

Aesthetic Education in Chinese Colleges and Universities: Music Education to Non-music Majors

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Abstract. The background that lots of Western universities have noticed the importance of aesthetic education and music education is that they offer a higher level of teaching and add teaching equipment, the lack of music education in Chinese universities has been more obvious. Based on the development of music education in Western universities, the authors looked into how students were being taught music in Chinese universities and colleges. Although the authors' findings from the questionnaire indicate that Chinese university students do not receive adequate music instruction, they are not pessimistic. The article by the author offers some reference data for upcoming studies on music instruction in Chinese universities and colleges.

Keywords: Chinese College; Aesthetic Education; Non-music Majors.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, aesthetic education has become a major hit of education in China, music education is a significant way of putting aesthetic education into effect. While music education has been widely spreading in conservatories, it hasn't been given enough attention in Chinese colleges and universities to those students whose foundation of music education is relatively weak [1-3]. The author will analyze the Chinese education system and the format of examinations to elaborate on the reason why they lack music education. The nine-year obligatory education program in China is a unified educational system, this system is universal in that it stipulates that all children who fit school age have their obligations to go to school, and the Chinese government supports them to be educated freely from grade one to grade nine. Someone who wants to keep on accepting higher education at high school must pass the entrance examinations. For this reason, when children get into school, scores and grades then become their goals, and parents and teachers pay much attention to their grades. Most Chinese young children have experienced that their Music class is always replaced by Math, Chinese, or another subject that is considered pretty important, especially when they are ready to have examinations [4-6]. It seems that they have a few music classes during the whole semester. As their grade gets higher and higher, grades become more and more important and they have fewer and fewer music classes. When they are accepted by high school, they have a higher goal of entering university, so good grades are the center of their life during that time. In addition to this, the subjects they learn are separated into two kinds: Social sciences and humanities and Science departments. In this case, they learn fewer subjects to make the specialization stronger. In this background, it can be seen that students can't gain music education enough and systematically during the Nine-year compulsory education system and the time of high school. Unless those students who used to take extra-curricular music classes, most of them have very weak basics of music.

2. Investigation of music activities of non-music majors students in Chinese colleges and universities

The author made a questionnaire to explore music education for non-art major students in Chinese universities. A total of 330 students from different provinces filled out the questionnaire. Fourteen questions in this questionnaire that is displayed in table 1. The author divided all majors into three main categories: Social sciences and humanities, Biological Technology, and Others. Social sciences and humanities and Biological Technology are the main two categories of all majors. Figure 1

provides their respective proportions, 47.88% of them come from Humanities and Social Sciences, and 45.45% comes from Science and Technology, from the figure, it can be seen that the data are evenly distributed that can make this investigation more objective.

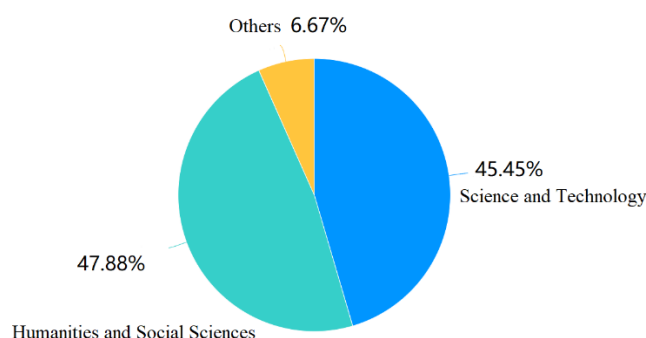


Fig. 1 The composition of categories

The author's thought of designing this questionnaire is dividing these questions into three main themes: question 1 to 4 is about Music literacy that students have already had, question 5 to 8 is about the Music habits of the students, and question 9 to 14 is about Students' willingness of taking part in music activities.

Table 1. The survey's questions

Question	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
1. How often do you listen to music?	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
2. Do you have experience learning instruments or singing?	Yes	No	
3. Do you know any of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Xinghai Xian, or Zi Huang?	Know some of them	Have ever heard	No idea
4. Have you ever been reminded of your life experiences while listening to music, or suddenly remembered a song when you were going through something?	Yes	No	
5. The type of music do you usually listen to? (Multiple Choice Questions)	Popular music	Classical Music	Others
6. How often does your school host any of the following music events (Singer Competition, Choral Competition, Arts and Entertainment Show, Music Festival, Music Radio...)?	Often	Sometimes	Never
7. Do you have a clear preference for the version of composer/author/singer when listening to music?	Yes	No	
8. Will you want to know the background and lyrics when listening to songs you like?	Yes	No	
9. Do you like to watch a musical movie?	Yes	No	No preference
10. Would you like to watch musical films that are screened in your school?	Yes	No	
11. Do you want your school to invite art groups to perform or hold art lectures at school?	Yes	No	No preference
12. Would you like to join Chorus/Orchestra/Musical Theatre Club or found a band by yourself in your spare time?	Yes	No	No preference
13. What do you want to learn in music class? (Multiple Choice Questions)	Theoretical content	Practical content	Perceptive content
14. Would you like to learn about nice Chinese and Western music works?	Yes	No	No preference

From questions two to four, the answers to all these questions show that the Music literacy students have already had is positive. In the answer to the second question, 56.36% of the students choose that they have experience learning instruments or singing and 43.64% don't. There 5.45% of the students don't know any of these famous musicians in question three while others have heard of them or know them. 92.12% of the students could connect music with their life and 7.88% of them couldn't.

From these answers, the author explores that most students have a habit of listening to music and have some knowledge of Chinese and foreign musicians. They also have a sense of music that they could connect music they have listened to with their life. But as we can see, nearly half of the students don't have experience in learning instruments and singing, they don't have extra music education while they don't get enough music education at school, this is a lack of aesthetic education for this part of students. Although many of them have known something about musicians like Bach, Beethoven, and Xinghai Xian. 50% of the 330 students just heard about them and 5.45% of the students know none of them. The author thinks learning about the world's most famous musicians and listening to their works is very important. The musicians who are widely known must have something great and the works which are still alive today must be classic and worthy of listening to.

Question 5 to 8 are about the Music habits of the students. In question 5, more than 90% of the students like popular music, and half of them like anime music and film music. Listening to popular music is good for them, it could soothe their mood after a busy day of work and study. The lyrics of popular music are close to life that could trigger their feelings. However, there is still another argument that could be described as aesthetic, or even "existential": within the field of popular music, there are a variety of styles and practices that have the potential to provide the performer and the listener with aesthetic (and social) experiences that other types of music do not [7]. Only 39.39% of them listen to classical music, it seems that classical music is relatively unfamiliar to them. Many students think classical music is difficult to understand and don't know to choose which piece of music is their start of listening to classical music. The author thinks the lack of listening to classical is one result of missing music education at school, so universities and colleges should pay more attention to introducing classical music to students. In question 6, the author finds 95.15% of the students choose their universities and colleges that used to hold activities related to music while 4.85% choose never. It is a good phenomenon that most universities and colleges try to enrich the spare time of students, but some of them still don't realize the importance of having some cultural activities.

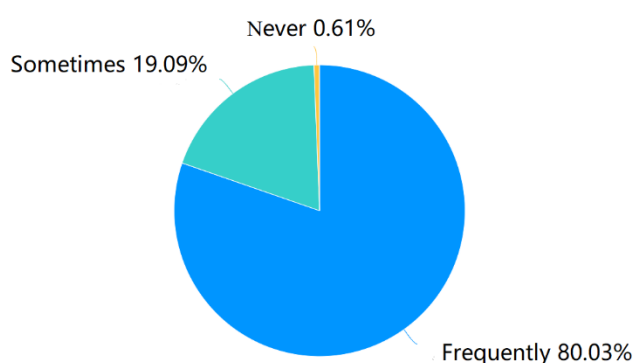


Fig 2. The frequency of listening to music, identical to question 1: How often do you listen to music

In questions 7 and 8, the author sees that 78.18% of the students have a preference for music, it is a good situation because it is proved that they have their own choice when listening to music rather than listening casually as some versions are not good. Also, 68.79% of them will look for information behind songs they like, this could help them build Aspectual hearing, which Drew Daniel said is “a hybrid encounter with the sound-heard-as-source, a manifold experience in which sound qua sound and music qua meaning were blurred into coextension.” “aspectual hearing” offers a usefully flexible model for how we perceive the expression of musical sound as a manifold which is always both: 1) an encounter with the “in itself” of sound as a physical vibration and 2) an encounter with the cultural

information saturated with historical grain, local specificity, gendered performativity, and genre-based contours.”

Question 9 to 14 is about Students' willingness of taking part in music activities. In this part, many problems are shown up. In question 9, 10.91% of the students choose they don't like a musical movies and in question 10, 36.67% of them choose they won't go to see films if some musical movies are screened at their school. In these two questions, many students demonstrate their clear attitude of "no". The attitude of "no" appears in the successive questions that follow. In question 11, 3.64% of the students don't want their universities to invite art groups to perform or hold art lectures at school. Figure 3 shows students' willingness of listening to lectures related to music.

The proportion of "no" highly increases in question 12 that 33.33% of the students don't want to like to join the Chorus/Orchestra/Musical Theatre Club or found a band by themselves in their spare time. Figure 4 shows students' willingness of joining musical activities.

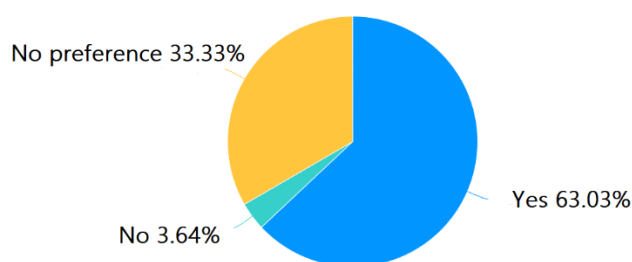


Fig 3. Students' willingness of listening to musical lectures, identical to question 11: Do you want your school to invite art groups to perform or hold art lectures at school

The answers to these two questions make the author confused that 3.64% of the students don't want their universities to invite art groups to perform or hold art lectures at school and 33.33% of them don't want to join musical activities in their spare time. But, looking back to the first question, only 0.61% of the students don't listen to music in their daily life. Why do the students like to listen to music but refuse to listen to music lectures as well as take part in musical activities? The author thinks there are some reasons for this phenomenon:

With the rapid growth of modern media, ways of listening to music are broadened and becoming more and more convenient, that is the reason why so many students listen to music frequently in their daily life, they could listen to music no matter when, where and what they are doing, just putting on the airphones and opening music software then they could enjoy music. Their unwellness in listening to musical lectures may be related to the Credit Unit System of the universities. Activities at universities are usually related to credits, teachers give different scores for joining different activities which make students highly utilitarian and destroys their interests, so when they hear that lectures will be held at school, they will associate the lectures with credits. Also, the contents of lectures are usually theoretical that is connected with the words like "boring" and "drowsy".

In question 13, the author investigates what students want to learn in music class. Figure 5 shows their choices of them.

It could be seen that 73.33% of the students like to learn perceptive content and 61.52% of them like practical content but only 29.7% of them want to learn theoretical content. It means that students could accept listening or practicing that they don't need to do many things, just listening or enjoying themselves. However, they don't want to learn theoretical things that are very important in music education. Listening to music makes people relaxed and happy so almost everyone listens to music every day. But doing something is usually difficult, and it is even harder to ask them to learn some boring theoretical things. However, as we know that experience is not the same as education. From listening to practicing and learning theoretical things, this process constitutes a complete process of music education but the questionnaire shows that the situation of students' willingness is becoming less and less optimistic. This situation is one of the results of lacking music education that they don't have experience in a lively and informative music class, they do not understand a complete music

class and only think of music class as listening to music and singing. The author thinks there should be music classes at universities and colleges that help them understand the whole process of music education.

Contrasting the answer to questions 13 and 14, the author finds that 61.52% of the students like to study singing and playing instruments but then ask them to join clubs of music or found a band by themselves, the proportion of it is 41.52%. They want to learn from teachers rather than do something by themselves because they haven't experienced music from a more holistic aspect and they are not being able to feel the joy of music. It is also a result of short of music education.

Though the result of the questionnaire seems optimistic, being fond of listening to music hides the absence of music education. Through analyzing and comparing the data the author finds the situation of music education for students at universities and colleges is grim. Finding solutions is impossible, otherwise, the next generation will even listen to music only and won't accept an entire music education.

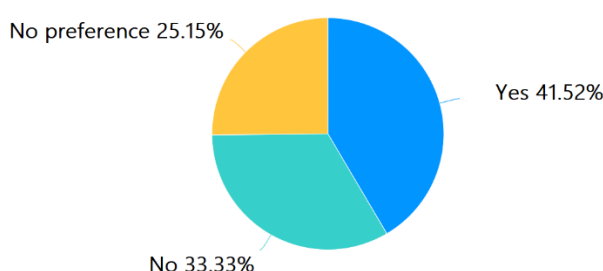


Fig 4. Student's willingness of joining musical activities in their spare time, identical to question 12: Would you like to join Chorus/Orchestra/Musical Theatre Club or found a band by yourself in your spare time

3. Possible explanations

This study proposes three reasons that might affect university students' lack of music education. The main reason the author thinks this is that students didn't gain adequate music education when they were at school before Year Nine as the subject of Music hasn't been paid much attention to. It seems that Music is not quite a usual subject at school. Although this subject is written on the class schedule, it doesn't always be attended and it will be occupied by other subjects like Math that we think it is really important during the final weeks. It is observed that almost every school has its choir and orchestra, however, students who can take part in these groups are those who have already gained some learning basis. Under such circumstances, students gain poor opportunities to get a music education. Because everyone appreciates music in and of itself, classroom music can all too frequently operate in a vacuum, taking up time in the schedule but with little recognition of its importance as a subject discipline in the curriculum. Even those who do express a conviction in its worth frequently defend its inclusion in the curriculum as merely serving as a balance to "the academic courses" demands [8].

Family background is also an important reason. Whether children's parents send their children to learn an instrument or sing depends on their basic family economics and knowledge. Therefore, a student's capacity to pursue music further after Year 9 depends on their cultural and socioeconomic background. According to a recent study, just 21% of adolescents whose parents' education ended at the secondary level would learn a musical instrument at some point in school, compared to 52% of students whose parents graduated from college. Children in households with a combined income of more than £46,000 annually are twice as likely to study an instrument as children in families with a combined income of £28,000 or less, according to the same report [8].

Another reason is that as students want to advance to a higher degree, they are stressed to prepare for examinations that they don't have spare time to practice instruments or sing, many of them stop learning music for this reason.

4. The necessity of progressing music education in colleges and universities

It is generally acknowledged that Europe and the United States have more advanced and well-principled music education systems, and they are also improving music education at universities. The shortage of music education is not good for the development of education in China.

Also, accepting music education is good for students' growth as there are many advantages to learning music. The students, their abilities could be improved in the process of music education. Music helps people use their bodies more flexibly as there is a strong connection between music and body movements. The relationship between music and movement is firmly ingrained in cultural heritage, with music playing a significant role as the accompaniment to dance in prehistoric cultures. Music can be understood as having originated from the rhythms of our bodies, both with and for the body. Friedrich Nietzsche, a philosopher, pianist, and composer, once said that "We listen to music with our muscles"¹. This association between listening to music and moving has now been proven to exist on a brain level. Music is helpful in the coordination and stimulation of locomotor movement due to the interaction of our auditory and motor systems [9]. These abilities will not just help them to study music, but they could also improve other aspects of the students. Music could also cure people's hearts and relieve psychological stress. A very important thing about music learning is that it could bring people together and make our society more harmonious. A "culturally agreed-upon pattern of rhythm and melody" can momentarily synchronize a culture's physiology, according to psychiatric researcher Anthony Storr. Sacks views this as the "collective binding of our neurological systems," and he credits music with being able to elicit "identical physical responses in various persons at the same time." Thus, it can be said that music connects people on a physiological as well as a social level. We may harness this capacity to eventually bring people together in open public spaces. A "culturally agreed-upon pattern of rhythm and melody" can momentarily synchronize a culture's physiology, according to psychiatric researcher Anthony Storr. He explains that this is due to music's capacity to elicit "identical physical responses in various people at the same time." This, according to Sacks, is how all of our neurological systems are bound together. Thus, it can be said that music connects. This, according to Sacks, is how all of our neurological systems are bound together. Thus, it can be said that music connects people on a physiological as well as a social level. We may harness this capacity to eventually bring people together in open public spaces [9]. The advantages of learning music are lifelong.

In the large picture, the ability students gain from music education has great connections with the musical ability of the whole nation. The standard of musical appreciation displayed across the nation should be used to determine a country's musical competence rather than how many notable composers it has produced in the past or how many prominent musicians it may be able to showcase today [10]. Universities are places to cultivate talents for the country and society, so they have duties of music education. Music education is not only for those who study at the conservatory of music or study music majors but also for all of the students.

5. Conclusion

Music education should be regarded seriously. The author thinks there should be music elective courses containing the whole process of music education in universities and colleges that give students chances to learn music itself, not just as means of earning a livelihood. It should be done in three aspects that the author has mentioned in question 13 of the questionnaire: Perceptive content, Practical content, and Theoretical content. Referring to the results of the questionnaire, which part that students are most interested in is perceptive content? The author thinks leading them to appreciate music and using their body with music is good for them. Based on the situation that most students like listening to popular music, introducing other kinds and periods of music are important. Dent, E. J. said. In principle, a university should be a hub of musical thinking and action where not only is it possible to regularly study music from the classical era, but also music from further back in time, and especially from the present, may be appreciated with intelligence and compassion. Popular lectures

with musical examples may help achieve this goal, but less formal methods yield the best outcomes. Emile Jaques-Dalcroze is an excellent system to study for using bodies freely with the feeling of the music. The feeling is the precondition of singing, playing instruments, or any other side of music. In practical content, organizing choirs is a good way for them to learn some skills of singing and they could have chances of participating in performances. Teachers could choose some familiar folksongs for them and it is also a good chance for them to feel about some great singing works of other periods and broaden their minds. Considering organizing an orchestra may just give chances to those who have had experiences of playing instruments, the author thinks there should be courses for those who don't have instrument learning experiences but want to learn some of them. Group lessons on instruments like piano and guitar are good choices. There is no need for them to train in perfect skill and It would be good for them to learn to play some familiar songs or what they like. In theoretical content, learning basic music theory and the history of music is necessary. The universities could offer some public courses like the history of western music and eastern music. Learning some basic theories of tones, rhythms, and musical modes is also important. The universities and colleges could also add an area for musical materials in libraries that could offer students of musical books, videos, and musical scores.

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