

On the Practical Value of Musical Theater Art in Music Education in Colleges and Universities

Tong Bian

Shanghai Xinyidan Culture Media Co., Ltd., Shanghai, China

Abstract: As a comprehensive art form, musical theater not only enriches people's cultural life and enhances the cultural taste of the society with its unique charm, but also shows far-reaching multiple values in music education in colleges and universities. It is not only a pusher of cultural prosperity, enhancing social cohesion through entertainment and emotional transmission, but also a valuable resource for art education, effectively cultivating students' aesthetic ability, performance skills, innovative thinking and teamwork spirit, and laying a solid foundation for students' comprehensive development. At the same time, musical theater also carries the important responsibility of cultural heritage, integrating excellent traditional cultural elements into modern artistic expression, and promoting the national spirit. This paper centers on the practice of music teaching in colleges and universities, and discusses in depth the multiple values of the artistic practice of musical theater, including its social practice, artistic education and cultural inheritance. Through the meticulous analysis of the significance and practical value of musical drama carried out in music teaching in colleges and universities, with a view to further promoting the effective application and development of musical drama in music education in colleges and universities.

Keywords: Musical Theater Art, Music Education in Colleges And Universities, Practical Value.

1. Introduction

Musical theater is a unique art form combining music, dance and drama. It draws on a wide range of global styles, blending visual and aural elements to create a cohesive stage performance. Musical theater uses singing and movement to tell a story. Musical theater's broad appeal as a modern stage drama, integrating diverse artistic elements, is a testament to its accessibility. In the contemporary era, musical theater is evolving from a conventional form of entertainment to a domain that intersects with higher education. This transformation offers students unparalleled opportunities for learning and personal growth. This expansion can be attributed to the pursuit of diversity in art education and the exploration of students' comprehensive cultivation (Song, 2022). The integration of diverse artistic elements, including music, dance and drama, in musical theater fosters the development of students' performance skills and teamwork abilities, thereby serving as a comprehensive training platform. Furthermore, musical theater also has rich social practice and cultural heritage value, which can promote the prosperity of culture, preserve the valuable traditional culture, carry forward the national spirit, and encourage the exchange and integration between different cultures. Consequently, the incorporation of musicals as an artistic category within the context of music education in higher education institutions has the potential to transform the conventional, monotonous nature of traditional university music instruction. This integration not only enhances the level of college students' appreciation of musicals but also fosters their ability to improvise, thereby cultivating a deeper love for musicals and a more comprehensive understanding of their intricacies.

2. Overviews of the Musical Theater Arts

The origins of musical theater lie in medieval Europe, where it developed as a distinct art form combining theater

and music. It was formally recognized in the 19th century and flourished in the 20th century in the US and UK. The development of musical theater in China has been rich and colourful, from its initial emergence during the Republic of China period, to its creation after the founding of New China, and continues to explore new challenges and opportunities (Vereshchahina-Biliavska et al., 2021). Musical theater combines music, dance and theater. The style is diverse, ranging from classical elegance to pop fashion and rock passion, contributing to a multifaceted atmosphere and plot characterisation. For instance, the use of classical music in *The Phantom of the Opera* has a mysterious and romantic atmosphere. The dance styles used include exuberant jazz, lively tap and elegant ballet, which enhance the expressive power of the performance. The depth of the actors' performances immerses the audience in the narrative.

Musicals are characterized by distinctive features. First, it is highly comprehensive, seamlessly integrating music, dance, theater and other artistic elements, giving the audience a full range of artistic enjoyment. Secondly, it is easy to understand and attracts a wide range of audience groups with vivid plots and catchy music, which can be enjoyed by both professionals and the general public. Thirdly, it is commercially strong, with a mature production and operation model that makes it occupy an important position in the cultural market, such as the global commercial success of Broadway musicals (Rajan, 2019).

Musicals have a strong epochal character, which is a vivid portrayal of the culture of the times. At the beginning of the 20th century, the society was full of optimism and enterprising spirit, and most of the musicals showed this kind of theme, which inspired people to pursue their dreams. In the early 20th century, the society was full of optimism and enterprising spirit, and musicals showed many such themes to inspire people to pursue their dreams, while the contemporary society is facing a lot of problems, and musicals began to pay attention to social problems and human nature exploration, such as *Hamilton*, which tells the history of the United States

with a unique perspective, and triggers the thinking of history and reality. At the same time, musicals continue to absorb new elements, from the innovation of stage technology, such as the use of multimedia, to the fusion of musical styles, to keep pace with the times, and always maintain artistic vitality. In short, musicals have evolved throughout history, and with their unique forms, distinctive features and modernity, they have become a popular art form. In the future, musicals are expected to continue to innovate and develop, adding more luster to the global cultural and artistic fields.

3. The Necessity of Musical Theater Art in The Practice of Music Education in Colleges and Universities

3.1. Fitting the Educational Objectives of Comprehensive Development

Modern music education in colleges and universities aims to cultivate comprehensive artistic talents with all-round development, and the characteristics of musical theater are highly compatible with it. Traditional music education often focuses on single skills, such as vocal music focusing on vocalization and instrumental music focusing on performance. Musical theater, however, is like an all-round artistic melting pot, which requires students to develop synergistically in multiple fields such as music, dance and performance. In music, students need to master a variety of singing techniques and music composition principles to interpret the emotions of the characters. In dance, students learn different styles and integrate them with music and characters. In the field of acting, students are required to go deep into the heart of the characters and portray them in a variety of ways. This synergistic development of multiple fields prompts students to comprehensively improve their artistic literacy and become comprehensive talents, which meets the demand of modern education's goal of cultivating well-rounded artistic talents (Cao, 2024).

3.2. Responding to Society's Demand for Artistic Talents

With the development of society, the demand for talents in the field of art is diversified, and talents with comprehensive artistic ability are more competitive. Colleges and universities, as the important place for talent training, have the responsibility to provide education that meets the needs of society. Musical theater art practice builds a platform for students to simulate real creation and performance. Students participate in the whole process from script to performance to accumulate rich experience (Guo, 2023). For example, if they participate in the production of original musicals, they need to work with multi-professionals and understand the various aspects of the industry. This enables students to better adapt to their future work, whether they enter professional troupes or join the film and television, cultural industry and other fields, with the comprehensive ability developed in the practice of musical theater, they can stand out in the job market.

3.3. Enrichment of Campus culture

Colleges and universities are places of cultural inheritance

and innovation, and the integration of musicals into music education in colleges and universities can enrich campus culture. Musical creation and performance itself is a cultural creation, and students' participation can bring creativity into play and inject vitality into campus culture. For example, students create musicals with the theme of campus life, showing the style and pursuit of contemporary college students, and becoming a unique logo of campus culture. In addition, musical performances create a strong artistic atmosphere, attracting more students to pay attention to and participate in artistic activities, and promoting the prosperity of campus culture. College musicals can also communicate and cooperate with outside schools to spread campus culture, enhance the influence of colleges and universities, promote intercollegiate and school-society cultural exchanges and integration, and enrich campus culture while expanding its influence.

4. Multiple Practical Values of Musical Theater in Music Education in Colleges and Universities

4.1. Social Practical Value

Musical theater in music education in colleges and universities has demonstrated the important value of enriching cultural life, upgrading social cultural taste and enhancing social cohesion at the level of social practice (Wang, 2024). The musical "Home" by the Experimental Theater Troupe of the Central Academy of Drama is based on Ba Jin's novels, and it is a new interpretation of classic literature with unique music, touching dance and delicate performance. Teachers and students from universities participated in the creation, performance and viewing, enriching the campus cultural life and gaining access to elegant art; the general public broadened their cultural horizons by watching the show online or on-site, appreciating its unique charms, experiencing the diversity of art and enriching their cultural life. At the same time, "Home" combines the essence of literature, music, dance and other arts, and has a profound connotation. Colleges and universities carry out this kind of practice to cultivate students' ability to appreciate and understand elegant art. Students enter the community through clubs, and with professional performances and explanations, guide residents to contact and understand the artistic value of musicals, enhance the cultural atmosphere of the community, promote the enhancement of social and cultural tastes, and make the elegant arts more widely recognized and appreciated. In addition, Beijing Normal University's "No Liability Today" takes "No Liability Normal, No Liability Mission" as its theme, and creates performances to attract students of different majors, break down disciplinary barriers, and enhance campus cohesion. The play goes to the society through public welfare performance, attracting people from all walks of life, we meet because of the theme identity and love of art, and pass the emotion in appreciation and participation, this kind of interdisciplinary and field cooperation, cohesion of all parties, and the transmission of the spirit of education and positive energy in society.



Figure 1. Musical theater “No Lose Today”

4.2. Artistic Educational Value

Musical theater in music education in colleges and universities highlight the outstanding value of art education, from a multi-dimensional to help students' overall development. Taking Mr. Ta-Chao rehearsed by teachers and students of Peking University as an example, this musical based on the deeds of Mr. Li Ta-Chao vividly demonstrates the spirit of the Peking University sage. In the process of interpretation, students need to master a number of skills such as voice, dance and acting, which greatly enhances their performance ability. At the same time, the innovative musical arrangement and stage presentation stimulated students' creative thinking. In the process of deeply experiencing the revolutionary spirit, the students' comprehensive artistic quality was enhanced, and the close collaboration in the rehearsal also strengthened their teamwork ability. Shanghai

Conservatory of Music's "Loyalty" is also very representative. Based on the guardian of the "Central Library", the play tells the story of underground party members guarding the party's secret archives. By incorporating elements of contemporary music styles such as rock, rap and jazz, the red-themed musical was made more contemporary. During the rehearsal, students' performance skills were practiced. Moreover, with the help of the program's Civic Teaching Design, the Civic Education and Art Practice are organically combined to guide students to establish healthy values. These two musicals reflect the diversified art education mode in college musicals. It not only enhances students' artistic ability, but also promotes students' all-round development in terms of aesthetics, innovation, teamwork and value shaping, which fully proves the important art education value of musicals in college music education.



Figure 2. A Still from the Musical Theater “Loyalty”

4.3. Cultural Heritage Value

Musical theater carries the value of cultural inheritance in music education in colleges and universities, and spreads and

carries forward the excellent traditional culture with the help of modern methods of expression. The original musical "Red Boat Past" of Zhejiang Media College has important cultural

inheritance value. With the background of the founding process of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the play vividly reproduces the birth and development of the "Red Boat Spirit" in the form of musical, and shows the spiritual qualities of the revolutionary pioneers: "pioneering, pioneering, steadfast in ideals, indomitable". The play incorporates traditional music elements from Jiaying and Hunan, combined with modern aesthetic characteristics, making the Red Boat Spirit more contemporary and artistically infectious. Through this work, Zhejiang Media College actively explore the "stage + politics" education mode, the red culture and art education, for the new era of cultural heritage provides valuable experience. In addition, Lanzhou University original musical "Dunhuang - Star" also highlights. The creation of the deep excavation of the essence

of Dunhuang culture, Dunhuang murals, ancient poetry, the Tang Dynasty blooming cultural elements skillfully integrated. In terms of music creation, it is bold and innovative, combining traditional Chinese music with modern musical language, and greatly enriching the musical expression through chanting of ancient poems, movie and television soundtracks, and the addition of ethnic instruments. The text of the lyrics is unique, with 12 of the 15 verses directly adopting Tang dynasty pentameter poems, which is unique in the creation of domestic musicals. This innovative form of Dunhuang culture revitalization, a novel and infectious way to let the audience appreciate the charm of Dunhuang culture, to promote the inheritance and development of excellent traditional culture (Wu,2023).



Figure 3. Poster of "Once Upon a Red Boat"

5. Exploration of Effective Practice of Musical Theater in Music Teaching in Colleges and Universities

5.1. Curriculum and Teaching Content

The construction of the musical theater course system aims to comprehensively and deeply cultivate students' professional skills and artistic literacy. The foundation course centers on the history and theory of musicals, helping students build a solid knowledge framework by systematically explaining its origin, development and representative works of different periods. At the same time, it analyzes the differences between Broadway and London's West End musicals, so that students can understand the influence of cultural background on the style of musicals. The practical course focuses on acting, voice and dance training, and enhances students' acting ability and characterization skills through diverse teaching methods such as role-playing and improvisation. The vocal course focuses on vocal skills and different styles of singing training, while the dance course covers a variety of styles such as jazz, tap, ballet, etc., aiming to cultivate students' sense of rhythmic movement and stage performance (Yue, 2020). In addition, the curriculum incorporates classic and contemporary musicals, and

encourages students to participate in original musical theater projects, draw inspiration from life, and create scripts, music, and choreography to broaden their artistic horizons and develop their creative abilities.

5.2. Teaching Methods and Practice Patterns

In the field of musical theater education, it is crucial to explore efficient and creative teaching methods (Jiyenbaevich, 2022). Experiential teaching and project-based teaching, as two important modes in musical theater teaching, provide students with a rich platform for learning and practice. Experiential teaching organizes students to watch classic musical performances, guides students to analyze and discuss from multiple dimensions, and enhances students' artistic appreciation and analytical ability. At the same time, combined with field rehearsal and performance practice, students can master performance skills and creative methods in practice. Project-based teaching is based on specific musical theater projects, and students are divided into groups responsible for different aspects of creation and performance. Under the guidance of the teacher, students are required to complete the whole process from choosing a theme to performing on their own. This model not only helps to improve students' professional skills, but also develops their teamwork and project management skills. Through

participating in the program, students are able to develop their overall development in practice, laying a solid foundation for their future entry into the musical theater industry.

5.3. Organize Students for the Creation and Performance of Musicals

In order to enhance students' practical ability and professionalism, colleges and universities actively cooperate with professional teams outside the university to build a bridge for students to the musical theater industry. Through in-depth cooperation with renowned musical production companies and theaters, students are able to participate in real musical projects, from the germ of the script to the stage bloom, working side by side with industry elites. In this process, students can not only learn the professional process of musical production and exquisite skills, but also under the careful guidance of professional actors, to appreciate the industry's cutting-edge concepts and technologies, laying a solid foundation for their future careers. At the same time, colleges and universities do not forget to build and improve their faculty. Teachers graduated from top musical theater majors are introduced, and their rich experience in performance, creation and teaching injects fresh power into the teaching team. In addition, by regularly organizing teachers to participate in training courses and seminars at home and abroad, they continue to learn advanced teaching concepts and methods to ensure that the teaching content is up-to-date (Kvammen & Hagen, 2024). What is more worth mentioning is that the university has also established a mechanism for cooperation between internal and external mentors, inviting experts, directors, actors, etc. from outside the university to serve as external mentors, forming a synergy with the internal teachers to jointly guide the students' projects, ensuring that the students' works meet the market demand as well as have a high degree of artistic excellence.

6. Conclusion

The practical value of musical art in music education in colleges and universities is remarkable, which is not only an effective way to cultivate students' artistic literacy, performance ability and creativity, but also an important means to broaden students' artistic horizons and enhance their comprehensive quality. Musical theater integrates music, drama, dance and other art forms, providing a platform for students to show their talents. By participating in the creation and performance of musicals, students are able to practice

their performance skills, teamwork ability and innovative thinking, laying a solid foundation for their future musical path. Colleges and universities should make full use of musicals as an art form, and through scientific curriculum, rich teaching content, and various teaching methods and practice modes, stimulate students' artistic potential and cultivate their artistic practice ability and innovative spirit. At the same time, students are organized to participate in the creation and performance of musicals, so that they can grow up in practice. Therefore, the art of musical theater has important practical value in music education in colleges and universities and should be widely promoted and applied.

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