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EXTENDING VOCAL RANGE FOR A MEZZO-SOPRANO IN VOCAL TECHING FOR LIGHT MUSIC

M.A. DO THI LAM

Thanh Hoa University of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam.

*Corresponding author: *Do Thi Lam
Tel.:+84919026789 Email: mylam0411@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

Popular music is one of the genres of music loved by the majority of young people. The teaching of popular music has now been included in the professional vocal training program in major art training departments in our country such as: Military University of Culture and Arts, Hanoi College of Art, National University of Art Education, ThanhHoa University of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Hue Academy of Music, Ho Chi Minh City Conservatory... It is very necessary to improve the quality of singing popular music in schools, especially with the expansion of the range for female voices.

KEYWORDS

Light music, Range, Mezzo-soprano.



1. Introduction:

Light music was originated in the 19th century for entertainment purposes, then light music was flourished in the 60s of the twentieth century with many different categories such as Pop, Jazz, Rock which were developed in parallel with classical music. With a short structure, lyrics for loved couples, and choreography, the light music has successfully been appealed to attract the listeners, and this kind of music is often performed by a mezzo-soprano. Along with the development of the world, light music created a strong attraction to a large number of young people in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Vietnam. However, there are misconceptions about training and singing light music in teaching and learning. For some teachers, when teaching light music, they still apply the whole practice method and vocal techniques of European for light music songs, leading to excessive sound, unclear pronunciation. These mistakes result from a lack of research on applying professional vocal techniques such as breathing control, sound position, opening the aperture, releasing words to suit the nature of light music. Besides, due to lack of clear orientation on singing methods, students often sing with chest voice and strength, leading to hoarseness which makes the life span of career shrink.

In order to improve the quality of vocal teaching for a mezzo-soprano as well as develop vocal teaching and learning in school, the expansion of the vocal range is essential helping the students understand the difference in singing chamber music and light music. Furthermore, the students are able to apply chamber techniques to light music to achieve the best performances and still meet the requirements of vocal techniques and performing arts.

2. Some methods of expanding the pitch of mezzo-soprano

The expansion of the vocal range for a female voice is divided into 2 parts (practicing the technique of expanding the sound area and applying it to the song)

First: Practice techniques include the following 3 types: aspect, breath, sound position

* Mouth shape

The position of mouth plays an important role in pronouncing vowels, consonants, and vowels - consonants in the sound of the soundtrack play an important role in the sound quality of the voice (opening the right mouth shape of the sounds can achieve resonant, clear pronunciation as well as stretching with the pitch of the note). To get a good mouth shape when singing, the most necessary thing is to open the mouth shape correctly, and these need to have practice.

In Western Classical music vocal, the mouth shape vertically opens (especially inside the oral cavity). For a mezzo-soprano singing light music, the voice frame is open both in and out of a natural, with more openness. When practicing, you must keep your upright posture, fresh facial expressions, and then raise the palate upwards like a yawn. The students can feel the cheeks are raised and the tongue is also raised to the temples, and the breath will go along with a jaw lift action, then the lower jaw comes down naturally after. This method is repeatedly practiced many times.

There are some instructions to practice the speech with some vowels to see that the practice of mouth shape needs to be very meticulous, shaping each sound:

The "i" sound: The "i" sound is a closed vowel, so if doing the practice, this sound is not raised the palate, causing the sound is flat. Therefore, the soft palate must be lifted up, the corners of the lips smile slightly to reveal the upper teeth there is a feeling of pulling on the temples, the teeth separate.

The "ê" sound: The "ê" sound is the most difficult sound for vocal students, when performing; they often cannot open and lift the palate high, easy to be stiff, so the sound is often blurred, unclear pronunciation. Therefore, in order to pronounce the vowel well, the lecturer should note that the students must lift the palate like yawning, the reed inside is hanging high, the upper lip is slightly raised to gently bring the upper jaw forward, lower passively shrink back, at this time turn the tongue into the root of the upper molars, so the sounds will be clear and fresh.

The "a" sound: For the "a" sound, it is necessary to lift the palate up and gradually pull up the temples to separate the teeth, the two corners of the lips are open as if smiling and exposing the upper teeth and tongue with cheerful eyes. When singing the vowels "a", students are not allowed to lower the palate because the emitted sound will be flat and feel like a little bit of similarity with vowel "ô".

The "ô" sound: When singing, the palate is still raised, the top of the upper lip must gently hug the outer surface of the upper teeth and close the corners of the lips slightly. During the practice process, the teachers always remind students to be more conscious in practice to achieve the quality of sound.

The "u" sound: Basing on the "ô" sound, the students close the corners of the lips closer than the vowel, the lower lip is slightly out in front as if the lips are closed, the aperture of the vowel is made. Note: students must always have a comfortable position, with a fresh face, the palate is always lifted high from sound to sound, absolutely do not keep the teeth together.

* **Breath:**

The breath in the vocal is a vocal control tool, helping the artist express the meaning of each song, creating the success of the work. The person with the good sound breath will not be singing the wrong notes and rhythm and can adjust to sing out loud and reduce the volume easily. In order to improve the quality of vocal learning, we offer the following breathing exercises for mezzo-soprano:

When practicing, the instructors guide the students to straighten their backs, shoulders down, chest slightly out in front while shoulder-width apart, bright facial expressions and direct gaze. Students lift the palate and take a deep breath into the lungs, the sponges in the lungs have the impact of air on the back and the diaphragm will expand, then students can exhale. The practice of breathing needs repeating many times. Note that during the exercise the students have to relax their body, so that the breath can be breathed into the lungs most naturally.

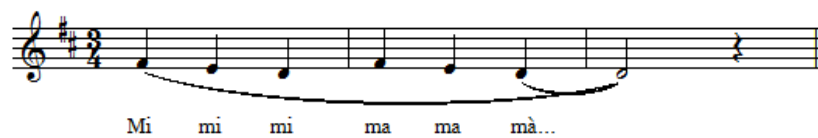
* **Sound location:**

The position, the echoes and the resonance are called chest resonance and head resonate. Chest resonance is the sound that is vibrated and echoes in the chest when singing. Head resonance feel like that the sound of going out and flying in front has a higher feeling and is calculated from the nose, eye sockets to the top of the head, forming an arc. When extending the vocal range for mezzo-soprano, the teacher must instruct the children to use this resonance to sing the notes in the highs.

Second: Applying to the vocal practice sentence pattern*** Legato techniques**

Legato is a continuous singing technique that makes a transition from note to note and is the main technique in professional vocal art. Wanting to perform this technique well, learners are required to have a deep breath, rhythmically regulate the breath, not to push massively as well as to pull in the stomach suddenly; the sound will lose the smooth connection. This singing technique is used mostly in songs from classical to soft music and ensures a resonant, bright, full element with lyrical, soft songs or dramatic works.

In order for the practice of singing to be effective from the first year of school, we need to let them practice the 3rd, 5th, 6th and tempo patterns that increase gradually with the school year and the ability of the person study as:

Example 1: Pattern 1

The vocal training sentence is a third volume sample and is built on a continuous top-down melody line, convenient for regulating the breath and feeling the sound position. When performing the sample, students need to have an upright position, legs shoulder-width, toes straight forward, ankles parallel to hips and shoulders, fresh facial expressions and consciously lifting soft palate, and the body relaxes. After that, students take a deep breath into the lungs, when the breath is full, learners lightly exhale backward while opening the mouth to feel like lifting the upper jaw muscles to the frontal sinus, and lower jaw loosened.

Start singing the "mi" sound, the palate stays the same, the sensory sound hangs on the forehead, lower the chest and the tongue loosens to sing at the pitch. The melody going down the palate still remains in place so that the sound pushes the breath gently, when changing to the "mi" sound, learners keep the mouth shape of "mi" sound, but the mouth shape is higher feels like sleep. Take care not to compress too tightly and open up along the mouth-shape

However, in legato singing technique, biphonic or multi-note are used, with narrow intervals which can be wide. When performing ligatures, learners must always agree on the sound position.

Example 2: Pattern 2

This is a sample second piece of music ligature with the rhythm going up and down the third. When singing the "mi" sound, the jaw muscles are naturally lifted, feeling like lifting the reed to the frontal sinus, the lips are lightly pressed together. to turn on the "mi" sound, relax the base of the

tongue, when transiting to the "mê" sound, keep the position of the "mi" sound, raise the upper jaw like yawn, the lower jaw will automatically let go.

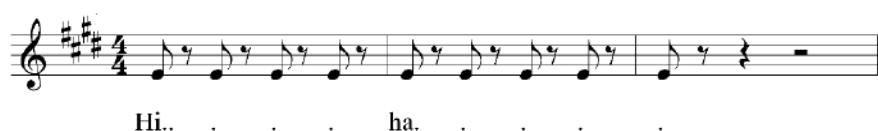
* *Note:* While singing a sentence pattern with the "mê" sound, students' body is prone to stress, leading to a raised chest, hardened tongue, accidentally the tip of the tongue being bent over the palate, so that the sound comes out was spilled on the back of the neck and slightly close to the neck. In order to perform this sound sample well, when singing and not focusing too much on the breath, think of singing soft lyrics, the tongue will be relaxed, the sound comes out loud, bright, and comfortable.

* *Note:* When practicing in the mid-bass zone, the instructors let the children sing at the chest resonance, up to the notes c2, d2, the lecturers let the students feel the resonance above the head (phase and transit of voice). When expanding the vocal range for mezzo-soprano, teachers should not let the students open in too much because it will lose the light music nature of the voice.

* Staccato technique

The staccato technique, also known as bouncing singing, is also an important technique in vocal art, the sound emitted like the singing of birds. If the legato technique requires singing the sounds together, the staccato sounds are separated clearly, after each sound comes out decisively as if there is a silence. This technique also helps students perform well in contraction and expansion of abdominal muscles in breathing exercise, and also fixes singing problems such as singing by neck, weak voices ...

Example 3: Pattern 3



This is a sample of the same pitch that is favorable for beginners to staccato. Before singing, learners have to relax their bodies, have a cheerful face, gently lift the frog's jaw to take a deep breath into the lungs, then push to the upper abdomen and back for a second or two then start singing. the "hi" sound, when the sound is played, the front abdomen pops in quickly like hitting a basketball. Then, take another breath and pop again as you sing the next note. Switch to the "ha" sound, you need to keep the aperture of the "hi" sound, then gently let your lower jaw down and also perform upper abdomen as "hi".

* *Note:* Do not open the mouth shape too large vertically but have to open slightly horizontally, the sound sticking out of the upper lip, the sound emitted will be elegant and playful.

Example 4: Pattern 4



It is a sentence pattern that performs a top-down melody and has a 5th intervals dance note, from fis1 to h1. Singers have to relax the nape of the neck, laugh to lift the palate up, at the same time take a deep breath, and then burst into the stomach quickly to sing hi. When switching back to the chorus, raise the palate so that the tongue is lifted to the shift, then the outer mouth closes the corners of the lips and lips. The sound is airy and full.

* *Note:* For the above staccato sample pattern with a relatively high first note (h1), learners must always be aware of cramping the abdominal muscles quickly so that the sound can be heard decisively, avoiding humming which is not correct bounce sound technique.

* Passage technique

Passage is a flexible way of singing with many notes carried out in succession, the sound is clear, neat, uninterrupted, suitable for the soprano coloratura to express songs with cheerful, vibrant and pure character. However, when the female voice refines this technique, the students will perform cadanza parts to enrich the song performance. When performing this technique, the mouth shape is flexible and the sound position is stable, during the singing process, it is always necessary to maintain the stability of rhythm.

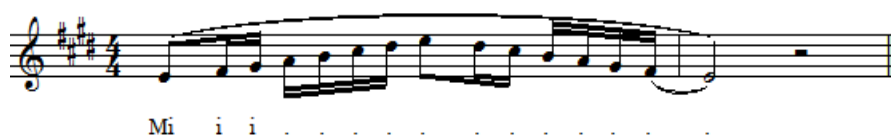
Example 5: Pattern 5



For those who are just starting to practice, teachers practice short sentences or take a breath in the middle, then gradually increase the length and height according to learners' abilities.

Before performing, it is necessary to prepare mentally, straighten up, then laugh like a yawn to lift the soft palate up and combine with taking the breath and feel the sound position near the top of the upper lip. When singing the first "mi" sound, place a gentle sound at the top of the upper lip and keep the sound position to move on the g1 note, then pause, then switch to the "ma" sound from g1 to d2. When the melody goes down, it is necessary to sing softly, hold the sound position on the frontal sinus, and do not push the breath much.

Example 6: Pattern 6



Requirements: The first note of the song is the e1 note, when singing the "mi" sound, the sound must be placed lightly as if it were speaking near the top of the upper lip. Then, push forward slightly and lift the mouth shape gradually higher in tune. When the tone goes down, the shape of the mouth remains the same but sticks to the sound closer to the outside so that the sound emitted is always clear and bright.

Passage technique requires learners to have a steady breath and sound, while singing must regulate breathing rhythmically to move from note to note without interruption.

Third: *The problem of word release pronunciation*

Singing clearly, often used as a "clear pronunciation" is one of the last factors, determining the success of the song performance, especially for Vietnamese light music songs. As we know that, the Vietnamese language consists of six tones: mid-level tone, rising tone, falling tone, low-falling-rising tone, high-rising broken tone, low-falling broken tone, and 14 vowels. During the singing process, the lips are often closed and the tip of the tongue plays the role of sounding. However, besides the distinctive tones and vowels, they are also divided into open and closed sounds, monosyllabic and diphthongs. We overview some methods of teaching the pronunciation and release of open and closed words in Vietnamese as follows:

Open words: The words that have the last sound of a, o, ... When pronouncing, learners must raise the palate slightly and keep it at a moderate level, smile lightly and leave the upper teeth open, and at the same time pull the two the corner of the lips to the side. With open words such as "ô", learners do not need to open too much inside, just gently hold the top of the upper lip to the teeth, the two corners of the lips close the sound.

Single/Double closed-words: Including words i/y, u, t, n, c, p, ng, nh, ch .. when singing, pay attention to separate the two teeth slightly, the upper jaw feels like hanging After that, we will perform the opening and closing of the lips so that the sound is clear and not flattened. It should be noted that: when learning to release the word, learners open to reduce the height of the mouth, the sound sticking out of the lips on the breath gently pushes the feeling of being darkened and stopped sooner. For letters with closed vowels, learners need to consciously hold their upper jaw, lower jaw passively fall off softly emitted sounds and not be swallowed.

Words with open sounds; a, ă, o, ô which is associated with the ending with single closed-words such as i, y, t, and with double closed word such as "ng", the students must open each word clearly and pay attention to bring the sound out of the two teeth that are not tight, then close the sound position combined with the moderator. Breathe gently, the emitted sound will be soft, bright. Students do the same thing with word-ending sounds like t, y, and so on.

* **Attention:** During singing, the students regulate gentle breath (not compressed like in classical music), especially with high notes. Release the text neatly and clearly, the sound feels close to the outside of the upper teeth and the aperture is not extended too longitudinally, the breath is not compressed too tightly, the sound will be sounded and erect like classic. Applying these methods will help students apply to songs to highlight the beauty of light music songs.

3. CONCLUSION

On the basis of understanding the role of light music for mezzo-soprano with professional vocal training university; through analyzing, comparing and finding the common points of music genres (chamber, folk, soft music ...), many ideas and suggestions have given appropriate technical practice methods to expands the pitch for a mezzo-soprano. Thereby, those involved in teaching in general and in research in particular have had standard assessments in the current state of teaching light music, identifying advantages and disadvantages in the process for student learning and training.

In addition, the analysis of artistic characteristics and vocal techniques suitable for singing light music also helps teachers and learners to come up with practice methods suitable to the characteristics of each voice; providing appropriate pronunciation and practice methods, helping students maximize their ability to apply vocal techniques in singing and performing. This scientific initiative of mine has a theoretical and practical application in the field of professional vocal training and performance, which can be used as reference material for lecturers and students in the learning and research process.

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