

# Innovation and Practice in Piano Performance Teaching in Higher Art Education

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**Abstract:** Piano performance teaching is a core component of higher art education, and its teaching quality directly affects the effectiveness of cultivating artistic talents. This article starts from the practical problems faced by piano performance teaching in current higher art education, systematically analyzes the limitations of traditional teaching models, explores innovative paths in four dimensions: teaching philosophy, teaching methods, curriculum system, and evaluation mechanism, and combines the teaching practice experience of art colleges at home and abroad to propose a teaching reform idea that integrates digital technology, interdisciplinary collaboration, and stage practice, in order to provide theoretical reference for improving the quality of piano performance professional talent cultivation.

**Keywords:** Higher art education; Piano performance teaching; Teaching innovation; Stage practice; Digital teaching

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## 1. Introduction

As one of the core disciplines in music schools, piano performance major undertakes the important mission of cultivating high-level performance talents<sup>[1]</sup>. With the rapid development of higher art education in China, piano performance teaching has achieved significant achievements, but it also faces practical challenges such as a single teaching mode, weak practical ability, and insufficient innovation awareness<sup>[2]</sup>. The traditional “one-on-one” teaching mode can ensure the refinement of technical training, but there are obvious shortcomings in cultivating students’ comprehensive performance ability, artistic innovation thinking, and stage adaptation ability.

In recent years, research on educational innovation has increasingly focused on the uniqueness of art education. The journal ‘Educational Innovation Research’ explicitly lists ‘innovative teaching and learning methods’, ‘higher education and lifelong learning’, and ‘case studies and best practices’ as core submission directions, providing an important academic exchange platform for research on piano performance teaching. This article is based on the practical context of higher art education, systematically sorting out the innovative paths and practical strategies of piano performance teaching, and striving to establish an effective dialogue mechanism between theoretical construction and practical exploration<sup>[3]</sup>.

## **2. Major issues facing current piano performance teaching**

### **2.1. The teaching mode is relatively single**

For a long time, piano teaching in higher art colleges in China has generally adopted a “master apprentice” one-on-one teaching model. This model has irreplaceable advantages in technology transmission, enabling individualized instruction and refined guidance. However, excessive reliance on a single teaching model has also brought some problems: students lack experience in collaborative performance, and there is insufficient cultivation of multi voice collaboration abilities such as ensemble and concerto; Classroom teaching is disconnected from stage practice, and students are prone to psychological pressure when facing real performance environments <sup>[4]</sup>.

Studies have shown that piano performance is closely related to human psychological activity, and psychological tension can interfere with brain flexibility and hinder the normal performance of playing techniques. Traditional classrooms are difficult to simulate real stage situations, resulting in students experiencing stage fright, mistakes, and other issues during formal performances <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **2.2. The curriculum system emphasizes technical training**

The current curriculum system for piano performance majors often focuses on technical training, with relatively insufficient emphasis on humanistic courses such as music theory, art history, and aesthetic cultivation <sup>[6]</sup>. Students are prone to falling into the misconception of “technology for the sake of technology” and neglecting a deep understanding of the cultural connotations and emotional expressions of their works during the technical polishing of a large number of exercises and music pieces. This tendency of “emphasizing skills over literature” restricts the comprehensive development of students’ artistic expression.

### **2.3. Homogenization tendency of evaluation criteria**

The current evaluation system for piano performance teaching mainly focuses on quantitative indicators such as technical accuracy, speed, and intensity control, with relatively weak consideration of qualitative indicators such as musical expression, artistic personality, and stage appeal <sup>[7]</sup>. The evaluation subject is mainly professional teachers, lacking multiple evaluation dimensions such as peer review and audience feedback, making it difficult to comprehensively reflect students’ comprehensive performance abilities.

### **2.4. Insufficient opportunities for stage practice**

Many art schools have practical teaching programs. However, we can see that students have limited opportunities to join formal concerts and competitions, and other stage practices are also hard to access, so there is clear gap between the classroom teaching and real stage performance <sup>[8]</sup>. In fact, when students move from classroom to the stage, they lack systematic guidance and support.

## **3. Theoretical basis for innovation in piano performance teaching**

### **3.1. Constructivist learning theory**

Constructivist learning theory emphasizes the subject position of learners in the process of knowledge construction, believing that knowledge is not passively received, but actively constructed by learners in their interaction with the environment. This theory has important implications for piano performance teaching: teachers should transform from knowledge transmitters to learning guides and facilitators, and stimulate students’ learning initiative and creativity by creating rich learning contexts <sup>[9]</sup>.

In piano performance teaching, constructivist theory requires teachers to actively guide students to participate in teaching activities, encourage students to raise questions about performance techniques, music theory, cooperation points, etc., and cultivate students’ independent thinking and innovative abilities.

### **3.2. Experiential learning theory**

Experiential learning theory believes learning is process where knowledge can be created through experience transformation. In the piano performance teaching, it is worth noting that this approach should emphasize personal participation and emotional involvement of students, and we can use simulated performances, concert practices, ensemble collaborations and other methods so students can “learn by doing” and their performance abilities in real musical contexts can be improved.

### **3.3. Multiple intelligence theory**

Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences says that human intelligence has many different forms and it is not just single ability but includes various types such as musical intelligence, bodily movement intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence which is important for social communication. In fact, piano performance involves musical intelligence and physical movement intelligence. Also, it requires good interpersonal intelligence because we need to interact with partners and audience and self-awareness intelligence is needed for stage psychological regulation. This theory can be used as a reference for the diversified development of piano performance teaching and we should consider this in practical education.

## **4. Innovative path of piano performance teaching**

### **4.1. Innovative teaching philosophy: Shifting from technology oriented to performance oriented**

The fundamental goal of piano performance teaching is to cultivate performers with stage performance skills, not just skilled practitioners. Therefore, the teaching philosophy should shift from a “technology-based” approach to a “performance based” approach, integrating stage practice throughout the entire teaching process<sup>[10]</sup>.

In the daily teaching, teachers can introduce cultivation of performance awareness. It is worth noting that students should pay attention to accuracy of musical notes. Also, they need to care about the artistic quality of sound and changes in musical tension and they should think about communication with virtual audiences because this can help them build the proper mindset for actual performance. The practice of each work can be based on the awareness of preparing for performance and technical training should serve artistic expression.

### **4.2. Innovation in teaching methods: Construction of diversified teaching models**

#### **4.2.1. Introducing piano ensemble and collaborative piano teaching**

Piano ensemble (including four handed ensemble, double piano, piano ensemble with other instruments, etc.) is an effective way to cultivate collaborative skills and polyphonic thinking. Art vocational colleges have begun to actively explore innovation in piano ensemble teaching, by creating ensemble groups, encouraging students to divide labor and collaborate in rehearsals, enhancing teamwork and problem-solving abilities.

In the piano performance major of comprehensive colleges and universities, introducing piano ensemble teaching has become an important measure to expand teaching content and cultivate students’ subjective initiative. Ensemble teaching requires students to learn how to listen, cooperate, and balance, which are difficult to acquire in solo teaching.

#### **4.2.2. Integrating digital teaching methods**

With the development of information technology, digital teaching methods have provided new possibilities for piano performance teaching. Multimedia technology can be used for master class video analysis, performance comparison, music visualization, and other aspects; Smart pianos and recording devices can help students objectively evaluate their performance; The online platform provides convenience for remote teaching and academic exchange.

Research has shown that the use of multimedia elements such as computers, sound systems, and double key electronic keyboards can achieve the goal of imitating symphonic orchestras. With the help of multimedia platforms, piano concertos

can save costs to a certain extent and provide audiences with a multi-dimensional music experience.

#### **4.2.3. Explore cross-border and integrated performance forms**

Modern piano performance has broken through the traditional single form of solo, and the trend of cross-border integration with folk music, dance, drama, visual arts, etc. is becoming increasingly evident. In teaching, students should be encouraged to explore diverse forms of performance, correctly grasp the relationship between sound movements, performance forms, and emotions, and let the forms carry richer artistic connotations.

### **4.3. Innovation of curriculum system: Building a three-dimensional curriculum system of “technology + literacy + practice”**

#### **4.3.1. Consolidate technical foundation courses**

Technical training remains the foundation of piano performance teaching, but mechanical repetition should be avoided. It is possible to combine technical training with music style cognition by setting different styles of technical training modules (such as Baroque style, Classical style, Romantic style, Modern style).

#### **4.3.2. Add courses on humanistic literacy**

Strengthen the proportion of courses such as music history, art aesthetics, work analysis, and performance psychology to help students establish a profound cultural background and aesthetic judgment. Accurate grasp of the style of the work and a deep understanding of the composer’s creative intentions require solid humanistic literacy as support.

#### **4.3.3. Strengthen stage practice courses**

Establish a systematic stage practice curriculum system, including simulated performances, class concerts, semester presentations, and on campus and off campus exchange performances. By simulating different types of concert scenes, students can adapt to playing in different environments and in front of audiences, gradually overcoming stage tension.

### **4.4. Innovation of evaluation mechanism: establishing a multi-dimensional comprehensive evaluation system**

#### **4.4.1. Diversified evaluation content**

The evaluation indicators should cover multiple dimensions such as technical accuracy, musical expression, stage demeanor, psychological quality, and cooperation ability, avoiding a single technical evaluation orientation.

#### **4.4.2. Diversified evaluation subjects**

Introduce multiple evaluation subjects such as teacher evaluation, peer review, audience feedback, and self-evaluation. Especially audience feedback can help students understand the aesthetic expectations of different audiences and enhance the targeted performance.

#### **4.4.3. Process oriented evaluation methods**

Change the practice of “one exam determines grades” and include daily exercises, classroom performance, periodic reports, formal performances, etc. in the comprehensive evaluation, focusing on the assessment of students’ learning process.

## **5. Practical strategies for innovative piano performance teaching**

### **5.1. Implement the integrated teaching mode of “classroom rehearsal stage”**

Establish a complete chain from classroom teaching to stage performance. Complete technical preparation and music

processing during the classroom stage; During the rehearsal phase (including rehearsals with accompaniments and ensemble partners), it is important to work together and adapt; Validate teaching outcomes through formal performances during the stage. Each stage should have clear teaching objectives and evaluation criteria.

### **5.2. Strengthening the systematic cultivation of psychological qualities**

The psychological quality of the performer has a decisive impact on the performance effect. In teaching, it is necessary to consciously cultivate the ability of performers to overcome psychological barriers: by regularly holding simulated concerts, creating a performance atmosphere that is close to reality; Carry out performance psychological counseling to help students master methods for regulating tense emotions; Establish a post-performance review mechanism to guide students to objectively analyze gains and losses and accumulate stage experience.

### **5.3. Promote school enterprise cooperation and the integration of industry, academia and research**

Establish cooperative relationships with art groups, concert halls, and cultural media institutions to provide students with authentic performance practice platforms. By participating in commercial performances, charity concerts, art popularization activities, and other forms, students can develop and grow in a real professional environment. At the same time, industry experts will be introduced into the classroom to carry out teaching activities such as master classes and workshops, bringing teaching closer to industry practice.

### **5.4. Establish teaching resource library and case library**

Collect and organize teaching videos, concert recordings, master class materials, etc. of outstanding performers, and establish a digital teaching resource library. At the same time, organize typical teaching cases (including successful cases and problem cases) to form a shareable teaching case library, providing reference for teachers' teaching and students' self-directed learning.

## **6. Conclusion**

The innovation of piano performance teaching in higher art education is a systematic project that involves changes in teaching philosophy, methods, curriculum, evaluation, and other aspects. On the premise of adhering to the essential laws of piano art, actively absorbing the achievements of modern educational theory, integrating digital technology, expanding stage practice platforms, and constructing diversified teaching models are the only way to improve the quality of piano performance talent cultivation.

The ultimate goal of teaching innovation is to cultivate both solid technical skills and profound humanistic literacy; Capable of independently completing high difficulty solo works, as well as possessing collaborative skills and innovative thinking; A versatile piano performer who can adapt to the requirements of stage performances while also pursuing lifelong learning and development. This requires educators to constantly update their educational concepts, explore and improve in practice, and promote the development of higher piano performance education in China to a higher level.

## **Disclosure statement**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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