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# Music education in China: In search of social harmony and Chinese nationalism

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*This article critically examines how interactions between social changes, social harmony, and historical memory shape school music education in China. As a historical review and documentary analysis, it traces the historical development of music education and examines the Chinese government's role in such interactions over time. The article argues that the Chinese government uses music and music education as an influential nation-building system to enrich the politics of memory. In particular, it adapts the nation's past for political ends, and passes on state-prescribed values to its citizens with a view to legitimising its power. The dynamics and dilemmas that challenge school education result from two divergent aims: (1) to combine the functional education of Confucianism and nationalism so as to encourage social harmony and maintain national myths; and (2) to encourage popular and other world music with traditional Chinese music by using multicultural teaching strategies in music lessons. The question remains how to balance ideas of social harmony, musical cultures and nationalism in school music education in the contexts of current Chinese education policies, teacher education and the globally oriented economics of China today.*

## Introduction

Throughout Chinese history, the moral ideal of social harmony has played an important role in strengthening national unity, enhancing the cohesiveness of the country, and promoting friendship with neighbouring ones. Chinese culture and values have been remarkably consistent over the nation's long history, mainly because its education system has been dominated by the teachings of Confucius (or Kong Fuzi, 551–479 BC), who lived during a turbulent period in China's history (Huang, 1988). The Confucian description of a society of 'great harmony' is contained within the *Liyun* (礼运) chapter of the *Book of Rites* (礼记) (original compiled by Confucius himself, and edited and re-worked by various scholars of the Han Dynasty [202–220 BC]). Mencius (372–289 BC) (one of the principal interpreters of Confucianism) also highly valued harmony between culture and education (Legge, 1895; Lau, 1970). At the same time, harmony between Heaven and the people – 'tian ren he yi' (天人合一) – has been thought to be a highly desirable achievement in Chinese philosophy (Lun & Bond, 2006; Han, 2008).

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After the 1911 Republican revolution, however, these Confucian concerns for social harmony in China were rejected. During the 1919 May Fourth Movement, Confucianism was blamed for China's backwardness, and radicals (such as Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao and Hu Shi) promoted the slogan of 'Smashing Confucius' Temples' in the name of developing a new Chinese culture and reforming China without Confucianism (Yao, 2000). Mao Zedong (1893–1976) and his followers criticised Confucianism as being old-fashioned, feudal and part of the bourgeois hierarchical thinking of the past; and during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) Mao launched a campaign to discredit Confucius in an effort to scrap the ancient sage's remaining influence. According to Han (2008, p. 149), some scholars differentiated the 'socialist harmonious society' from the 'traditional harmonious society' in imperial China. The former attempted to balance 'the interest of individuals and that of society', whilst the latter accomplished its harmony 'at the expense of individual's interest' (Han, 2008, p. 149).

Besides social harmony, nationalism has also been an essential component of the Chinese state's determination to create a new, unified collective historical memory and political culture. The rise of nationalism, as Ernest Gellner (1964) points out, involves closely connected relations between structure and culture. The literature on nationalism ascribes a pivotal role to schools because they reproduce what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls an 'imagined community' through the formation and dissemination of a common national identity and a shared national consciousness (also see Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1991). This unity is also demonstrated by Chinese surnames and the concept of family, which are thought to be essential for the survival and development of China's national identity (Giskin & Walsh, 2001).

China's national identity is referred to as 'racial nationalism' (Dikötter, 1992, 1996), insofar as many regard China as having an absolutely distinct civilisation with a unique history, culture and a clearly prescribed territory. However, modern history in China was largely marked by the 'one hundred years of humiliation' from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, when China was invaded and attacked by foreign powers (Wang, 2008; also see Callahan, 2004). Certain Chinese intellectuals built a myth of a uniform 'Han race', with a common descent and culture, to create a sense of nationalism among the diverse people of the Chinese nation. Thus the Chinese have often called themselves *Han Ren* (汉人), or 'People of Han', who lived during the celebrated Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 200). Han civilisation developed from the earliest times in the eastern side of China in the valleys of three major rivers: the Huanghe (Yellow River), the Yangzi (Yangtze River) and the Xijiang (West River). These river systems have shaped agricultural development and population growth throughout China's history. Of the 56 ethnic groups living in China, the Han accounts for 92% of the total population. The 55 others, including the Bai, Bouyei, Dong, Hui, Miao, Manchu, Mongolian, Tibetan, Tu, Tujia, Uygur, Yao and Zhuang peoples, are nestled away in China's vast frontiers, where they maintain their own rich traditions and customs whilst remaining a part of Chinese culture.

Previous studies (such as Ho & Law, 2004; Law & Ho, 2009; Ho, 2010) have examined challenges to values education in the Chinese music curriculum of contemporary China, and the cultural interplay between Communist revolutionary music and other musical styles. These studies, however, do not address rising concerns about the political promotion of social harmony and collective historical memories through school music education in

China in the 2000s. They also do not specifically explain how socio-political circumstances were mediated by social harmony and historical memories in school music education in imperial and contemporary China, and the government's role in such mediation. This paper fills this research gap by analysing historical context, and by tracing the development of music education in imperial and contemporary China. In particular, we examine the Chinese government's role in shaping traditional and modern Chinese music education over time.

We argue that, despite different emphases and extents, the imperial and contemporary Chinese governments promoted social harmony in music education as a means of state governance to consolidate their political leadership and maintain social stability. These governments played a significant role in fusing the values of social harmony with the contents of musical knowledge. We further argue that because of China's rapid economic growth and unprecedented social changes in recent years, the contemporary Chinese government's need for promoting social harmony has become more intense and urgent. As China is being globalised economically, culturally and socially, these changes demand a new educational philosophy, innovative curriculum materials and the renewal of educational experience, along with a respect for social stability, virtuous living and the treasures of traditional Chinese culture. On the one hand, music promoted by Chinese authorities for use in classrooms attempts to incorporate diverse musical cultures and to encourage world peace. On the other hand, music education is used to perpetuate ideologies of political socialisation, to promote the historical heritage of traditional Chinese music, and to reproduce Chinese nationalism. We conclude the paper with a discussion of how these opposed ideals shape music education in contemporary China. As a historical review and documentary analysis, the sources of data for this paper include school music textbooks, government documents concerning educational policies and curricula, school music and arts syllabuses, and other relevant studies. Before analysing how the Chinese government shapes and uses music and music education in contemporary China in a global age, it is useful to understand the historical contexts of music education before the founding of socialist China by Mao Zedong in 1949.

### **Historical contexts of musical meaning and music education: from social harmony to nationalism**

One of the earliest definitions of 'harmony' has been discovered in the *Guoyu* (国语) (a classic text written during the Spring and Autumn period of China's history between 770 and 476 BC) in relation to the Confucian tradition (Li, 2006, p. 584). Li's translation of the *Guoyu* reads that harmony in China 'comes from the rhythmic interplay of various sounds, either in nature or between human beings, that is musical to the human ear ...' (Li, 2006, p. 584). According to the *Analects* (论语) (also known as the *Analects of Confucius*) 7.31, 'When Confucius sang with others and saw someone did well, he always made the person repeat the song before he responded' (Li, 2006, p. 583). The pentatonic scale of traditional Chinese music was not merely a series of discrete sounds, but also the harmonious interplay of those sounds. Great music shared in the harmony of Heaven and Earth, and the human body. A Chinese saying proclaimed that the means to achieve an ideal state was provided by: 'Harmony between music and man, harmony between heaven

and man'. In traditional Chinese society music was not meant to please but to educate. It was one of the four fundamental social functions, together with morals, law and politics. A scholar's personality was thought to be perfected by the synthesis of ritual and music (DeWoskin, 1982; Wang, 2004).

After the establishment of the Republic of China in 1911, a commission on music education was formed to provide suitable music for schools and for civic and national gatherings (Wiant, 1966). Early reforms in school songs were led by Chinese music students who had studied in Japan. Shen Xingong (1869–1947) and Li Shutong (1880–1942), who returned from musical training in Japan in 1903 and 1910 respectively, were two of the more important composers. The texts of their songs called for patriotism, self-discipline and the strengthening of the wills of Chinese children (Ho, 2003, 2006a). The end of the First World War coincided with the advent of the 1919 May Fourth Movement, which advocated the use of the Chinese vernacular language as a written medium of communication in all areas. This in turn influenced the development of Chinese literature and music, and led Chinese intellectuals to attack traditional Confucian values (Chow, 1960; Whitehead, 1976).

In China, the growth of nationalism was further reinforced when the country was invaded during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). Chinese nationalism is related to Chinese people's sense of identification with and love for China. In recent Chinese history, it was often associated with Chinese people's concern to protect the country's capacity to resist foreign invasion, for example, during the anti-Japanese movements of the twentieth century (He, 2007, p. 2). Chinese patriotism is often referred to as the state's cultural governance, movements and beliefs that assert the idea of a cohesive Chinese people and culture under a unified nation known as China. Sometimes Chinese nationalism is seen as synonymous with Chinese patriotism (see Hunt, 1996; Zhao, 1998; Callahan, 2006). The Resistance War of 1937–1945 is the centre of contemporary Chinese nationalism and contention over the war memory, as well as a source of diplomatic friction between Beijing and Tokyo (Coble, 2007). Encouraged and promoted by China's Ministry of Education (MoE), singing anti-war songs became a significant musical activity at this time (Gu, 2006; Zhou, 2007). For example, Nie Er (1912–1935), who was originally self-taught, and who joined the Communist Party in 1933, studied violin and composition with Russian instructors at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. His most famous song, 'March of the Volunteers', was written as the theme song for a patriotic film named *Stormy Children*. It was very popular during the war years and was later adopted as the national anthem of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Besides Nie Er, other patriotic/communist composers, such as Huang Zi (1904–1938), Tan Xiaolin (1911–1948), Ma Sicong (1912–1987) and Xian Xinghai (1905–1945) all made use of tunes in national styles and produced large numbers of songs to motivate the masses to resist the Japanese invasion, and to achieve national liberation (Tuohy, 2001; Wong, 2002; Chen, 2005; Liu, 2009). During the 1937–1945 period, 'the political use of mass songs' was promoted by war films and demonstrations in order to 'cultivate the revolutionary spirit' and to inspire a 'sense of unity' (Wong, 1984, p. 124). The MoE also promoted military music and its education. In 1940, the Military Department established a programme of military music and presented courses on vocal and instrumental music to 15–18-year-old students during their 3-year military training (Liu, 2009, p. 204). All these individual and collective efforts represented a significant shift in emphasis from

promoting music and music education for social harmony to strengthening a sense of Chinese nationalism and encouraging Chinese people to fight for territorial integrity against foreign encroachment and domestic revolution from below.

### **Between communism and patriotism in music education in the New China**

The official Chinese version of communism, Maoism (also known as Mao Zedong thought), is a far cry from Karl Marx's original version. Mao Zedong, a librarian at the Beijing University, started a society for the study of Marxism, and its members founded the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Shanghai in 1921. In 1942, following the growth of the communist movement in China, Mao Zedong delivered a famous speech at the Yanan Forum on the use of literature and art to serve communist ideology and on the nature of art in a class-based society. In 1949, the CPC defeated the Kuomintang and formally established the PRC on 1 October, with its national capital in Beijing. The CPC intends to lead the people of all ethnic groups in the endeavour to build China into a prosperous, strong and highly civilised modern socialist state, adhering to the Four Cardinal Principles: upholding the socialist road; the people's democratic dictatorship; the leadership of the Communist Party; and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. The central theme of socialist culture is often referred to as the ideology of the CPC, Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory. This ideology was initially brought forward in China in the early 1990s.

The CPC promoted revolutionary music while suppressing traditional and popular varieties. Many of the protest and revolutionary songs supported by the party were Chinese versions of existing Soviet songs. The 'New Songs of the Battlefield', a five-volume anthology of songs published between 1972 and 1976 in China, were regarded as 'new artistic works to promote political campaigns and ideologies' (Lei, 2007, p. 88). During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1967), only revolutionary songs, such as 'The East is Red', 'March of the Revolutionary Youth', 'We Are Chairman Mao's Red Guards', 'Long Live Chairman Mao' and 'Generations Could Never Forget the Kindness of Mao', could survive political suffocation.

Besides glorifying the CPC, patriotic education includes studying the long history of China and its civilisation, political ideology, national unity, and the ways in which the rich tradition of Chinese culture has shaped patriotism and socialism. Modern China has used the ideal of nationhood to reconstruct a collective cultural and ethnic identity. Symbols of either Chinese scenery or Chinese diligence, such as the Huanghe or Yellow River, which is considered to be the birthplace of Chinese civilisation, the Yangtze or Changjiang River, the Huang Mountain and the Great Wall, are what Wang (1993) and others call the 'Cultural China' that can bind Chinese migrants (游子, *youzi*) to the nation. Advertisements in China 'sell nationalism through Chinese symbols, images, rituals, historical heroes, and China's anti-imperialist history, to create a narrative of patriotism, loyalty, and national glory' (Li, 2008, p. 1130). The 'Patriotic Education Propaganda Poster Set' was designed by the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League and published in 1994 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese people's struggle against Japan and the victory of the international struggle



against fascism. In his closing speech to the Sixth Plenary Session of the 14th Central Committee of the CPC in October 1996, President Jiang Zemin expounded the patriotic duty of education to promote ethical and cultural progress. The film *Lei Feng is Gone*, which was well-received when it was first released in 1997, celebrates the spirit of Lei Feng (1940–1962) (a model soldier of the People's Liberation Army of the PRC), and ends with 'overt propaganda-children clapping, banners waving, patriotic music and song blaring' (Williams, 1999). During the patriotic campaign in Hangzhou city in east China's Zhejiang province, presentations of 'patriotic films', setting up 'national music clubs', and 'singing contests of patriotic songs' were also popular in local colleges and universities (Zhao, 1998, p. 296).

The unity of the 56 ethnic groups has been described as a key aspect of achieving social harmony and nationalism. This unity was seriously challenged, however, by the eruption of ethnic tensions between Uyghur and Han peoples into social unrest in Xinjiang, China in July 2009. Xinjiang was an important passage for the ancient Silk Road, along which people of many ethnic groups travelled, lived and traded for centuries. The region also has a long history of conflict in the annexation of the territory in the 1700s, dating back to the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911). On the 60th anniversary event of the founding of the PRC in 2009, the Chinese authorities deliberately chose ethnic unity as a major theme. Fifty-six pillars were placed as a symbol of ethnic unity in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, with each pillar representing an ethnic group. At the anniversary's grand gala on 1 October 2009, thousands of performers dressed in traditional festival costumes of different ethnic groups and danced joyously to the rhythm of their famous folk songs in the celebration activities of the anniversary in Tiananmen Square. Moreover, the annual Spring Festival Gala organised by China Central Television (CCTV) (the major state's television broadcaster in mainland China) has been often presented as a joyful occasion for 56 ethnic groups to celebrate Chinese New Year together. At the 2010 Gala, its director Jin Yue gave thumbs up to performances presented by the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (China Central Television, 13 February 2010). In education, cultivating a love for traditional Chinese music and an understanding of the various musical styles of the 56 ethnic groups is strongly encouraged in order to promote students' dedication to their homeland (Ministry of Education, 2001a, pp. 26–28; Ministry of Education, 2001b, pp. 6, 8, 13). Accordingly, traditional songs and dances of minorities were introduced in the 1980s to unite these various ethnic groups (Mackerras, 1984).

There are also other revolutionary and patriotic songs that are common to music textbooks in the new China, such as: 'A Red-starred Song', which begs listeners to follow the heart of Chairman Mao and the glory of the Communist party (Educational Editorial Board, People's Music Publisher, 2004, pp. 24–25), 'Praise of the Red Flag' (Editorial Board, People's Music Publisher, 2005, pp. 44–45), 'If There Was No Communist Party, There Would Be No New China' (Shanghai Music Publisher, 2002, p. 35), 'Suite of Songs for the Long March' (Shanghai Educational Publisher, 2004b, p. 5), 'Song for the Communist Youth Members' (Shanghai Educational Publisher, 2004b, p. 8), 'The Flying Flag' (Shanghai Educational Publisher, 2004c, p. 41), and 'Protect the Yellow River' (Educational Editorial Board, People's Music Publisher, 2004, pp. 8–9), which praises the revolutionary spirit.

Even though the War ended 65 years ago, anti-Japanese feeling lingers on in the Chinese community. In 1985 the Anti-Japanese War Memorial Hall was established under



the direction of the Departments of Propaganda and Culture. The September 18 Museum, which was established in northeast China's Shenyang city in 1991, was named after the date of Japan's invasion of northeast China on 18 September 1931. The War of Resistance Museum, located in the Beijing suburb of Wanping, first opened in 1987 and then extended in 1997. According to Vickers (2007, p. 369), the *People's Daily* (an official newspaper of the PRC) reported that the State Administration of Cultural Heritage had announced that there would be '3000 museums by the year 2015'. Meanwhile, China's museums and other historical sites have been promoted to preserve national memory and to share a sense of history (Callahan, 2004; Vickers, 2007; Wang, 2008).

Another example of anti-Japanese sentiment is the case of a famous Chinese actress and singer, Zhao Wei (also known as Vicki Zhao), who sparked a furious media campaign in September 2001 when she modelled a mini-dress, which was printed with the old Japanese naval flag with the inscription 'health, peace, happiness and hygiene', for a Chinese fashion magazine. Having been boycotted, Zhao apologised in the state media; and, during a television interview for *Entertainment Scene*, emphasised her patriotism and admitted neglecting her history lessons, being insensitive to historical matters, and failing to recognise the red 'rising sun' emitting rays of light as the hated Japanese symbol. In 2002, the controversial Japanese flag dress incident was included as a negative example of patriotism in Chapter One of new moral educational textbooks for primary and secondary schools under the heading, 'She was wrong'.

Anti-Japanese songs, such as 'The Sino-Japanese War' (1894–95), are still used in class to praise the nation's reconstruction after the Japanese aggression. In 1995, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of China's war victory, a large-scale commemorative campaign was launched to bring patriotic education to a climax. This included many historical documents, interviews and editorials regarding the war. Meanwhile, secondary schools nationwide carried out the 'Six Hundred Project' to popularise a long list of patriotic books, movies and television dramas, and songs and poems, including 'Against the Enemies', 'September 18' and 'Flying Flag', which are commonly found in primary-school textbooks. These songs encourage students to be brave and courageous, to fight against enemies, and to recount Japan's 20th-century military campaigns. All this suggests that in order to legitimise its continued leadership, the Chinese government under Communist rule vigorously promotes patriotism through music and music education by recalling its important role in historical events such as the anti-Japanese wars before 1949, and by glorifying the Communist rebuilding of the nation after 1949.

### **Global culture and social harmony in music education**

Communist China first pledged to shape a 'more harmonious society' in its 16th national congress in late 2002, and later explicitly called for the building of a harmonious society at a plenum in 2004. At the end of 2005, the government issued a white paper on peaceful development for the first time. On 11 October 2006, the Sixteenth Central Committee of the CPC passed a strategic document titled, 'The Communist Party of China Central Committee's Resolution on Major Issues of Building a Socialist Harmonious Society'. The resolution puts forward the importance, principles, goals and tasks of developing social equity, cultural harmony, and the ideological and ethical foundations for building a socialist harmonious society by 2020.

In response to globalisation, Chinese politicians and intellectuals, similar to those in other parts of the world, have sought to maintain dialogues with their Eastern and Western counterparts. Since 1979, the Ministry of Education (MoE) (1999) officially encouraged long-term planning to train speakers of different foreign languages. The learning of English in China has a longer history. There was even a mention of English language teaching (ELT) in the middle of the 19th century during the Qing Dynasty. With China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its successful bid for the 2008 Olympics, the MoE has made English instruction a requirement for all Chinese elementary schools from third grade onward. Both junior and senior high school students are required to take five or six 40–45 minute English lessons per week (Yang, 2006, p. 5). The Pop English online portal (<http://www.popenglish.tv/>) offers a virtual community for students and tutors and provides a multitude of resources related to learning and teaching English in China.

Today China has caught up with popular culture in every aspect of life. Popular culture generally defines the lifestyle and tastes of most young people; and its content is largely determined by industries that disseminate cultural materials, for example, industries associated with film, television, news media, video games, and publishing. According to the China Teenage Research Institution (2000), 'new media are changing the relationships' between young internet users in urban China by 'allowing them to operate as friends across generations and even in school environments' (quoted in Donald, 2004, p. 47). The increasingly affluent lifestyles of Chinese youth in big cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Wuhan, have enabled them to afford digital entertainment, including mobile communication devices, MP3 players, DVD players and Playstations (Asia Pacific Research Group, 2004, p. 38). Nurtured largely by an electronically based consumer culture, youth culture in China draws its icons, styles, images and values mainly from 'global' consumer cultural production and the entertainment industry (Lu, 2001; Liu, 2004). In China's Internet sphere there are online fan groups focused on global culture, including Hollywood movies; US-American television dramas; Japanese music, cartoons and comic books; and Korean music, fashion and food. Chinese youth have warmly welcomed Western popular culture, especially English-language popular songs (see Efirid, 2001; Sisario, 2007).

Western music and education had been promoted in China before the Cultural Revolution. In 1927, the first National Shanghai Conservatory of Music was established with an education system that copied those of the USA and Europe. During the Cultural Revolution, traditional Chinese music and Western music were both banned because they were accused of carrying 'feudal' and 'bourgeois' ideas, respectively. Nevertheless, the 1978 'open-door' policy towards Western culture allowed musical exchanges between China and the West to resume. In 1979 Isaac Stern (1920–2001), a violinist who in his prime was considered one of the greatest instrumentalists of the 20th century, accepted an invitation to visit China as an official guest of the PRC government. This visit was seen as a part of a globalisation process that would affect Chinese music education (Law & Ho, 2009). Many symphony orchestras and Chinese-style instrumental ensembles exist, and large choral groups are common in big cities, schools, universities and conservatoires. The impact of technological developments, such as CDs, film, multi-media computers, video and other audio and visual presentations, and Musical Instruments Digital Interface (MIDI), is profound in China's music education (Ministry of Education 2001b, pp. 23,

30). To give just one example, the Central Conservatory of Music (the leading music education institution of China) established an electronic music centre with advanced recording and video equipment in 1993. The Centre pioneered computer music, and has led the development of the music curriculum and research in computer music in higher education.

Besides traditional Chinese and Western music, US-American jazz (Shanghai Music Publisher, 2004c, p. 56), musicals composed by Andrew Lloyd Webber (Shanghai Music Publisher 2004b, pp. 18–33), film music, Hollywood films such as *Star Wars* and *Titanic* (Shanghai Music Publisher, 2005, pp. 68–75), Walt Disney animation films *Mulan* (based on the Chinese legend of Hua Mulan) (Shanghai Music Publisher, 2004b, pp. 46–54) and *Lion King* (Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2003, p. 32), and the Japanese animated film *Spirited Away* (Shanghai Music Publisher 2004c, pp. 44–55) are all in the current senior-high-school arts curriculum. In higher education, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music took a leading role when it introduced a contemporary and popular music course including the study of modern musical instruments and percussion as part of its music programme at the beginning of the 21st century (*Beijing Review*, 18 January 2001; Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2010). Meanwhile, the Department of Pop Singing was founded in the Pop Music School of the Sichuan Conservatory of Music in 2001. Its foundation was intended not only to cultivate students with comprehensive and systematic pop singing skills, but also to develop their inter-disciplinary music talents with solid music theory and composition technique (Sichuan Conservatory of Music, 2010).

When students come to appreciate the quantity and richness of the music of other countries through learning world music, they develop a broader sense of aesthetics and a greater understanding of, and respect for, other cultures. Students are encouraged to learn diverse musical values as a means of developing their musical appreciation and aesthetic sensitivity, as well as for cultivating non-musical values, such as global peace and development. Song materials include 'The World Is a Beautiful Circle' (Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2004a, p. 31), 'We Are One' (words and music by Mary Donnelly) (Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2004b, p. 31), 'A Whole New World' (words by Tim Rice and music by Alan Menken) (Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2004c, p. 31), and 'The True, Lovely and Small World' (Shanghai Music Publisher, 2004a, p. 55). These songs celebrate the global environment, which, it is warned, can survive only if we learn to live in peace and harmony with our fellow human beings. In recognition of this perennial challenge, China's music education ensures that multiculturalism, which focuses on nurturing cultural diversity, celebrating the quantity and richness of other countries' musical cultures, and having respect and love for other music cultures, plays an increasingly vital role in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2001b; Guan, 2009). Now Chinese students have more opportunities to learn and experience diverse musical cultures, including African, Indian, Japanese and others covered by their music textbooks (e.g. Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2003, pp. 19–23, 2004a, pp. 19–24, 2004c, pp. 19–24; Educational Editorial Board, People's Music Publisher, 2004, pp. 12–17). In other words, while emphasising the traditional theme of social harmony and appealing to patriotism for national solidarity, the contemporary Chinese government promotes and incorporates music from other cultures into Chinese society and school music education in line with the increasingly globalised world.

## **Dynamics and dilemmas of Chinese school music education in the global age**

As shown earlier in this paper, using the music curriculum to promote patriotism, national cohesion, social unity and harmony, collective memory, and cultural heritage is a recognised practice in contemporary Chinese education in today's global age. The challenges of school music education result from perceived needs to: (1) combine Confucian values of education, nationalism/patriotism, and collective memory for enriching social harmony and national myths; and (2) encourage traditional Chinese music and other world music by using multicultural teaching strategies in music lessons. The nation's sense of pride in its great civilisation, together with a sense of humiliation about its modern history, are key factors to understanding China's reinterpretation of its cultural identity and its relationship with the rest of the world.

The long history of China and Chinese traditional culture holds a prominent place in education, with a particular focus on national development and struggles against foreign aggression. Many scholars have stressed that teaching about the past plays a major role in forming national, ethnic, religious and regional identities, as well as group perceptions and relations (Hein & Selden, 2000; Smith, 2005; Vickers & Jones, 2005). Confucian classics are being used increasingly in China's schools and universities as a way of defending national morals against an ever-growing consumer culture. Issues related to promoting traditional culture and Confucianism are highlighted in the 2001 Action Plan for the Development of Civic Morality and especially in the 2006 Plan for Cultural Development, which featured the 11th five-year plan (2006–2010) (Billioud, 2007). The Sihai Confucius School, which was founded in 2004 in the outskirts of Beijing, is the first full-time private Confucian school to be approved by the district government. Public schools have also started to develop new syllabi that incorporate the study of Confucian classics.

Within the 'Confucian revival movement', Chinese authorities used contemporary popular culture to promote traditional values. For example, Chow Yun-Fat, a famous Hong Kong and Hollywood actor, was to star as Confucius in a film production by the Beijing-based Dadi Cinema in combination with the state-run China Film Group. The opening of this film was intended to mark the 60th anniversary of the PRC and Confucius' 2560th birthday.

The Chinese government has used popular media such as posters to propagate correct social behaviour and to convey moral messages through role-modelling (Landsberger, 1998, 2001). The school posters titled 'Loving the Nation' usually involve visual images of the national flag of the PRC and/or the constitutions, and promote the image of 'unity and friendship within the multiethnic composition of the population' (Landsberger, 2001, p. 563). Other posters addressed such concrete social issues as the flooding problem and other natural disasters. This promotion and distribution of media content in China was intended to 'diversify and internationalize China's economy', as well as to 'retain and reiterate a sense of local and national identity' and to equip children with 'new knowledge in a new world' (Donald, 2004, p. 45).

Popular versions of revolutionary ideas are still being presented. The re-staging of 'revolutionary epics', or 'red classics', such as Peking Opera's *A Tale of a Red Lantern* and Peking Ballet's *The Red Detachment of Women*, which were popular in the 1960s and

1970s under Mao, still attract enthusiastic Chinese theatre-goers, though many of them were born after these classics were originally produced (Shi, 2000, p. 202). Propaganda songs and music that featured popular culture from the 1950s to 1970s were collected and performed in modern rock adaptations for several albums, such as *Red Rock* and *Red Sun*, which sold about 6–8 million copies in China during the 1990s. In October 2004, the Beijing authorities put forward a new patriotic education project called ‘Three One Hundred for Patriotic Education’, which included 100 films, 100 songs and 100 books linked by a common theme of patriotism. One selected book entitled ‘Never Forget Our National Humiliation’ is intended to shape people’s historical memory of past humiliation (Wang, 2008, p. 796). The MoE recommended 100 patriotic songs for teachers and students to celebrate the PRC’s 60th anniversary. These songs, titled ‘Glory the Motherland’, were designed to be used in their schools’ musical activities. Meanwhile, a mass singing of 100 patriotic songs in schools was conducted in September 2009 (*People’s Daily News*, 3 June 2009; *Zhongguo Jianguo Bao*, 3 June 2009). The criteria for selecting these songs were based on 23.35 million votes cast by Chinese citizens, along with some cast by Chinese composers and lyricists. Some of these songs were criticised, however, for expressing nothing other than a devotion to the communist party, which it was said could not capture people’s feelings and thoughts about love and pride of the nation (Sun, 2009). Songs in music textbooks, such as, ‘I Love My Chinese Nation’ (Educational Editorial Board, People’s Music Publisher, 2006, p. 8), ‘Sing My Beautiful Homeland’ (Educational Editorial Board, People’s Music Publisher, 2007, p. 13), ‘My Chinese Heart’ (Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2004b, p. 17), ‘My Home Town Is Beijing’ (Shanghai Educational Publisher, 2004a, p. 2) and ‘Shanghai Is the Best Place’ (Shanghai Educational Publisher, 2004a, p. 3), attempt to cultivate passionate love amongst students for their homeland. The PRC’s national anthem, ‘March of the Volunteers’ (see for example, Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c), which is always placed at the beginning of music textbooks, must be learnt.

Chinese schools traditionally have been isolated from the world beyond their gates. Moreover, popular music has provoked reactionary regulations by both the state and educational authorities. Schools never introduced other popular songs from the USA and other Asian countries because such music was feared to carry ‘spiritual pollution’. The educational reception of Jay Chow’s song ‘Snail’ reveals how much attitudes have changed, however. Jay Chow is a famous Taiwanese songwriter and singer, whose song ‘Snail’ aroused controversy in Shanghai education in 2005 because it encouraged students to pursue their dreams and to realise their individual, as opposed to collective and patriotic, values (Ho, 2006b). ‘Snail’ was included, however, in the Shanghai’s Education Commission’s 100 patriotic Hong Kong and Taiwanese popular songs. Recently the Central Propaganda Department promoted the ‘patriotic songs we sing’ activities and selected 100 patriotic songs based on an online poll. A song ‘The Pearl of the East’ written by another Taiwanese singer – Luo Dayou – was also adapted for patriotic education. The song lyrics urge, ‘please don’t forget my forever yellow face’. Luo Dayou had been banned from performing in China after the 1989 crackdown on student protesters around Tiananmen Square, because of his song about the diminutive Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, called ‘The Dwarf’s Song’. Now the song ‘The Pearl of the East’ has been incorporated into Chinese college textbooks because of its lyrics about life, confusion and the thoughts of Chinese youth in the face of the social transformations of the 1980s and 1990s.

Music education in China is changing rapidly to accommodate new ways of thinking, learning and musical culture. Through praising the beauty of the world, and the virtues of hope, bravery, humanity and civility, school music education encourages children's love for their locality, the nation and the world. Despite political dilemmas between China and Taiwan, mainland textbooks include the song 'Tomorrow Will Be Better' by Luo Dayou (Xiaonian Yitong Chubian She, 2004c, p. 15). Other Chinese and English language songs praise world peace (for example, an English song 'Hand in Hand', which was the theme song of the 24th Olympic Games in Shanghai Educational Publisher, 2004b, pp. 30–31) and protection of the environment (for example, the Chinese song 'The Earth is Beautifully Round'; Shanghai Educational Publisher, 2004b, p. 24). Meanwhile, song lyrics in praise of parenthood and friendship recognise individuals' responsibilities to both family and community, and the virtues of bringing honour and avoiding disgrace to the family name. Such songs are common in Chinese music textbooks, along with others in praise of friendship and the unity of human beings.

For the last 20 years, the Chinese government has been passing laws and implementing policies of cultural protection in an attempt to maintain the continuity of national and minority cultures as an essential cultural basis for enhancing social cohesion. Chinese opera has been stimulated by collecting traditional libretti, promoting new plays and operas, supporting public performances, and training and rewarding professionals. More generally, China has started a long-term plan to publicise its cultural heritage among the younger generation. Since 2001, Kunqu opera (one of the oldest forms of traditional Chinese drama, with a 600-year history of synthesising drama, opera, ballet, poetry and music) was included in the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization's (UNESCO) intangible heritage list as an 'oral masterpiece' – a decision that has attracted nationwide attention. In 2003 a Kunqu Opera museum opened in Suzhou in Jiangsu Province to exhibit masks, costumes, manuscripts and ancient instruments. The first training programmes on national culture based distinctly on Chinese language and literature, customs, art and music, which were funded by the municipal government to educate young students, were inaugurated in Shanghai in 2005. The Chinese government promised to allocate 50 million yuan (US\$6.1 million) between 2006 and 2010 to preserve Kunqu opera (*People's Daily News*, 13 June 2005). In February 2008 the MoE started to stimulate an interest in Beijing Opera, which is 200 years old, and combines music, singing, mime, dance and acrobatics. The government piloted introductions to Beijing Opera in 200 schools in ten provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, including Beijing, Gansu, Guangdong, Heilongjiang, Hubei, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Shanghai, Tianjin and Zhejiang. Meanwhile, the Shanghai government allocated 10 million yuan for ten training programmes in Peking Opera, Kunqu Opera and folk songs and dances, etc. for over 6000 students (Shen, 2007). With the help of modern computer and video technologies, a national audio and video database for Chinese traditional operas has been established to preserve traditional Chinese operas. Cultivating a love for traditional Chinese music and an understanding of the various musical styles of the 56 ethnic groups is strongly encouraged in order to promote students' dedication to their homeland (see Ministry of Education, 2001a, pp. 26–28; Ministry of Education, 2001b, pp. 6, 8 13).

The diversification and mixing of cultures is a basic trend in the development of all human societies. Exchanges between different civilisations have boosted mutual



learning and the common progress of humankind. But, owing to limitations on resources and music teachers' educational training, creating a truly multicultural music education curriculum may be problematic. The current social, political and economic challenges facing China today revolve around the phenomenon of globalisation, which challenges traditional culture and identity in the curriculum. The principal challenges for Chinese music education in the 21st century are the integration of popular music, traditional Chinese music, music from other minority groups, and other world music in the school curriculum. However, despite the spread of popular culture and multiculturalism in the Chinese school music curriculum, globalisation has not changed the promotion of traditional values, nationalism and traditional Chinese music as a form of sociopolitical exclusion and inclusion on a nationwide basis.

Therefore, changes in teacher education are part of a much broader change in the nature of education policy-making in China. The teacher's role must be that of a facilitator and a co-learner in coping with continuous changes in Chinese society today (Chen, 2008; Shi & Englert, 2008). Such a sharing of knowledge could generate long-lasting and meaningful musical experiences for students. Music teachers are expected to be responsible for cultivating cultural understanding and expression, and for demonstrating how politics shape the content of school education (Jorgensen, 2007). As Jorgensen (2007, p. 150) noted, music teachers as 'researchers are inherently ethical and have political consequences' because they 'act on behalf of what John Dewey terms 'the public''. Traditional conceptions of teaching, as Dewey (1902, 1934) contended, have failed to do justice to the ideal of open-mindedness. To rectify this, Dewey invited teachers to rethink their aims and priorities, and the manner in which they taught. He further urged teachers to construct knowledge through an on-going inquiry with a view to coping with new problems and needs arising in changing societies. Dewey (1902) also encouraged schools to make the curriculum more flexible because it should address not only societal needs but also students' interests and needs. To help students cope with changing needs of the rapidly changing society of the 21st century, teachers must learn new methods of teaching and stretch their horizons (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). It is also important that teachers tailor their curriculum contents and educational philosophies to the mainstream (Ministry of Education, 2001c; Huang, 2004). Facing similar challenges, Chinese music teachers, as reflective practitioners, need to adopt an open-minded attitude towards interpreting and applying pedagogical principles.

There is a question, however, of the extent to which the Chinese teacher education curriculum can adapt to the changing society to meet new social needs (Mak, 1999). With particular reference to Shanghai education, Lai and Lo (2007, p. 66) found that the state monitored teachers' work, and argued that it is important to increase teachers' empowerment. They suggested that teachers should be provided with more opportunities 'to participate in the decision-making process over school administration and educational policies to retain their professional autonomy and authority (also see Huang, 2004; Law, 2009). The question of how to integrate teacher education into broader educational policies to promote the value of cultural differences in the music curriculum remains to be researched. We recommend that a capacity for critical sociological insight into the interactive construction of students' musical learning be incorporated into teacher preparation programmes.



### Final words

Whether in imperial or contemporary China, the Chinese government has been an important agent in promoting social harmony through various means, including music education, with a view to maintaining political stability and therefore its leadership. The philosophy and teachings of Confucianism – a moral and ethical code of conduct for all human relationships, which aims to cultivate an ideal and harmonious social structure – can now be found in Chinese educational reforms, books, television and movies. The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games on 8 August 2008 was used to show 5000 years of China's cultural splendour. To the thunderous beat of Xia Dynasty drums, 2008 voices chanted Confucius' saying, 'How Happy We Are, To Meet Friends from Afar!' in welcoming more than 90 000 spectators from all over the world to the opening of the Beijing Olympics. A 9-year-old Chinese girl performed 'A Hymn to the Motherland' as 56 children, each representing an ethnic group of the nation's 56 nationalities, carried the national flag into the stadium. A male and female representative of each ethnic group sang the national anthem as the Chinese flag was raised, illustrating China's claim to unite its diverse population under one nation and party. International faces on umbrellas appeared with Chinese singer Liu Huan and British soprano Sarah Brightman singing the theme song, 'You and Me', to send a message of international harmony to the world.

Despite the spread of popular culture and multiculturalism in the Chinese school music curriculum, globalisation has not changed the promotion of traditional values, nationalism, or traditional Chinese music as a form of sociopolitical exclusion and inclusion on a nationwide basis. The prime raw material for constructing ethnicity in China is usually its history and culture. This forms the basis on which to teach national culture with the aim of consolidating the bond between cultural understanding and cultural identity in children's music education at school.

We conclude with a suggestion of how music education might manage two pairs of struggles: (1) between the transformation of social values of harmony and nationalism on the one hand; and (2) between national and global cultures on the other. Sinification is seen as an important arena for the Chinese state to further its nationalist incorporation of the social harmony of traditional Chinese culture, and the discourse of national humiliation is an integral part of the construction of Chinese nationalism. Recently, Li Changchun, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, urged Chinese authorities to use Chinese civilisation and ethics for the promotion and prosperity of socialist culture in China (*Xinhua News*, 13 January 2010). But this leaves the question of how to devise musical materials and teaching strategies that can help students achieve more meaningful educational and musical values through studying both national and global cultures in the school music curriculum. It is important for the Chinese state, music teachers and educators, and music curriculum developers to recognise and understand this need, and to find ways to bring about an ideal music education that can involve highly diverse voices from all over the world speaking to one other. It is also important to rethink how Chinese music teacher education could help school music teachers and school music education to be open to a more humanistic and student-centred approach wherein connections are made with the wider community.

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