Emotional Perception and Spiritual Interaction in Vocal Art Practice

Qian Zhao
Shiyuan College, Nanning Normal University

Abstract: Vocal music learning consists of far more than polishing vocal timbre and singing techniques. Essentially, singing is an artistic practice that conveys emotions through the human voice and realizes in-depth spiritual communication between people. From the perspective of art psychology, emotional perception is the psychological process for singers to interpret the connotation of musical works and intuitively perceive their emotional moods, while spiritual interaction occurs among singers, musical texts, teachers and students, and audiences, with empathy serving as the core internal support throughout the whole process. Current vocal teaching generally prioritizes technical training and neglects the cultivation of students' internal perceptual ability. Although many students achieve proficient technical performance, their singing lacks genuine emotions and fails to build effective emotional bonds with works and audiences. Based on front-line vocal teaching practice, this paper clarifies the internal correlation between emotional perception and spiritual interaction, analyzes prominent problems in current teaching, and summarizes practical training paths from the dimensions of cognitive, emotional and behavioral empathy. It also explores the practical value of vocal art practice in emotional regulation and personality cultivation, providing feasible references for implementing affective education in vocal classrooms.
Key words: vocal practice; emotional perception; spiritual interaction; art psychology; empathy

1. Basic Connotations of Emotional Perception and Spiritual Interaction in Vocal Practice

The Book of Music says, "Wherever a tone arises, it is born of the human heart", showing that the ancients already realized that music originates in human inner feelings. Vocal music uses the human voice as its carrier of expression and, from its very origin, has borne the function of expressing emotion and conveying intentions. Unlike instrumental performance, the human voice carries dual physiological and emotional attributes, and the singer's psychological fluctuations are directly projected onto vocal texture. In actual vocal learning, emotional perception is not equivalent to directly venting the joys, angers and sorrows of one's personal life. It requires the singer, in light of the work's historical background, to mobilize personal life experience, to experience the circumstances of the characters shaped by the lyrics and music, to understand the characters' joy, pain and entanglement, and thus to complete the acceptance and comprehension of the text's emotions. Vocal music is not a simple reproduction of score notes but a re-creative process in which the singer integrates personal life experience into the musical text; emotional perception is precisely the psychological starting point of this secondary creation. Singing divorced from perception is at best a copy of notes and can hardly generate the artistic appeal that moves people's hearts.

Such perception can be divided into three levels. At the cognitive level, one must first understand the work and grasp its overall emotional keynote; at the emotional level, one must feel as if personally present, transforming the emotions carried by the score and text into genuine inner experience; at the behavioral level, inner experience is externalized into

singing practice through breath, articulation and timbre changes. The three levels advance layer by layer: cognition is the premise, emotion is the core, and behavior is the ultimate carrier of output; none is dispensable.

Spiritual interaction is built on emotional perception; it is the spiritual dialogue completed by different subjects through singing. First, the cross-textual dialogue between the singer and the lyricist and composer: the singer fathoms the creator's creative mood through the lyrics and score. Second, the interaction within the classroom field: teachers guide students to interpret the work, students feed back their own understanding through singing, and teachers and students, and classmates among themselves, exchange the emotional feelings brought by singing. Third, the two-way response on the live stage: the singer outputs inner feelings, the audience receives the singing and is emotionally touched, completing the spiritual communication between performer and audience. Such interaction is not one-way indoctrination: the audience's response in turn affects the singer's emotional state, forming a circulating spiritual flow.

Empathy connects emotional perception and spiritual interaction. Domestic research on vocal psychology shows that a singer's psychological state and level of emotional perception directly affect the final presentation of stage performance. Foreign vocal teaching practice also confirms that groups who participate in vocal training over the long term can improve their ability to recognize others' emotions and to conduct emotional communication. Emotional perception leans toward inward accumulation of feeling, while spiritual interaction belongs to outward communication and output. Without genuine inner perception, singing retains only technical imitation; without spiritual interaction, the value of vocal art in communicating emotion cannot be realized.

2. Practical Problems in Emotional Perception and Spiritual Interaction in Vocal Practice

In actual vocal teaching, technical training often occupies most of the class hours. Intonation, rhythm, resonance and the execution of high notes often become the main criteria for judging singing quality, while emotional training remains in a secondary position for a long time. Influenced by traditional teaching thinking, some teachers assume that emotion will be generated naturally as singing proficiency improves, and therefore rarely set special exercises for emotional perception. Many teachers only give simple verbal prompts about emotional handling, lacking step-by-step perceptual guidance training. Students do not truly enter the emotional world of the work and can only pretend to be engaged by increasing volume and deliberately performing facial expressions, so their singing hardly moves the audience.

Many students' understanding of the emotion of a work remains superficial, and cognitive empathy is clearly insufficient. When receiving a new work, students first focus on the difficulty of the melody and whether they can execute the high notes, rarely proactively consulting the creative background or excavating the inner conflicts of the characters behind the lyrics. Emotions are simply labeled, and students cannot distinguish, within the same sadness, the hierarchical difference between restrained suppression and grief-stricken outburst. When understanding remains superficial, emotional perception loses its foundation, and deep spiritual communication becomes impossible. Some students are also accustomed to understanding vocal works through the fragmented interpretations of online short videos; the feelings they obtain are one-sided and thin, making it difficult to understand the deeper spiritual connotation of the work.

The mutual separation of technical training and emotional experience is also a common phenomenon. Many students form the fixed perception that technique must be practiced to proficiency first and emotional expression supplemented afterwards. While singing, all attention is concentrated on vocal function, and inner emotional feelings are set aside. Even when they understand the theme expressed by the work, it is difficult to transform inner feelings into vocal changes; breath and timbre cannot adjust naturally with emotion, and technique and emotion each go their own way. Some students go to the other extreme, indulging in emotional venting that disrupts the normal vocal state, resulting in loss of vocal control and intonation deviation, which likewise fails to achieve ideal artistic expression.

At the same time, practical scenarios capable of spiritual interaction are relatively scarce. One-on-one professional lessons are mostly devoted to technical correction, and teachers and students rarely discuss in depth the inner experience brought by singing. Opportunities for group rehearsal and stage performance are limited; students spend most of their

time practicing alone in the practice room, habitually singing with reference to the score, and lack opportunities to listen to peers and receive genuine audience feedback. Over time, students value only the correctness of singing technique and forget that singing itself is the art of communication; singing becomes one-way output, and two-way spiritual interaction is hard to generate.

Stage anxiety likewise hinders the realization of emotional perception, a difficulty commonly faced by vocal learners. Many students can experience the work's emotions when practicing privately, but once facing a classroom review or stage performance, excessive worry about singing errors dominates, the inner perceptual channel is closed, the emotional experience accumulated earlier cannot be released, and spiritual interaction becomes impossible. Existing research on vocal psychology also points out that the singer's psychological state directly interferes with the complete presentation of emotional expression.

3. Practical Paths of Emotional Perception and Spiritual Interaction from the Perspective of Art Psychology

Emotional perception cannot be generated incidentally through technical training; special training links need to be set up in teaching. Combining relevant theories of art psychology, teaching can advance gradually along cognitive empathy, emotional empathy and behavioral empathy, connecting the complete process from inner perception to singing expression and then to interpersonal spiritual interaction.

3.1 Strengthening Cognitive Empathy and Consolidating the Foundation of Emotional Perception

Cognitive empathy focuses on understanding the emotional logic behind the work and is the first step of emotional perception. When receiving a vocal work, there is no need to rush into singing; first calm down and study the text. Sort out the work's historical background and the creator's life experience, clarify the narrative thread of the lyrics, and understand the inner contradictory demands of the characters. One may also practice reading the lyrics without the melody, temporarily setting aside the burden of singing technique and relying on linguistic pauses and stress changes to experience the emotional fluctuations within the text, thereby establishing a complete emotional cognition of the work.

In teaching, story fragments and video materials can be used to assist understanding, guiding students to think from the standpoint of the characters rather than simply judging the characters' emotions from the outside. This step focuses on clarifying the causes of emotions and understanding the story behind emotional turns, moving beyond simple emotional labels and laying a foundation for subsequent inner experience. Teachers can also assign pre-class text study tasks, asking students to collect materials in advance and write brief notes on their understanding of the work, changing the passive learning mode in which students first encounter the work in class.

3.2 Awakening Emotional Empathy and Building a Connection Between the Work and Individual Experience

After understanding the text, students' own life accumulation is mobilized to complete emotional empathy, transforming the text's emotions into personally perceivable inner experience. Art psychology holds that people retain emotional memory; teaching can inspire students to retrieve similar life feelings and connect personal experience with the circumstances of the characters in the work. This is not, however, equivalent to directly copying emotions from real life; rather, the original emotions are artistically processed to complete an emotional transformation at the aesthetic level.

In class, simple exercises can be set up: sorting out the characters' inner activities and writing brief character monologues to help students complete role immersion. Teachers need to guide and control the process, distinguishing real-life emotions from stage artistic expression, and preventing students from over-indulging in negative emotions and thereby creating psychological burden. Only when the singer truly generates feelings inside can emotional perception cease to be an empty concept and possess the internal conditions for realizing spiritual interaction outward. Teachers should respect differences in students' individual life experiences, allow students to form their own emotional

interpretations within a reasonable range, and need not insist that everyone's feelings be completely uniform.

3.3 Carrying Out Behavioral Empathy Training and Realizing the Transition from Perception to Interaction

Behavioral empathy means putting inner perception into practice in singing and interpersonal interaction so as to truly achieve spiritual interaction. First, the fixed notion of "technique first" must be reversed, and it must be insisted that technique serves emotion. Even at the stage of basic vocal exercises, emotional imagination should be incorporated, with different emotions matched to different states of breath and resonance, so that timbre and articulation change naturally with inner feelings and emotion is not made to accommodate vocal technique.

The classroom cannot consist only of one-way corrective comments. Besides discussing technical problems, teachers and students should also exchange the emotional feelings brought by singing. In group classes, mutual evaluation sessions should be set up so that students listen to each other, share the emotional signals they receive, and train their ability to perceive others' emotions.

Practice-room training is closed self-training; only when facing a real audience does complete spiritual interaction actually occur, and the value of stage practice must not be ignored. In the process of going on stage, the singer receives feedback from the live audience, dynamically adjusts the singing expression, and completes the spiritual dialogue between singer and audience. Regarding stage nervousness, adjustment approaches from art psychology can be used to guide students to shift their focus from "whether I will make a mistake" to "what emotion do I want to convey", returning to the work itself, alleviating performance anxiety and allowing emotional experience to be released on stage. In daily teaching, more small internal recitals can be organized to lower the psychological threshold of going on stage and to adapt students gradually to the environment of public performance.

3.4 Exploring the Extended Application Value of Vocal Practice

The value of emotional perception and spiritual interaction is not limited to the classroom and the stage. Practice has shown that singing can serve as an artistic intervention to ease emotions, and empathy training in the singing process can enhance an individual's ability to understand others and communicate emotionally.

Choral singing is a high-quality carrier of collective training. In choral rehearsal, singers need to perceive the singing state of their companions, adjust their own voice and emotion, and adapt to the overall emotional atmosphere; it is an important form of spiritual interaction in collective settings. The approach of vocal emotional training can also provide references for mental health education: through singing practice, students' empathy literacy can be improved and inner emotions eased, expanding the practical application space of vocal art. Such cross-disciplinary practice also enables vocal music to step out of the category of pure artistic skill and display the diverse possibilities of humanistic education.

Conclusion

The core of vocal art is to use the human voice to build a bridge of spiritual communication between people. Emotional perception is a process of inward comprehension, while spiritual interaction is the manifestation of outward communication and expression; together they constitute the spiritual core of vocal art. Vocal teaching should not single-mindedly pursue technical refinement; it should draw on research findings in art psychology and attach importance to the cultivation of emotional perception and spiritual interaction.

From cognitive empathy in understanding the work, to emotional empathy in awakening inner feelings, and to behavioral empathy in realizing singing expression, a complete line of emotional training is constructed. Singing technique determines the texture of the voice, while emotional perception endows the voice with a soul. Only when students possess delicate emotional perception ability will their singing avoid becoming a mechanical reproduction of notes and achieve genuine spiritual interaction among singer, work and audience, releasing the unique humanistic power of vocal art. The cultivation of empathy literacy through vocal practice also enables music education to go beyond imparting artistic skills and to nourish the human spiritual world.

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