

## “COVERED SINGING” AND VOCAL MUSIC TEACHING FOR MALE ADOLESCENT

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### Abstract

High-pitch vocal is a necessary skill for a tenor singer. They are singing high-pitch technique called covered singing extended singer voice range to reach the highest pitch range. In China, covered singing techniques improve male adolescent singers to enhance singing high-pitch skill. By implementing critical thinking into the learning process, the students learn to critique their vocal problems the cause of the singing problem, and the proper method for improving their singing. The assessment of the result was evaluated by themselves, the teacher, and their classmates. Adopting critical thinking in the learning process decreases the teacher-center level of leading a class in which the teacher leads the class in full response: conducting and solving individual students. Using critical thinking is transformed the learning process into a student-center. The student learned to solve their singing problem by themselves with teacher guidance. Moreover, this process is suitable for the female teacher who cannot demonstrate the tenor vocal for male adolescent students. By using this technique, the male adolescent singing in high pitch could be more successful.

**Keywords :** high-pitch vocal (covered singing), critical thinking, tenor voice, male adolescent

### Introduction

Nowadays, rapid improvements in vocal music singing cause some changes in Chinese vocal music teaching. Teachers need to think more to adapt to the new problems in teaching. Singing in high pitch areas is the most considerable difficulty for male adolescent students to learn vocal music, which requires teachers to study the covered singing method to help them learn to solve this problem (Wu, 2019).

“Covered singing” is a necessary skill for a tenor. The high pitch is the key to checking the tenor. However, “covered singing” is the key to checking the high pitch. “covered singing is one way to help male adolescent students learn vocal music better. It could reduce the difficulty of singing high pitch effectively. Students learn to reflect on their voices, listen to their recordings, and improve their voices. This is how to learn vocal music by critical thinking.

### “COVERED SINGING”

According to Stellan Hertegard Jan Gauffin and ohan Sundberg (1990) “Covering the voice near the passaggio is a skill mainly used in male classic Western singing. The purpose is said to be to smooth the register transition and avoid register breaks. The findings indicate that covered singing also is associated with larynx lowering. Covered singing near the passaggio shows similarities to so-called phonation and is probably preferable from the point of view of vocal hygiene.” Open and covered singing are terms for two voice modes used in classic Western singing. The term covered singing was introduced by the French tenor Duprez around 1830. Different from open singing, covered singing is a term mainly used for male singing on open vowels. The purpose is said to be to smooth the register transition near the so-called passaggio.

For male singers in the western operatic tradition, the upper part of the frequency range contains a series of pitches called passaggio, the transition between ‘chest’ and ‘head’ registers. Covering the voice near the passaggio is a

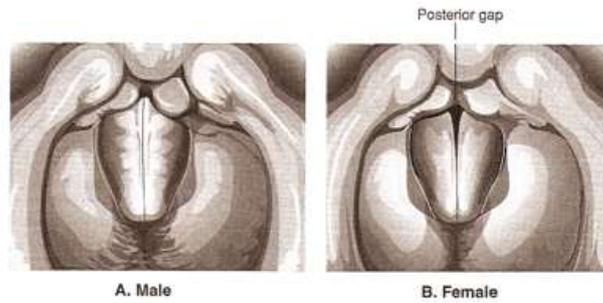
technique mainly used in male classic Western singing. The purpose is said to be to smooth the register transition and avoid register breaks. The study findings covering physiologically means a widening and lengthening of the pharynx and defines the “covered singing” and *passaggio*. In addition to being used to smooth the register transition, “covered singing” is used more as a means of singing high notes in China. Li Haiyang (2019) states that "covered singing" is a tenor singing skill that helps tenors expand their vocal range. The specific method is to lower the larynx and expand the laryngeal cavity. This method can significantly break through the original range. According to Zhang Cuifang (2012), Singers do not have an exact definition of the "covered singing" method. Luciano Pavarotti, the world's favorite Italian tenor, called it "covered singing," Placido Domingo, the Spanish operatic tenor, noted for performances in operas by Verdi and Puccini, called it "closed singing," however, Carlo Bergonzi, the world's favorite Italian tenor, called it "Mask singing" In China, only a few people can understand and use this singing skill correctly. Mask singing means that the position of the voice is near the eyes. Different names are just different ways of describing "covered singing.

Hollien (1974) defines a voice register as "a series or range of consecutively phonated frequencies which produced with nearly identical vocal quality" and "ordinarily there should be little or no overlap in fundamental frequency between adjacent registers," As discussed by Hollien, the trained singer in performance usually wants the audience to have the impression of only one single register over the entire vocal range and tries not to expose the different registers. The singing skill is the means to achieve this goal. "covered singing" is an excellent vocal skill for this purpose. Hollien (1983) states that "If an untrained singer is singing an ascending scale, a perceptually clear register break from chest to falsetto may occur near the *passaggio*. The trained singer avoids this .by the covering technique, which allows him to pass from chest to head register without any perceptual difference in timber." The covered singing method can solve the problem well and avoid breaking, which is a problematic tenor skill. Perceptually, the covering can be described as a slight darkening of the voice quality. For instance, open vowels such as [a:] or [a~:] are modified towards [O:] and [8:]. This is in contrast with open singing, where the vowels retain a brighter timbre.

### **Problems in teaching Male adolescent students**

"Covered singing" is a kind of singing skill only for male singers. However, most of the teachers are women. Female teachers cannot demonstrate the "covered singing" method, making it more difficult for male students to learn vocal music. Men and women have similar voices before the sound changes period. After this period, the voices of men and women began to differ significantly. Meredydd Harries, Sarah Hawkins, Jeremy Hacking, and Ieuan Hughes (1998) studied the pitch of the male voice lowers during adolescence. And students began to learn vocal music after this period. Women's voices don't change as much as men's. The period of male voice change will continue for several years. Therefore, it is more difficult for male students to learn vocal music. (Liang Lina, 2011) stated that In China, many teachers lack experience in teaching, especially female teachers who lack experience in teaching male students. Teachers should treat male and female students differently and use different methods to teach different students.

Peter A. Facione and Gittens (2011) stated that the thyroid cartilage is often called the throat, the male's throat is prominent, the female's throat is not apparent, the vocal cord is in the throat, the female vocal cord length is 14 mm – 18 mm, the female vocal cord average length is 15 mm, the male vocal cord length is 18 mm – 24 mm, the male vocal cord. The average length is 20 mm.



**Figure 1** : Vocal fold closure during phonation in a normal healthy man (left) and woman (right)

Source : Gregory :2013, 35

Teachers should pay attention to the different characteristics of male students and female students in teaching. “covered singing” is a suitable training method for an adolescent male student to study vocal music about the high pitch. The vocal tone's height is affected by the length of the vocal cords, the tension, and the size of the glottis. Adult men's vocal cords are long and wide, and women's vocal cords are short and narrow. When we speak, the vocal cords on both sides are tightened, the glottis is narrowed, and even almost closed. The airflow from the trachea and lungs continues to impact the vocal cords, causing vibrations and vocalization. Under the control of intralaryngeal muscle coordination, the glottis is subjected to regularity control. (Huang lu, 2013)

As women have higher tones than men, teaching male adolescent students' vocal music should be based on the characteristics of male students' voices (Huang lu, 2013). It is difficult for a female teacher to teach a male student because the female teacher cannot imitate the male voice, and the students cannot understand the teacher's meaning directly. However, by using the "covered singing" method, Female teachers can also help male students learn the skill and sing the high notes. It is well known that there are obvious differences between men and women in physiology. As good vocal educators, we must pay attention to this objective physiological phenomenon at any time. As good singers, we must also understand the difference between ourselves and others. Because only by paying attention to this problem can we improve the level of vocal music and education better in vocal music learning and teaching.

### Training method for covered singing

There are some similarities and differences between the “covered singing” training method and the usual vocal training method. For example, the way of breathing is the same, but the way of practicing is different.

Breathing: There are two ways to breathe; The first one is not suitable for singing; we called clavicular breathing or scapula breathing.

Cornelius L. Reid (2018) states that "Clavicular breathing is a system of inspiration whereby the upper parts of the chest are raised while the diaphragm is drawn in. The effect of this method of breathing is first to interfere with, and then destroy, the effective coordination of the vocal organs." He also states that "Two important reasons make clavicular breathing useless as a practical technique. First of these is that by raising the chest and lifting the shoulders, the neck muscles are brought into tension. This constitutes an unnecessary involvement, and the neck muscles' tension soon spreads until the entire upper portion of the anatomy becomes rigidly inflexible. Continued use of clavicular breathing leads to tonal throatiness." The second one we called abdominal breathing. It is a deep breathing method. It is not only the right way of singing but also keeps your lungs healthy. Abdominal breathing is rarely used in daily life. Surprisingly, abdominal breathing is the same as ancient Chinese QiGong, a deep breathing exercise from China breathing. Its breathing pattern is similar to yoga.

## Position of larynx

The training of low larynx position is the key for male adolescent students to learn bel canto. The singers recommend a comfortably low position of the larynx in singing. The position of the larynx in popular singing is constantly changing. In Bel canto, the position of the larynx is in the middle. In covered singing, the larynx is required to be in the lowest position. The low larynx position can help us learn the covered singing; the covered singing position can also help us understand the low larynx position.

## Learning method



Figure 2 : The Training Scale model

Source : Wang, 2019

As shown in the picture, this is the practice of the "covered the singing" method. In general, vocal music training trains the high pitch, similar to climb the stairs step by step. However, on my training scale, I ask for "jump training." The training methods like jump up the stairs. The sense of jump is a critical core that many people overlook. Because jumping relaxes the throat and prepares it to hit the highest pitch, another essential point is that although the first bar and the second bar have the same tone, they are sung in entirely different ways. The first bar requires a sense of jumping and relaxation, and then the second bar requires sufficient strength and an immediate impact. So, if you look at the scale, it is straightforward, but the training method has many elements. The key is not about the scale; how do you teach the students to learn the scale. Here are the core skills to practice:

Italian has five vowels, a, e, i, o, u. Do not practice vowels first; practice the alphabet /æ/ first; this alphabet is the key to learn "covered singing". After mastering this skill, you can practice singing "Che gelida manina (Puccini - La Boheme)." Since the highest pitch is the /æ/, it is the best way to practice "Covered Singing" This piece of music is known as the touchstone of a bel canto tenor in the world. In the traditional practice, /a/ has a higher proportion of training, but the "covered singing" method, almost all the training revolves around the /æ/ In other words, the key to "covered singing" method is learning to sing high notes with /æ/.

## Critical thinking and vocal teaching

Critical thinking is often explained as the ability to think and learn independently. It refers to learning logically and thoughtfully rather than blindly following the teacher's instructions.

Onur Topoğlu (2014) stated that "The term critical thinking, often used in conjunction with problem-solving, high-order thinking skills, reasoning, is defined as a skill in some approaches. However, some suggest that individuals must have critical disposition at first to have critical thinking skills while some see it as a mental process." According to Mertes (1991) "critical thinking is a conscious and deliberate process used to interpret or evaluate. information and experiences with a set of reflective attitudes and abilities that guide thoughtful beliefs and actions."

Liang Lina (2011) stated that a 5-step Critical thinking problem solving, and decision-making process named “ideas”: Step 1 “I” means Identify the problem and set priorities. Step 2 “D” means Deepen the understanding and gather relevant information. Step 3 “E” means enumerate options and anticipate consequences. Step 4 “A” means Assess the situation and make a preliminary decision. Step 5 “S” means scrutinize the process and self-correct as needed.

### Learning “covered singing” with critical thinking

It is helpful to use critical thinking in vocal music teaching. It can effectively help students understand their voice. Students usually follow the teacher's guidance, but students lack the logical self-learning process. Traditionally, it is difficult for students to understand their voice.

As a teacher, we should try to help students use critical thinking to find the optimal method. Critical thinking is not to criticize everything. Critical thinking is a great way to learn and understand things.

Vocal music learning is the initial stage for adolescent students. Self-learning and evaluation are particularly important for vocal music learning. Critical thinking is an excellent way of self-learning. Rational use of critical thinking evaluation mode is beneficial to vocal music learning. In this study, critical thinking in vocal music lessons is mainly reflected in the evaluation system, including self-assessment, mutual assessment, group assessment, and teacher assessment. Record your voice in the vocal class. After class, first conduct self-assessment, exchange recordings, and conduct the mutual evaluation and group assessment. Finally, give the form to the teacher, and the teacher provides the final evaluation. According to the results of the assessment, the students analyze and find their weaknesses and shortcomings. Learning to use critical thinking to self-study, change the traditional learning mode, become their teachers, and learn from each other.

### Some simple critical thinking process examples:

1. Recording: record the process of their singing.
2. Identify: students listen to the record and identify the problem in their singing.
3. Teacher assessment: the teacher graded the students' performance.
4. Peer assessment: students give marks to other students.
5. Self-check: listen to the recording carefully and write down the characteristics of the recording's sound.
6. Analysis: compare the scores and assessment of teachers, classmates. Find the problem of the singing.  
(Score criteria: Pitch, emotion, breathing, etc.)
7. Summary: summarize the data after analysis and give conclusions.
8. Self-correct: improve your voice and singing method. scrutinize the process and self-correct as needed.

### Conclusions

"Covered singing" is a necessary skill for male adolescent students to sing high notes. Although many vocal music teachers are female, the "covered singing" skill could also be taught by female teachers to male students. The skill is mainly used to help male students with their high notes. It is challenging to improve the vocal range with conventional methods, but it is possible to master the highest note in the shortest time by using "covered singing." In other words, by using this skill, we tap into the true beauty of the human voice. The "covered singing" method is quite different from other singing skills in practice. Its practice method is, even strange, but it is correct and effective. Critical thinking is an important way to learn "covered singing" It uses self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher assessment, and other methods to help students find their problems. Critical thinking focuses on teaching self-reflection and self-

learning. Critical thinking is not about criticism; and it is about rational analysis. And finally, the student gains knowledge in the process.

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