

# Exploration of the Teaching System for Master's Students Majoring in Piano Music Performance in Russia

## Taking the Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music in Russia as an Example

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### ABSTRACT

Russia's traditional music culture has a long history, and on this basis, it has integrated Western music education concepts. After a long period of development, it has formed a Russian music education system with localized characteristics. It holds a pivotal position in the global music education field and has a profound impact on the development of music education in China. This system not only emphasizes teaching in technical aspects, but also focuses on cultivating artistic expression. This article takes the Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music in Russia as an example, and through the analysis of the teaching system, curriculum design, and academic research characteristics of the master's degree program in piano performance at the school, explores the characteristics of the teaching system in Russian piano major, hoping to provide reference for music performance training in Chinese universities to a certain extent.

**Keywords:** *Russia, Music performance, Piano major, Master's students, Teaching system.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music (“Ростовская государственная консерватория им.С.В.Рахманинова” in Russian) is established in 1967, and located in Rostov, Russia. The conservatory is renowned for cultivating high-level music performance and educational teaching talents, with its piano music performance major particularly outstanding, attracting numerous students all over the world. The college has a faculty consisting of senior professors and young talents, as well as modern teaching facilities and abundant music resources. Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music is not only one of the most important music education centers in southern Russia, but also has a wide influence in the international music education community. This article takes Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music as an example to analyze the curriculum, academic research, and artistic practice activities of the

master's degree piano performance major (“Магистратура оркестровые струнные инструменты-фортепиано” in Russian) at the school, explore its teaching system characteristics, and provide certain reference for the development of music education in China.

## 2. CURRICULUM SETTING

### 2.1 Professional Skills Curriculum Setting

Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music has designed a comprehensive and systematic curriculum system for master's students majoring in piano music performance. The conservatory advocates personalized teaching, tailored to students' characteristics and needs. For example, for students with weak technical foundations, teachers will focus on helping them improve their basic skills and performance techniques; For students who have already reached a high level, teachers will focus on guiding them to

deeply understand and express the emotions and connotations of music works. Through this personalized teaching, students can make the greatest progress in the shortest possible time and achieve their artistic pursuits. The skills courses for piano performance majors in this school can be divided into three categories: "professional solo courses", "art guidance courses", and "chamber music courses".

### *2.1.1 Professional Solo Course*

Professional solo course ("специальный инструмент" in Russian) is one of the core courses in piano performance major, aimed at cultivating students' solo performance ability. It adopts a one-on-one teaching mode, with two solo courses per week, each lasting one hour. The amount of tasks for the two solo classes per week is not large, and students need to practice continuously every day to complete the tasks. This greatly enriches the accumulation of students' repertoire. When learning works of different styles and periods, not only is the technical proficiency emphasized, but also the interpretation and artistic processing of stress music works are emphasized. At the same time, this course arrangement also increases communication between students and mentors, allowing mentors to better understand students' completion status of their works, in order to adjust teaching progress at any time and improve students' learning efficiency.

### *2.1.2 Art Guidance Course*

Art guidance course ("концертмейстер" in Russian) is a compulsory course for students majoring in piano performance, commonly known as "piano accompaniment". The course is jointly completed by the instructor, students, and vocal teachers, with 1-2 class hours per week and a duration of one hour. The course will allow students to understand the playing techniques of different types of songs, such as romantic songs, opera excerpts, and choral songs. With nearly ten songs trained each semester, it greatly improves students' ability to adapt to random changes in song accompaniment techniques, including translating lyrics, searching for song writing backgrounds, and understanding the emotions expressed in songs. At the same time, it also allows students to learn more about the history and culture of different periods through songs, which effectively cultivates their music literacy.

### *2.1.3 Chamber Music Course*

Chamber music course ("ансамбль" in Russian), is a small instrumental ensemble course, usually consisting of 1-2 different instruments in a duet or trio. The course is arranged one class per week, with a duration of one hour. The instruments played in ensemble will vary from semester to semester, usually including violin, flute, clarinet, and other instruments. In the process of ensemble, it is not only necessary to listen to the sound of the piano being played, but also to listen to the sound of the ensemble instruments, cooperate with each other, and play the perfect sound. Chamber music often consists of sonatas, 3-4 movements, and a performance time of about 30-40 minutes, testing the performer's endurance and concentration. It is a highly collaborative form of performance. While testing students' professional skills, it also cultivates their teamwork spirit. Through such curriculum design, it helps students better understand the overall structure of music works and improve their ability to cope with complex music environments.

## *2.2 Theoretical Curriculum Setting*

The teaching objectives of the Russian music schools are not only to cultivate students' professional performance abilities, but also to develop their musical thinking. Such a curriculum not only helps students improve their performance skills, but also deepens their understanding and perception of musical works. In terms of curriculum setting, theoretical courses are essential and occupy a certain proportion. Taking the Rachmaninov State Conservatory of Music in Rostov, Russia as an example, the master's students majoring in piano at the school need to study theoretical courses such as language courses(иностранный язык), European music appreciation courses(Европейская музыкальная культура), cultural economics courses(экономика культуры), philosophy courses(философия), southern Russian music culture(культура Юга России), thesis guidance courses(диссертация), etc. during their studies. The establishment of so many theoretical courses provides students with excellent theoretical support and guidance, enabling them to better interpret works and convey their understanding of music during performance. In addition, the accumulation of a large amount of knowledge can also improve performance skills more efficiently. As is well known, piano performance skills require long-term repeated practice, but it is not blindly practiced, but

combined with theoretical courses to guide practice. For example, after understanding the history of southern music in Russia, students can quickly demonstrate the style of their music when playing related pieces.

### **3. ART PRACTICE ACTIVITIES**

Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music provides students with abundant opportunities for on campus practice. The conservatory regularly holds various types of concerts, competitions, and master classes, providing students with a stage to showcase their talents. Through these activities, students can not only showcase their learning achievements, but also communicate and interact with classmates and teachers, enhancing their musical expression and artistic understanding.

At the same time, the conservatory has established cooperative relationships with multiple music institutions and theaters both domestically and internationally in Russia, providing students with a broader performance platform. Through these collaborative projects, students have the opportunity to showcase themselves on a more professional stage, further enhancing their artistic level and professional competitiveness. For example, the college has established long-term cooperative relationships with the Rostov State Symphony Orchestra and the Rostov Grand Theatre, regularly organizing students to participate in orchestra rehearsals and theater performances. Through these collaborative projects, students can not only accumulate rich stage experience, but also communicate and collaborate with professional musicians and directors, enhancing their artistic level and professional competitiveness.

In addition, the conservatory actively participates in international music exchange activities and regularly organizes students to participate in international music competitions and festivals. For example, the conservatory selects outstanding students to participate in world-renowned music competitions such as the "Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition" and the "Chopin International Piano Competition" every year. Through these international competitions, students can not only showcase their talents, but also exchange and learn from outstanding musicians from around the world, enhancing their international perspective and artistic level. The conservatory has also established cooperative relationships with music schools and

art institutions around the world, regularly organizing student exchanges and mutual visits. Through these activities, students can learn about the music culture of different countries and regions, promoting the international dissemination of music culture.

#### **3.1 Concerts**

The conservatory regularly holds various types of concerts to provide students with a stage to showcase their talents. These concerts are not only a platform for students to showcase their skills, but also an effective way to accumulate stage experience and enhance psychological resilience. Through regular public performances, students can continuously improve their performance skills and artistic cultivation through practice.

##### **3.1.1 Student Concerts**

During regular concerts, students will have the opportunity to perform in the college's music hall. Throughout the process of preparing and hosting concerts, students not only need to improve their performance skills, but also need to exercise their stage performance, psychological resilience, and adaptability. Teachers will also arrange different types of concerts based on students' specific situations, and through repeated performances and summaries, enable students to master the skills and methods of music performance. Student concerts are not only an important component of music education, but also an indispensable and valuable experience in students' growth process. It is not only a test of students' music learning achievements, but also an important platform for improving their comprehensive quality. This practical experience cannot be replaced by classroom learning. It can not only improve students' music skills, but also enhance their confidence, laying a solid foundation for their future artistic path.

##### **3.1.2 Teacher Concerts**

The participants of teacher concerts are usually teachers from the school, with a high frequency of performances, and teachers from various majors regularly hold concerts. This is not just a simple artistic activity, but also a vivid practical lesson. Teachers combine music theory with practice through personal demonstrations, providing students with intuitive learning opportunities. This not only inspires students' love and longing for music, but also sets a vivid and concrete learning

example. This close range feeling and experience can enable students to deeply understand the unique charm of music and broaden their musical horizons. At the same time, the teacher concerts have had profound significance and influence in showcasing the style of teachers, educating students, promoting cultural exchange, and enhancing the reputation of the college. It is an indispensable and important component of the music college, contributing to the development of the college and the inheritance and innovation of music culture.

### **3.2 Master Classes**

A master class is a platform for students and professionals to directly communicate with top experts, usually consisting of short-term intensive courses. The master classes of music schools usually invite internationally renowned musicians or well-known musicians in the industry for exchange visits. Taking the Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music in Russia as an example, the conservatory regularly holds master classes for different majors and invites professors or well-known musicians from other music schools to come to the school for exchange and visits. During the communication process, students can directly participate in the teaching or listen as audience members. Regardless of the form, it provides students with deep artistic guidance and practical experience. In a short period of time, it is an efficient and concentrated way of music learning. Through direct communication with internationally renowned musicians, students can be exposed to cutting-edge teaching methods and concepts, and gain a deeper understanding of the connotation and expression techniques of music. At the same time, many master classes have humorous and witty teaching methods that leave a deep impression on students.

## **4. THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEACHING SYSTEM FOR MASTER'S STUDENTS MAJORING IN PIANO MUSIC PERFORMANCE IN RUSSIA AND ITS REFERENCE VALUE FOR THE CULTIVATION OF CHINESE MUSIC PERFORMANCE PROFESSIONALS**

### **4.1 Main Characteristics**

#### **4.1.1 Inheritance and Development of Music Culture**

Russian piano education has a long history and profound tradition. Since the 19th century, the Russian piano school has held an important position in the global music industry. The uniqueness of Russian piano education lies in its combination of rigorous technical training and profound emotional expression, cultivating many world-class pianists and composers such as Rachmaninoff and Shostakovich. The history of piano education in Russia can be traced back to the mid-19th century, when music education in Russia began to gradually form its own system and style. The characteristic of the Russian piano school lies in its emphasis on the expressiveness and emotional depth of music, emphasizing students' understanding and perception of musical works.

In the development process of piano education in Russia, many famous music educators and pianists have made important contributions to the formation and development of this school. For example, Tchaikovsky was not only a great composer, but also an outstanding music educator who trained many outstanding pianists and musicians in his teaching work at the Moscow Conservatory. As one of the representative figures of the Russian piano school, Rachmaninoff's musical works and performance style have had a profound impact on later generations. Shostakovich, with his unique musical language and profound emotional expression, became one of the greatest composers of the 20th century.

The Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music introduced in this article not only enjoys a high reputation in Russia, but also has a wide influence in the international music education community. The teaching system for master's students majoring in piano music performance integrates the excellent traditions and modern

educational concepts of Russian piano education, forming a unique educational model. The teaching system of Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of music not only focuses on cultivating students' technical abilities, but also emphasizes their understanding and emotional expression of musical works. This educational model not only cultivates many world-class pianists, but also provides valuable experience for the development of global music education.

#### *4.1.2 Emphasizing Comprehensive Music Literacy*

In addition to offering various professional skills courses, the Russian music schools also cover theoretical courses in various aspects. The conservatory emphasizes a teaching model that combines theory with practice, and through rigorous academic training and practical operation of professional skills, it cultivates students' music literacy and artistic expression. The conservatory actively engages in exchanges and cooperation with international universities, and regularly holds academic seminars and master classes, providing students with a broader perspective and more learning opportunities.

#### *4.1.3 Diversified Teaching Content*

In addition to the professional courses offered by the Russian music schools, related courses are also arranged as auxiliary courses, such as piano. There are not only solo courses, but also chamber music courses and art guidance courses as auxiliary courses. The arrangement of this course not only cultivates solo skills, but also indirectly improves students' cooperation ability and enables them to master various performance skills. The combination of theoretical courses and artistic practice activities enriches students' knowledge and helps them better understand the works.

### *4.2 Reference Function*

This article conducts an in-depth study of the teaching system for master's students majoring in piano music performance at Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory of Music, and finds that the institute has significant advantages and characteristics in terms of curriculum setting, teaching methods, faculty, and practical opportunities.

#### *4.2.1 Integration and Innovation of Teaching Concepts*

In terms of teaching philosophy, Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory emphasizes the teaching philosophy of "technology as the foundation, art as the core", and also integrates local culture into the teaching content. Some Chinese universities draw on this concept in piano education, emphasizing the integration of traditional Chinese culture into performance aesthetics, interpreting Western music works from an Eastern aesthetic perspective, and promoting the "Sinicization" development of piano art.

#### *4.2.2 Optimization and Reform of Curriculum System*

In terms of curriculum, Rostov State Rachmaninov Conservatory not only offers a rich range of professional skills courses, but also offers a series of theoretical courses to help students comprehensively improve their academic and artistic levels. At the same time, the rich practical opportunities provided by the Russian music schools, such as regular concerts and international competitions, have promoted Chinese universities to strengthen their practical activities, shifting from "theoretical discussions" to "applied innovation", and cultivating talents with both theoretical literacy and practical abilities.

#### *4.2.3 Construction of Teaching Staff and International Cooperation*

China has improved the quality of its teaching staff by sending teachers to study at the Russian music schools and inviting Russian experts to give lectures. China and Russia regularly exchange teachers for short-term teaching exchanges and introduce the teaching methods of the Russian piano school. In addition, Chinese teachers absorb cutting-edge educational concepts by participating in international seminars.

Some Chinese universities have launched "2+2" and "3+1" joint training programs with Russian music schools, allowing students to exchange credits between the two countries' universities. The joint training of master's students between China and Russia not only broadens students' horizons, but also promotes the integration of educational standards between China and Russia.

By introducing these advanced teaching concepts and methods, the overall level of music

education in China can be further improved, and more internationally competitive music talents can be cultivated.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The influence of the Russian music education system on Chinese music education is profound and lasting, providing multidimensional inspiration for Chinese music education. From updating concepts, curriculum reform to teacher construction, it promotes the development of Chinese piano education towards a more systematic and international direction. Currently, Chinese music education presents a "two-way integration" feature in the context of globalization: on the one hand, it draws on the rigorous academic tradition and nationalization practice path in Russian music education; On the other hand, relying on its own cultural resources, it promotes the creation and dissemination of "Chinese style" music works, and constructs a teaching system with Eastern aesthetic characteristics.

While maintaining an open attitude, Chinese music education is also deepening local exploration, combining the systematic advantages of Russian music education with the uniqueness of traditional Chinese music culture, cultivating music talents with both international perspectives and local sentiments, while strengthening the proportion of practice and innovation, and enhancing students' artistic expression ability through dynamic teaching such as stage performance and creative practice. Finally, attention should be paid to the systematic construction of the inheritance of ethnic music culture, and the core of Chinese music culture should be integrated throughout the textbook writing, teacher training, and evaluation system, so as to achieve sustainable development based on tradition and facing the world, and showcase unique cultural values and artistic vitality in the wave of globalization.

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