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Research on the Application of Glottal Sound Training Method in the Reform of Vocal Pedagogy at the Conservatory Level

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Abstract: *In the current singing training process, constructing a new and efficient teaching system with breakthrough training methods is essential. This system should strengthen the innovative teaching abilities, proficiently master and apply the skills of vocal group classes, while also effectively nurturing students with less vocal potential. Moreover, it should allow for the full display of the teaching talents in individual vocal lessons. By deeply integrating the "Glottal Sound Training Method" with traditional vocal pedagogy, it is beneficial for vocal teachers to enhance their teaching capabilities in the combined mode of conservatory-level vocal group classes and individual lessons. This approach can comprehensively cultivate students, enabling them to develop a sense of belonging and teamwork in group classes and receive more targeted guidance and attention in individual lessons. The incorporation of the "Glottal Sound Training Method" into vocal pedagogy enables vocal teachers to develop a well-rounded teaching ability.*

Keywords: *Glottal Sound Training Method, conservatory-level, vocal pedagogy, teaching system*

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the demand for talent in society has been increasing, with a greater emphasis on practicality and comprehensiveness. However, in the context of vocal pedagogy at ordinary universities, there have been numerous issues in teaching ideology, content, and methods. As a result, the traditional teaching approaches and educational concepts have failed to produce students who can meet the demands of society and adapt to its evolving needs. This misalignment has led to a significant disconnect from reality[1].

For many years, vocal pedagogy in higher normal universities in China has mainly relied on individual lessons, following a teaching system based on Western bel canto techniques. The long-standing teaching practice has proven that the use of one-on-one teaching and the corresponding pedagogical system is effective in cultivating professional vocal performance talents in the field of music[2]. It facilitates the solid foundation of vocalists' basic skills, promotes the full development of students' individual strengths, and enhances their singing proficiency and artistic cultivation[3. However, with the expansion of enrollment in music programs at various universities and the increasing number of students with diverse vocal conditions and qualities, the shortage of teaching staff has become a challenge. Consequently, many universities have had to reduce the number of class hours for vocal students. For instance, at our institution, due to the overall increase in enrollment, the teaching method for vocal courses has shifted from one-on-one to one-on-two, one-on-three, and even small group classes with six students. This significant reduction in class hours has compromised the quality of one-on-one teaching, resulting in a decline in the overall singing proficiency of students[4]. Especially for students in vocal departments at normal universities, most of them lack the exceptional vocal conditions that students in professional music colleges possess, making vocal studies more challenging[5]. Through this research, we aim to achieve a unified approach to both individual and group vocal teaching, enhancing the capabilities of higher normal universities in providing vocal education.

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2. Advantages of Applying the Glottal Sound Training Method in Vocal Pedagogy

2.1 Facilitating the Multi-angle and Multidimensional Expansion of Vocational Skills in Vocal Major Students

In the realm of education, there is no fixed approach; the key lies in finding the right one. No single teaching method can meet all needs, and in vocal pedagogy, teachers need to flexibly employ diverse teaching methods to address the complex and ever-changing demands of society[6]. In the reform of vocal courses, cultivating applied talents should be the primary goal. Within this context, a wide range of teaching approaches should be adopted to broaden students' horizons, stimulate their thinking abilities, and enhance their professional skills and overall qualities. This approach better caters to the students' needs and lays a solid foundation for their future development[7].The "Glottal Sound" training method, a rigorous and scientifically designed training system, has been primarily used in vocal training for professional singers and vocal health care for professional voice users in China. It effectively improves the vocal abilities of individuals with various vocal conditions in a relatively short period, making it a valuable asset for professional voice users. Compared to traditional vocal warm-up methods, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" emphasizes improving the coordination of throat muscles and soft tissues to achieve better acoustic effects[8]. This method focuses on the collaborative work of vocal organs, such as the throat, mouth, and nasal cavity, to enhance the quality and expressiveness of the sound. Additionally, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" emphasizes training students in airflow control and breathing techniques to ensure stable and expressive vocal output. It centers on establishing an awareness and control of upper-resonance chambers, laying a solid foundation for producing unified, expansive, penetrating, and metal-like beautiful tones. By shortening the required class hours for vocal major students and accelerating the development of their singing abilities, this method can be applied to areas beyond singing, fostering the students' multi-dimensional skills in teaching, singing, vocal therapy, and other related fields. Incorporating this teaching philosophy into the current vocal training at higher normal universities will significantly enrich the existing vocal training system in these institutions.

2.2 Facilitating the Establishment of a Comprehensive Practical Teaching Platform for Vocal Major Students

In higher education, vocal teachers should prioritize practical teaching and design diversified practical content to enhance students' active engagement. In vocal pedagogy, it is essential to emphasize students' learning and training in vocal fundamentals and integrate theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Special attention should be given to cultivating students' stage performance abilities, and diverse practical content should be implemented to increase their involvement. The combination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills is crucial, as it fosters students' stage performance and innovative expressive abilities. However, in our music academy, as vocal students are admitted after general enrollment into the music college, their vocal conditions are generally not as good as students who were admitted directly to the music college. Moreover, class hours are severely limited, making it challenging to complete several songs within a reasonable time frame. This limitation prevents many students from gaining stage performance experience, and some may even go through their entire four years of university without having the opportunity to perform on stage. Under the competitive framework of the arts, where they must surpass others despite their less advantageous conditions, it becomes imperative to reform the teaching and training system and seek more advanced and efficient teaching methods. Furthermore, when teachers deliver their classes, they need to adhere to teaching rules, make effective use of teaching platforms, and employ diverse teaching approaches. Through various teaching modes, students' comprehensive abilities can be rapidly improved. The "Glottal Sound Training Method" can be applied across various singing styles, including classical, ethnic, popular, and traditional styles. As a new singing training system, it plays an essential role in deepening professional music education, particularly in the reform of "vocal majors." Therefore, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" can be regarded as a new subject related to the teaching of "vocal cord" functionality and holds significant importance in vocal performance courses at music and art schools. It offers students a unique training method that helps them further enhance their vocal quality and performance abilities.

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3. Reform Content and Objectives

3.1 Reform Content

The "Glottal Sound Training Method" significantly differs from the traditional vocal training methods used in higher normal universities. Traditional training methods rely on natural phonation, where high pitches are achieved by squeezing the vocal cords, resulting in limited resonance in the throat. In contrast, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" builds on natural phonation but adjusts the throat to resemble a tube, creating a larger resonance chamber and transforming vocal production into that of a wind instrument. This specialized technique is a form of postnatal training that increases the amount of "fundamental resonance" by forming a resonant tube in the throat, relieving tension in the chin, and redirecting effort to the throat, producing a robust, clear, and penetrating sound. This method establishes a new training system that differs significantly from traditional vocal training methods and offers an ideal approach to shape the "instrument" of singing.

The "Glottal Sound Training Method" primarily involves two types of exercises: voiceless exercises and voiced exercises. In voiceless exercises, students perform self-massage to train the muscles related to the throat, providing a solid foundation for subsequent voiced exercises. These voiceless exercises aim to activate the muscles involved in vocal production and enhance their coordination through self-massage. Voiced exercises follow voiceless exercises after a certain period. Students gradually develop their vocal techniques, starting from low to high pitches, from soft to strong voices, until they can produce a sound with proper pharyngeal resonance. Additionally, they expand their vocal range, increase their volume, and progressively refine their voices to achieve an overall ethereal, penetrating, and resonant quality. Through these training methods, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" aims to help students fully utilize their throat-related muscles, improve their vocal techniques and control during voiceless and voiced exercises. This will enable them to better utilize pharyngeal resonance to shape their voices and gradually achieve higher levels of vocal performance.

Silent Practice mainly involves four exercises to effectively train the muscle groups used in singing. These exercises include "raising the head and opening the mouth," "vibrating the chin," "using the traditional Peking Opera method of "frog breathing" to train the diaphragm and muscles related to controlling singing breath," and "training the tongue to form a longitudinal groove." Singers are required to maintain a posture of inhalation, with the chest erect, naturally open the throat, keep the pharyngeal wall stable, relax the jaw, and further stabilize the larynx. This creates a singing passage in the pharyngeal wall, while the inspiratory muscles and expiratory muscles work together, achieving the requirements of thoracoabdominal coordinated breathing for singing. The exercises aim to train and strengthen the rarely used inspiratory muscle group, giving it elasticity and flexibility, thus achieving a state of "supernatural" breathing and singing.

Voiced Practice includes several typical exercises, such as humming and using the postures of opening the mouth widely and slightly to produce "yin-yin" sounds, as well as combining "yin-yin" singing with the method of "opening the throat" for practice. The basic requirements are to maintain the correct singing posture, use the tongue to form a straight groove, open the mouth widely (without sticking out the tongue) for phonation in the throat, try to stabilize the pharyngeal wall, naturally lift the chest, relax the chin, source the breath from the lower abdomen (dantian), and produce the sounds of "a-o-u" or "ah, oh, ee, eh" in the mid-low vocal range initially with a speaking-like approach. Gradually, the exercises involve raising the back of the tongue above the larynx, lifting the epiglottis, and tilting the epiglottis backward to create a funnel-shaped vocal tract.

3.2 Reform Objectives

Integrating the traditional vocal training system with the "Glottal Sound Training Method" will break the bottleneck of requiring an extended period for vocal training, and it will make singers to quickly master correct and scientifically sound vocal techniques and swiftly resolve issues related to vocal breaks. The method also aims to rapidly expand the singer's vocal range, increase volume, and enhance vocal endurance.

Using the "Glottal Sound Training Method" to enhance vocal efficiency and finding the optimal pathway for overall singing, which can bridge the gap between vocal conditions of students at higher normal universities. Those from music colleges aims to provide students with more extensive stage practice in a shorter period, maximize the potential of their vocal abilities, and offer specialized training advantages over traditional vocal training, which often takes years to achieve significant progress.

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Additionally, the method can help singers who frequently use forceful techniques to quickly release tension in the larynx, achieving a more natural and efficient singing style. It can also provide guidance for vocal health during children's voice change period.

4. The "Glottal Sound Training Method" possesses distinct advantages compared to existing vocal pedagogy systems.

Firstly, the teaching and practical application of the "Glottal Sound Training Method" focus on efficiently developing the vocal potential of singers, fully leveraging the relationship between the method and artistic singing. This approach allows vocal training to achieve remarkable results with minimal effort. The resulting voice is robust, bright, focused, positioned high, and possesses a metallic, penetrating quality. The sound produced through the "Glottal Sound Training Method" is relaxed, resonant, flexible, and bright, enabling singers to perform without strain and delaying vocal aging. The training method results in a solid, core-driven voice that is less prone to aging.

Secondly, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" differs significantly from the traditional vocal training methods employed in higher normal universities. It seeks to establish a true vocal system, shortening the vocal cords and transforming the pharynx into a tubular shape, akin to blowing a whistle, in contrast to the traditional approach of squeezing the larynx to produce high notes. The traditional method often limits the resonance points in the pharynx, leading to smaller resonance areas and less efficient vocal production. Moreover, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" enables singers to coordinate the functions of true voice, falsetto, and glottal voice, rapidly opening the pathway to high overtones resonance. It also enhances the flexibility of the vocal cords, improving the ability of male tenors to reach higher notes and curing vocal tremors. The method also has vocal health benefits, helping treat and rehabilitate those with weak or hoarse voices. As an ancient vocal training tradition, the scientific principles behind the "Glottal Sound Training Method" and its positive effects on human vocal health merit further research. This method can effectively serve as an adjunct to vocal training, offering valuable therapeutic possibilities for patients with voice-related issues in medical settings. In conclusion, the "Glottal Sound Training Method" offers unique advantages, including efficient vocal development, improved vocal quality, enhanced vocal capabilities, and vocal health benefits. It stands out from traditional vocal training methods used in higher normal universities, providing a comprehensive approach to vocal training. Its application in medical settings also demonstrates its potential for treating voice-related ailments.

5. Conclusion

This research has focused on the systematic construction and effective application of the "Glottal Sound Training Method" in vocal training, taking into consideration the students' learning outcomes and stage performance. The primary objective was to enhance overall vocal quality, achieve the goals of vocal music education, and adapt to the increasing enrollment in the field of vocal music. The "Glottal Sound Training Method" was identified as a core teaching approach for vocal music education, complementing and integrating with existing vocal pedagogy systems, combining Eastern and Western methodologies.

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