

# *A Study on Traditional Music Education in Universities in the Comparison of Chinese and Western Music*

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**Abstract:** After thousands of years of historical changes, the Chinese nation has accumulated a rich traditional Chinese music culture of excellence. With the development of globalization, Chinese and Western music cultures are exchanging frequently and intermingling more and more widely. As an important part of higher education, traditional music education in colleges and universities is conducive to enriching students' musical knowledge and enhancing their artistic qualities by comparing Chinese and Western music cultures and exploring the educational countermeasures of traditional music in the comparison of Chinese and Western music. This paper analyzes the comparison of the overall structure and creation of Chinese and Western music, and proposes countermeasures for traditional music education in colleges and universities in the comparison of Chinese and Western music, in order to inherit and learn the excellent Chinese traditional music culture in traditional music education in colleges and universities.

Traditional Chinese music is music that has been handed down through thousands of years of development and evolution, created by Chinese people using their own traditional methods and inherent forms. The content of traditional music includes not only the ancient musical and cultural forms produced and handed down in history, but also the musical and cultural forms of various ethnic groups that have been updated with the development of society. In the process of education of Chinese traditional music culture, colleges and universities can explore the differences between Chinese and Western music in terms of overall structure, transmission methods and aesthetic elements through comparative teaching of Chinese and Western opera music, follow the artistic rules of music culture itself, encourage students to complete the continuous transmission of traditional music culture through diligent study, and guide college students to actively inherit Chinese traditional music culture.

## **1. Comparison of the overall structure and composition of Chinese and Western music**

### **1.1 Comparison of musical language structure**

The Chinese music language is influenced by the structure of Han Chinese language, which has "thirteen rhythms" and "four voices", and pays attention to the head, belly and tail of the characters,

while the Western language follows the "a Western languages follow the five vowel letters "a, e, i, o, u" to form the state of the language. Since the Chinese language is fundamentally different from the Western language, the most crucial way of biting the words in the song is different. For example, the pronunciation of ji, qi, xi, zi, ci, si, etc. in Chinese language cannot be done exactly according to the phonetic state of "a, e, i, o, u" vowel letters in Western language. The difference in the judging of "bite" can occur. The rhythm of the native language, the accent of the home dialect, the emotion of expression, etc. are all inseparable from the "bite", and the "flavor" of the Chinese language is often not conveyed according to the very "on-point" vocal style of American singing<sup>[1]</sup>. "Their singing has the pursuit of national language, Chinese emotion and regional style of precision, accuracy, essence, and even spirit. But over time, the older generation of folk singers has shown signs of marginalization.

## 1.2 Comparison of music time and space structure

Chinese music is generally a flexible music time structure, with a large space for rhythm and a relatively loose beat, relying mainly on the mental control of the performer or singer's performance. In traditional Chinese music, rhythm, intensity, and timbre are not required to be precise, but need to be given different musical contexts according to the performer's performance. Performing a musical work with too much or too little intensity can have an impact on the aesthetics of the music created by the listener, and thus the connotation of the musical work itself cannot be perfectly displayed<sup>[2]</sup>. Therefore, the performer needs to control the strength and weakness of the music to keep it in balance, so that it can form a good contrast strength, thus bringing beauty to the music listeners. Western music, on the other hand, has a rigid temporal structure, with a fixed rhythm, intensity and tempo, which cannot be changed at will by the performer during the performance. Western music is based on mathematical logic and has a rigid spatio-temporal structure, and needs to be performed in strict accordance with the performance requirements of musical passages.

## 1.3 Comparison of Chinese and Western Music Aesthetics

The aesthetics of traditional Chinese music attaches importance to life and nature, giving a profound experience through the depiction of natural scenes and the pursuit of a unique mood in music. For example, in the pipa piece "v.", Mr. Wu Houyuan combines the tragic encounter of the pipa girl with Bai Juyi's frequent experience of relegation, fully realizing the perfect unity of poetry and music, mood and reality. As a typical representative of China's traditional musical instruments, the pipa has a strong musical expression and infectious power to bring poetry to the listener through pipa music. The overtones and glissandos used in the composer's music, as well as the chanting and rubbing techniques, allow the listener to fully experience the unique emotions of the music and thus become absorbed in the tragic fate of the pipa woman. Western music emphasizes the objectivity and logic of melody, and is mainly based on realism and truth-seeking. The music contains both a reflection of reality and the creator's own inner feelings, such as Beethoven's "Symphony of Destiny" and Mozart's "Flute Concerto No. 1 in G Major", which have fixed and clear melodies and require the performer to express strong emotions when performing<sup>[3]</sup>.

## 1.4 Comparison of creation and transmission methods

Chinese folk music brings together the wisdom of people from different regions of China, and is flexible and improvisational, allowing the performer to play freely, which gives the performer great room for creativity. The performers' state of mind and emotions vary greatly when they perform, as well as their breath and muscularity. For example, when playing the pipa piece "v", the performer

must not only pay attention to the use of breath, but also create a good emotional state and integrate into the piece so that the audience can relate to it<sup>[4]</sup>. For pipa players, while the technique is important, the correct use of breath can also add to the music and give it a deeper connotation. Western music focuses on scientific rationality, and a performer can only perform a musical work in absolute terms, and cannot be separated from the creative intent of the creator. A good performer should have good coordination ability of western music, and should grasp the overall style, tone pitch, strength and intensity of the piece, and the speed of playing, and do a good job of coordinating the performance of each part.

## **2. Measures for traditional music education in colleges and universities in the comparison of Chinese and Western music**

### **2.1 Establishing the subjectivity of traditional music education**

In the comparative teaching of Chinese and Western music, colleges and universities need to establish the subjectivity of traditional music education, not just apply the Western music education system, and establish cultural attentiveness on the basis of promoting traditional music culture, strengthening students' identification with Chinese traditional music, and making more people understand and inherit Chinese traditional music culture. Colleges and universities need to integrate traditional music into the music teaching system, constantly promote innovation in the content and form of traditional music teaching, establish the training goal of cultivating excellent talents who master traditional music knowledge, fully reflect the subjectivity of traditional music in the teaching process, and implement traditional music cultural thinking. Colleges and universities can start from the form of ancient music scores, examine the tones, the eye of the board, the words, and the related materials, and open up the relationship between music scores and music, literature, history, and philosophy. Universities can focus on fostering emerging cross-disciplines, bridging music and literature, linking teaching, research, creation and social services, and combining cultural heritage with cultural outreach. At the same time, universities need to strengthen the subjectivity of traditional music education in order to enhance Chinese cultural heritage and accurately grasp the core of Chinese ritual and music culture. On this basis universities can play a fundamental role in education in the inheritance and innovation of Chinese cultural genes, allowing contemporary education to be rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese culture and enhancing the connotation and quality of education. In addition, universities need to unify inheritance and innovation with exchange and borrowing, deeply excavate and refine the beneficial ideological and artistic values in excellent traditional culture, and actively absorb the excellent cultural achievements of other countries, so that literature and art can be more in line with the trend of progress of the times and better lead the social style.

### **2.2 Building traditional music teachers' team**

At present, due to the lack of attention to traditional music education in colleges and universities, the teacher resource power of traditional music majors is weak. In traditional music teaching in colleges and universities, teachers play an important role. In order to improve the effect of traditional music teaching, we should strengthen the construction of traditional music teachers' team in colleges and universities and improve teachers' teaching level. First of all, teachers themselves should pay attention to the learning of theoretical knowledge and practical skills of traditional music. Teachers can learn by attending expert lectures and traditional music exchange meetings in major professional music colleges to improve their professional knowledge and understanding of traditional music. Second, different forms of traditional music teaching ability training activities are

actively carried out, such as inviting experts to hold public demonstration classes, organizing observation and exchange activities, and releasing information about teaching conferences, etc., so as to actively build a platform for teachers to exchange and learn, and encourage them to attend various traditional music teaching conferences and training. Teachers are encouraged to attend various traditional music teaching conferences and trainings. Teachers exercise their practical skills in traditional music teaching by attending training courses. Keeping up with the new curriculum, the participating teachers comprehensively improve their teaching ability and subject expertise, exchange learning experiences and collide with sparks of thinking in continuous lesson grinding and discussion, which further enhance the comprehensive teaching skills and teaching research literacy of traditional music teachers and better promote their future education and teaching work. Finally, colleges and universities should strengthen the Internet knowledge and skills training of traditional music teachers, while inviting outstanding traditional music folk art masters and traditional music non-genetic inheritors to schools to conduct lectures, strengthen the learning and communication between teachers and folk artists, and study the theoretical knowledge and performance techniques of traditional music. Piano teachers should also develop a perfect traditional music teaching plan to enrich the contemporary features of traditional music teaching and improve the effectiveness of traditional music classroom teaching.

### **2.3 Building a traditional music curriculum**

In the traditional music education of colleges and universities comparing Chinese and Western music, students who study traditional music such as folk songs and folk instruments also need to have knowledge of western music theory knowledge and song harmony, but there is a lack of traditional music series teaching courses. Therefore, colleges and universities should build a series of traditional music courses, offering compulsory courses on Chinese music theory and traditional music rhythms, as well as elective courses on folk instruments such as guqin, guzheng, pipa, etc., so that traditional Chinese music culture can be integrated into the curriculum. For example, NUST Hangzhou Institute of Advanced Studies offers a course on "Appreciation of Traditional Chinese Music", the first course on "Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo", which has been listed as a national intangible cultural heritage item <sup>[5]</sup>. The teacher used a new way of dialogue and sharing. The "Hearing Tradition - Exchanging Music" intercollegiate academic exchange and cooperation competition was officially launched at Hang High School, and the academic association will last for the whole fall semester. In the future, every Wednesday morning in the music classroom of Hang High School, students from both schools will form an academic debriefing group to give lectures on the same traditional music topic, with instrumental music and singing sessions, and even invite non-genetic heritages to participate in the activities online and offline. By offering traditional Chinese art and culture courses such as "Appreciation of Traditional Chinese Music", "Appreciation of Chinese Painting" and "Spiritual Enlightenment of Chinese Culture", we empower new vitality in aesthetic education, develop students' horizons, comprehensively improve their humanities and science literacy, explore a curriculum model that integrates science and humanities, and accelerate the cultivation of complex scientific and technological elites.

### **2.4 Transforming traditional music teaching methods**

Based on the comparative teaching of Chinese and Western music, traditional music education in colleges and universities needs to change the teaching methods, increase the teaching of oral and mental transmission, cultivate students to learn traditional music based on and make creative innovations, and give traditional music a deeper connotation. In order to improve the quality of traditional music teaching in colleges and universities, teachers should combine Internet technology

in pre-class preparation, classroom teaching activities and post-class teaching expansion, and cultivate students' good musical and cultural literacy with students as the center<sup>[6]</sup>. First, in the pre-class preparation, teachers should release electronic traditional music textbooks and learning materials on online platforms, ask students to pre-study in advance, and assign pre-class homework through class WeChat groups and nailing platforms to encourage students' self-study. Secondly, in the classroom teaching process, teachers can use Internet technology and multimedia technology to play traditional music videos to fully motivate students to learn traditional music. At the same time, remote online teaching can also be realized through the Internet, using the time-sensitive feature of the Internet to make the traditional music teaching classroom an interactive communication platform for teachers and students. Finally, participatory learning is encouraged to make students actively participate in the classroom. By conducting rich classroom activities, such as group discussions and singing training of Chinese and Western music, students' main position is highlighted and encouraged to strengthen their understanding of traditional music in comparative learning of Chinese and Western music, strengthen their proficiency in traditional music, invariably transform their thinking in learning traditional music, and improve their artistic quality.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, although traditional music classroom teaching in colleges and universities is based on teaching traditional music knowledge, innovative countermeasures adapted to traditional music education in colleges and universities should also be explored in the comparative teaching of Chinese opera music. Colleges and universities can inherit the excellent Chinese traditional music culture and make students enhance their cultural confidence and national pride by establishing the subjectivity of traditional music education, building traditional music teachers, constructing traditional music curriculum and transforming traditional music teaching methods. Universities should respond positively to the people-centred creative orientation, pay more attention to the national genes in traditional culture, adhere to the principle of "cultural confidence" and take root in the aesthetic field of Chinese national art. At the same time, universities need to actively explore art education models and artistic talent training mechanisms with Chinese characteristics and reflecting the depth of traditional culture in classroom teaching, academic activities and performance activities, taking the promotion of traditional Chinese music culture as an important path for art education.

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