To improve, the university should enhance its teaching system by updating materials, incorporating student feedback, and offering performance opportunities. Teachers' qualifications must be upgraded through training, and the curriculum should integrate theoretical instruction with practical training. Encouraging art appreciation, social practice, and performance exposure is essential for cultivating well-rounded students with strong artistic and technical skills. Additionally, greater emphasis on comprehensive education will help develop high-quality cello performers with broader artistic understanding and creativity.

References

- Cai, J. (2017). Some thoughts on the construction of cello performance courses in normal colleges. *Art Education*, 2017(7), 56-58.
- Duan, Y., & Chen, L. (2022). Reflections on the Development of Cello Teaching in Colleges and Universities. *Music Life*, 2022(12), 66-68.
- Hu, T. (2020). Analysis of the Current Situation of Cello Teaching in the Current Music Education Environment. *North Music*, 40(11), 3.
- Liu, D. (2016). Talking about cello teaching in music quality education in art colleges. *Voice of the Yellow River*, 2016(14), 100-101.
- Liu, M. (2016). *How to improve the level of cello performance*. Shanghai: Huale Publishing House.
- Ma, M. (2014). Thoughts and Suggestions on the Construction of Cello Teaching Curriculum System in Colleges and Universities. *Jiannan Literature*, 2014(8), 60-61.
- Tian, H. (2015). Research on teaching methods of cello courses in colleges and universities. *Northern Music*, 2015(20), 30-34.
- Xie, G. (2023). Research on left-hand training in cello performance techniques. *Heart Voice Song Magazine*, 2023(2), 38-41.
- Zhong, Q. (2018). Analysis of the Current Situation and Countermeasures of Cello Teaching. *North Music*, 2018(8), 89-91.