Comment on "A Study of the Styles and Characteristics of Basic Music Theory Textbooks in China in the Past 100 Years"

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Commented Article: YU, Feng; ZHANG, Qiming; THUY, Pham Minh. A study of the styles and characteristics of basic music theory textbooks in China in the past 100 years. **Trans/Form/Ação**: Unesp journal of philosophy, v. 46, Special Issue, p. 117- 144, 2023.

YU et. Al (2023) have justified the primary rationale behind the topic. The topic, indeed, is kaleidoscopic. However, with their swift pens and sharp wits, the writers highlight all the significant developments affecting the styles and characteristics of basic music theory in textbooks in China in the past 100 years. Massive material had to be sifted and scanned because of the enormity of the work, which spans over a century. The advancement of fundamental music theory in China trails behind us in teaching methodology, materials and other areas for various historical and practical reasons. Updating or adding to the current basic music theory and associated textbooks, followed by establishing a discipline system for basic music theory in China, is crucial for Chinese musicians. The development of the primary music theory education of China is the research object. History is used as a mirror to consider further and anticipate the development of the basic music theory discipline system of China.

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https://doi.org/10.1590/0101-3173.2023.v46esp.p145

This paper synthesizes the theories of music education and history, music culture, music morphology and other related disciplines. It also uses scientific, objective and rational values, besides holistic and comprehensive concepts. The fundamentals of Chinese music may be loosely split into three periods: (1) from the turn of the 20th century to the foundation of the People's Republic of China; (2) from that time until the period of reform and opening up; and (3) from the period of reform and opening up to the present. The growth of western music theory in China, before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, was a transition from passive acceptance to active absorption, as observed from the evolution of the primary theory education of Chinese music and its educational materials. In China, music theory education gradually evolved into a central, minor system as the dominant mode, and the fundamental theory of Chinese music slowly veered off its course as a result of the spread of western music theory from the palace to the church, then to the school and, eventually, to society.

The development of fundamental music theory, which is presently moving toward diversity and depth, has profited from the increased depth of music study that has followed the founding of the People's Republic of China. The advancement of fundamental music theory in China has been made possible by a large community of musicologists, educators and researchers from a range of academic disciplines and research perspectives. The concept of "combining history with the theory" and an examination of the advancement of fundamental music theory in China serve as the foundation for the ideal model of Chinese music theory discipline building. This model encourages the assimilation of traditional and modern music theory from a dialectical point of view, strengthens the unity of the country and the world in basic music theory from a synchronic perspective, and pays attention to the connotation of technology.

A royal tomb from 433 B.C. was discovered in Hubei Province, China, in 1978 by archaeologists working there. Among the twenty musical instruments is a collection of 65 bronze bells supported by wood. The two unique pitches of each almond-shaped bell depend on where it is struck. They are excellent for complementing vocals and other instruments because of their low inharmonicity and quick self-damping (BAGLEY, 2005, p. 54). Twelve different pitches per octave can be found in the middle registers. The pitches roughly divide the scale in half. Without specifically fitting any traditional

European tuning system, pairs of pitches separated by 3, 4, or 7 units create consonant intervals (LEHR, 1988, p. 144).

Each strike point contains a gold-inlaid inscription that identifies its set pitch. This inscription is buried into the tip of the strike point. The four root labels, that are identical duplicates of their current pentatonic counterparts, are Gong (number 1), Shang (number 2), Zhi (number 4) and Yu (number 5). The fifth modern label (number 3) does present; however, it does not precisely correspond to the other root positioned four units above the gong. This is even though it also appears. These very roots are then translated upward by an additional four units using a second suffix called Zeng, which results in the production of labels for the final four chromatic pitch classes. The generation of the same system by the cross-product of four roots and three suffixes is isomorphic with the formation of the chromatic system through the transpositional combination of an all-combinatorial [0257] tetrachord with an [048] augmented triad. Both processes result in the generation of the same system (COHN, 1998, p. 4).

The inscriptions provide a list of many relevant uses according to each pitch. The surfaces of the larger bells indicate a range of pentatonic functions for both of its constituent tones and, in places where there is sufficient capacity for writing, these functions are displayed. Isomorphic to those inscriptions would be the Western concept that, for example, the E bell functions as 1 of the E scale, 2 of the D scale, 3 of the C scale, 4 of the A scale and 5 of the G scale (where the scales are pentatonic). An identical range of pentatonic functions was utilized, as indicated by the inscriptions on a set of 41 chime stones found in the tomb. These stones also span from twelve to an octave (LYNCH, 2018, p. 290).

In the years 1979 and 1980, Yuan-Yuan Lee (1979, p. 16; 1980, p. 41) had two articles in the Chinese Music magazine, a publication of the Chinese Music Society of North America. After that, I read about the Zeng bells in a metallurgical journal and an archaeological monograph. These two resources both gave me information (VON, 1993; CHEN *et al*., 1994). I had the honor of being asked to speak in a plenary session at the annual meeting of the Society for Music Theory in 1997. I grabbed what I thought was a really large stick. I waved it around in an obnoxious manner in an effort to draw some attention because I had properly anticipated that this would be the greatest live audience I would ever have the opportunity to address. This is what I meant when I said that such a finding might arouse a level of curiosity that

is comparable to that of a community of what it says about our discipline. I waited patiently for a response. My home field, on the other hand, remained to hibernate even after my bell immediately self-damped itself.

Bagley (2005, p. 58) employs lovely language when he compares the inscriptions to "[…] a book about musical scales with a demonstration CD hidden inside the back cover." As a result, they "[…] represent the earliest works on music theory that are currently known from China" (p. 41). The inscriptions reveal that Zeng theorists were fascinated by the chromatic universe as a repository for twelve (theoretically) evenly spaced transpositions of the pentatonic scale, each composed of distinctive pitches with apparent purposes. To a contemporary music theorist who has studied Western music, this last line comes so naturally that it takes effort to recognize the seething mass of ideas that it compresses, the majority of which are separate from one another. Bagley achieves this by decomposing the claim into, in my opinion, seven sub-claims: specific pitches that are (1) uniformly distributed across a range of (2) octave-equivalent pitches that constitute twelve pitch classes, (3) co-related via transposition and (4) well-defined functions with regard to twelve different pentatonic scales (72). Nothing about these things should be taken for granted because musical systems are a gift from nature (NOWACKI, 2020).

Bagley positions the Zeng bells as the flashy apex of a 1,500-year-old bell-forging civilization. The method of the pointed ellipse was already invented by 2,000 BC. Early bells were crafted one at a time for utilitarian purposes like alarming or herding livestock. No later as 1100 BC, single bells were first gathered to court "from the field" to anchor the tune of vocal and instrumental ensembles. Eventually, tiny musical consorts that were aesthetically jumbled but acoustically matched to one another emerged. One consort from the 11th century B.C. filled a half-octave chromatically, suggesting an early standardisation of the chromatic reservoir. Assuming that the documentary evidence from the fifth century B.C. also applies to bell consorts, some of the priorities that might have guided the matching of bell frequencies to form pentatonic scales six centuries earlier include the maximization of acoustic symmetries as well as the transposability by substitution of a single bell one unit away, as in the case of "CDEGA" => "CDFGA" => "CDFGBb." Bagley shows that pentatonic modulations would not have been possible, at least not for the chime stones, in the middle of a composition, which is consistent with the idea that they were not likely to have occurred. One can assume that each

bell acting as the gong of one of the twelve different pentatonic transpositions reflected a range of cosmological, political, or societal factors.

Bagley (2005, 2015) claims that the fixed-pitch properties of the bells lead to the 12-tone chromatic reservoir closing. There is no incentive to constrict the pitch universe and bring it full circle, unlike the Mesopotamian harp, which has seven diatonically tuned pitches and can achieve the same chain of fifth-related transpositions by slowly returning individual strings (RAHN, 2022, p. 15). A more intricate connection may be made with the Greek system of tonoi, which was first described a century after the Zeng bells were buried and permits at least twelve possible transpositions that are close to their original position (HAGEL, 2009, p. 44). The increased centralization of the aulos, according to Andrew Barker (1987, p. 107; 1989/2, p. 26), may have prompted the development of this strategy. Although the pitches of the aulos are fixed like bells, they can be slightly changed by partial-hole fingering, embouchure, air pressure, and mechanical attachments (HAGEL, 2009, p. 337). The majority of the historical evidence for these systems, which is intermittent and constructed more than 500 years after the fact, as well as iconography and poorly preserved musical instruments, only provide indirect information about these systems. [ii] The aural and written evidence of the Zeng bells, on the other hand, is beyond dispute.

Chinese music researchers have enjoyed creating fundamental music theory textbooks, and numerous results have been published since Zeng Zhifan's interpretation and augmentation of the Textbook of the Music Canon in 1904. These fundamental texts on music theory share a number of features in common: (1) this paper broadly separates Chinese music philosophical thinking into three stages, with each historical stage having its own unique historical development features in terms of the construction of basic music theory textbooks. (2) The translations of books on fundamental music theory from abroad. Basic music theory textbooks have been translated at every stage from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Many academics, such Zeng Zhifan, Miao Tianrui and Feng Zikai, have dedicated their careers to creating basic music theory textbooks. (3) The tendency for basic music theory textbooks to be nationalized.

The construction of basic music theory for Chinese traditional music became a significant concern at the end of the twentieth century and the start of the twenty-first century. Western music theory has been the main subject of foundational music theory courses and fundamental music theory

textbooks for the past century. (4) A number of discipline-specific basic music theory textbooks for various majors and levels have recently been published, including basic music theory for preschool and early childhood education, basic music theory for popular music, and others. (5) The establishment of these disciplined, nationalized systems. Specialized basic music theory textbooks have made a significant contribution to the revival of the core knowledge base of the field.

This paper argues that traditional music education notion, the ancestor of Chinese educational philosophy, pervaded feudal society at all periods and was ultimately merged with contemporary western aesthetic education idea. This argument is made from the position of pure music philosophy. However, it was diminished and even denounced after the founding of New China; yet, with liberalization, its cultural values and conventional educational philosophy can be preserved and recognized in the present. The primary reason is that the concept of music education incorporates the timeless idea of "humanistic edification" as the purpose and value of education. This can help to organically integrate education and social development, highlight the social meaning of music education and allow it to adjust to the demands of various social development.

The result of music education will be significantly harmed by blindly adopting political or cultural theories in place of music education philosophy, according to the historical experience of Chinese music education, which demonstrates that the development of philosophical ideas of music education could perhaps take into consideration the needs of various socioeconomic and cultural development as well as the law of music education development itself. The only approach to improving and creating a music education philosophy, regarding Chinese and foreign music, is through good inheritance and borrowing. The advancement of music education philosophy will not be aided by completely rejecting preexisting theoretical frameworks or by adhering to conventional practices.

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Received: 22/11/2022
Approved: 10/12/2022