

## II.2 Teaching Chinese Traditional Music with *Generative Instruction and Effective Music Teaching*

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*This text is the carefully adapted transcription of the recording of the presentation of Zheng Li and Huo Gua at the symposium in Leipzig 2014. Prof. Dr. Zheng Li read parts of her presentation in Chinese language alternating with her assistant Huo Gua, who translated into English. Only the English part is printed in this book. The title is given from the editor. (Ed. CW)<sup>1</sup>*

I'll do my best. Forgive me, if there are any mistakes. You may think we are dressed very strangely, but that is because Mr. Christopher asked us to find a strange lesson and talk about the strange points in it. Our Beijing-Lesson is about the traditional Chinese music culture and these costumes are traditional Chinese clothes. We chose two lessons for you, one is from Beijing. It talks about a kind of folk music called *Jingyun Dagu* a story with drums and some singing. The second lesson is from Sweden. It talks about teaching of instruments.

We are happy to be invited by Mr. Christopher and to be here to visit you. My teacher said that she has attended many international meetings before, but all those meetings just had a lot of rooms which she could enter and in which she was able to watch something. There was no chance for her to have meaningful and deep conversation with the researchers from all over the world. We now have a chance to introduce the music lesson from China to everybody. We appreciate this chance to be here and to introduce this Chinese music lesson to you. It was a lot of work and also some trouble.

Firstly, we couldn't receive the DVD because the Chinese government is very strict with videos which are not yet published. They want to check the videos one by one. We think the DVDs might be in their heads now. We were finally able to download all the videos, but at a very slow speed because it's from the website. We then applied for our visas – which is not easy – but they finally arrived on the last day of August. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September we got

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ready, bought some clothes and other things. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September we departed from Beijing, but unfortunately the flight was delayed due to heavy rain. We had to hurry to catch the plane in Stockholm, Sweden, we only had 10 minutes to get on the plane. We arrived in Berlin at 12 o'clock in the evening and went to the hotel. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> morning, we got on a train and now we are here. We had planned to come here with three people, one of which is the teacher in this video. But because in China September is the new month of the new semester, she wasn't able to leave. We really appreciate this chance to learn from you.

Before this meeting, once we got here, we found that it was worth to learn from you, the organizers, your responsibility, I think that is the character of Germany. We have the chance to watch eight different videos from different countries and this lets us know what a music lesson is like in other countries. In China, we used to introduce and learn some music pedagogics such as Orff, Kodály, Suzuki, Dalcroze. My teacher [Zheng Li] went to Hungary in 1996 to learn pedagogics and to Salzburg to see some academic examples of Orff, but that is a long, long time ago. Today, an education revolution is happening in China. Therefore, it is important to consider many different styles of teaching. This is very helpful to gain experience for our own music lesson revolution. This is why I chose to come back and conduct further research.

This time, I chose the lesson from Sweden to make a comparison. Actually, at first we wanted to show a lesson from Scotland, where folk music, the dance music was taught, but we changed our plan because the Swedish lesson seemed to fit much better into this requirement of a "strange" lesson. We chose this lesson because the teaching of instruments is a very weak point in China's music education. This lesson shows how we dream to have it in our country.

We found some paintings on the ground outside of the academy store where you can see the process from ape to human. It tells us that the biggest difference between a human and an ape is that we can create and use tools. We can use and create tools with our own hands and this is essential for our modern world. It is mostly common to teach singing in a Chinese music lesson. I think that if the teaching of instruments was part of our music lesson, our students would have a richer experience. It must be a very important part of the music education and it mustn't be left out.

We can see that some areas are doing a very good job of teaching instruments, such as Hong Kong. Hong Kong was ruled by Great Britain for one hundred years, so the music education system is a lot different from China

mainland. We want the students to inherit the rules of traditional music. This is a way to make them love our country more. In Hong Kong, the department of music education of our government asks Middle school students to choose one traditional instrument which they must learn. Many more children and teenagers go to concerts in Hong Kong. The Chinese orchestra is very outstanding. Teaching instruments plays a very important role to improve a student's musical ability and also their mind. We do have some teaching of instruments in China mainland, but the instruments are not the formal instruments that we usually take for performing. There, they mainly use mouth organs, melodica, recorder or some kind of percussion. We also train some students to learn *Erhu*, *Pipa*, traditional string Chinese instruments, and sometimes the guitar. It is hard for us to organize people into a band or an orchestra and it's hard for us to teach the students harmony or chords, they usually only play the melody.

We've had music education for hundreds of years. We started to learn from Germany and Japan, we call that time *xue tang yue ge*. We use a piece of music from a German composer or some other European composer and we rewrite the lyrics in Chinese. After the 1950s, we started some formal music education, we added appreciation and some theory. After the 1980s, we finally started with some instrument teaching, but our music education system is very different from yours and our economy is not very balanced. We don't have enough instruments or rooms and we don't have the high quality of trained music teachers. We can hardly find a single music teacher that is able to play different kinds of instruments. So this lesson that we found is a surprise gift for us.

In this lesson we can see that the students had many choices of instruments. I don't think we need to play the lesson again,. Your lesson is very popular, we are familiar with it. We found that the students are able to practice a lot. We found that the teachers teach the students one by one and they can learn these instruments and perform some music together. They gained musical experience directly just by way of practicing. We are able to see the development of the students experience and their musical ability. It's so different from our musical lesson! In our lesson, usually the teacher is the focal point. We are trying to change this, to switch the position of the teacher and the student and we have started to see some change. We are trying to get the students to become the main focus of the musical lesson and we want to judge a teacher based on the behaviour and the experience of the students. But most

of our music teachers were not able to take on this new role, they just continued to teach as they used to.

Now, the department of music education of our government has asked for a new revolution, one we like to call: “turn this classroom upside down”, “Generative Instruction”. We want the teachers to really help the students if they have a difficult time or problems. We call this “effective music teaching”. Currently, there are researchers doing a study on this aspect. You can see this style in the Beijing-Lesson-video. The teacher is able to play the instruments. It is hard to teach the teachers in our music teacher education. We couldn’t teach them to relax and to be able to play several kinds of instruments. The main subject in our education of music teachers is to learn singing, keyboard and some theory, these are the main subjects. The teachers can only learn instruments if they learn it outside of the education we give them.

We have chosen this Beijing-Lesson for you. We want to give our students a lifelong music education by having them learn instruments. That is one reason why we chose this lesson called *The Charm of Jingyun Dagu*, which is taught by Zhao Feng. The lady is a teacher at Beijing Middle School no. 8. We have five basic ideas:

1. Take appreciation as a call and interest as a motive to power.
2. Stress music practice and encourage music creativity.
3. Highlight music creation and focus on comprehensive lessons with different subjects.
4. Develop and expand Chinese traditional music as a very important part of music culture.
5. Music for all students and take care about individual personality.

In the files, the government writes:

We should take the Chinese traditional music as a very important part of music education. Students should be familiar with and love our countries’ music culture. Cultivate national consciousness and patriotism.

Furthermore, the government of China has noticed and focused on the importance of inheriting Chinese traditional culture, which includes Chinese music culture. We have 56 ethnic minorities [Huo Gua translated “nations”]. The Han-Chinese is the main ethnic group in China. In every province there are different kinds of folk music. I’m guessing you all know the Beijing Opera, but every area has their own opera, their own folk songs, their own folk in-

struments, folk poems and songs and their own dance music. So, you can see, it is a huge task for us to inherit all the Chinese traditional music cultures.

Until now, our music education still consists mostly of European music as the focal point of our lessons. Many of our students are familiar with your music, but they don't know a lot about their own countries' music. In our Tuba orchestra the teacher played a famous traditional Chinese song called *Jasmine*. We know it is famous all over the world, but our own students didn't know it. The students asked the teacher: "Where does this song come from, from which country? It sounds strange." The teacher decided to create a new lesson called *The Flower Jasmine*. She wants the students to understand the relationship between music and culture, music and language and the relationship between music and the area.

There are three different attitudes towards our traditional music. One is to only accept traditional music, in their mind it's the only one to accept, it's hard to accept any other kind of music. The next attitude towards our traditional music is called "turn back". But really, the attitude we need is to face towards it. As music teachers we don't have another choice.

The lesson we introduced to you today, this lesson is actually in the textbook the students are supposed to learn and know. But in our music teacher education they didn't know this kind of thing. Usually, they skip this part of the textbook. The teacher in the video is actually one of my teacher's students. She learned the vocal-singing in Europe and is also able to play some piano. It's a really big challenge for her to teach this lesson. In order to be able to teach this lesson well she went to a professional musician to teach her. She's very brave to take on this challenge and it is commendable that she is willing to learn. We want our students to know culture and music from where they are from. It's not what she majored in, she needed to change her way of rehearsing, her pronunciation and her way of teaching. We chose this lesson for you because it shows some of new ideas already.

How can we teach the traditional music? We believe that most of our music teachers should change their way. In the past we ordered our students to read the notes before they were able to sing. But this time, the song is one from folk music. It's inherited in a way that the traditional artists learned it from their teachers, by singing it and getting the feeling, understanding the song and memorizing it. The charm and the taste of this kind of folk music cannot be written down on paper in the form of some notes.

Our music teachers have very different abilities in many different areas.

The highly qualified music teachers always gather in the big cities. Our countryside is very poor and the music education is weak. The middle and western part of China we really worry about. There is barely any music education in the mountains. The government gave the subject the name “most needed, but weakest”-subject. Many teachers try to teach this kind of a music lesson, but they weren’t able to get good results and couldn’t improve their own abilities. Music is not a subject needed for the test to get into college or higher education. In the mountain area, or the far away area, the music teachers are taken for other subjects. Many teachers didn’t have the chance to learn music, so it’s very difficult for them when they have to teach about Western music.

My teacher created a training plan for the teachers of the *Gansu*-province. They studied very hard, but it was very difficult for them. But when I asked them to sing their own songs from the area, their folk songs, they sang it so well that even we couldn’t reproduce the charm and the taste even though we graduated from Music College. We found that they have a deep connection to the traditional music culture in the area. That is in their character and their advantage. Here is a video from the mountains of the *Yunnan* Province. The city is called *Lanchang*. The teacher is not very good at playing instruments but she has a very beautiful, original voice. I think she is a characteristic

singer. She didn’t have a music education but we found that she is very good at folk music. This is very common, there are many teachers just like her. That is the reason why we chose this lesson for you (see Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1:* A video from the mountains of the Yunnan Province (Beijing-Short-Film-1)

She can teach folk singing and folk dancing but she cannot tell you anything about the Western music. We want to teach folk music to inherit our traditions of music culture. We want to protect and inherit our national spirit. The lesson *Jingyun Dagu* taught by Zhao Feng introduces this traditional folk music, Jingyun Dagu, and tells the history and the way this art developed. It shows the traditional 7 beats, which is a traditional rhythm for this kind of art. The students practice together and make the best use of the tools nearby, not instruments. They are making music the old way, and here comes the shocker:



Fig. 2: Making Music the Old Way (Beijing-Short-Film-2)

This song talks about a man who wakes up every day at three o'clock in the morning to watch the sunrise and have some tea. In this activity, the students and the teacher sing in the traditional way. The lyrics come from their real life, it talks about how great the boys' class is. We don't have a lot of time left so we will not show more of this. We think this lesson shows the area's features. The other areas could have their own textbook written by them. The second lesson shows how our future music lessons should be like. At this time, it is very important to keep our traditional characters. Also, this lesson provides a lot of practice and the students can learn different things from different music styles. And finally, there is a performance. The music lesson has a structure. Because of our population we have very big classes of 50–80 students in one class. We must find a way to teach that many students at once. The structure of our music education is very important. It is also a way of

teaching comparisons and finding different pieces of music, discovering different styles of artists. We also have a mixture of styles. It is the future of this art. We think the teacher is trying her best to teach this lesson, and we can see the quality. This lesson took part in the 6<sup>th</sup> Chinese National Music Lesson competition and it won the first prize! Everybody liked it! Today, we took this lesson here and we wanted to help you open your mind.

If you have any, now is the time to ask questions.