

# Research on the Reform of Music Production Programme in Local Universities in China A Case of Teaching Practice Based on Southwest Minzu University

Yan Jiang

Southwest University for Nationalities Mianyang, Sichuan Postal code: 610225

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**Abstract:** With the deepening of educational reform in universities in China, a number of local colleges and universities have launched music production courses in their faculties and departments in order to strengthen students' comprehensive music literacy and music creation ability and to realize the all-round development of musical talents. The department of music in Southwest Minzu University opened a music production major under the direction of music theory for all undergraduate music majors. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the teaching status quo of the music production major in Southwest Minzu University, and based on the case of personal teaching practice in this university, to explore the path to achieve teaching reform in this major.

**Keywords:** Music Production; Pedagogical reform; Local Universities

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## 1. A brief introduction to music production

Music production refers to the process of songwriting, recording, mixing and mastering. The invention of this technology unified the specifications and standards for data transmission of musical instruments, synthesizers, and related electronic music devices of different labels, marking the official entry into the era of composing music with computers.

The continuous development and innovation of computer music has also synchronously influenced the development of modern music education. To deepen the reform of higher education, local universities have successively opened music production courses in their faculties. Southwest Minzu University, as one of the key universities in Southwest China, has also been promoting and helping the development of MIDI music production professional course teaching.

## 2. Curriculum of Music Production Programme in Southwest Minzu University

The music production major is under the direction of musicology theory, which is a one-to-one professional programme only for undergraduate musicology students. It focuses on developing the ability of musicology students to teach music by using music production technology. Thus more emphasis is placed on the practicality of the music production programme, rather than on the professionalism of the course in this university.

The programme selects students through an application and assessment system. Musicology students need to apply in the second semester of their sophomore year, and take the specialized assessment before they can proceed to a three-semester systematic study. The specialized assessment consists of two main parts, score production and monophonic melodic composition. The examination of score production is to test whether students have the ability to operate the basic notation software; the examination of monophonic melody composition is to test students' sensitivity and creativity in composition.

## 3. Status of the music production programme in Southwest Minzu University

### 3.1 Teaching and learning configurations

The School of Arts of Southwest Minzu University is equipped with an independent music production classroom, supporting teaching hardware and professional music production software for the professional music production course. The hardware facilities include Apple desktop computers, MIDI keyboards, sound cards, condenser microphones, monitor headphones, monitor audio, etc. The music production software includes the professional music notation software Finale, and the digital audio workstation(DAW)

Logic Pro X.

### 3.2 Admission requirements for the major of Music Production

According to the cultivation programme of the musicology major of the Department of Music, College of Arts, Southwest Minzu University, the major direction of musicology theory is divided into the musicology theory, music production, and the theory of composition and compositional technology.

From 2020 to 2023, three students are enrolled in the MIDI Music Production programme at Southwest Minzu University. Due to the limited enrolment, the output of the number of student works is also limited to some extent. As a result, this status has left the major of music production with a serious lack of professional influence in the music discipline.

## 4. Approaches to realizing pedagogical reforms in the music production programme

### 4.1 Emphasis on the output of students' musical work

The output of a musical piece needs to focus on quality while aiming for a certain quantity. The quality of a musical work is a test of students' skills in creating, recording, mixing and mastering. For students majoring in music in local universities, the process of music production in the early stage is long. However, through systematic learning and continuous accumulation of works, students are basically able to independently complete the production of a musical work. In addition, the quantity of musical work output in the process is not to be ignored. Because quantity and quality are closely related. In the process of constantly creating new musical works, the creative thinking and the ability of music production are both upgraded and advanced simultaneously.

Although at Southwest University for Nationalities, more emphasis is placed on the practical aspects of music production technology in teaching, the teacher's ability of creating and composing music is also very important in actual music teaching. Therefore, in the assessment at the end of each semester of the music production major, the requirements for creating and arranging different music theme and styles are incorporated as follows:

First semester: one steak tape piece and one remix (any style of music)

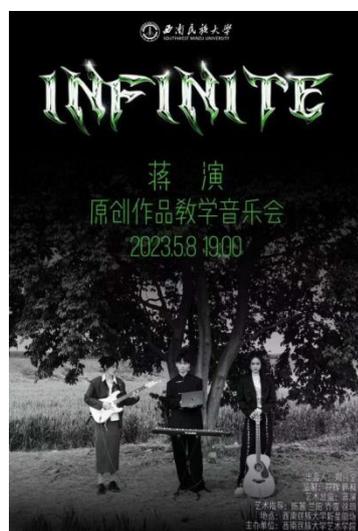
Second semester: three original songs, including basic remixes (any style of music).

Third semester: complete a video soundtrack of no less than 30 seconds and a 5-minute pure music composition in (any style of music).

The above assessment content will be adjusted appropriately according to the students' specific learning situation and assignment feedback. According to this assessment requirement, students can reach the number of compositions of at least five songs, one soundtrack and one pure music composition within three semesters. The quality of the compositions is also gradually enhanced with the increasing difficulty of the themes of the compositions.

### 4.2 Diversified promotion of musical works

The promotion of a musical work is the continuation of the life of the musical work. It not only enhances the exposure of the work, but also tests whether the work conforms to the development of the current music market. Music works are usually promoted both online and offline. Online promotion is the most convenient and popular way of promotion at present. With the continuous development of technology and the Internet, digital music has gradually become the preferred way for people to get music, so online



(left picture the album of INFINITE, right picture is the concert poster INFINITE )

promotion can radiate different groups of listeners. Offline promotion, such as performances, provides listeners with a stronger sense of participation and experience of the music. Students can also learn more intuitively about the audience's real evaluation of the work through offline promotion. However, the cost of offline promotion is higher and requires more factors to be considered, which makes it relatively difficult to realize.

As an example, the students who majored in MIDI music production in the class of 2019 in Southwest Minzu University, released an original music digital album "INFINITE" and held an original concert of the album of the same name, "INFINITE", at the Xinxing Theatre of Southwest Minzu University in May 2023, with a theatre attendance rate of 90%.

The diversified promotion of works is not only to increase the exposure of students' works, but also an important reflection of the aesthetic value of individual works. At the same time, music albums and concerts can be used as personal portfolios and practical activities, respectively, to be included in students' curriculum vitae in order to fully demonstrate their professional strengths in employment.

### **4.3 Establishment of an inter-professional model of cooperation**

Traditional music majors dominate the music majors offered by local universities, and the teaching mode is relatively independent and single. However, this often leads to a lack of horizontal communication and contact between the majors, and is not conducive to the current situation of the development of social music. Therefore, music production majors as a new type of music major, it is more important to break down the barriers between majors, strengthen the communication and cooperation with traditional music majors, and fully integrate and fuse teaching resources.

In preparation for the concert of INFINITE, the music production students invited vocal performance and instrumental performance students to join them in recording their original work. During the recording process, students from different majors had to communicate with each other. For example, when communicating with vocal performance students, they would suggest what kind of singing techniques would be better to interpret the song, so as to create a second creation of the vocal part of the song. In this way, through the close communication and contact with students from different majors, the completion and quality of the musical works will be gradually improved and enhanced.

In addition to the communication and cooperation at the student level, it is more important for the instructors to play a good leading role among themselves. During the rehearsal process of this concert, teachers from the Department of Music majoring in vocal, piano and instrumental music were invited to give professional guidance to different concert programmes. At the same time, the leaders of the faculty were also invited to give more comprehensive guidance to the whole concert. The whole inter-professional cooperation not only makes the connection between the professions closer, but also demonstrates the full commitment of Southwest Minzu University to the music production programme.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this paper, by combining the teaching status and teaching practice cases of music production major in Southwest Minzu University, we discuss the path to achieve reform in the major music production. Local universities usually focus on their own situation and adjust the cultivation direction and goal of this major to a certain extent. For example, Southwest Minzu University focuses on the practicality of music production in music teaching, rather than training students for its professionalism. Due to the small number of semesters in which the major is offered and the limited number of students enrolled, the influence of the major in the institution is seriously insufficient.

In order to effectively improve the current teaching situation, teachers need to fully integrate and use teaching resources, and start from three aspects to achieve the teaching reform of music production majors. The first aspect is to pay attention to the output of musical works of the current music production students. The second aspect is to focus on the promotion of students' musical works. The third aspect is to strengthen horizontal exchanges and connections between disciplines. In the present era of high development and integration of science and technology and culture, music production, as a new music discipline with cutting-edge technology, high integration and comprehensive knowledge, can join hands with traditional music disciplines to effectively promote the development and construction of music education in local universities.

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