

Analysis of the Role Played by Basic Music Theory in Teenagers' Learning of Instruments

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Abstract: The purpose of this thesis is to prove the positive role of basic music theory knowledge in teenagers' learning of instrumental music and its importance. In order to prove this point, the author uses abundant experience in music theories and basic teaching methods accumulated in the Conservatory of Music to carry out teaching practice. In the process of teaching while learning, the author constantly enriches professional knowledge, continuously find problems and solve them with the help of professors. Finally, it is proved from many aspects that the basic music theory can greatly promote teenagers' learning of instrumental music.

Keywords: Music Theory; Teenagers; Instrumental music learning

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In recent years, the development of social music education has been greatly boosted by the promotion of the whole nation's comprehensive quality and the vigorous growth of social art aptitude examinations. More and more music educators begin to realize that they should not merely pay attention to the cultivation of instrumental performance techniques, leading students to neglect the basic logic and composition of music, but should raise students' comprehensive music quality in an all-round way. However, in the social music education environment, some instrumental music teachers didn't receive systematic education of basic music theory themselves, which thwarts them to impart the basic music theory to students accurately and convey its importance to the parents. As a result, the popularization of basic music knowledge to teenagers has not made obvious progress.

Until 2018, the Ministry of Culture officially issued a new policy: To take the basic music knowledge test first during the instrumental music test. The trial implementation of the policy has stimulated more and more teenagers who study instrumental music in their spare time to find ways to learn basic music theory. However, the fact that our country still keeps improving examination methods, revising audio-based coursebook, and exploring teaching methods with scarce resources of teachers compounds the difficulties in disseminating basic musical theories. Hence, teenagers can rarely have the chance to learn such theories in the current social environment of musical education even though more and more teachers and parents recognize that such theories play an active role in teenagers' musical instrument learning. Therefore, as a new generation of music education practitioners, currently it is of great significance to start with ourselves, develop effective teaching methods, promote their importance, and guide students and their parents to deal with the study of basic music theory with a proper attitude and manner.

2. Research Purposes

In view of the fact that the study of basic music theory has been massively neglected during amateur instrumental music learning in the current social environment of music education, this paper, taking into account the author's expertise and personal experience in teaching teenagers basic musical theory, tries to figure the reasons thereof and prove in the evolution of musical theories from simplicity to complexity that knowing basic music theory has many positive effects on instrumental music learning and is not difficult but effective if taught with reasonable methods. This paper seeks to provide inspiration to peers in the same social environment of music education, and provide help to teenagers who are confused about how to learn basic music theory as much as reasonably possible.

3. What Is Basic Music Theory

It refers to the rudimentary part of music theory, and it's a compulsory course to learn music. Basic music theory is just like the dictionary of music, which is a unique language. You have to learn the words to read, and understand the music notation to perform.

Music theory knowledge is a tool to help us understand the notation, in other words, it is the basic law and composition principle of music. It is strong in theory, and there are too many nuances to be understood, memorized, and even calculated and converted; moreover, it's time-consuming to repeatedly practice and consolidate such theories to wield them smoothly, so it appears to be boring and difficult to learn. It is a challenge for students who have never been exposed to music at all. This is one of the reasons why basic music theory cannot be popularized rapidly, and the first problem that music educators need to solve is to encourage parents to overcome their fear of obstacles. However, to deliberately inculcate these sophisticated theories in teenagers in a simplified manner will be an effective way to facilitate instrumental music learning.

4. Why Should Teenagers Who Study Instrumental Music Learn Basic Music theory

4.1 Basic Music Theory Is the Basic Skill to Understand Music

Most parents whose children are new to musical instruments think that their children can get to know music theory in instrumental lessons, so why bother to learn basic music theory particularly? Music is an irreplaceable aesthetic education subject, especially for those who study music as a hobby, and its significance lies in cultivating sentiment, improving attainment, enriching oneself and developing intelligence. Whether you choose to play the piano or sing, it is only one way to learn music, and the ultimate goal is to perceive, understand, express and even create music through this kind of re-creation. No matter which way you choose to expose yourself to music, the dictionary of music is an indispensable element.

4.2 Basic Music Theory is Helpful to Enhance the Understanding of the Music Notation

Before learning the music theory in a systematic way, students' cognition is limited to recognizing every single note. And they can merely imitate the teacher's demonstration when it comes to the details. After studying the basic music theory systematically, students begin to notice more marks on the music notation, in which case, they can not only identify the position of notes quickly and accurately, but also broadly find the composition regularities between sentences after understanding the basic chord composition. Under the guidance of musical terms and symbols, students try to think independently about how they can deal with music to achieve better effects, and then they can learn something profounder through understanding the music notation.

4.3 Basic Music Theory Helps to Reduce the Difficulty in Practicing Instrumental Music

There are quite a large number of students who study instrumental music for the purpose of examination, of which the result is that they learn less tracks in a slow pace; some of them even neglect performance quality in order to pursue the difficulty coefficient of tracks. This way of learning, which goes against the laws of nature, is basically useless for the improvement of music performance techniques, and it is easy for children whose views of the world, life and values are not completely developed to become impetuous and even have the psychology of unrealistic comparison.

Without the support of any theoretical knowledge and logical relationship, the difficulty coefficient of performing the tracks soars greatly, and it takes the children much more energy and time. If students know the underlying reasoning, they can not only substantially relieve the pain of practicing piano, but also have more fun never felt before. Therefore, music educators are expected to make conscious efforts to lead students and their parents to treat examinations in a rational attitude and mentality, urge the students to learn instrumental music in an appropriate way, and jointly create a positive atmosphere for music education, in which children can improve their skills and characters in the process of learning music.

4.4 Analysis of Music Aptitude Test in China and Abroad

With the development of the times and society, more and more teachers pay heed to the importance of basic music knowledge for instrumental music learning. The growth of social music education at home and abroad has been stimulated to some extent by the flourishing of art aptitude examinations.

According to related data, the Central Conservatory of Music launched a basic music knowledge examination for the first time in 2002. In 2009, it joined the National Educational Examinations Authority to launch a revised examination of basic music knowledge. In order to spread basic musical knowledge and skills and improve basic musical taste of the whole nation, universities like China Conservatory of Music, Central Conservatory of Music, Shanghai Conservatory of Music and cultural ministries have all listed basic

music subjects into the compulsory examination items for amateur. In the 11th year of the trial implementation of basic music examination, we notice that the broad atmosphere has changed and gradually improved in practice. After years of exploration, the Ministry of Culture officially enacted a new policy in 2018 that prioritized the examination of basic musical knowledge.

With regard to the music examination overseas, after interviews with teachers and students who have returned from studying music education and performance abroad, the author has roughly learned that they mostly concentrate on edifying the children from an early age, of which the details are part of the issues the author wants to figure out when studying abroad.

If we want to trace the history of foreign music examination, it can date back to a hundred years ago. For example, the ABRSM grading of instrumental music, which has existed for almost 200 years, is composed of performing, aural skills and sight reading, of which performing is only one of the comparatively important parts. In the grading, each section's content fits with its requirements regarding difficulty coefficient, which means that children's musical aptitudes improve as the grade climbs. The setting and mechanism of ABRSM grading are relatively systematic and complete, from which countless students have benefited. Their ability to understand music, their adeptness at music learning and overall aptitude are beyond compare of those who don't receive professional training. Therefore, ABRSM grading can stand out among music grading examinations around the world.

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