

# On the Training Path of Improvisation Accompaniment Ability of Piano Art Guidance

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**Abstract:** The ability to improvise accompaniment is a core professional competency in piano art instruction, directly impacting artistic presentation quality and adaptability across diverse scenarios. Current talent cultivation in this field in China faces challenges including an incomplete teaching system, disconnection between theory and practice, insufficient practical platforms, and weak faculty resources, which fail to meet the demands of cultural industry development. This study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods (questionnaire surveys, interviews, and literature reviews) to analyze training pain points among university faculty, students, and industry practitioners. It innovatively proposes a stepwise cultivation path: "Theoretical Foundation–Skill Enhancement–Practical Empowerment–Innovative Improvement." Through measures such as optimizing curriculum design, innovating teaching methods, expanding practical platforms, and strengthening faculty development, the study aims to achieve coordinated enhancement of theoretical knowledge, technical skills, and comprehensive literacy. This provides practical references for university teaching reforms and practitioner competency development, contributing to the advancement of the music industry.

**Keywords:** piano art instruction; improvisational accompaniment ability; cultivation pathway; teaching reform; practice empowerment

## 0. Introduction

In today's thriving cultural industry, fields such as musical performances, art education, and artistic creation demand higher professional standards for piano art direction. As a pivotal collaborator in music performance and teaching, the core mission of piano art direction lies in enhancing the expressiveness and emotional impact of vocal, instrumental, and dance performances through artistic piano accompaniment. The ability to improvise accompaniment is the essential skill that supports this mission—it requires not only solid musical theory and keyboard techniques but also comprehensive abilities like style interpretation, on-the-spot adaptability, and collaborative communication to address diverse artistic scenarios.

However, China's professional education in piano art direction started relatively late, and the current talent cultivation system still has many shortcomings: some universities still follow traditional piano teaching models, emphasizing solo skills while neglecting improvisational accompaniment, with curriculum design lacking systematicness and progression; teaching disconnects theory from practice, with monotonous skill training and neglect of comprehensive quality development; practical platforms are limited to classrooms and small-scale performances, depriving students of real-world experience; faculty members lack diverse professional backgrounds and industry experience, failing to meet the diverse teaching demands. These issues result in uneven improvisational accompaniment abilities among practitioners, making it difficult to meet the industry's actual needs for flexible adaptation and artistic innovation, thereby hindering the overall improvement of piano art direction talent quality in China.

Building on this foundation, this study addresses the core challenges in cultivating piano art instructors' improvisational accompaniment skills. With the dual objectives of "overcoming training bottlenecks" and "aligning with industry demands," the research employs a comprehensive methodology integrating questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, and literature reviews. By systematically collecting data from university teaching practices, industry requirements,

and practitioner feedback, it analyzes key influencing factors in developing improvisational accompaniment capabilities. The study innovatively proposes a "theory-based foundation-skill enhancement-practice empowerment-innovation-driven improvement" tiered training framework. This multi-dimensional approach aims to establish a holistic training system, providing both pedagogical guidance for reforming piano art instruction in higher education and scientific solutions for professional development. Subsequent chapters will examine current challenges in improvisational accompaniment training, detail specific implementation pathways, and ultimately offer theoretical and practical support for advancing China's piano art instructor workforce and fostering the growth of the music industry.

## **1. Analysis of the Present Situation and Problems of the Ability of Piano Artistic Guidance and Improvisation Accompaniment**

The improvisational accompaniment skills of piano art directors represent a multifaceted competency that integrates music theory, keyboard techniques, artistic perception, and collaborative awareness. Their proficiency directly determines the quality and impact of artistic presentations. With the music industry's diversification, improvisational accompaniment has evolved from a traditional "supporting skill" to a core competitive advantage, spanning vocal accompaniment, instrumental accompaniment, dance scoring, and music education. However, current training programs for piano art directors' improvisational accompaniment skills still face numerous pressing challenges.

### **1.1 Current Status of Improvisational Accompaniment Ability Training**

The piano art pedagogy program in China has a relatively late start. Many universities still adhere to traditional teaching methods, focusing primarily on solo skills and score interpretation while neglecting improvisational accompaniment. In the talent development framework, improvisational accompaniment courses are often offered as electives with limited class hours. The curriculum lacks systematic structure, predominantly covering harmonic theory and basic arrangement exercises, which fails to meet the practical demands of diverse musical styles and performance contexts.

From the current status of practitioners, most piano art directors possess solid keyboard performance skills, but their improvisational accompaniment abilities vary significantly. Some practitioners can only handle the accompaniment needs of adapted fixed repertoire, often lacking the flexibility to adapt to sudden performance adjustments or personalized artistic treatments. In terms of style adaptation, their improvisational arrangement skills for genres beyond classical music—such as pop, ethnic, and jazz—are insufficient, making it difficult to meet the diverse demands of artistic practice.

### **1.2 Problems in Improvisational Accompaniment Ability Training**

#### **1.2.1 The teaching system is incomplete, with a disconnect between theory and practice.**

Contemporary improvisational accompaniment pedagogy predominantly employs a "harmonic theory + repertoire demonstration" framework, with curricula emphasizing theoretical instruction while neglecting scenario-specific practical training. For instance, while students may master fundamental harmonic progression rules, they struggle to adaptively select harmonic textures in actual accompaniment arrangements according to melodic styles and vocal emotional nuances. Similarly, texture design instruction lacks tailored training for different instruments and vocal parts, resulting in dissonance between the arranged accompaniment and the performing subject. Furthermore, the curriculum lacks a progressive structure, with disconnected content between beginner and advanced levels, hindering gradual skill development.

### **1.2.2 Single-minded skill development with insufficient comprehensive literacy training**

The essence of improvisational accompaniment lies not merely in keyboard techniques, but also in comprehensive competencies including musical perception, stylistic interpretation, and collaborative communication. Current pedagogical approaches disproportionately emphasize keyboard proficiency while neglecting the cultivation of students' musical aesthetics, stylistic analysis, and improvisational responsiveness. For instance, when encountering unfamiliar melodies, students often struggle to swiftly discern musical styles and emotional tones, resulting in arrangements that lack artistic resonance. Furthermore, during collaborations with vocalists or instrumentalists, they frequently demonstrate insufficient listening and feedback awareness, failing to adjust accompaniment dynamics (tempo, intensity, and texture) in response to performers' interpretations.

### **1.2.3 Insufficient practical platforms and lack of diversified scenario training**

The development of improvisational accompaniment skills requires extensive practical exposure. However, most universities' practical training remains confined to classroom demonstrations and small-scale performance showcases, lacking diversified platforms that integrate professional performances with teaching practices. Students rarely encounter real-world performance challenges such as singers suddenly changing pitches or altering performance rhythms, resulting in a disconnect between their practical skills and industry demands. Furthermore, insufficient collaboration between universities and performance troupes or art academies leaves students without opportunities to engage in professional artistic practices, making it difficult to translate classroom knowledge into practical work capabilities.

### **1.2.4 Weak faculty strength with uneven professional competence**

Teaching improvisational accompaniment requires educators to possess a well-rounded set of competencies, including solid theoretical knowledge, extensive practical experience, and the ability to adapt to diverse musical styles. Currently, most university instructors in this field have piano performance backgrounds, with some lacking systematic training in improvisational accompaniment. Their limited proficiency in arranging accompaniments for various styles often results in inadequate professional guidance for students. Furthermore, the teaching staff's lack of industry experience leads to a disconnect between curriculum content and the latest professional demands, ultimately compromising the quality of student development.

## **2. The Training Path of Improvisation Accompaniment Ability of Piano Art Guidance**

The training of the improvisation accompaniment ability of the piano art instructor is a systematic project, which needs to build a comprehensive and multi-level training system based on the core idea of "theoretical foundation, skill strengthening, practice empowerment and innovation promotion", so as to realize the synergistic promotion of theoretical knowledge, practical skills and comprehensive quality.

### **2.1 Improving the Teaching System and Constructing a Stepwise Curriculum Structure**

#### **2.1.2 Optimize curriculum design and strengthen foundational theoretical instruction**

The improvisational accompaniment course will be integrated into the core curriculum of piano art instruction, with increased class hours to establish a tiered structure of "basic theory-style arrangement-practical application". The foundational stage focuses on core theories including harmony, form, and counterpoint, combined with keyboard harmony training to help students master chord progressions and harmonic rules, enabling them to quickly compose basic harmonies for simple melodies. The advanced stage emphasizes arrangement techniques across various styles such as classical, pop, folk, and jazz, explaining their harmonic characteristics, texture types, and rhythmic patterns. The applied stage provides specialized training for practical

scenarios like vocal accompaniment, instrumental accompaniment, and dance music, enhancing students' adaptability to different performance contexts.

### **2.1.2 Innovate teaching methods to achieve the integration of theory and practice**

The teaching methodology of "case analysis + live arrangement + real-time feedback" breaks down the barriers between theory and practice. In case-based instruction, students analyze classic accompaniment examples with diverse styles and scenarios, examining their harmonic designs, texture choices, and stylistic adaptation techniques to identify patterns. During live arrangement training, students complete accompaniment arrangements and performances for given melodies or themes within time limits, developing rapid response skills. A real-time feedback mechanism is established through teacher evaluations, peer reviews, and industry expert guidance to help students identify and address issues promptly. Additionally, digital tools such as music production software and improvisation accompaniment simulation systems are integrated to assist students in practice and preview effects, enhancing teaching efficiency.

## **2.2 Enhancing Skill Training to Improve Comprehensive Competence**

### **2.2.1 Diversified skill training covering core competency modules**

Targeted training modules are developed to focus on core skills in improvisational accompaniment. In harmonic arrangement training, students practice not only basic harmonic progressions but also substitute chords and chromatic chords to enhance accompaniment richness. For texture design, varied textures like arpeggios, block chords, and half-arpeggios are taught according to instrument and vocal part characteristics, cultivating students' ability to flexibly adjust textures for performance. Rhythm control training incorporates diverse rhythmic patterns—such as jazz syncopation and ethnic music rhythms—to improve style adaptation. Additionally, sight-reading and solfeggio training are strengthened to develop students' ability to quickly read scores and capture melodic features, laying the foundation for improvisational arrangement.

### **2.2.2 Emphasize the cultivation of comprehensive qualities to enhance artistic appeal**

To enhance students' musical aesthetic and stylistic analysis skills, we will improve their musical perception through listening to diverse musical works and analyzing artistic approaches in classical accompaniment. Collaborative communication training will be implemented by pairing students with vocal and instrumental majors, cultivating their listening awareness and feedback skills while teaching them to adjust accompaniment dynamics based on performers' interpretations. Additionally, we will strengthen on-the-spot adaptability through simulated scenarios—such as sudden changes in tempo or mode—allowing students to hone their flexibility in real-time performance.

## **2.3 Expanding Practical Platforms to Achieve Collaborative Education Between Schools and Enterprises**

### **2.3.1 Establishing an on-campus practice platform to diversify practical scenarios**

The school establishes diverse practice platforms on campus, including regular impromptu accompaniment performances, vocal-piano collaborative showcases, and dance music-making workshops, providing students with consistent hands-on opportunities. It also implements an open practice room policy, featuring dedicated spaces for impromptu accompaniment training equipped with abundant sheet music and audio resources to facilitate independent practice. Furthermore, the school organizes impromptu accompaniment competitions to boost students' enthusiasm for learning while fostering peer interaction and healthy competition.

### **2.3.2 Deepen school-enterprise cooperation and meet industry demand**

Enhance collaboration with professional performance troupes, art academies, and cultural

institutions to establish off-campus practice bases. Arrange students to participate in accompaniment roles for various performances, including concerts, cultural galas, and grading accompaniments, enabling them to gain hands-on experience in real-world settings. Invite veteran piano art instructors to serve as off-campus mentors, sharing industry expertise through lectures, workshops, and live coaching. Adjust training programs to align with industry demands, integrating the latest standards and practical requirements into the curriculum to ensure seamless talent development that meets market needs.

## 2.4 Enhancing Faculty Development and Elevating Teaching Standards

### 2.4.1 Optimize the faculty structure and recruit professional talents

We will recruit professional improvisational accompanists with extensive industry experience to strengthen our faculty. Existing teachers are encouraged to engage in practical industry activities, such as serving as piano art directors for performances or participating in music production projects, to gain hands-on experience. Additionally, we will establish a faculty training mechanism, organizing regular workshops and professional skill development programs to enhance teachers' instructional capabilities and professional expertise.

### 2.4.2 Promote the integration of teaching and research to enhance educational quality

Encourage teachers to conduct research on impromptu accompaniment-related topics, exploring innovative teaching methods and training models; support teachers in developing targeted teaching materials and resources to address the shortcomings of existing educational resources; establish a teacher exchange mechanism, regularly organizing in-school teaching observation and discussion activities to facilitate experience sharing and mutual progress among educators.

## 3. Conclusion

The ability to improvise accompaniment serves as the core professional benchmark for piano art instructors and a critical foundation for diverse artistic practices. Currently, China's talent development in this field faces challenges such as an incomplete teaching system, insufficient practical platforms, and inadequate comprehensive training, which constrain educational quality. To address these issues, a tiered training framework—"theoretical grounding, skill enhancement, practical empowerment, and innovative advancement"—should be established. This involves optimizing curriculum design, innovating teaching methods, expanding school-enterprise collaborative platforms, and strengthening faculty development to achieve coordinated progress in theory, skills, and overall competence. Such cultivation requires long-term accumulation and the collaborative efforts of universities, industry organizations, and practitioners to continuously refine the system. Only through this approach can we nurture professionals with solid foundations and outstanding practical abilities, thereby injecting vitality into China's music industry.

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