

The Differences Between Chinese and Western Music Education

JING Jia^{[a],*}

^[a]School of Music, Jiangnan University, Wuhan, China.
*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Music education development in China and Western countries is inseparable with the basic educational concept of the country. Although the educational idea of western countries is advanced, we cannot completely copy it. We can only learn from the educational idea of other countries to improve our country's own educational system, so as to improve the overall quality of teachers and cultivate more outstanding musical talents.

Key words: Music education; Psychological quality; Piano; Differences

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INTRODUCTION

China is a country with a long history of ceremonies. Chinese educational history can be traced back to thousands of years ago. After the Han Dynasty Confucian culture has taken the dominating position, and in the late Qing Dynasty western modern education has been introduced. In modern times, we have learned the educational system from Japan, Germany, and the United States. Since the establishment of People's Republic of China, we have also studied from the Soviet Union. It can be said that our country today's educational system has not only retained the traditional Chinese Confucian culture but also has been integrated with other countries' educational systems.

Western educational philosophy is open and pluralistic, encouraging students to demonstrate their "characteristics": Allow students to boldly show themselves, do what they want to do. Even if everyone does not recognize you, you should recognize yourself. While in China, influenced by Confucianism, students tend to be more subtle, know more humility, in emotional expression will not be as direct as American students, and are likely to bury a lot of emotions in their hearts. In language expression it is the same, they like to "say half sentences," "do not speak more than necessary", and let the listener to speculate what they really mean, so many foreigners are not suited to such a manner of speaking when they come to China. These differences in educational concepts are reflected more prominently in the aspects of "cultural education", "music psychological quality", and "music basic education", etc..

1. THE WESTERN CONCEPT OF CULTURE AND EDUCATION

As the world's top ranked university - Harvard University's motto is derived from the Latin word "VERITAS", which means "truth". Just as the university motto, students in this university have been walking on the road "to explore the truth". It is also this world's firstly ranked university which has created seven US presidents, 40 Nobel Prize winners and 30 Pulitzer Prize winners. JK Rowling's speech at the 2008 Harvard university graduation ceremony is impressive. In this more than 20 minutes of speech, she did not say that how she was able to be successful, instead she humorously self-deprecated her own experience to tell the students how she failed and what's the benefits of the failure. Students of this world's top ranked Harvard university usually have a potential superiority. They do not have the painful "failure" experience, but to Rowling, it seems

that “fear of failure is as strong as the desire to succeed.” In Rowling’s speech, she told the graduates that their ambitions and the expectation of the people around them might generate serious conflicts, even if their parents are likely not to understand them, support them, but she has always believed that she was born to write novels. A “failure” in the life journey means that people should release something which is not necessary, after numerous “failures” and “frustrations” people can really recognize themselves and realize the true power of friendship, and these are precious gifts given by life, are painful victories. After a failure people can get the free, which is the determination to succeed on their real stages. Rowling tells us that “qualifications and CVs are not our life. Life is difficult, complicated, and beyond anyone’s control. Having the humility to know that will make you better survive life’s vicissitudes.” “Life is like a story. What matters is not the length, but the quality.”

Similarly, Steve Jobs’ speech in 2005 graduation ceremony of Stanford University is also only 15 minutes. He told three stories, which were also thought-provoking. The final sentence “stay hungry, stay foolish” has inspired many students. He told the graduates that they have to have a faith, no matter what the faith is. Because only when they have a faith, they can be self-confidence. All occasions in life inevitably link with each other, and only when people have a faith they are able to have a different life. After graduation and before enters the society, a person will be faced with the problem of employment. If he is able to take his hobby as a career, it’s no doubt that he will be happy, because only in this way his life will be full of fun, and doesn’t have to work just for survival. Get up every day to face the mirror and asked yourself, “If today were the last day of your life, what would you do?” If you do not get an answer for several days, then you should change the current state of life. We will all grow old, will die, this is the reality, so do not repeat someone else’s life, do not repeat someone else’s idea, have the courage to listen to our inner voice, and become the person we want to be.

2. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHINESE AND WESTERN EDUCATORS ON THE ASPECT OF “MUSIC PSYCHOLOGICAL QUALITY”

In preparing repertoire, foreign teachers are more likely to let students make the choice. When the students take the right of choice, they will enhance the sense of responsibility, and will be responsible for their own choice. In order to choose a favorite song they would look up the musical works of various periods, and naturally in the process their awareness and recognition of musical works will be raised. Secondly, it is because this musical

work is selected by the students themselves, they will make more efforts to practice it, and believe that they have made the right choice. In addition to guide on how to play correctly, the teacher will need to teach them to enjoy the process, to enjoy the achievement given by the stage, and to understand and feel the enthusiasm of audiences and supports of friends and families. Do not “perform” because they have to, but interpret the musical work to the audiences from their hearts. If a student plays disorderly, the teacher in the audience will firstly assure that the student’s performance is very good, but the teacher believes that he/she can do it better next time, and tells the students the most important thing in a performance is to maintain the “integrity “and” stage accomplishment”. “Stage accomplishment” has been especially valued by foreign teachers. They believe that the manner of the students on and off the stage, and the standard “stage etiquette” is the “musical accomplishment” which the students must possess. Secondly, they let the students consider which part of the performance goes wrong, and then analyze the reasons of the failure together to ensure that next time they will not have the same problem. We can find that in every step the teacher does not use their “subjective consciousness” to influence the students, but let the students think about the problem themselves each time, regardless of right or wrong. Such a method can better cultivate the students’ judgment of right and wrong, and allows them to keep a good attitude, even if there is an “emergency situation “in the performance, they have the ability to remain calm and to complete the entire performance owing to the basic “stage accomplishment”. For live performances, Cao Li’s book *Music Learning and Teaching Psychology* (2013, p.257) says that, “in a live show, when facing the pressure brought by the full audiences, a performer will often have physiological and psychological abnormalities due to emotional stress. His musical performance skills will be disturbed or even destroyed, affecting the effect of the show. Some live performances only show 60%-70% or less of the usual level. Music Performance practice is a training process for a performer’s growth, and in this process, the performer must constantly adjust his mentality, exclude a variety of psychological disorders, boost confidence, and calmly and successfully complete the performance.

3. INTERPENETRATIVE DIFFERENCES OF “MUSIC BASIC EDUCATION” AND “MUSIC PSYCHOLOGICAL QUALITY” BETWEEN THE WESTERN AND CHINA

For music basic education, music teachers at home and abroad will similarly firstly develop children’s interests through a variety of ways to guide them to like the piano. A lot of children in the beginning are impossible

to stay at the piano for a very long time. The teacher will guide them through increasing the fun of practices. In the process of learning, the teacher will encourage the students to participate in music performances. This is because firstly it can rich students' stage experience, secondly it can increase students' confidence.

In basic piano education, Western music teachers lay special emphasis on students' music treatment details. For example, they have very strict requirements on the mastery of "rhythm", "pause", and "pedal", and will clearly point out students' slightest error so that they will take the standard playing method from the beginning, which is very important and cannot be ignored. Similarly, Chinese piano educator Mr. Dan Zhaoyi's points out in his book *Children Piano Teaching and Counseling*, "practice habit - is a quality more important than the practice itself. To cultivate a good habit for children so as to lay a good foundation for their future self-study will benefit them for a lifetime." (Dan, 2004, p.86)

China would still lay more emphasis on the "traditional method of piano playing," but there are many new methods of piano playing in the United States and other countries, added with a lot of new elements. In piano teaching Western music teachers focus on "personalized" playing, encourage students to add their new ideas into the play, and break a lot of "traditional values". These newly emerged "performance effect" is hard to be accepted in the beginning, but as more and more "personalized" playing ways come into people's eyes, the audiences began to accept and learn to appreciate them. It is also because American education lays stress on the concept of "individual", resulting in everyone's more distinctive personality, and innovating and enriching the piano playing methods. Music is a way to express our emotion, and is the only language without any borders. Because of this reason, when teachers tutor piano education, they will be also concerned about the mental health of students. Many foreign countries will help students get out some emotional problems through music. Different types of music have different psychological implications on the brain. For this reason, students can find calm and hope in the music, and can feel the meaning of life. Cao Li's book *Music Learning and Teaching Psychology* (2013, p.335) mentions that,

music is an important part of art education in schools. Although it is not the all contents of aesthetics, its psychological impact is similarly incalculable. Like the impact and effectiveness of psychology, the impact of psychological effect of music education is not always positive. It has both the positive effect, good influence, and the negative effect, adverse influence. We should understand and master the characteristics and rules of the psychological effects of music teaching, promote the good and abandon the wrong, consciously use and apply its positive function, prevent and overcome its negative effects, thereby improve the quality of music teaching and education.

4. DIFFERENCES OF QUALITY BETWEEN CHINESE AND WESTERN MUSIC TEACHERS

Teachers have been acting a particularly important role in the educational process. Their impact on students' life road is immeasurable, so teachers must have the responsibility and obligation to guide students toward the right path. Similarly, teachers should also possess high "educational attainments and qualifications". As Zhao Songguang mentions in his book *Introduction to Music Educational Psychology* (2011, p.96), "music teacher is the messenger of music aesthetic education, and is the guide who spreads the beauty of music to young students." In the study of educational psychology abroad, German educator Diesterweg talked about teacher's psychology as that: Teachers should have the ability to creatively use education and teaching methods, should master the concise expression way of language, and should possess a strong character and an indomitable will. Again, this book also points out that the current situation of music and the situation of music teachers of our country are far from that of other countries, the reasons are:

- a) Some local educational authorities ignore the music education, so that the construction of teaching staff has been influenced in varying degrees.
- b) Our country has a long-term tendency to favor techniques more than arts, or pay more attention to imparting knowledge and underestimating the cultivation of aesthetics.
- c) A large number of music teachers do not have a strong ability in the application, teaching, and research of music theory. (Zhao, 2011, 298)

Thus, in order to cultivate outstanding students we must firstly improve the teaching staff. Only the best, high-quality teachers are able to stimulate the inherent potential of each student, so that students can continue to surpass themselves and realize themselves. Many colleges and universities have recognized the importance of this problem, so in recent years colleges and universities have strongly encouraged teachers to continue to study, have provided a lot of opportunities for them to go abroad for academic exchanges, have organized internal seminars, have invited well-known foreign professors to pay academic visits, have offered master classes, and have created a healthy, good environment for teachers. Similarly, Zhao Songguang's book *Introduction to Music Educational Psychology* also includes what Michael-L-Mark has said in *Contemporary Music Education* (Guan Jianhua, Qiao Xiaodong as the translators) (Zhao, 2011, p.301),

- the abilities for a teacher include three aspects: personal quality, musical ability and professional quality, covering a very wide range of contents: Not only personal and social interaction, adjustment ability, and evaluation ability for new ideas, but also the abilities to conduct music performance, to create, and to appreciate, as well as the abilities to grasp education and music

educational thoughts, to apply theories, and to understand the function and responsibility of teachers, and the entrepreneurial spirit to continue to learn, etc..

CONCLUSION

By the above analysis, we understand that the development of music education is closely linked to the basic educational philosophy of a country. Although the educational philosophy of Western countries is advanced, we cannot completely copy it. We can only learn from the educational philosophy of other countries to improve our own educational system, improve the overall quality of teachers, and cultivate more outstanding musical talents for the country.

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