

Marching Band Education Model In Secondary School Level

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Abstract:

In recent years, China's marching band art has developed rapidly, and the formation and teaching of marching bands have gradually been introduced into the scope of Chinese compulsory education. This paper focuses on marching bands in secondary schools, exploring scientific training models and management mechanisms in marching band education. The author analyzes the current state of marching bands both domestically and internationally by reviewing existing literature and drawing on personal educational experience. Additionally, the paper proposes strategies to address the challenges facing marching band education in China. The aim is to help integrate marching bands as a popular form of music education in Chinese secondary schools.

Keywords: Music education, marching band education, aesthetic education, training model.

1. Introduction

Marching bands, a performance art that combines wind music and choreographed formations, originated in Western countries. This art form not only enhances students' musical abilities and teamwork skills but also plays an important role in aesthetic education and physical exercise. In recent years, marching band education in China has been gradually incorporated into compulsory education. This paper explores the training models used in marching band education within secondary school orchestras and proposes solutions to the challenges facing marching band education in China, with the aim of providing valuable insights for educators. Through this research, the author hopes to improve and standardize the training methods of marching bands and promote the development of this discipline in China.

2. Current Status of Marching Band Education and Research

2.1 Domestic Status

Marching bands were introduced to China in the 1980s, and over the past 40 years [1], they have grown from an unfamiliar art form into a widely embraced component of quality education. Various competitions and exhibitions have emerged across the country, such as the "Shanghai Spring International Wind Music Festival," "Jinbao International Music Festival," "China Cup Marching Wind Band Exhibition," and the "Beijing Student Art Festival Marching Wind Music Exhibition."

Currently, most domestic research on marching band education focuses on comparing Chinese and Western marching bands and analyzing secondary

school orchestras. For example, three studies examine the aesthetics of marching band education from a musical perspective [2, 3, 4]. Two articles highlight the unique formation and training aspects of marching bands [5, 6], while two others compare the historical background and curricular differences between Chinese and Western marching bands [1, 7]. Additionally, two papers discuss the advantages and strategies for transforming traditional wind ensembles into marching bands [8, 9]. Another study explores the impact of marching band education on the overall development of Chinese youth [10].

2.2 Status Abroad

International research on marching band education largely focuses on its educational and social value. Five studies emphasize how marching band education serves as an effective medium for young people to develop their values [11, 12, 13, 14, 15]. Two papers examine the formation and training models of marching bands [16, 17], while two others discuss how participation in marching bands improves students' comprehensive abilities [18, 19]. One study focuses on the development of teaching methods and their impact on music education [20].

3. Marching Band Education Model

3.1 Selection, Formation, and Sectional Partitioning

The formation of a marching wind band begins with setting selection criteria based on students' musical fundamentals, physical fitness, and teamwork skills to ensure a high standard among the members. After selection, the band is divided into sections according to the characteristics of the instruments, such as the wind band, marching percussion band, front-row percussion, and flag dance performance team.

3.2 Professional Guidance

3.2.1 Wind Ensemble Performance Training

Performance training for the Wind Ensemble is conducted by arranging the players in two semi-circular rows. In the first row, from left to right, are the flute (or piccolo), clarinet (or oboe), and saxophone. In the second row, from left to right, are the trumpet (or cornet), trombone, euphonium, and tuba. Training focuses on basic skills such as fingering, breathing, intonation, and rhythm.

3.2.2 Marching Step Training for Wind Ensemble

Marching step training focuses on mastering basic formation and movement to ensure coordinated and precise

marching.

3.2.2.1 Standing Postures for Marching Wind Players

Before practicing marching steps, students must learn the four standing postures: ready, at attention, at ease and straddle.

- Ready posture: Heels together, toes angled out at 90 degrees, body weight slightly forward, one hand holding the instrument horizontal to the ground, the other hand in a fist at the waist.
- Attention posture: Similar to ready posture but with the instrument held up by both hands, shoulders relaxed, arms parallel to the ground, and the instrument positioned so that the mouthpiece aligns just above the mouth.
- At ease posture: Feet shoulder-width apart, forearms crossed in front of the chest, holding the instrument in one hand while the other is half-clenched.
- Straddle posture: Feet shoulder-width apart, hands naturally folded in front of the abdomen. For larger instruments like the tuba, the bell rests on the ground.

3.2.2.2 Footwork Training

Footwork training includes forward marching, backward steps, and lateral steps (side-panning), each with different variations. Marching steps should cover 5 meters in 8 equal steps, with each step being about 62.5 cm.

- Forward Step Training: The forward march begins with the left foot, with the heel of the foot leading and the back foot's toes pointing down. Throughout, the body's center of gravity should remain balanced between both feet. Special attention should be given to the first and last steps.
- Backward Step: For the backward step, heels are lifted while the toes remain pointed to the ground. The upper body must remain stable, and marching students should use peripheral vision to ensure alignment with their peers.
- Lateral (Panning) Step: Lateral movement requires sharp turning of the body, with the center of gravity directed upward. The step must be crisp and precise, with a near 90-degree rotation between the upper and lower body.

3.2.3 Flag Dance Performance Team

Members of the Flag Dance Performance Team are trained in various dance and form routines, such as flag twirling, gun spinning, and gymnastics. Movements are broken down into steps to ensure the quality and precision of performance.

3.2.4 Marching Percussion Training

3.2.4.1 Percussion Baton Grip Method

The percussionists practice holding their drumsticks by dividing them into thirds. Snare drummers and polyphonic drummers hold the stick lightly with their middle, ring, and little fingers, while bass drummers grip the stick differently. Snare drummers should avoid striking the center

of the drum, playing slightly below the center instead. Bass drummers aim for the center of the drum.

3.2.4.2 Mallet Holding for Marching Percussion

- **Snare Drum:** Both hands hold the mallets parallel to the ground, with a small gap between the sticks. The left hand rests on the outer mallet, while the right hand supports the inner mallet.

- **Quad Toms or Quint Toms:** Players hold two drumsticks, head-to-tail, with both hands gripping firmly. The fingers of the left hand help control the spacing between the mallets.

- **Marching Drum:** Drummers hold their mallets so the heads are parallel with the height of their eyebrows.

- **Mallet Technique:** Snare and polyphonic drummers should play with mallets close to the drum surface but without touching it. Bass drummers should place the mallet heads near the drum's center.

3.2.4.3 Crab Walk Training

- **Crab Walk (also known as Side Stance)** is used to practice lateral movement and is divided into left and right steps. The body's center of gravity must remain stable, and the feet must be lifted at precise moments.

- **Left Crab Walk:** The first step involves extending the left foot to the left while the right foot follows across. The movement should be balanced, with the right foot acting as the base.

- **Right Crab Walk:** The right crab walk mirrors the left, with the left foot controlling the direction, ensuring smooth and precise movement to the right.

3.2.5 Professional Guidance

Schools should regularly invite experienced marching band experts to provide professional technical and artistic guidance. Additionally, skilled instrument teachers should be hired to offer lessons on specific instruments. Regular training sessions and exchanges with other bands should be organized to enhance the professionalism and artistry of the band members.

3.3 Management Model

A structured system for selecting band leaders is key to successful management. Skilled and responsible students are appointed as band leaders and section heads, with clearly defined responsibilities, allowing for student self-management. Introducing a competitive mechanism within sections and between the band members fosters enthusiasm and creativity.

3.4 Performances and Practices

Regular performances are organized to give students a platform to showcase their talents, boosting their self-confidence and sense of achievement. Students are also en-

couraged to participate in various marching band competitions, which not only offer practical training but also help improve the overall standards of the band.

4. Challenges and Countermeasures for Marching Band Education in China

Marching wind music education in China faces several challenges:

- **Shortage of Domestic Teachers:** There is currently a lack of professionals specializing in marching band music. To address this, education departments should improve the professional skills of teachers by organizing regular training sessions and inviting well-known domestic and international marching band experts to offer lectures and guidance.

- **Limited Training Time:** Due to the heavy academic workload on secondary school students, band practice time is often insufficient. A solution is to arrange training sessions based on the students' schedules. For example, weekday afternoons can be dedicated to sectional or ensemble rehearsals, while weekend days could be reserved for physical fitness and marching practice. Additionally, summer and winter vacations could be used for intensive training programs.

- **Lack of Funding and Equipment:** Many schools face financial constraints, which affects the development of their marching bands. It's essential to raise awareness among educators and the broader community about the benefits of marching band education. By doing so, schools and bands can seek financial support from both schools and community organizations to improve equipment and resources.

5. Conclusion

Marching wind music education plays a vital role in enhancing students' overall development, particularly in teamwork and comprehensive skill-building. While there are challenges—such as a shortage of teachers, limited practice time, and funding issues—these can be addressed by educators and relevant departments. With continued efforts, marching wind music education is poised to grow and flourish in secondary school orchestras in the near future.

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