

The Value and Practice of Musical Theatre in Primary School Music Education

Siyin He *

Department of music, South China Normal University, Guangzhou, China

* Corresponding Author Email: siyin@ldy.edu.rs

Abstract. As a new type of stage art that emerged in the early 20th century, musical theatre has continued to develop with its unique artistic expression. It is a comprehensive education that involves a number of subject areas such as music, theatre, dance and literature. Popularising the artistic meaning of musical theatre in primary school music education is not only fully feasible and scientific, but also an important way to realise the education of people through beauty. This paper focuses on primary school music education, takes the art of musical theatre as an entry point, and analyses the necessity and specific measures of integrating musical theatre into primary school music education on the basis of elaborating the characteristics of primary school music education. The whole paper includes an introduction and three chapters. The introductory part is a study of relevant domestic and foreign literature. The first chapter compares the characteristics of primary school musical theatre. The second chapter analyses the necessity of integrating musical theatre into primary school music education and the third chapter is mainly from the point of view of the school, giving specific measures for integrating musical theatre into primary school music education.

Keywords: Musical theatre, primary school, music education, values, practice.

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of society and the trend of cultural diversification, the art of musical theatre, as a comprehensive form of performance, is gradually stepping out of the traditional realm of entertainment and entering the field of primary education, providing students with brand new opportunities for learning and development. Musical theatre combines drama, music, song and dance, and is both witty and comedic. It requires students to have solid performance skills and teamwork, making it a platform for all-round development. The Art Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the curriculum, advocating that each art discipline should be the core of the curriculum, reinforcing the intermingling of art disciplines with other art fields, valuing the connection between art and other disciplines, and giving full play to the effect of synergistic education [1]. Teachers apply musical theatre education in primary school music curriculum, students form cognition and memory of music-related knowledge, carry out music performance and creation activities, and explore in music creation activities, which can enable students to enhance the practical experience, stimulate the interest of music performance, enrich the emotional experience and accumulate the perceptual experience of appreciating music. “Original Student Opera: History, Theory, and Practice of a Multi -Disciplinary Arts Education program” [2] introduces the philosophical, historical, and practical roles of implementing opera composition programmes in the United States and Canada. Behind the rise of primary schools musical theatre is the quest for diversity in arts education and the exploration of students' overall quality development. The first chapter of this study introduces the characteristics of primary school music education. The second part focuses on the necessity of integrating musical theatre into primary school music education. The last part focuses on measures that can enable students to learn musical theatre. The main purpose of this paper is to explore the importance of musical theatre in primary school music education with specific measures that can engage students in learning musical theatre. The article also used the literature reading method to classify and summarise the domestic and foreign periodical literature, monographs, and excellent master and doctoral dissertations on musical theatre

education, and to study the necessity and specific methods of musical theatre teaching in primary school teaching in China.

2. Characteristics of Music Education in Primary Schools

2.1. The Principle of Subjectivity in Primary School Music Education

The principle of subjectivity in pedagogy is to give play to the positive initiative of learners and instructors, who are the masters of learning and teaching, not passive bearers [3]. Primary school music education has certain specificity, teachers should pay attention to the psychological characteristics and cognitive laws of students, teachers and students should show their own initiative to improve the effect of music learning. The implementation of the principal of subjectivity in primary school music is of great significance. Firstly, it can make teachers more active in teaching. Primary school music teachers play their own initiative. The primary school music teachers play their own initiative, in carrying out their work, update the teaching methods, improve the teaching methods, and show good music teaching art. Secondly, the musical quality of primary school students will be improved accordingly. When primary school students come into contact with music knowledge, they often do not have strong music learning ability and need the guidance of teachers. At the same time, good music learning ability and strong interest in music learning also need to be cultivated and stimulated by teachers. Teachers should make careful arrangements to gradually improve students' musical expression ability, starting from the learning of music knowledge. While teachers give full play to their own initiative, they also provide opportunities for the construction of students' main learning status. Teachers in primary school music classroom teaching, in order to highlight the student's main position, should effectively participate in the planning of implementation strategies, optimize the teaching preparation, to ensure the effectiveness of primary school music classroom teaching. In addition, the implementation of music teaching, teachers should provide effective teaching guidance to ensure that students fully participate in the classroom interaction, improve their comprehensive music literacy.

2.2. Multiple Integration in Primary Music Education

As a form of art, music can not only pass on culture, but also stimulate students' aesthetic emotion, inspire creativity and cultivate comprehensive literacy. However, traditional music teaching is often limited to the teaching of skills and knowledge, ignoring the cultivation of students' aesthetic emotion and creativity, and it is difficult to meet the demand for comprehensive literacy in today's society. Therefore, in the current Chinese primary school music education, a series of multiple fusions such as subject fusion and teaching method fusion are carried out. First of all, the integration of disciplines, the integration of disciplines is divided into the integration of artistic disciplines and the integration of non-artistic disciplines, in the integration of artistic disciplines, different forms of artistic expression, although different in terms of aesthetic connotation, expression techniques, etc., but there are also many commonalities [4]. Music is an aural art and an abstract art. For primary school students who are still in their infancy, it is very difficult for them to understand the images, emotions and connotations portrayed by music through listening alone. According to the physical and mental characteristics of primary school students, they would like to be guided by figurative guidance to realise the 'visibility' of music to a certain extent, so as to help them appreciate and understand music more deeply. Film and television art and music are closely related sister arts, film and television art can well realise the 'visibility' of music, so the integration of film and television art and music teaching can effectively help primary school students to deeply appreciate and understand music. For the integration of non-arts disciplines, music, as one of the arts disciplines, also has a natural and close relationship with a wide range of other cultural fields, which makes it possible to integrate music with other non-arts disciplines. For example, it is possible to feel the timbre of a musical instrument, which can be linked to the vibrational frequencies of physics. There is also the fact that before learning to sing a song, primary school students may not have such an accurate grasp of the mood of the song,

which can be linked to the backstory of the song, which is also linked to the subjects of history and language. Secondly, the integration of teaching methods, in the primary school music classroom nowadays, instead of teachers imparting knowledge to students in a rigid manner, many different teaching methods will be used to lead students to feel and learn music. For example, when learning some musical concepts, in order to fix the notions, the teacher has to offer the necessary theoretical explanations. This intervention has to be short, concise, and essential, not to be transformed in pure theory. It is necessary to continuously alternate the theoretic moments with the practical ones helping by the voice or the instrument, the musical audition [5]. Music game teaching method is used a lot in primary school music teaching methods nowadays. Most students in primary school are fond of games, and in primary school music teaching, if teachers can combine games with teaching, they can effectively stimulate students' interest in learning music, let students actively explore music knowledge, and gradually develop good learning habits [6]. Music games usually cover a variety of music knowledge and skills, such as pitch, rhythm, music theory and so on. Through games, students can learn and master these knowledge and skills in a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere, and better integrate into actual music activities. Teachers can design music riddles, music sitcoms, etc., so that students can experience the fun of active performance through games. Primary school music game teaching can not only effectively cultivate students' sense of cooperation and social skills, develop their emotional understanding and expression, but also enhance their learning effectiveness and promote the overall development of their musical literacy.

3. The Necessity of Integrating Musical Theatre into Primary School Music Education

3.1. Promote the Development of Music Curriculum in the Context of the New Era

At present, most of the teaching of primary school music adopts a relatively single teaching method. The teacher lectures through slides, audio and video, and the students listen and practice. There is nothing new. The students passively accept this kind of teaching, which lack of active learning and participation in teaching, lack of enthusiasm and creativity for music. Primary school music curriculum in the context of the new era has the characteristics of diversified integration, focusing on the integration of disciplines, and musical theatre, as a kind of comprehensive performance integrating music, dance, theatre and other art forms, which provides an important cultural service for the society, enriches the cultural life of the people, and further promotes the vigorous development of cultural undertakings. Musical theatre not only shows the charm of music, but also presents the fusion of multiple artistic elements through superb dance and theatre performances. In addition to this, in the constructivist theory of psychology, John Dewey and child-centred discovery learning Constructivism is an educational model that places the learner at the centre of the learning experience and emphasises students' active participation and the process of constructing knowledge [7]. According to constructivist theory, students construct knowledge through active participation in practice and hands-on experience. By incorporating musical theatre in primary school music education, students can gain a deeper understanding of the elements and expressions of musical theatre through actual participation in activities such as singing, acting and dancing. By applying Dewey's constructivist principles, primary school musical theatre education can stimulate students' creativity, co-operation and self-directed learning, help them construct knowledge and artistic skills in practice and support their overall development and learning outcomes, promoting the development of music curricula in the context of the new era.

3.2. Stimulate Students' Divergent Thinking and Creativity

Knowledge is limited, while imagination is the source of endless creativity. The current education system has some constraints on the development of students' imagination but musical theatre is a very interesting form of art, which has a great role in promoting students' creativity. Primary school

music education has the principle of subjectivity. The teaching of musical theatre gives full play to this principle. Flexible musical theatre script provides students with the space for secondary creation, so that they can freely create actions and lines. The students' imagination and creativity to play to the extreme, so that it will be interpreted in the process of their own moods and emotions into it. For example, at the Virginia Opera, they curate a programme of classic children's books and performances of popular opera tunes for young people in the community [8]. They combine imagination, music and storytelling to take audiences on a new audio-visual journey. In 'Musical Storytime', artists perform a musical adaptation of Mozart's Don Giovanni, combined with the story of Little Red Riding Hood, for an hour-long performance [8]. By combining classic opera music with a children's story, the young audience's imagination is stimulated and they are immersed in the marvellous world of music and storytelling.

3.3. Cultivate the Overall Quality of Students

Musical theatre is a form of stage performance that integrates various art forms and contents, with distinctive cross-category and cross-professional qualities. It is not only well versed in the artistic connotations of music, dance and theatre performance, but also permeated with cultural elements such as literature, philosophy and history, and blends them into the same story, which helps the students to understand the intertwining and fusion of different cultures and to recognize the inherent homogeneity of cultures in a work with dramatic conflicts rather than existing in isolation and fragmentation. Musical theatre presents music in a narrative way and dance serves the plot of the whole musical, which can teach primary school students to appreciate beauty and feel love. Theatre reflects life. Life is condensed in theatre and theatre is an important platform to understand life and know life. By watching and studying classic musical theatre works at home and abroad, students can gain more emotional and aesthetic experiences. For individuals, understanding and participating in theatre activities will be influenced by subtle influence, learning to play their social roles, learning to get along and communicate with others, which reflects the important role of theatre originating from life and reshaping life. While improving students' aesthetic ability in literature, music, dance and visual arts, musical theatre can also help primary and secondary school students find the value of their own existence through a variety of characters, conflicts and story backgrounds, so that they can look at everything around them with a more optimistic and positive attitude. The rehearsal session in the musical theatre programme, on the other hand, helps to cultivate students' team spirit, improve their artistic qualities and enrich their spiritual and cultural life.

4. Measures for the Study of Musical Theatre by Pupils

4.1. Incorporating Musical Theatre into Classroom Teaching

The classroom teaching of musical theatre should be interlinked and progressive and the whole classroom teaching can be divided into several stages. The first stage is for the lower primary school students, whose lesson mode is based on 'singing and travelling'. In music lessons, songs, dances or body rhythms can be learnt and the use of body rhythms and Orff instruments aims to stimulate and enhance students' interest in learning and to make students break away from the traditional mode of sitting and listening to music lessons. This stage requires the participation of all students, with those who are strong learners being able to sing and dance, and those who are average learners being able to sing and play in rhythm. The second stage is for upper primary students, in which students are required to make up their own compositions. It can be to present the narrative plot expressed in the song as a simple scenario and experience the combination of elements in a musical theatre. In this process, teachers can provide some classic musical theatre clips for students to appreciate and imitate and try to interpret them artistically according to their own understanding. In addition, it is also possible to carry out the adaptation of classic clips, so that students can create their own performance content based on the classic clips, and then perform afterwards. Finally, independent creation, the

teacher can first give students some guidance, and then let students combine the textbook content to create their own musical theatre clips and interpretation.

4.2. Creation of a Musical Theatre Club

To promote musical theatre in primary schools, apart from focusing on the inside of the classroom and classroom teaching, it is also important to integrate musical theatre into the lives of students and promote it through extra-curricular activities. Musical theatre can be carried out in the form of clubs. Activities such as singing, dancing and reciting in the clubs are used to enhance students' humanistic qualities and musical abilities. Students in musical theatre clubs need to be carefully selected, and they need to be better at singing, dancing and acting than other students and they need to be better at intonation, rhythm and body rhythms. By screening students for participation in clubs, schools can produce excellent musical theatre clubs that can lead students to participate in competitions and performances at all levels, enriching their extracurricular arts practice. Overseas, in-school performance programmes often take the form of opera professionals in residence at the school, and in some cases, children are involved in classic opera productions or create their own operas. For example, The Cleveland Opera offers a 'mini-residency' programme for primary schools, which lasts about six to eight weeks and culminates in a simplified version of the opera performed by 25-40 selected students [9]. In China, for example, the Haitian School in Bao'an District, Shenzhen, has created a musical theatre club. Because the school was newly created and only had students at the lower primary school level, they chose the familiar story of 'The Tortoise and the Hare race' when selecting a script to choreograph. The musical theatre of such a club lean towards children's cabaret. Children's cabaret is often accompanied by imitation of things and in many children's, music often carries some fairy tale colours and appears some animal figures with distinctive features [10]. The choice of this script could fill the lower primary school students with interest, releasing their nature while playing the animals and strengthening their perception of their inner emotions. Eventually, they won the first place in the Shenzhen Musical Theatre Competition.

5. Conclusion

This study begins with a brief example of the characteristics of primary school music education in Chapter one characterized by the principle of subjectivity and pluralistic integration. This study focuses on the necessity of musical theatre in primary school music education and the specific measures to involve students in learning musical theatre. Musical theatre can perfectly play out the characteristics of primary school music education, which can not only promote the development of music curriculum in the context of the new era, stimulate students 'divergent thinking and creativity, but also cultivate students' all-round quality. In terms of how to involve primary school students in musical theatre, the advantages of musical theatre in primary school music education can be brought into play through the integration of musical theatre into classroom teaching and the creation of musical theatre clubs. The development of musical theatre in primary school music education has made some progress in terms of operational methods and social needs, but there are still limitations in terms of teachers and social acceptance. In order to further promote the development of musical theatre in primary school music education, the relevant departments and all sectors of society should increase their investment in and support for musical theatre education, promote musical theatre teaching materials, improve the level of teachers, and increase the social acceptance of musical theatre education, so that more primary schools can come into contact with the art of musical theatre, and cultivate good artistic literacy and aesthetic ability. At the same time, we hope that this paper can play the role of throwing bricks to attract jade for the research and practice related to musical theatre education in primary schools in China.

References

- [1] Ministry of Education. Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition). Beijing Normal University Press, Beijing, 2022.
- [2] Sharon Joy. Original Student Opera: History, Theory, and Practice of a Multi-Disciplinary Arts Education program. University of Houston, 2002.
- [3] Ping Yu. On the Principle and Application of Subjectivity in Primary School Music Education. Course Education Research, 2015.
- [4] Hongbin Du. Analysis of the new version of the curriculum standard and teaching guide: music. Beijing Normal University Press, Beijing, 2022.
- [5] Mihaela Modoran. Methodological approaches specific to rhythmical music education in the Romanian primary school. Elsevier Ltd, 2013.
- [6] Bin Hua. The role and practice of singing games in primary school music education. Encyclopedia Forum Electronic Magazine, 2020, 728 - 729.
- [7] Liansheng Pi. The Psychology of Learning and Teaching. East China Normal University Press, 2009, 91 - 92.
- [8] Virginia Opera's official website, <https://vaopera.org/community/>.
- [9] Heting Huang. Research on Opera Education for Youth and Children in North American Countries. Shanghai conservatory of music master thesis, 2024, 21.
- [10] Jie Chang. Chinese Children's Song and Dance Drama and the Value of Music Education in Schools Re-Conceptualised-Feelings from Watching the Children's Drama 'Warmth'. House of Drama, 2016.