

Multidimensional Value and Application Strategies of English Song Resources in High School Music Appreciation Teaching

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Abstract: Under the macro background of new curriculum reform and the cultivation of core competencies, high school music education is undergoing a profound transformation from single-skill training to comprehensive aesthetic literacy enhancement. How to broaden students' musical cultural horizons, cultivate their ability to appreciate diverse styles, and develop cross-cultural understanding has become a crucial topic in current music teaching. As a comprehensive art carrier integrating linguistic rhythm, melodic lines, and profound cultural connotations, English songs possess unique educational value. From the perspective of high school music disciplines, this paper deeply explores the current application status of English songs in music appreciation teaching. It systematically analyzes their positive roles from three dimensions: cognition of diverse musical styles, deepening perception of rhythm and meter, and understanding of cross-cultural music. Combining actual high school music teaching practices, the paper proposes strategies for scientific material selection, design of deep listening activities, and interdisciplinary integration. It also offers corresponding solutions to potential pitfalls such as "emphasizing language over music." Research indicates that the rational use of English songs can effectively enrich high school music curriculum content, stimulate students' aesthetic interests, and serves as an effective pathway to enhance high school students' core music competencies and international cultural perspectives.

Keywords: English Songs; High School Music; Music Appreciation; Core Competencies; Cross-Cultural Music Education; Teaching Strategies

1. Introduction

The high school education stage is a critical

period for the formation of students' worldviews, outlooks on life, and aesthetic tastes. As a universal language of human emotion, music plays an irreplaceable role in shaping students' sound personalities and enhancing their aesthetic literacy. *The General High School Music Curriculum Standards* (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision) clearly states that music courses should adhere to education through beauty, emphasize artistic practice, promote national music, and understand diverse cultures. However, for a long time, some high school music classrooms have been limited by traditional textbooks or singular appreciation modes. Teaching content often remains confined to classical music or local folk songs, with insufficient exposure to world pop music and works under diverse cultural backgrounds, which leads to narrow musical horizons for students and a lack of in-depth understanding of contemporary international music culture.

English songs are an important part of the treasury of world pop music. Their styles and genres are numerous, covering Pop, Rock, Jazz, Blues, Country, and other forms. These works not only possess beautiful melodies and distinct rhythms but also carry the historical changes, social trends, and humanistic spirit of English-speaking countries. Introducing English songs into high school music appreciation classrooms is not intended to assist language learning but to treat them as pure musical artworks. This guides students to start from the music itself, perceiving their stylistic characteristics, formal structures, and emotional connotations. This is not only an expansion of teaching resources but also an important pathway to implement the core competencies of the music discipline (aesthetic perception, artistic expression, cultural understanding). This paper aims to elaborate on the multiple values of English songs in high school music teaching and explore their effective application strategies in practical teaching through theoretical analysis and practical discussion, providing new ideas

for high school music education reform.

2. The Expansive Role of English Songs in High School Students' Cognition of Musical Styles

2.1 Constructing a Diversified Style Map

One of the core goals of high school music appreciation is to let students contact and understand music from different historical periods and regional styles. With their rich style genres, English songs provide excellent material for constructing a diversified music style map. In traditional music classrooms, students' cognition of Jazz often remains at an abstract conceptual level. However, by appreciating Louis Armstrong's *What a Wonderful World* or Ella Fitzgerald's classic tracks, students can intuitively feel the swing brought by syncopation and experience the freedom and charm of improvisation, thereby deeply understanding the soul of Jazz. Similarly, for Rock music, by listening to The Beatles' *Hey Jude* or Queen's *We Will Rock You*, students can not only feel the strong rhythmic drive and the tone tension of electric guitars but also appreciate the rebellious spirit, passion release, and social critical consciousness contained in Rock music. Additionally, the rustic narration of Country music and the melancholic twelve-bar structure of the Blues can all become vivid and perceptible through specific English song works. This style experience based on concrete works greatly broadens students' musical horizons, enabling them to establish an inclusive and open aesthetic view.

2.2 Deepening Perception of Form and Harmony

Although most English songs follow pop structures, they contain rigorous formal logic and rich harmonic colors within. In music appreciation teaching, teachers can guide students to analyze common forms in English songs, such as the Verse-Chorus Form or AABA structure. For instance, when appreciating The Carpenters' *Yesterday Once More*, teachers can guide students to identify the contrast between the narrative melody of the verse and the lyrical climax of the chorus, understanding how this structure drives emotional development. In terms of harmony, many classic English folk and pop songs use rich modulations between major and minor keys,

modulations away from the home key, and seventh chords. These changes in harmonic color directly correspond to emotional fluctuations. Through careful listening and analysis, students can enhance their sensitivity to musical elements, shifting from merely "listening for fun" to "listening for expertise," truly improving the professional depth of music appreciation.

3. The Promoting Role of English Songs in Rhythm, Meter, and Vocal Performance

3.1 Strengthening Sense of Rhythm and Kinetic Experience

Rhythm is the skeleton of music. English songs, especially those in Pop, Rock, and R&B styles, usually possess distinct and complex rhythmic patterns. The stress-timed rhythm of the English language itself is closely integrated with musical beats, forming a unique sense of groove. In music classrooms, using fast-paced English songs (such as Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*) for body movement training can effectively improve students' beat stability. Students can experience the rhythmic tension brought by syncopation, dotted notes, and ties through clapping, stomping, or swaying their bodies. This multi-sensory coordinated kinetic training allows students to internalize rhythm concepts more effectively than simple theoretical explanations. Phenomena such as anacrusis (upbeats) and cross-bar ties in English songs appear particularly natural when coordinated with lyrics and melodies. In the process of singing along or imitating, students can subconsciously master these complex rhythmic techniques and improve their own musical expressiveness.

3.2 Optimizing Vocal Performance and Articulation Techniques

Vocal performance is an important component of the high school music curriculum. The singing of English songs has special requirements for articulation, enunciation, and breath control. English vowels are full, consonants are clear, and there are numerous phenomena such as liaison, weak forms, and lost plosives. These linguistic features directly affect the fluency and stylistic sense of singing. In vocal teaching, teachers can select English songs with beautiful melodies and clear pronunciation as materials for vocal exercises.

For example, when singing the lyrical song *My Heart Will Go On*, students need to learn how to maintain breath stability during long notes while handling vowel continuity. When singing fast-paced songs, they need to practice the elasticity and clarity of consonants to avoid muffled singing. Through specialized training in English song articulation techniques, students can not only master the singing style of English songs but also transfer these techniques to the singing of Chinese songs, making their voices more transparent and their expression more delicate, thereby comprehensively improving vocal performance levels.

4. The Deep Nourishment of English Songs for Cross-Cultural Music Understanding

4.1 Viewing History Through Songs: Cultural Mirrors in Music

Music is a carrier of culture, and English songs often reflect the social landscape and values of specific historical periods. Introducing English songs in music appreciation classes is essentially opening a window to Western cultural history. For instance, Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind* is not only a folk classic but also a musical monument to the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war thoughts in the US during the 1960s. By appreciating this song, students can understand the social contradictions and the thinking of young people in that era, understanding how music becomes a horn call for social change. Similarly, Simon & Garfunkel's *Bridge Over Troubled Water* conveys universal values about friendship, comfort, and the brilliance of humanity. Through in-depth interpretation of the blending of lyrical imagery and musical emotion, students can transcend national boundaries and resonate with emotions from different cultural backgrounds. This teaching method of "viewing history through songs, observing customs through songs" helps break cultural barriers and cultivates students' international vision of respecting differences and understanding diversity.

4.2 Emotional Resonance and Psychological Adjustment

High school students face significant academic pressure and frequent psychological fluctuations. Music possesses unique functions for emotional venting and psychological healing. There are

numerous English songs exploring themes of growth confusion, pursuit of dreams, love, and loss, which easily resonate with high school students. Cheerful songs can stimulate positive emotions and alleviate exam stress; deep songs can guide students to face inner confusion and engage in self-dialogue. In music classrooms, by guiding students to appreciate English songs full of positive energy or philosophical depth, teachers can achieve an organic penetration of moral and aesthetic education, helping students establish an optimistic attitude towards life and promoting their mental health development.

5. Practical Application Strategies of English Songs in High School Music Teaching

5.1 Adhering to the Principle of "Music-First" in Material Selection

When introducing English songs into high school music classrooms, it is essential to guard against the tendency of emphasizing language over music and always adhere to the principle of music-first material selection. Principle of Art: Priority should be given to classic works with beautiful melodies, exquisite arrangements, and high artistic value, avoiding low-grade or overly commercialized "catchy tunes". Principle of Stylistic Diversity: Materials should cover representative works from different genres and eras to ensure students are exposed to rich musical styles. Principle of Appropriateness: The difficulty of songs (vocal range, rhythmic complexity) should match the singing and appreciation levels of high school students. Lyric content should be healthy and positive, conforming to the cognitive characteristics and moral standards of adolescents. Teachers must clarify that English songs here serve as music textbooks, not English textbooks; the focus of teaching must always remain on the analysis of musical elements and the acquisition of aesthetic experiences.

5.2 Designing Deepened Music Appreciation Activities

To maximize teaching effectiveness, teachers should design diverse and progressively deepened classroom activities, avoiding superficial "listening for relaxation." Structured Listening: Guide students to listen with questions, such as identifying the song's formal structure, distinguishing the timbre of main instruments, or analyzing rhythmic

characteristics, to cultivate students' concentration and analytical abilities. Comparative Appreciation: Compare English songs of different styles with the same theme, such as different singers performing Hallelujah, or compare Chinese and English songs of similar themes, allowing students to deepen their understanding of stylistic differences through comparison. Creative Practice: Encourage students to engage in simple adaptation and creation, such as re-arranging rhythms for English songs, attempting multi-part choral singing, or choreographing body movements based on musical mood. This not only enlivens the classroom atmosphere but also enhances students' artistic expressiveness and innovative thinking. Cultural Inquiry: Assign after-school inquiry tasks for students to collect background information on the song's creation, the singer's life, and relevant historical cultural knowledge, sharing them in class to deepen cultural understanding.

5.3 Reasonably Integrating Class Hours and Second Classrooms

High school music class hours are limited, so teachers need to plan teaching time reasonably. Regular Classroom: Use English songs as supplementary material for unit teaching, such as interspersing appreciation in units on pop music or world ethnic music, controlling the time to 10–15 minutes for focused and deep analysis. Second Classroom: It is recommended to use English song appreciation and singing as the core content of school-based elective courses or choir/music clubs. In the second classroom, there can be more sufficient time for systematic vocal training, band rehearsals, and in-depth cultural discussions, making English song teaching a beneficial extension of classroom teaching.

6. Conclusion

In summary, English songs possess irreplaceable unique value in high school music appreciation teaching. They are not only a bridge connecting students to the world's diverse musical cultures but also an effective carrier for enhancing students' core competencies in aesthetic perception, artistic expression, and cultural understanding. Through English songs, students can broaden their musical horizons in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere, deepen their perception of rhythm,

melody, and style, cultivate noble moral sentiments, and establish an open and inclusive cross-cultural mindset.

Of course, in actual teaching, teachers must always be aware of the misconception of turning music classes into English classes. They must firmly uphold the ontological status of the music discipline, select materials scientifically, and design carefully to ensure that every listening session is a journey of deep aesthetic experience. With the deepening of educational internationalization, we should further explore the deep integration of information technology and English song teaching, develop more diversified and high-quality music teaching resources, allowing English songs to bloom with even more brilliant artistic flowers in the fertile soil of high school music education, contributing to the cultivation of a new generation of youth with international vision and profound humanistic literacy.

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