

# Research on Opera Practice and Teaching in Vocal Performance Majors of Higher Education Institutions

Baiyang Yu\*

Uniwersytet Muzyczny Fryderyka Chopina, Warszawa 00-368, Poland

\*Corresponding author: Baiyang Yu, yilei1088@163.com

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**Abstract:** Opera plays a very important role in the teaching of vocal music performance. Its practice teaching link plays a key role in improving students' performance ability and singing skills. For the students of vocal performance major, from the perspective of comprehensive quality training, this paper briefly analyzes the value and significance of opera teaching practice, clarifies the existing problems in the current opera teaching process, and puts forward specific implementation strategies for the opera teaching of vocal performance major. It covers the aspects of attaching importance to role-playing, strengthening image building, imparting performance skills and enhancing students' music perception ability, to provide valuable reference for the opera teaching of vocal performance majors in colleges and universities.

**Keywords:** College vocal music performance major; Opera; Teaching practice; Strategy

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## 1. The value of opera teaching practice for vocal music performance majors in colleges and universities

Opera is an important branch of artistic performance. To shape characters and create dramatic conflicts, opera performances often need to be closely combined with specific plots to carry out musical interpretation, which puts forward higher requirements on the professional skills of actors, who not only need to have strong stage performances but also need to have excellent singing skills. However, from the perspective of professional division, although opera is an independent professional field, there are very few colleges that can set up opera majors. In most cases, opera elements are integrated into the teaching practice of vocal performance majors, and teachers selectively add classical opera pieces to the teaching according to their professional teaching needs. This approach can not only effectively improve students' singing skills and exercise their stage performance ability, but also improve the overall quality of professional talent training for vocal performance. In the process of integrating opera elements into vocal performance, singers need to flexibly adjust the singing voice and timbre according to specific needs to create a diversified character image and enhance the stage performance <sup>[1]</sup>.

In addition, in the teaching practice of vocal performance specialty, in addition to the need to train students' singing ability, they should also be targeted to train their performance skills and psychological quality to enhance their employment competitiveness. Students can get more stage performance opportunities through opera rehearsal, which can not only exercise their stage performance but also further enhance their psychological quality so that they can face the stage more confidently. In the long run, the overall performance of the students in stage singing, including singing ability, body movements and facial expressions, will be significantly improved, laying a solid foundation for them to better adapt to the professional requirements of vocal performance. Therefore, it can be said that it is of significant value and significance to integrate opera teaching into the teaching practice of vocal performance majors.

## **2. The problems in opera teaching**

### **(1) The teachers lack experience in opera performance**

Vocal music teaching is very obvious practical, to train highly professional students, teachers have rich practical experience is indispensable. However, with the rapid development of vocal music education and the expansion of the enrollment scale, many vocal music performance teachers have little contact with professional opera-related content, which naturally cannot guarantee the overall quality of teaching work.

### **(2) More attention should be paid to opera teaching in colleges and universities**

In the implementation of art education in some colleges and universities, they tend to emphasize the teaching of theoretical knowledge, while the content of opera is rarely included. Even if relevant courses are offered, most of them only play videos through multimedia devices to guide students to observe and imitate, and theory and practice cannot be effectively combined, which makes it difficult for students to appreciate the charm of opera performance, thus affecting the teaching effect and progress <sup>[2,3]</sup>.

### **(3) The threshold of opera learning is relatively high, and some students' knowledge base is weak**

In the current music teaching process in colleges and universities, due to the limited course time, opera teaching is often dominated by fragments or main arias, lacking the opportunity to practice the whole act of opera. Students can only imitate and practice part of the content, it is difficult to grasp and perceive the opera as a whole, and cannot carry out in-depth analysis. They know little about the creation background, performance methods and plot content of the opera <sup>[4]</sup>. Therefore, in the actual practice process, it is difficult for students to grasp and control the opera as a whole, and it is difficult to invest their emotions in singing, and the emotions that the opera author tries to convey through the work cannot be fully displayed, and the performance often appears disconnected from the work itself.

## **3. Practical measures of opera teaching in vocal music performance majors in colleges and universities**

### **3.1. Pay attention to role-playing**

As one of the important components of performing arts, the core of opera lies in performance. As a key teaching method, role-playing plays a decisive role in cultivating students' abilities and enhancing their class participation, especially in the cultivation of performance ability. In the practice of opera teaching for vocal music performance majors in colleges and universities, teachers need to focus on the innovation and diversification of teaching methods to enhance students' class participation and achieve the goal of improving teaching quality and

efficiency. Therefore, teachers can combine the teaching content of opera and guide students to complete the opera performance through the way of role-playing. To improve students' performance ability, as well as to achieve the preset teaching objectives and carry out the role-playing activities smoothly, teachers should make adequate preparations.

- (1) Teachers should assign roles scientifically and reasonably according to the appearance conditions and timbre characteristics of the students, so as to make the opera performance more smoothly. This can not only cultivate students' performance ability but also effectively tap their performance potential and promote their comprehensive literacy.
- (2) Teachers should give students enough preparation time to understand the background and plot development of the opera, and deeply understand the character characteristics of the characters to better shape the characters' images <sup>[5]</sup>. The reason is that there are many factors involved in opera stage performance and the overall difficulty is extremely high. Only in this way can they effectively rehearse within the prescribed time and lay a solid foundation for the completion of stage performance tasks with high quality.
- (3) Teachers should take the initiative to assume the responsibility of education and guidance, lead students to in-depth analysis of opera works, detailed interpretation of the composition elements of the work, performance requirements, etc., and organize students to carry out rehearsal activities based on full understanding of the work <sup>[6]</sup>. In this way, once students enter the role state of rehearsal, they will take the initiative to think about how to shape the character image and show the character characteristics more clearly to complete the opera performance with high quality. This process can fully cultivate students' comprehensive ability and add impetus to the practical teaching of opera for vocal music performance majors in colleges and universities.

Taking the teaching practice of Turandot, a Western classic opera with strong Chinese elements, as an example, in order to attract students' attention and stimulate their interest in the opera and Turandot in the course of teaching, teachers can use multimedia to play the film clip of Turandot. The selection of the Chinese folk song "Jasmine Flower" from this opera, guides students to think deeply about the inner world of the characters and the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western cultures in combination with these film and television materials and explore how to present different characters in the best way. As different students have different knowledge bases and performance comprehension abilities, teachers should encourage students to actively communicate with others, express their views to others while listening to other's opinions, and constantly improve their cognitive level and understanding ability. At the same time, teachers can show students the performance video of the classic version of the Turandot opera, so that they can create roles based on their understanding of the role to stimulate enthusiasm for the performance to the maximum extent so that they can get more profound experience and perception in practice <sup>[7]</sup>. Compared with the traditional simple theoretical explanation, this way can let students deeply understand the charm of opera, which is of great benefit to the development of students' comprehensive literacy and lays a solid foundation for their comprehensive development in the future.

### **3.2. Pay attention to image-building**

Generally speaking, the opera performance in the vocal music performance major in colleges and universities can create a perfect audio-visual image. In the performance process, the audience is often moved by the singer's body language, facial expression and language expression to obtain a pleasant audio-visual experience. These

elements that can touch the heart of the audience can be summarized as “performability.” For college students majoring in vocal performance, mastering these professional skills is an indispensable part of their studies. However, as they have fewer opportunities to receive systematic vocal music knowledge education, it is often difficult for them to master singing and performance quickly, and may have a sense of frustration, which is not conducive to establishing own confidence in performance. Therefore, in the actual teaching, teachers should not only emphasize the training of singing skills, but also pay attention to the training of image building, flexibly use heuristic teaching activities to guide students to realize the importance of image building, and lay a solid foundation for students to build an appealing stage performance.

In specific teaching activities, teachers can play classic Chinese and foreign opera works such as “Madame Butterfly,” composed by Italian composer Puccini, and the opera “The White-Haired Girl,” co-composed by Chinese composers He Jingzhi, Ding Yi and Ma Ke, to integrate opera into classroom teaching. During the viewing process, teachers can assign small tasks for students to observe the body language of the actors and analyze the creative techniques of the opera works. Students need to further think about how the original actors construct and present the characters and the actual stage effects brought by this shaping. At the same time, they can share their reflections with classmates to deepen their understanding of the importance of character portraying<sup>[8-10]</sup>. In addition, teachers can use online resources to provide snippets of Chinese national operas such as Sister Jiang, and guide students to explore the emotional world and personality characteristics of characters in combination with the creation time background of the works. Through such teaching methods, students can more effectively shape the characters in the stage performance, thus improving the stage performance and laying a solid foundation for the development of students’ comprehensive ability.

### **3.3. Teach students performance skills**

As the core link in the opera teaching practice of vocal music performance majors in colleges and universities, teaching performance skills plays a key role in shaping students’ characters on the stage and improving the performance effect. Generally speaking, no matter what kind of opera stage performance, the actors are required to have solid and professional performance skills. Therefore, in the actual opera teaching activities to truly achieve teaching efficiency, teachers should not only teach students basic vocal music knowledge, but also teach performing skills according to the actual situation of students, and guide students to carry out practical exercises<sup>[11]</sup>. Only in this way can students deeply appreciate the charm of opera in continuous performance practice, and gradually improve their performance ability. In addition, in the process of teaching performance skills, teachers should explain specific opera works, pay attention to the combination of theory and practice to help students better understand and master relevant skills, and on this basis, arrange opera performance exercises for students in time, so that students can deeply understand and master performance skills, and realize the steady improvement of performance ability. Take the practical teaching of Mozart’s opera “The Marriage of Figaro” as an example. In the teaching process, teachers can first explain the Western social background and story script of the opera in detail for students, and demonstrate the interpretation of the main roles for students. Students can experience the facial expression changes of the characters in different plot stages and reasonable changes of the stage body and posture, guide students to integrate their understanding of the characters in the process of performance practice, master the performance skills more effectively, and gradually improve the performance effect on the stage<sup>[12]</sup>. In addition, the gesture skill is also an important performance skill. In order to help students better master this skill, exaggerated and enlarged gestures can be used, that is, stop-motion demonstration teaching method to explain and demonstrate in detail, such teaching method can make



students understand and know more deeply the use of gestures in performance, and then provide strong support and help for the development of students' performance ability.

### **3.4. Strengthen the cultivation of students' music perception ability**

For most students majoring in vocal performance, the knowledge of vocal music in the learning process is mostly derived from Western music concepts. Therefore, in the teaching activities of vocal performance majors in colleges and universities, teachers should exert importance on introducing practical teaching content of opera, focus on cultivating students' musical perception ability, and guide students to experience and understand the differences between Chinese and Western vocal performance. Under the current background of artistic diversification and integration, appreciating Chinese and Western opera works has become an effective way to cultivate students' musical perception ability. In fact, for students majoring in vocal performance, the improvement of music perception not only helps to enhance their understanding ability and enables them to grasp the structure of opera more deeply but also lays a solid foundation for them to try to perform challenging opera works<sup>[13]</sup>. In the course of teaching, teachers can select Chinese and Western opera works and guide students to analyze the differences between the two with the knowledge they have learned to help students correctly understand the differences between Chinese and Western opera, and at the same time cultivate their music perception ability to lay a solid foundation for the improvement of students' opera performance ability. Teachers can choose the Western classic opera "Madame Butterfly" and the Chinese classic national Opera Sister Jiang to guide students to carry out horizontal comparative analysis from multiple dimensions such as structure, cultivate their music perception ability, construct multi-sound thinking of music, and lay a solid foundation for the development of their comprehensive ability of vocal performance<sup>[14,15]</sup>. In this process, teachers need to play a leading role to ensure that students' learning activities can be carried out in an orderly manner, guide them to have a deeper understanding of the differences between Chinese and Western operas, improve their music perception ability, and promote the comprehensive development of their literacy.

## **4. Conclusion**

In order to enhance the training level of artistic talents, and promote the prosperity and development of the country's art culture more effectively, teachers of vocal performance majors in colleges and universities should pay more attention to the teaching of opera performance, fully realize the importance and far-reaching significance of practical teaching of opera in vocal performance majors. Colleges and teachers should keep in close contact with students' actual ability and the actual needs of social development, flexibly adopt diversified practical teaching strategies, greatly improve the quality of practical teaching of vocal music performance specialty opera, and make positive contributions to training highly qualified artistic talents.

## **Disclosure statement**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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