

TRAINING PIANISTS IN THE FIELD OF “POP PERFORMANCE” IN MUSIC UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This article highlights the tasks and main directions of training pianists in the field of “Pop Music Performance” in higher music education institutions. The role of pop piano in the modern musical process, the content and goals of the curriculum, traditional and innovative methodological approaches are analyzed. The necessity of effectively using improvisation, arrangement, stage culture, and modern technologies in the preparation of a creative and versatile performer is substantiated. Additionally, the article addresses emerging challenges in music education, including technological disruption and polyvalent professional roles.

Keywords: Pop music performance, piano, music education, improvisation, arrangement, stage culture, modern technologies, creative individuality.

Introduction

ПОДГОТОВКА ПИАНИСТОВ ПО НАПРАВЛЕНИЮ «ЭСТРАДНОЕ ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬСТВО» В МУЗЫКАЛЬНЫХ ВУЗАХ

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Аннотация:

В данной статье освещены задачи и основные направления подготовки пианистов по направлению «Эстрадное исполнительство» в музыкальных высших учебных заведениях. Проанализированы роль эстрадного фортепиано в современном музыкальном процессе, содержание и цели



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учебной программы, традиционные и инновационные методические подходы. Обоснована необходимость эффективного использования импровизации, аранжировки, сценической культуры и современных технологий в подготовке креативного и универсального исполнителя. Также рассматриваются актуальные вызовы музыкального образования в контексте быстрых изменений индустрии и требования к флексибельности пианиста-эстрадника.

Ключевые слова: эстрадное исполнительство, фортепиано, музыкальное образование, импровизация, аранжировка, сценическая культура, современные технологии, творческая индивидуальность.

*“I need no words... only the piano,
Which will explain everything with its own sound.”*

I. Kuzmina

Introduction

Modern music education, especially in the field of pop performance, is entering a new phase of development that reflects the dynamics of cultural and technological processes of the 21st century. Today, a musician is expected not only to master the instrument at a high technical level, but also to possess creative versatility, the ability to quickly adapt to various stage conditions, demonstrate individuality and artistry. A contemporary performer must think freely, sense the audience, be ready to improvise, and be capable of interacting with other musicians and technical means of sound production.

A pop musician appears on stage not merely as a performer, but as an enlightener, a bearer of spiritual and humanistic values. Their work becomes part of cultural diplomacy, shaping the listener's worldview. In this context, the system of music education carries out the mission not only of professional training but also of forming a holistic individual endowed with a high level of musical culture, emotional intelligence, and refined aesthetic taste. Music, as the language of the human soul, requires the unity of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, a balance of academic foundations and freedom of creative expression. Pop



performance opens the path to this harmony for the student, offering limitless opportunities for self-realization.

In the modern understanding, the stage becomes a space of spiritual awakening, communication, and inspiration. A performer in the realm of popular music shapes the emotional climate of the audience, conveys the values of culture and beauty. Thus, the training of pianists in the pop-performance direction is not merely professional instruction but a path toward the spiritual enrichment of society.

The piano occupies a special place in pop art. This instrument combines unique timbral and harmonic capabilities, serving both as a universal means of accompaniment and as an independent vehicle of musical expression. Its keys are a kind of “magic door” into the world of human emotions, while its sound becomes the quintessence of emotional experience. In pop performance, the piano can act as a reliable partner for a vocalist, a part of an ensemble, or a solo instrument capable of conveying the full spectrum of human feelings.

As A. A. Serdyukov notes: “The music education system in modern Russia is characterized by a dominant orientation toward the performance of written text... The requirement to perform it in an unaltered form is strict, allowing only freedom of intonation” (Serdyukov A. A., 2017, p. 136). This statement emphasizes that for contemporary training of pianists in the pop field, it is essential to go beyond the academic repertoire, seek new forms of expression, and integrate improvisation and composition.

Today, the piano in pop performance does not merely provide accompaniment but becomes the performer’s “creative laboratory.” Modern research highlights the need for pianists to develop not only classical technique but also skills in working with digital tools — MIDI keyboards, synthesizers, loop platforms, and audio editors. All of this expands the expressive and technological possibilities of the artist.

The training of a pianist in the pop-performance direction typically takes place in two stages.

The first stage includes mastering basic chords and seventh chords, identifying harmonic progressions by ear, performing popular songs, and developing a sense



of meter and rhythm in genres such as pop, rock, and blues. At this level, the foundation of memory, auditory perception, and stage confidence is formed.

The second stage involves an in-depth study of altered chords and inversions, analysis of contemporary pop compositions, mastery of improvisational techniques, the use of modulations and genre integration, as well as the basics of arranging and stage-oriented sound design.

In addition, the curriculum incorporates modules that develop modern competencies: stage culture and visual presentation, fundamentals of sound engineering, working with recording and arranging software, cross-genre flexibility, and media communication skills.

The traditional academic school, based on classical piano technique, solfeggio, and harmony, undoubtedly remains an essential foundation. However, the pop-performance direction requires a different approach—training by ear, improvisation, participation in jam sessions, and studio work. As N. B. Aleksandrina notes: “Lessons in improvisation and composition... are undoubtedly of great importance for education and training in the piano class. They aim to develop students’ musical and creative abilities, their musical imagination, and musical thinking...” (Aleksandrina N. B., 2011, p. 110).

Thus, the teacher becomes not only a transmitter of knowledge but also a mentor of a creative personality, a curator of stage behavior and media competencies. The teacher helps the student reveal individuality, learn to think musically, and freely express ideas through the instrument.

The formation of key skills for a pop pianist includes three main areas:

Improvisation — the ability to create music “here and now,” varying rhythm, mode, and harmony. Working in different modes (blues scale, minor pentatonic, jazz modes) develops musical thinking and expands the palette of expressive means.

Arranging — developing the skills of selecting harmonic progressions, choosing accompaniment patterns, and mastering techniques such as arpeggios, block chords, and rhythmic patterns.

Stage culture — the development of artistry, communication skills, visual presentation, and the ability to interact with the audience.

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These areas are combined into a system of creative exercises: listening to and performing songs by ear, transposing melodies into different keys, improvising over a given harmony, and working with jazz standards (“Autumn Leaves,” “Blue Bossa,” etc.). The teacher’s task is to guide, inspire, and support the student’s individual style.

As a result of such training, a universal musician is formed—one capable not only of performing but also of creating music, analyzing contemporary genres, developing original compositions, and demonstrating flexibility both technically and emotionally.

The training of pianists in the field of “Pop Performance” is a complex, multilayered process that integrates technical, creative, stylistic, and technological components. A modern pianist is simultaneously a performer, composer, arranger, and “media creator,” capable of using both traditional and digital resources. The integration of innovative methodologies, digital tools, stage culture, and interdisciplinary competencies shapes a new type of artistic personality—a musician who not only reproduces music but creates it in a living dialogue with the audience, opening new horizons of artistic perception.

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