

Research methodologies for helping undergraduate students prepare the public recital

Yingxin DAI

Guangzhou Huali College, Guangzhou 52100, China

Abstract: As a public recital involves individual participation and leadership, it is a significant challenge for undergraduate students and inevitably brings them pressure. To help them prepare the public recitals, we need to focus on helping students develop musical abilities, experience, and leadership skills, which will enable them to perform at their best in recital. Students can be helped to prepare for a public recital performance through one-on-one tutoring, individual exercises and class participation, such as seminars and performance sharing (simulated concert class), including recital, ensemble and band rehearsals. This aims to make musicians (performers) focus on their playing skills and gain experience from activities (recital and ensemble), helping them become emerging musicians and prepare for their future careers. The main purpose of this paper is to study how to help college students prepare their public recitals independently, hoping to provide some positive suggestions to the piano educators.

Key words: piano teaching; public recital; undergraduate students

1 Introduction

Helping undergraduates prepare for their public recitals is a challenging idea because they should spend a lot of time recording videos and discussing suggestions for performances with specific viewers. This is an interesting topic, which is helpful to accumulate experience for future performance teaching. As a music project led and participated by individuals, we focus on helping students improve their music skills, experience, and leadership.

Students can prepare public recital performances through one-on-one tutoring, individual exercises and class participation, such as workplace activities and performance sharing (simulated concert class), including recital and ensemble exercises. This is to engage musicians (performers) in their performance skills and gaining experience from activities (recitals and ensembles), helping them become a new musician and prepare for their future career.

2 Some suggestions and recommendations

To discuss this topic, we utilize interviews to support some suggestions in this essay. Firstly, a pianist suggests that we relax ourselves by taking deep breaths as a starting point for preparing for the public recital. That is a psychological perspective, an opinion of a Chinese doctoral student.

Another perspective from violinists indicated that we ought to listen to recordings of various musicians to comprehend their working processes and learn from their emotional expressions to enhance our performances for the

recital. Subsequently, a music educator recommended that undergraduates should explore a variety of pieces and attempt to practise while reading and listening. This is essential for every instrument, and this technique is referred to as "quick browsing". Additionally, it was suggested that we engage in warm-up activities before the performance, as this aids in relaxing the fingers, fostering smoother execution during the recital. And performers can learn from the emotional expressions of the composer to enhance their performance in public concerts.

However, there are several key recommendations to assist undergraduates in preparing for a public recital. Firstly, it is advised to cultivate good habits well before the performance. Additionally, over-practicing immediately before the recital should be avoided to prevent vocal strain. It is also beneficial to engage in light aerobic exercises to improve breathing control, such as yoga or gentle stretching. Finally, it is encouraged to practice the pronunciation and intonation of specific words in the pieces by listening to audio recordings for imitation practice. This suggestion comes from an Asian vocal coach.

3 Reason analysis and methods for helping students prepare for public recitals

3.1 Why help undergraduate students

First of all, undergraduates have an age advantage; they have a strong will to face pressure and challenges in their chosen research fields, which may be from their families, schools or internships. Secondly, by deepening their understanding of performance, they can more effectively connect theory with practice. Moreover, by obtaining more professional guidance in their areas of interest, they can further prepare themselves for study/work. Undergraduate students are young musicians, yet they may lack the professional performance skills required. It is essential to assist them in developing these skills while preparing for a recital, as most students do not have the opportunity to host one. Furthermore, helping them with their public recital can aid them in overcoming stage fright and building confidence. Finally, by effectively allocating time to hone their skills and collaborating with peers to exchange knowledge and insights about performance, students can achieve greater rewards and progress in their professional fields.

3.2 How it could be done to help them

3.2.1 Creative performance workplace activities

A structured program is proposed to organize performance workshops for undergraduate students, with the possibility of including postgraduate students if available. These workshops can provide students with opportunities to share critical thinking about composers of different periods or the connections between their works, including discussions on creative approaches and stylistic characteristics. Participants can be asked to reflect on how they choose their works, why they choose them, and what their focus is, and what benefits this will have for them. Based on their research areas, students will be divided into groups to discuss their perspectives and subsequently organize performances. This initiative aims to foster collaborative skills and help students accumulate practical experience. Additionally, it will explore how students evaluate performances as audience members and how they present themselves as performers. The workshop activities are planned to be held once a week, with different themes and should be included in the optional courses.

Students can significantly enhance their skills through participation in the workshop, which can positively impact their performance. This is particularly true for ensemble techniques, including collaboration with both school and external orchestras during rehearsal sessions (monthly activities). The workshop is open to all students preparing for recitals.

How the workshop works--- Try to use the school's music library, which has several tables and chairs near the grand piano. Students can discuss, perform and record together. Each group consists of 4-5 students, and a leader is assigned to lead the group members in performance explanations and discussions, summarizing their behaviour in the performance. The leader can also ask the performers questions about their behaviour (The team leader is changed once a week to ensure

that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership and participation abilities). Through these activities, they can play different roles in this workshop and develop their competitive and key skills.

3.2.2 Performance sharing (mock concert class)

The purpose of this activity is to give students confidence in performing. As a performer, maintaining confidence during performances is crucial. *Journal of Research in Music Education* highlights that: To identify that how performances will be created and the specific work of musicians, the researchers discussed the close connection between performance behaviour and individual [1].

Holding monthly mock concert class and providing small class teaching for students can make students familiarize themselves with their performance platform and adjust their mental stress. Most of them are beginners in performance, so it is necessary to hold this mock concert activity. Each session lasts 40-50 minutes for four to five students to perform. While 3 to 4 professors are invited to provide guidance, and several audience members are also invited to the hall (similar like a small competition). Students can achieve different creative thinking in their major skill study and share their performance with the audience and classmates to express their emotion directly. It is recommended that the concert should be organized by students, and leaders need to comprehensively plan their group concerts and manage their time, including the entire concert and each program. In addition, a class tutor is assigned to help them prepare for a small performance. This activity means to help performers overcome their tension and address the urgent issues during performance. Above all, students are the main participants in performance sharing.

3.2.3 Public ensemble practice project

This project plan is to be held on an annual basis. Ensemble practice constitutes another crucial session in recital. The cultivation of students' collaborative skills will facilitate their engagement in this programme alongside their peers, with each group being assigned a tutor to provide guidance. For instance, an ensemble may comprise vocals and piano or an instrument such as the violin or flute in combination with the piano. The programme's pivotal element is its performances for children, with a particular emphasis on orphans. To address their feelings of isolation, these performances are scheduled to take place weekly in different cities at no cost.

The individual designated to lead this programme is likely to be a group member with the aim of developing their organizational and communication skills. In terms of organizational skills, the programme will contribute to the development of individual recitals, including the organization of performances (i.e. the time and location). The programme has been designed to facilitate the development of communication skills, with the understanding that emotional expression can have a significant impact on peers, who are susceptible to rapidly changing emotions. The selection of pieces for this ensemble programme has been meticulously curated to ensure its relevance and impact. Participants will have the opportunity to present the rationale behind the selection of pieces and receive feedback from the audience, including residents, school teachers and the general public.

Following the performance, students will review the activity and summarize their behaviour, which plays a crucial role in the field of performance education. The programme assists undergraduates and postgraduates in comprehending the concept of ensemble performance as it represents a novel domain for students lacking experience in this area. The programme enables them to develop their artistic aesthetic ability. Moreover, the ensemble represents a novel form of performance, providing students with numerous opportunities for social participation.

4 Conclusion

The exploration of how to assist undergraduate students in preparing for solo concerts has been proven to produce beneficial results. For example, it has the potential to introduce new elements into performance, thereby establishing

connections with further performance education. It can help students develop their performance skills, communication skills, music criticism abilities, and public participation abilities, cultivate their competitiveness and key skills, and thus help students become emerging musicians, preparing them for future careers.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Reference

[1] Broomhead P, Skidmore, JB, Eggett DL, et al. 2012. The effects of a positive mindset trigger word pre-performance routine on the expressive performance of junior high age singers. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 60(1): 62-80.