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CULTURAL DISSONANCE IN PIANO PEDAGOGY IN POST-COLONIAL CHINA

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Chinese piano culture and pedagogy in historical perspective

Western classical music has enjoyed a presence in China for four centuries, ever since the first harpsichord was introduced by a Western missionary at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Its long history there has accompanied and responded to the vicissitudes of Chinese society. However, it is only since the 1980s that Western classical music has become an integral part of Chinese society, finding a place in the daily life of Chinese people. Over the same period, the Chinese economy has grown very substantially, and China has opened her doors to embrace cultural diversity from all over the world under the specific policy of 'Reform and Opening'. In the mid-1980s, Chinese society was gripped by 'piano fever', and around the same time China became one of the biggest producers internationally of pianos and violins.[1] From the late twentieth century, Chinese musicians performing Western music were increasingly visible on the international stage.[2] In the twenty-first century, somewhere between 30 and 100 million students have been learning to play the piano in China,[3] constituting around 18 to 42 per cent of the population of Chinese children in the age range 0–14.[4] In sum, since the 1980s, Western classical music has clearly grown hugely in popularity in China and become integrated into Chinese society in a variety of ways.

Many scholars have investigated the processes whereby Western classical music has become embedded in Chinese society and culture, against the backdrop of developments in politics, society and culture. Melvin and Cai claim that the Chinese Communist Party has used the performing arts as a political tool since its founding in 1921.[5] Prior to the establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, the Communist Party used Western music to disseminate revolutionary and anti-Japanese sentiment, in order to shape the political consciousness of the population and to encourage them to resist the invader during the period of the Second World War.[6] By the 1970s, China was eager to build a relationship with the Western world, both to develop commercial interests and to build an international image that might enhance its influence around the world, and in this context Western music became an effective diplomatic tool.[7] The Communist Party enacted policies to give

1
Sheila Melvin and Jindong Cai, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese* (New York: Algora, 2004), 308.

2
Ibid., 300.

3
'Western Classical Music in China', Facts and Details, last modified January 2014, http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat7/sub41/item250.html.

4
'Demographics of China', Wikipedia, last modified 22 July 2019.

5
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 320.

6
Richard Curt Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1989), 49–52.

7
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 266.

strong support to the dissemination of Western classical music in China in order to win international recognition in all fields.[8] In addition, with the economic prosperity of the 1980s, an expanding Chinese urban middle class increasingly pursued self-enrichment by developing and enhancing its cultural and spiritual life.[9] Government support for Western classical music was also intended to satisfy the needs of these Chinese citizens. However, all matters concerning music and music education were always controlled by the Ministry of Culture, a department of the Chinese government (replaced in 2018 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism).[10] The Ministry of Culture announced policies designed to shape both spirit and mind within music and musical education, with the wider aim of keeping the nation's musical culture in harmony with the value system of the Communist Party.[11] Music was, in essence, a tool used to control people and to reinforce the hegemonic position of the Communist Party in China.

All that said, the values embodied in Western music were well aligned to a perceived need for social modernisation in China. With the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese society was encouraged to shake off its impoverished and backward image. Especially after the announcement of the policy of 'Reform and Opening', allowing China access to the wider world in the 1980s, those objectives were pursued as a very high priority. And in these circumstances, as Kraus has noted, Chinese people have tended to equate 'modernisation' with 'westernisation', and Chinese musicians accordingly defined modernity in terms basic to Western music.[12] As early as the 1920s, in fact, Chinese musicians 'improved' Chinese traditional instruments, such as the erhu, by learning the supposedly more scientific technologies associated with Western instruments.[13] Regardless of whether it stemmed from false consciousness under the influence of Western colonialism, this perception of Western classical music as 'advanced' and 'scientific' became part and parcel of the modernising movement in the 1980s.[14] This music was regarded in China as a token of revolutionary progressive thinking, associated with values such as emancipation, freedom and individualism.[15] Thus, it was also regarded as a useful import that could help liberate Chinese people's cultural thinking from 2000 years of feudalism.[16] Many Chinese have adopted Western classical music as a badge of respectable social status, as Europeans themselves did in the early nineteenth century when the piano emerged as a prestige commodity in the bourgeois consciousness.[17] This investment in Western music as a status symbol is one of the crucial factors driving the 'piano fever' that continues to this day in China. As the Chinese newspaper *China Daily* reported on 6 April 2004, 'Some parents are hoping beyond all hope that their children will change their lives through studying the piano'.[18] Western classical music satisfies Chinese people's aspirational fantasies of high social status.

8
Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 105.

9
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 287.

10
Ibid., 310–320.

11
Ibid., 324.

12
Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 29. Although it is more characteristic of the 80s and 90s in China, this concept is actually deeply rooted in the country, embracing several generations of citizens born before 2000. They form the mainstay of Chinese society today, constituting the majority of the labour force and of the national wealth.

13
Ibid., 115.

14
Ibid., 115–119.

15
Hedrich Geiger and Jinshou Zeng, 'Xifang Gudian Gangqin Yinyue Zai Zhongguo de Lishi Yu WeiLai' [The history and future of Western classical music in China], *The Newspaper of Xinghai Conservatory*, 3 (2011), 165–167.

16
Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 213.

17
Ibid., 182.

18
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 307.

At the same time, in recent years, an intercommunity bridging Western music culture and Chinese traditional culture has promoted the integration of Western classical music into Chinese society by emphasising common themes and perspectives. Huang has proposed that the high levels of popularity achieved by Western classical music in China result from a fundamental compatibility between the values of Western classical music and those of the Confucian tradition in China, such as self-cultivation and virtue, values that can be merged to reveal transcultural affinities.[19] China has a history, after all, of connecting the realm of music with morality or individual self-cultivation.[20] Numerous ancient Confucian sources emphasise this connection, claiming for example that good music can help people create virtue, or that music is an indispensable part of improving people's self-cultivation.[21] (Interestingly, though perhaps not significantly, exactly the same views of music can be found in the ancient Greek sources that are conventionally considered by Westerners to lie at the foundations of European culture.) Similar opinions attached to Western classical music in China, even in the early twentieth century. Several Chinese musicians who supported the integration of Western classical music into Chinese society promoted the view that this would improve the quality of Chinese musical culture, help enhance the virtue of Chinese people, and develop their self-cultivation.[22] In China, there is a common view that symphonies are in some sense 'better' than popular music, and that state support for classical music is justified because symphonies will make their listeners into better people.[23] With the enactment of the one-child-one-family policy in 1979, Chinese parents focused their efforts on providing the best possible education for their child, their sole descendant.[24] Lessons in Western classical music became a popular choice for occupying their child's time outside school.

In addition, the motives for encouraging a child to learn a Western instrument can sometimes be rather utilitarian, implying a 'fake enthusiasm' for Western classical music. An article in *China Daily* put it as follows: 'It is true that almost every parent sent their children to attend piano lessons. However, if you ask the primitive purpose of these parents in making their children learn a Western instrument, you are likely to receive the answer that if their children can master one Western instrument, they can gain extra scores on the National College Entrance Exam'.[25] This is the result of a policy pursued by the Ministry of Education from 2009 to 2018, intended to encourage students to focus on self-cultivation, with students who won prestigious music competitions able to gain extra points in the National College Entrance Exam.[26] However, although policy changes in recent years have made it harder to gain extra points by learning Western instruments, the enthusiasm of Chinese parents for Western music has continued to surge.[27] This is largely attributable to the social cachet associated with one's child attaining

19
Hao Huang, 'Why Chinese People Play Western Classical Music: Transcultural Roots of Music Philosophy', *International Journal of Music Education*, 30/2 (2012), 161–162.

20
Ibid., 167–169.

21
Sheng Dai, 'Li Ji' [Books of rites], compiled from the Dynasty of Xi Han (206 BC to AD 9), 'Lun Yu' [The analects], compiled before the period of Zhan Guo (475–221 BC): Walter Kaufmann, *Musical References in the Chinese Classics* (Detroit: Harmonie Park, 1976), 23–33.

22
Geiger and Zeng, 'Xifang Gudian Gangqin Yinyue Zai Zhongguo de Lishi Yu WeiLai', 165–166.

23
Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 181–183.

24
Ibid., 182.

25
Mengyu Luo, 'Gudian Yinyue Tingzhong de Shehui Fenceng – Zhong, Ying Gudian Yinyue Tingzhong De Tingzhong Duibi' [The hierarchy of class among audiences of Western classical music – a comparision between audiences from Chinese concerts and British concerts], *The Dissemination of Music*, 1 (2016), 48–53.

26
'Gaokao Jiafen Zhengce' (The policy of extra scores in the National Entrance College Exam), Baidu.

27
Meng Bian, *Zhongguo Gangqin Wenhua Zhi Xingcheng Yu Fazhang* [The form and development of Chinese piano culture] (Beijing: Huayue, 1996), 90.

a high level in their musical instrument exam, something that far predates the introduction of the policy in 2009. These parents represent a distinct constituency for the reception of Western classical music in China, and although they may in fact have no interest or aesthetic investment in Western music at all, they are dedicated followers of it as a vehicle for their social aspirations on behalf of their children. Zhao has proposed a simple explanation to capture all of these apparent anomalies in the Chinese approach to Western classical music, referring to a mismatch between the pronounced aestheticism and even spirituality associated with the classical tradition in its original European setting, and the pronounced pragmatism that has characterised Chinese traditional culture.[28] Pragmatic thinking, Zhao argues, places the emphasis on achieving good results and attaining benefits from the fulfilment of goals, instead of enjoying the process and pursuing the satisfaction of the spiritual world.[29] Seen from this perspective, the centrality of technique in music education and the 'excessive and screwy enthusiasm' for Western classical music is a result of a pragmatic desire among the Chinese to gain good results and the benefits that arise from them.

On the other hand, it is also easy to see ways in which the popularity of Western classical music has left China's indigenous musical traditions short-changed. The association of Western traditions with the modernising impulse in China has led to the overwhelming dominance of Western music in Chinese tertiary music education. In pursuit of the goal of modernisation, in short, Chinese musicians have ignored a rich tradition of Chinese music in favour of Western music.[30] Melvin and Cai observe that Western instruments and music theory dominate the curriculum of China's conservatories.[31] While there exist a number of compositions in the Western classical style written by Chinese composers which were regarded as 'Chinese compositions' in the second half of the twentieth century, Western repertoire was still the priority for Chinese musicians when they appeared on stage.[32] Since the turn of the millennium, a number of Chinese scholars have begun to see this as a problem, and have devoted themselves to re-examining the indigenisation of Western classical music.

Although professional piano education was established in China in the 1920s, in its earliest phase it was rather unsystematic, relying on historical resources and influences from Russia, Western Europe and Japan. Several piano textbooks appeared at an early stage, including Alexander Tcherepnin's *Textbook with Pentatonic Scales* (1936) and Li Shuhua's *Basic Methods of Piano Performance* (1941), which were seen as 'Chinese' because they involved Chinese characteristics (although the former was by a Russian rather than a Chinese musician) or were written by Chinese musicians. Also, new piano works written in a style incorporating Chinese idioms appeared during this early phase, although it seems that they have

28
Yun Zhao, 'Wenhuashiyu Zhong De Zhongguo Dangdai Gangqin Jiaoyu' [Investigation of Chinese contemporary piano education from the perspective of Chinese culture], PhD thesis, University of Huadong Shifan, 2010, 128–135.

29
Ibid., 135.

30
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 306.

31
Ibid., 321.

32
Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China*, 205-211.

rarely been used in actual piano lessons.[33] According to Sun, it was rather piano anthologies and books of exercises from the West that constituted the mainstream in piano lessons during that period, most of them brought by foreign teachers or Chinese musicians who had studied overseas, and many of them in English.[34]

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, which ushered in a more stable period, the Communist Party for the most part vigorously pursued the development of a Chinese cultural infrastructure. Professional musical education was thus placed high on the agenda of state affairs.[35] Both the Central Conservatory (initially in Tianjin and then in Beijing from the mid-1950s) and the Shanghai Conservatory were rapidly developed, and in the following decade a number of other conservatories were inaugurated in some of the key cites of China, including Tianjin, Sichuan and Wuhan.[36] Furthermore, an increasing number of music departments providing professional piano teaching were established in many Art Colleges and Universities distributed across almost every province of the nation.[37] Thus, professional piano education in China underwent significant development during this period.

In the process of developing musical education in the 1950s, China learned a great deal from the experience of the Soviet Union. In that period, China, which saw itself as a backward country, built a good relationship with the Soviet Union in order to accelerate its development in all fields. Music education was no exception, and some specific measures of pedagogy inspired by the Soviet Union were proposed by the Ministry of Culture. These included sending students to study in the Soviet Union, inviting educational experts from the Soviet Union to China, learning from and imitating the institutional models developed in the Soviet Union, and translating Soviet textbooks and syllabuses.[38] Under these circumstances, three piano pedagogues, Aram Taturian (1915–1974), Tatayana Kravtchenko (1916–2003) and Shienoff (dates unknown), were invited to China, working separately at the Central Conservatory and Shanghai Conservatory during the 1940s and 1950s.[39] At the Central Conservatory, Taturian and Kravchenko gave masterclasses and private lessons to not only students but also teachers.[40] Their masterclasses were open to all faculty members, and almost all teachers and students of the faculty attended in order to benefit from their teaching.[41] Also, some talented pianists and piano teachers from different colleges and universities were selected to come to Beijing and Shanghai and attend the Russian teachers' lessons.[42] Many of these Soviet-trained students who attained a high standard in pianism and teaching have become famous pianists and piano pedagogues in China.[43] Their contributions to Chinese piano

33
Siqiu Li, 'Ershi Shiji Zhongguo Gangqin Lilun Fazhan Yanjiu' [A study of the development of Chinese piano teaching theory in the twentieth century]. PhD thesis, Normal University of Haerbin, 2017, 25–27.

34
Hui Sun, 'Zhongguo 20 shiji Gangqin Jiaocai Lishi Yanjiu' [Research into the historical development of Chinese piano textbooks in the twentieth century], DMA dissertation, University of Qingdao, 2018, 18–20.

35
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 189.

36
Siqiu Li, 'Ershi Shiji Zhongguo Gangqin Lilun Fazhan Yanjiu', 30. The Central Conservatory was based on the Chongqing National Conservatory of music, established in 1940.

37
Ibid., 30.

38
Dan Yang, 'Yinyue Jiaoxuefa Jiaocai Zhi Lishi Yanjiu' [Historical study of textbooks of musical didactics (1901–1976)], PhD thesis, Normal University of Hunan, 2013, 189.

39
Hui Zhang, 'Sulian Zhuanjia Zai Zhongyang Yinyue Xueyuan Zhijiao Shimo' [Information on all the activities of Soviet experts' teaching at the Central Conservatory of Music], DMA Dissertation, Central Conservatory of Music, 2011, 36–38; Chi Lin, 'Piano Teaching Philosophies and Influences on Pianism at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China', PhD dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2002, 2.

40
Lin, 'Piano Teaching Philosophies', 1–17.

41
Ibid.

42
Ibid.

43
Ibid., viii.

culture have included organising piano recitals around the nation, publishing books and articles on piano education, and working as teachers at conservatories, art colleges and even piano studios for amateurs all over the country.[44] Through such activities, these Soviet-trained piano teachers have disseminated Russian piano traditions across China.

With the implementation of the 'Reform and Opening' policy of the 1980s, the booming of the economy and culture allowed piano studies to develop rapidly. In order to satisfy the needs of a rapidly growing number of piano students, the People's Music Press, regulated by the National Publishing Bureau, started to publish a large quantity and variety of books of piano exercises, including more than ten series of Czerny exercises (139, 599, 849, 636, 718, 299, etc; previously only four series had been available in China), the etudes of Cramer and Tchaikovsky, and anthologies of piano works by Liszt, Chopin, Debussy and Rachmaninoff, expanding beyond the established repertoire of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven.[45] Moreover, some beginners' tutor books from America, such as *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course* and *Interesting Techniques of Piano*, were introduced into China and became popular.[46] Also published were an increasing number of piano tutor books by Chinese authors, such as *Zhu Gongyi's theory of Piano Teaching* by Deyue Ge (1989) and *The Art of Piano Performance* by Jialu Li (1993), piano anthologies complied by Chinese editors and including both Western and Chinese works, such as *The Basic Book of Piano* by Hejun Zhou (2003), and piano pieces by Chinese composers suitable for use in piano lessons.[47] That diversity of Western and Chinese resources could have considerably enriched the content of piano lessons in China after the 1980s, but in fact Western resources have overwhelmingly dominated Chinese piano lessons up to the present day.

Obstacles to the transmission of piano technique and interpretation

The dominance of Western piano tutor books in Chinese piano lessons brings with it a number of difficulties, because the cultural differences between the West and China inevitably interpose themselves in the process of using those Western books to teach Chinese pupils. There are, in other words, differences of cultural context and even conceptual thinking that make the transfer from West to East problematic. Western tutor books rely on a localised cultural literacy. The ways in which enculturation is reflected in and created by these textbooks cause certain obstacles for Chinese pupils. One of the clearest examples is the use of kinetic analogies identical to the common Hollywood cartoon scoring technique known as 'Mickey Mousing' in *A Dozen A Day*, a tutor book first published in America during the heyday of such cartoons in the

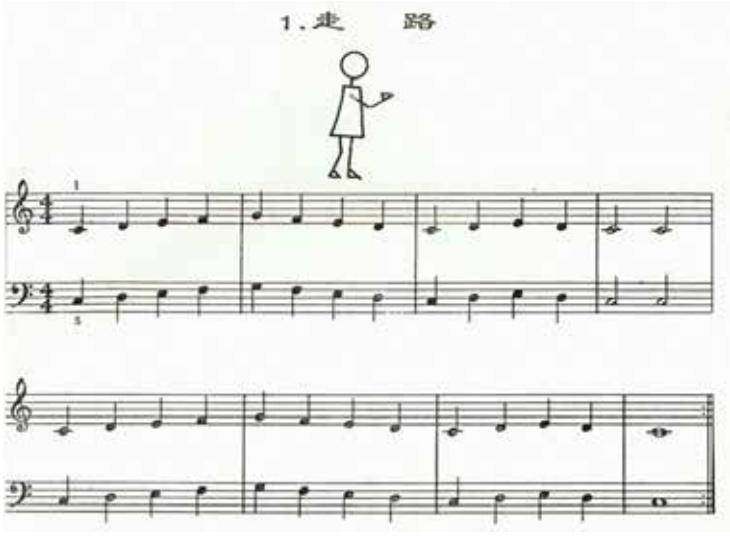
44
Siqiu Li, 'Ershi Shiji Zhongguo Gangqin Lilun Fazhan Yanjiu', 72–86.

45
Ibid., 69.

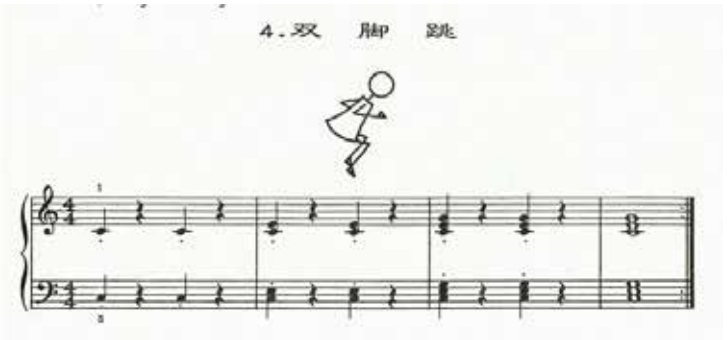
46
Hui Sun, 'Zhongguo 20 shiji Gangqin Jiaocai Lishi Yanjiu', 37.

47
Siqiu Li, 'Ershi Shiji Zhongguo Gangqin Lilun Fazhan Yanjiu', 72–86.

mid-twentieth century. In cartoons scored in this fashion, such as *Tom and Jerry*, the actions of every character, such as walking, running or tumbling, are always accompanied by precisely synchronised music. A near-identical conception lies behind several exercises in *A Dozen A Day*, in which the student is invited to create musical movements following the characteristics of physical movements. In the first exercise, 'Walking', for example, the music begins on C, moves up by steps to G, and then returns (Example 1). The musical movements on the keyboard are similar to the bodily movements of walking. In the second piece, 'Jumping', the pattern of staccato crotchets followed by crotchet rests makes the music sound like jumping (Example 2). Other actions, such as running, skipping and breathing, often appear in other exercises. Clearly the author assumes that it will be easy and intuitive to imagine what movements on the keyboard best match these actions. However, while 'Mickey Mousing' was second nature to mid-twentieth-century American children, contemporary Chinese children's animation series, such as the popular show *Pleasant Goat and Big Grey Wolf*, are scored in an entirely different manner. *Pleasant Goat and Big Grey Wolf* is about a group of goats living on the Green Grassland, and the story revolves around a clumsy wolf who wants to eat them. This show became enormously popular with Chinese schoolchildren after its debut in 2005. Mickey-Mousing is not used at all, and in this it is characteristic of contemporary Chinese children's cartoons. Thus, the contents of *A Dozen A Day* were well-attuned to the cultural experience of mid-twentieth-century American children, for whom a kind of musical kinaesthesia was normal and expected; but the same is not true for the many contemporary Chinese piano students who learn from this book.

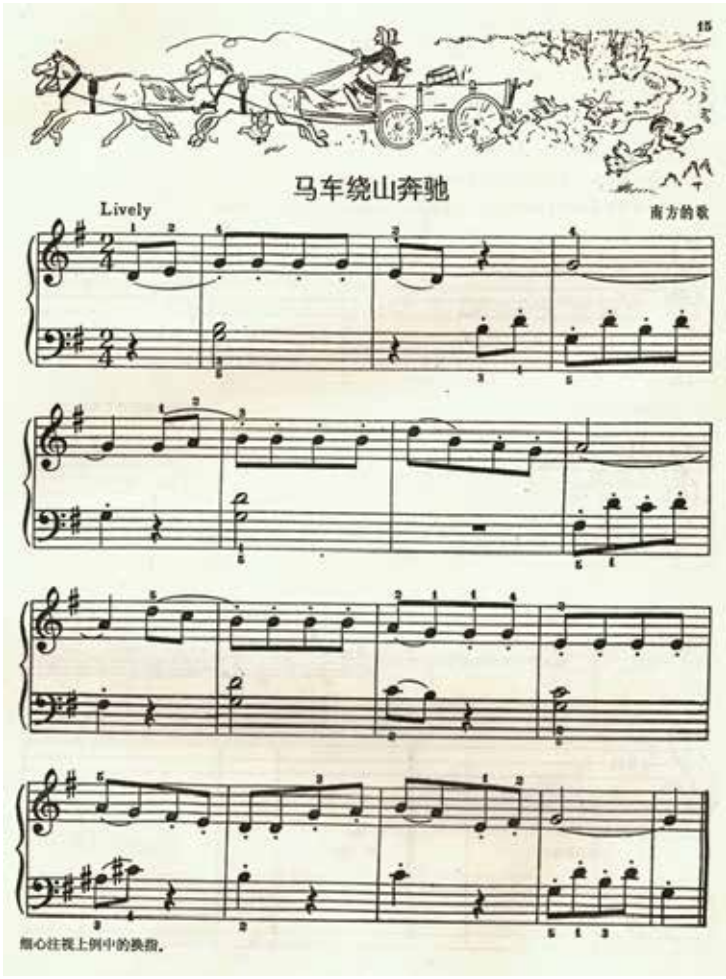


Example 1. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Gangqin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2015)), 2/5.**



Example 2. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Gangqin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2015)), 2/6.**

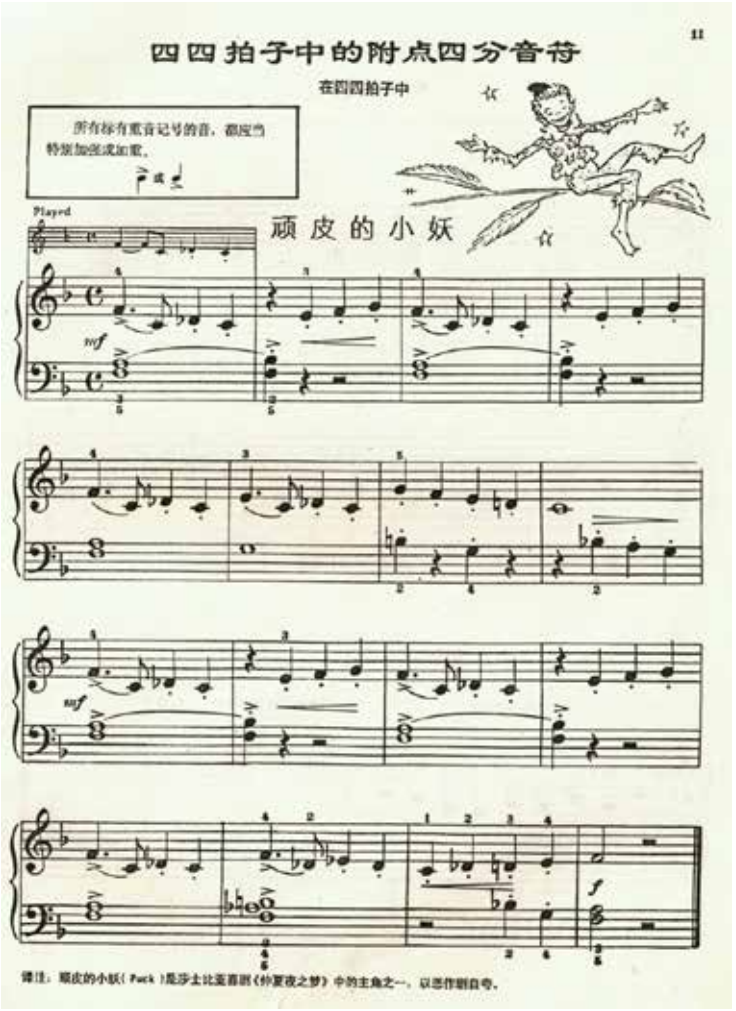
Another good example of the reliance of piano tutor books on cultural literacy is the use of culturally-specific references to popular music and Western music culture. I will give examples from *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*, first published in America in 1954 and now very popular in China (although many Chinese scholars have pointed out that these US tutor books are too old for contemporary Chinese pupils, they are still commonly used in daily piano lessons all over the country). This piece (Example 3), 'Round the Mountain', is a traditional American folksong derived from a Christian spiritual, now commonly sung in the Anglophone West as a nursery rhyme. Thus, people who grow up in the Western world will very likely be familiar with it. In this series of piano tutor books, many traditional and popular American tunes like this one are introduced as exercises; their familiarity is intended to make them accessible, and it also links piano learning to broader processes of musical enculturation tied to national identity. However, Chinese pupils are not familiar with them, and therefore the intended and unintended pedagogical effects associated with their familiarity will not operate. Another example from *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course* is an exercise introducing dotted crochets, entitled 'Puck' (Example 4). In the Chinese version, the Chinese editors have added a commentary to introduce Puck at the bottom of the page, to help Chinese pupils understand the background of the piece: 'Puck is one of the roles in Shakespeare's comedy of A Midsummer Night's Dream, always making mischievous boasts'. The humorous, cheeky character of Puck conforms to the *Affekt* created by the dotted crotchets. The understanding of Shakespeare's comedy and the role of Puck can help pupils play this piece and grasp this technique well. Although the reference is explained to Chinese pupils in the Chinese version, Shakespeare and his works are integral to an Anglophone cultural identity, whereas they are very unfamiliar to Chinese learners. Obviously, *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course* is built on the background of Western popular and art culture; it was intended to



Example 3. **John Thompson,** ***Yuehan Tangpusen Jianyi Gangqin Jiaocheng*** **[*John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999), 4/15.**

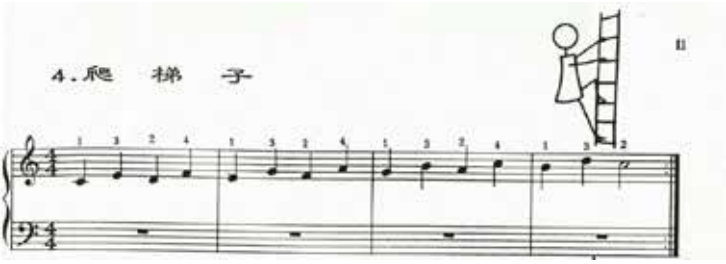
both rely on and generate American cultural literacy for American pupils. These elements will not have their intended pedagogical effects when presented to Chinese piano pupils.

A metaphorical approach to forming knowledge is felt as natural across all arts and humanities subjects in Western culture, but at least in some respects this too is culturally specific. The analogy between familiar bodily movements and physical key movements on the piano, as discussed above, is a good example of such a metaphorical style of learning. However, this kinaesthetic approach is quite different from the manner of verbal instruction that is commonly used to teach the piano in the Chinese tradition. Some exercises from *A Dozen A Day* can serve as further examples of this difficulty. The titles of several exercises are derived from sports, especially from the gym, including activities such as 'Climbing up

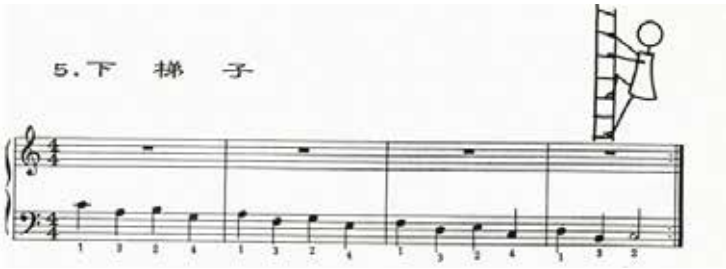


Example 4. **John Thompson,** ***Yuehan Tangpusen Jianyi Gangqin Jiaocheng*** **[*John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999), 4/11.**

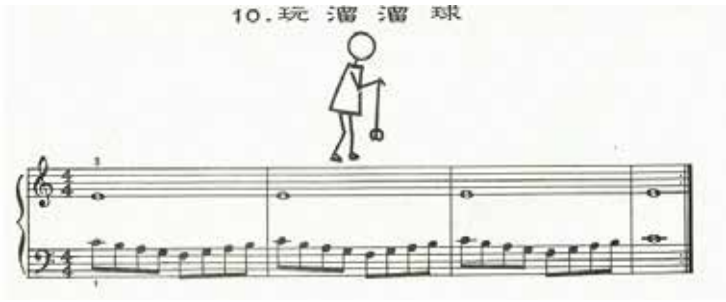
a Ladder', 'Climbing down a Ladder', 'Jumping like a Frog', 'Hanging from Bar by Right Hand', 'Hanging from Bar by Both Hands', and 'Playing with a Yo-Yo'. Analogies between bodily movements and musical movements were engaged in the process of designing these exercises, through which pupils can intuitively understand the intended musical effects. For example, in the exercises 'Climbing up a Ladder' (Example 5) and 'Climbing down a Ladder' (Example 6), the melodies go up and go down like the upward and downward motion of the climbing body. In 'Playing with a Yo-Yo' (Example 7), the melody of the right hand is static, representing the hand holding the toy, and the melody of the left hand is in motion, representing the up-and-down motion of the toy itself, from C to G then back to C. These build on the metaphorical mode of taking knowledge



Example 5. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Gangqin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2015)), 2/11.**



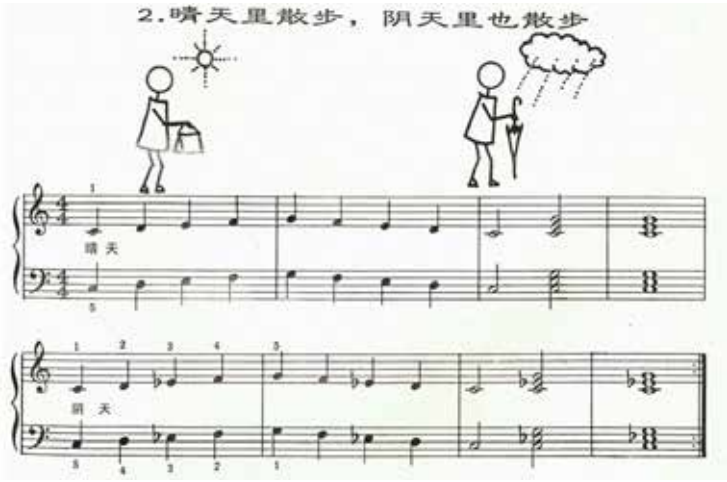
Example 6. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Gangqin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2015)), 2/11.**



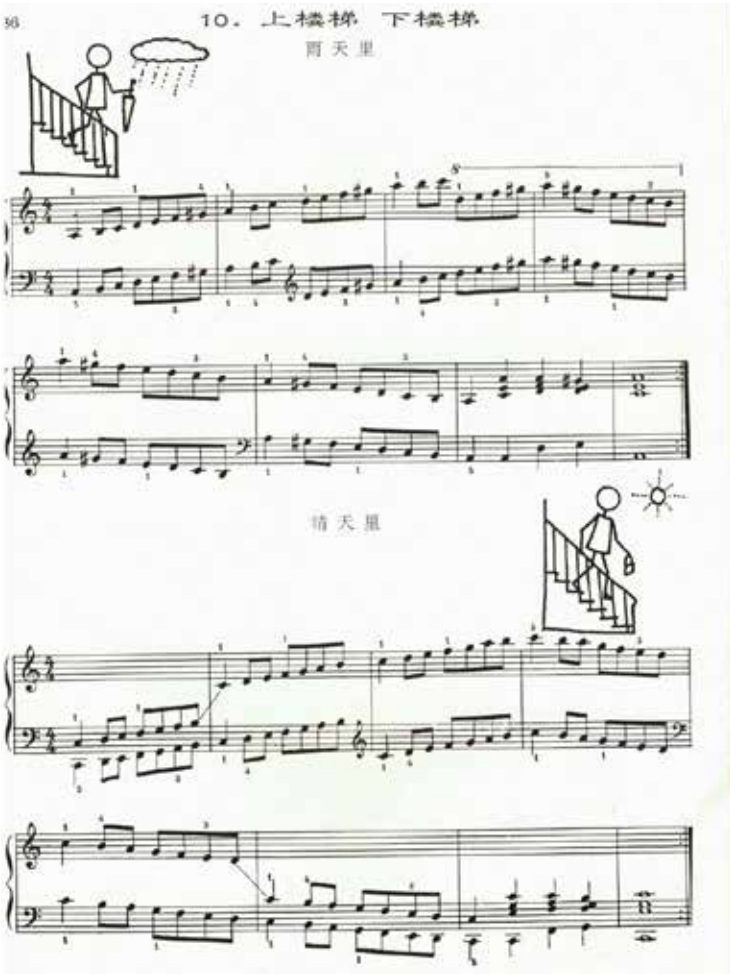
Example 7. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Gangqin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2015)), 2/12.**

from one domain and applying it to another. Sports were centrally important to school culture in the twentieth-century USA, and were seen by children as cool, so the analogy of sports to musical training was attuned to the culture within which *A Dozen a Day* was created, and served to attract pupils' interest. Twenty-first-century Chinese piano learners are more engaged with computer games and smartphones, so this metaphorical invitation may not have its intended effects for them.

Other examples in this tutor book also show how the metaphorical approach is engaged. The title of one piece is 'Walking On A Sunny, Then A Cloudy Day' (Example 8). There are two lines of melody, with the sunny day represented by a major chord C-E-G, and the cloudy day by a minor chord C-Eb-G. In another



Example 8. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Ganggin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2015)), 2/19.**

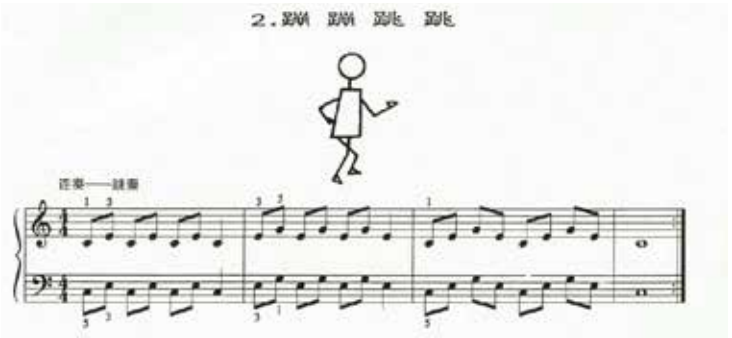


Example 9. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Ganggin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2015)), 5/36.**

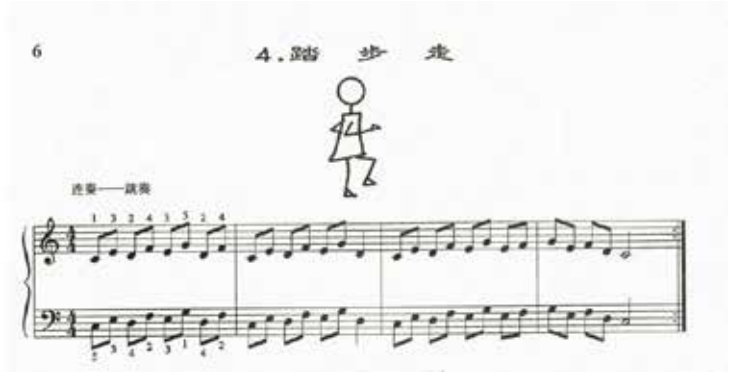
exercise, 'Upstairs and Downstairs on a Cloudy Day / On a Sunny Day' (Example 9), the first section is in B minor and the second is in C major, once again linking minor to bad weather and major to fine weather. This is clearly intended to help pupils understand the emotional resonance of major and minor chords, or major and minor keys, through their prior emotional understanding of different weather conditions. This kind of metaphorical approach is very common in Western music education, so Western students learn to expect it and make use of it. However, in contemporary Chinese education, direct verbal instruction is the conventional method, and Chinese learners may not immediately see how to get the best out of these learning resources.

Translating English to Chinese in the Chinese versions of Western tutor books, including the titles and lyrics of pieces, also creates dissonances and misunderstandings. The characteristic analogy between physical body movement and musical movement in *A Dozen A Day* is clarified through the titles of the exercises. In the English version, the titles 'Skipping' (Example 10) and 'High Stepping' (Example 11), for example, allow Western pupils to understand easily the intended connection with the musical movements in the exercises: skipping refers to the main melody, which is organised by thirds, such as rising from C to E and E to G, or descending from G to E and E to C; while in 'High Stepping', the main melody goes up and down by seconds, from C to D to E or E to F to G, and then back from E to D to C or G to F to E. Because the analogy between physical movement and musical movement is commonplace in Western culture, if a music teacher says that this line of melody goes up by step, pupils can immediately intuit the character of the melody. However, because this view of music and the childhood significance of these descriptors of physical actions are both culturally specific, the titles do not retain these connotative values when translated into Chinese. Chinese editions generally give literal Chinese translations of titles, rather than idiomatic translations that aim to preserve the cultural significance of a term or phase; thus, the pedagogical intention is lost.

Another translation-related issue is the absence of lyrics. In studying the adaptation of Western piano tutor books for publication in China, I have found that some pieces which are given lyrics in the Western English version lose them in the Chinese version. Two small exercises from *A Dozen A Day* can serve as examples. The lyrics in the English version run: 'Fit as a fiddle, All day long, Exercise will make my fingers very strong; Fit as a fiddle, Exercise my fingers every day, Fit as a fiddle, Exercise will make my fingers play'. The editor uses the lyrics to describe metaphorical associations between sports exercise, physical play and musical movements, to make daily practice seem both necessary and fun. In each book in this series (save the last, book 7), the contents are categorised into five groups, each with twelve exercises, so that



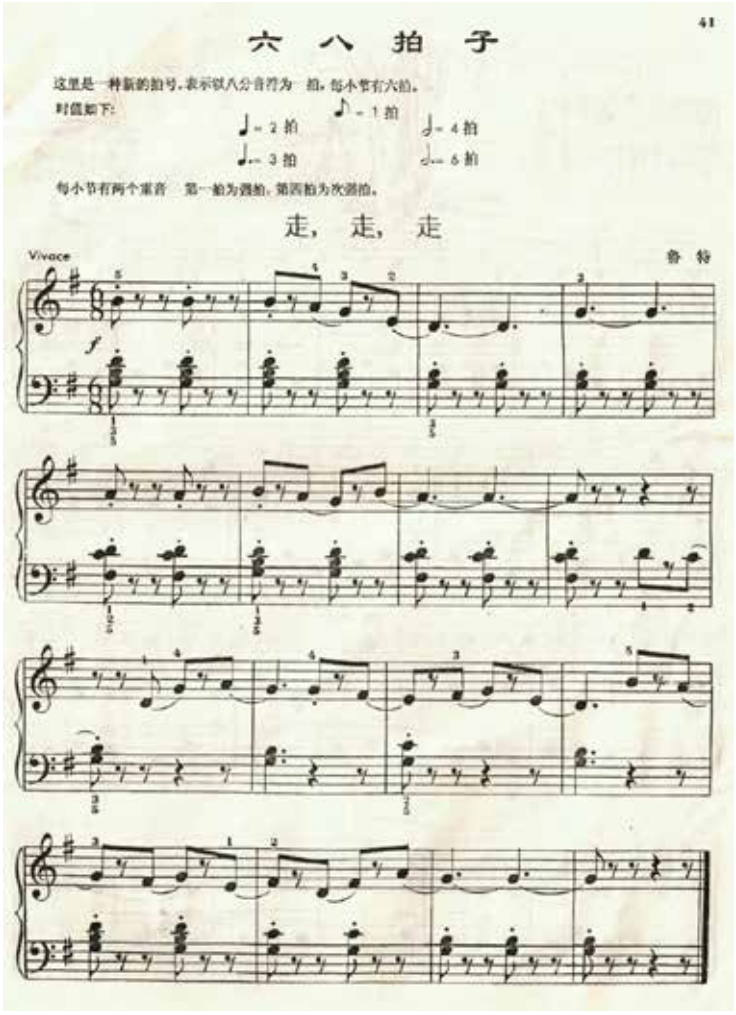
Example 10. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Gangqin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2017)), 3/1.**



Example 11. **Edna-Mae Burnam, *Gangqin Tinatian Lian* [*A Dozen a Day*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999 (reprinted by 2017)), 3/6.**

pupils can structure their progress group by group. The last exercise of each group is named 'Fit as a fiddle and ready to go' and includes lyrics to encourage pupils to practise every day. The foundations for this structure are laid in the preface, where the author writes: 'Many people do physical exercises every morning before they go to work. Likewise – we should all give our fingers excises every day'. However, the lyrics to each iteration of 'Fit as a fiddle and ready to go' disappear in the Chinese version; thus, Chinese pupils miss this more explicit and direct opportunity to understand the editor's pedagogical scheme.

Another example can be found in *John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*, in a piece called 'Tramp, Tramp, Tramp'. This was one of the most popular songs of the American Civil War. The composer, George F. Root, wrote both words and music in order to give hope to the Union prisoners of war. The time signature of this piece is 6/8, and the expression mark is 'vivace'. Also, two staccato quavers at the beginning of the main theme, paired with an accompaniment of short chords with staccato in the left hand, build lively and strong sentiments. Lyrics are given, thus: 'Tramp, Tramp, Tramp! The boy is marching; Cheer up comrades they will come'. Through these



Example 12. **John Thompson, *Yuehan Tangpusen Jianyi Gangqin Jiaocheng* [*John Thompson's Easiest Piano Course*] (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1999), 3/41.**

two sentences, we can feel the intended emotion, and also a kinetic analogy with marching feet; and it is obvious that the music and lyrics respond directly to each other, so when pupils learn this piece, the lyrics can help them understand its sentiments and execute the music well. However, Chinese pupils cannot benefit from that learning experience, because the lyrics are not included in the Chinese edition of the book.

Orientalism, prejudice and assimilation

These difficulties in the adaptation of Western piano teaching resources to Chinese piano lessons may seem of minor importance,

but they are symptomatic of a larger problem, namely, the divergent power relations and ideologies that give rise to them. Here we must take a long historical perspective on how and why Western classical music, with its extensive ideological freight, was disseminated around the world. By way of various colonial initiatives, beginning in the fifteenth century, European colonisers gradually explored and conquered other territories, with the primary aim of building one-way trading relationships for economic gain.[48] The dissemination of Western culture was a particularly effective tool in advancing this agenda, and accordingly European colonisers projected notions of the 'modernity' and 'superiority' of Western culture to non-Western societies.[49] It was within this context that Western music and Western culture more generally were intentionally introduced and exported to the rest of the world.

The putative modernity and superiority of Western music were products of a comparative discourse developed within Western culture that established Westerns values as an ideal to which others should aspire. Philip Bohlman has claimed that 'European music has no ontology without imaging otherness', and that the 'sense of selfness' of European music exists through its imagining of others and through its attempts to control and to destroy otherness.[50] Where music is concerned, a hierarchy of values was built on these premises, with Western music valorised above the music of what Richard Middleton has called an un-modern 'low other'.[51] As Western music spread around the world, accompanied by its aura of modernity, it acquired connotations of rationality, progress, change and universality, all presented as oppositional to traditional values, which were deemed 'to stand for all that is irrational or emotional, stagnant, ancient and local'.[52] Those characteristics were then used to map the difference between West and non-West,[53] and by building this discriminative symbolic geography, Western people established their discourse of 'essentialism, exceptionalism and Eurocentrism' in the world.[54]

In the sphere of post-colonial research, different arguments have emerged concerning the globalisation of Western music. These arguments have been thoroughly rehearsed in recent years, but may be worth some reiteration here. Several scholars, particularly those of an older generation, have proposed that the advent of Western music to non-Western societies was beneficial to the musical development of those societies, because they could turn its 'scientific', 'mature' and 'modern' character to advantage when exploring their own heritage. Thus, Bruno Nettl enumerated several benefits to introducing Western music to non-Western cultures: Western notation might play a part in preserving and transmitting native traditional music; the technical design and manufacture of Western instruments could contribute to the improvement of traditional instruments in non-Western societies; the mature teaching system of Western music provided a model of

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Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2017), Preface.

49
Jin-ah Kim 'European Music Outside Europe? Musical Entangling and Intercrossing in the Case of Korea's Modern History', in Reinhard Strohm (ed.), *Studies on a Global History of Music: A Balzan Musicology Project* (London: Routledge, 2018), 177.

50
Philip V. Bohlman, 'Composing the Cantorate: Westernizing Europe's Other Within', in Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (eds), *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 188.

51
Richard Middleton, 'Musical Belongings: Western music and Its Low-Other', in Born and Hesmondhalgh (eds), *Western Music and Its Others*, 60–62.

52
Amanda J. Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Post-Colonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 4.

53
Ibid., 7.

54
Carole De Vale, 'The utility of musical instruments in the racial and colonial agendas of late nineteenth-century France', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 129/2 (2004), 24–32.

music education which could help the teaching institutions of non-Western countries develop a more efficient pedagogical approach to their native tradition of music.[55]

In contrast, many scholars have observed the problem inherent in analysing the globalisation of Western music from within a Eurocentric discourse, noting that these supposed advantages are built on the assumption that Western society is 'modern' compared to non-Western societies, and that global modernity can be achieved by disseminating Western achievements.[56] Edward Said famously argued that the separation made by the Western world between Europeans and others was insidious and unjust, and had been designed to achieve imperial and colonial objectives.[57] The West inscribed 'white' as a high-level racial type, Western society as 'modern' and Western culture as 'superior' in order to assert its own centrality.[58] For non-Western countries, a consciousness of inferiority, firmly established under the strong influences of colonialism, imperialism and Eurocentrism, resulted in 'many independent regimes [having] sacrificed potential emblems of cultural distinctiveness, even more than occurred in colonial territories'.[59] This inferiority complex has encouraged non-Western countries to imitate the forms of Western culture even as they develop their own societies and cultures.

Western music has taken on the prestige and glamour typically ascribed to Western science and technology, and as a result has been followed and imitated by many countries around the world. Some countries in Asia, which has been eager to 'modernise' and 'catch up' with the West, are typical of this, and China is a case in point. As noted earlier, Chinese authorities, from the early twentieth century onwards, have used Western music as an efficient tool of social modernisation and the liberation of Chinese people's minds from feudal culture.[60] With its connotations of modernity, Western music has enjoyed increasing popularity among the Chinese public, and its instruments, theory and history have dominated tertiary-level music teaching in China.[61] In the process, however, traditional music was perceived as an antonym of these values, a symbol of backwardness and inferiority. Traditional Chinese instruments, such as the erhu, were 'improved' by applying techniques from the manufacture of Western instruments, in the quest for 'musical cosmopolitanism'.[62] As Yang has argued, the prestige that Western classical music continues to enjoy in East Asia in the post-colonial period is directly linked to this colonial baggage of modernisation and globalisation.[63]

The political objectives involved in the dissemination of Western music that followed colonial expansion around the world are also significant here. Coelho has argued that 'music became an important source of information as both cultural product and mode of political discourse with the colonial expansion', and that through its dissemination 'people can understand a web of interacting

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Bruno Nettl, *The Western Impact on World Music: Change, Adaptation, and Survival* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985), 3–164.

56
Matthew Pritchard, 'Cultural Autonomy and the "India Exception": Debating the Aesthetics of Indian Classical Music in Early 20th-Century Calcutta', in Reinhard Strohm (ed.), *Studies on a Global History of Music* (London: Routledge, 2018), 260.

57
Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), Introduction.

58
Ibid., Introduction.

59
Pritchard, 'Cultural Autonomy', 260–261.

60
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 266–300.

61
Wai-Chung Ho and Wing-Wah Law, 'Values, Music and Education in China', *Music Education Research*, 6/2 (2004), 149–167.

62
Kraus, *Piano and Politics in China*, 115.

63
Mina Yang, 'East Meets West in the Concert Hall: Asians and Classical Music in the Century of Imperialism, Post-Colonialism, and Multiculturalism', *Asian Music*, 38/1 (2007), 1–4.

relationships involving authority, power and influence'.[64] As early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the spread of European music outside Europe was always managed by viceroys, soldiers and diplomats in the service of church and nation.[65] To advance the political purposes of colonial expansion, Europeans described Western music as a superior artform that should replace those of the natives,[66] with the intention that cultural control might be a first step toward political control. At the end of this process, in the twentieth century, Western music came to be regarded as a lingua franca and an internationally valid cultural code, a set of techniques and praxes that could be understood by everyone.[67] Spakowski has argued that the popular concept of 'a universal music culture', or the analogy between Western music and an international language, seen in the light of the troubling colonial circumstances under which such assumptions have emerged, is dangerous, as it 'ignores the high potential for Eurocentric inherence in inclusive narratives of the world'.[68]

The globalisation of *People's* Western music, with its sheen of modernity, superiority, science and internationalism, has always played into political discourse in non-Western countries, and in line with this, the Chinese Communist Party advocated and supported the development of Western classical music in the mid-twentieth century.[69] Henceforth, Chinese musicians started to win prizes in instrumental competitions and became famous on the international stage, as noted elsewhere in this issue, and also by Melvin and Cai.[70] The ability of the Chinese to master Western instruments and Western music was used by the Chinese government to show the whole world that China had emerged from poverty and backwardness, to build relationships with the West and the developed countries of the world, and to develop trade relations with them to in order to grow the economy.[71]

Given this context, and given China's present-day efforts to shake off of the influence of Western culture and to achieve cultural independence as part of an alliance of non-Western societies, it is all the more important to highlight the assimilation of Eurocentrism that seems to be always hidden in people's subconscious. Prichard has argued that 'cultural autonomy', by which he means the attempt by non-Western societies to escape the influence of Western culture and to develop and indigenise traditional culture, sometimes manifests a false consciousness.[72] China's indigenising of Western classical music can be seen as a case in point. Barbara Mittler has proposed the term 'new music' to describe a category of music in China that is reserved not just for indigenous Chinese traditions, but also for the different genres of music that emerged under Western influence. She also defines 'new music' as including works written by Chinese composers in many different Western idioms and styles, and employing techniques familiar in the West, in order to exploit Western instrumental and compositional techniques

64
Victor Anand Coelho, 'Music in new worlds', in Tim Carter and John Butt (eds), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 91.

65
Ibid., 91.

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Ibid., 92.

67
Barbara Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes: The Politics of Chinese Music in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the People's Republic of China since 1949* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 272.

68
Nicola Spakowski, 'East Asia in a Global Historical Perspective – Approaches and Challenges', in Reinhard Strohm (ed.), *Studies on a Global History of Music: A Balzan Musicology Project* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 235.

69
Meng Bian, *Zhongguo Gangqin Wenhua Zhi Xingcheng Yu Fazhang*, 80–82.

70
Melvin and Cai, *Rhapsody in Red*, 300.

71
Ibid., 266.

72
Pritchard, 'Cultural Autonomy', 260–264.

that are new to China.[73] Most Chinese scholars, however, have tended to subsume all of those types of music within the successful indigenisation of Western music in China, ignoring their essentially Western musical inheritance. Mittler has further argued that it was common that 'Chineseness' (referring to a Chinese musical idiom produced in the service of Chinese nationalism) appeared as a commodity designed first and foremost to satisfy the needs of the Western market in the twentieth century.[74]

Some Chinese scholars are already alert to these tropes, which mark the assimilation of Western cultural hegemony and its comparative discourse into Chinese society. Yang, interviewed here by Kang Ouyang, even created a word roughly corresponding to 'occidentalism', in direct relation to 'orientalism' (in Chinese, only one character is altered to pivot between the two words), to describe the way in which 'orientalism' has been effectively transmitted in China. He points out that not only has orientalism grown deep roots in Chinese society, but it has effectively marginalised traditional Chinese culture in various fields. He further observes that the initiator of this phenomenon is the Chinese cultural elite, including artists, writers and the media.[75] Unsurprisingly, few Chinese scholars have spotted the difficulties that Western piano tutor books pose for the Chinese piano student, given that the most popular of these tutor books were formulated in the mid-twentieth century, when Western cultural hegemony still went largely unquestioned. The fact is that most Chinese music educators, as members of the cultural elite, still hear and teach Western classical music from within the Eurocentric, orientalist discourse that gave it its power and prestige in the era of colonialism. In the interests of shaking off habits of thought associated with orientalism and the Eurocentric comparative discourse that animates it, Chinese scholars are currently exploring ways of thinking that construct the value of the self outside of the orientalist paradigm.[76]

Western music originally came to China to serve the objectives of European colonial powers, and the development and indigenisation of piano music within Chinese society have never really shaken off this encumbrance. The issues flowing from this are all too apparent in current piano teaching in China. From the perspective of teaching materials, at least, the cultural dissonance between Western piano tutor books, which present the concept of an editor aiming to build the cultural literacy of Western children, and the acceptance and understanding of Chinese pupils who grow up within a Chinese culture that is hugely different from the West, is clearly both pedagogically and ideologically undesirable. Unfortunately, most educators in China have not recognised this reality and the burden of colonialism that comes with it. Western scholars are accustomed to understanding oriental culture within a discourse that is full of prejudices created by themselves. The assimilation of such orientalist attitudes by Chinese elites always

73
Mittler, *Dangerous Tunes*, 8.

74
Ibid., 283–286.

75
Kang Ouyang and Xiaoming Yang, 'SaY De "DongfangZhuyi" Yu Dangdai Zhongguo Wenhua Jianshe Wenhuan Dingwei Yu Weilai Zouxiang De Duihua' [Said's 'orientalism' and the dialogue of cultural orientation and future trend of contemporary Chinese cultural construction], *Soft Power of Chinese Culture*, 1 (2019), 18–24.

76
Ying Chen, '"DongfangZhuyi" Yu "Xifang" Huayuquan Dui Sayide "Dongfangzhuyi" De Fansi' ['Orientalism' and 'Western' discursive power: reflections on Said's 'orientalism'], *Oriental Series*, 3 (2004), 54–64.

hides in the shadows, and as a result China struggles to move beyond the influence of Western modernity and to recognise itself through modes of thinking that are self-produced. In the present day, China's cultural autonomy, at least in the field of piano pedagogy, is still a work in progress.

ABSTRACT
The popularity of the piano in China grew steadily through the 1980s. Many popular piano tutor books in today's China stem from the Western world, and they are often several decades old, but re-published in Chinese versions. However, their use exposes significant cultural differences between the West and China.

In this article, I will first introduce some historical commentary on the piano and piano pedagogy in China to provide a general background. Then, I will discuss several obstacles to the transmission of piano techniques and interpretation, including issues concerning cultural literacy, the conceptual space between Western metaphorical-kinaesthetic teaching methods and Chinese direct verbal instruction, and the difficulties posed by translation. Finally, some discussion of orientalism, prejudice and assimilation will be presented to explore the power relations and ideology that may lie behind these difficulties in transmission.

Western piano tutor books used in China, particularly those originating in the mid-twentieth century, often feature stylised oriental elements in an attempt to introduce diverse musics from different parts of the world. Yet the accompanying descriptions indicate that this introduces explicit and implicit prejudice, and in ways that (ironically) infect even some piano tutor books written by Chinese musicians, thus unwittingly extending and naturalising a system of global cultural hegemony. When we consider that these are beginner tutor books used by children of primary school age, the long-term effects of this musical orientalism come into focus: although superficially China has striven toward cultural autonomy, thanks to these teaching materials, Western hegemonic views of Chinese music may remain current and are indeed internalised by Chinese musicians.

KEYWORDS
piano pedagogy, cultural dissonance, orientalism, assimilation

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