

WANG GUANGQI AND FENG ZIKAI: TWO WAYS OF APPRECIATING EUROPEAN ART MUSIC IN CHINA

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Abstract

This paper focuses on two musical textbooks written by Wang Guangqi 王光祈 (*An Outline of the History of Western Music*, 1930) and Feng Zikai 丰子恺 (*Introduction to Music*, 1926). During the 1930s in China, these publications emerged as the dominant genres of literature explaining Western art music: music history and music theory textbooks. The paper examines the influence of German comparative musicology on these notable works. By conducting a comparative analysis of these publications in the context of the themes and values of comparative musicology, the paper seeks to investigate how these influential texts reflect the state of Chinese music culture during the transformative period that followed the May Fourth Movement. The conclusion will summarize the reception of these two influential textbooks at the time of their publication and evaluate their significance in contemporary China.

Keywords

Wang Guangqi – Feng Zikai – European art music – Chinese traditional music – music education – musical textbook

Introduction¹

Wang Guangqi 王光祈 (1892–1936) and Feng Zikai 丰子恺 (1898–1975) were leading intellectuals and modernizers who subscribed to the legacy of the May Fourth Movement and sought inspiration abroad for the “improvement” (*gaijin* 改進) of domestic culture: Wang in Germany and Feng in Japan. Both devoted themselves to many areas of artistic creation and a vast range of social activities, and both, through their publications on music, significantly contributed to shaping learning about Western art music in China.² However, there are certain differences in the way in which knowledge about European music was spread by these two personalities, as well as in the positions they both held in the ongoing clash between domestic tradition and new knowledge from Europe.

Feng Zikai was not a trained musicologist, yet his handbooks on Western art music originally written in the Republican period are still among the most widely published works of their kind in China, where they have become a fixture in music education. Wang Guangqi, who completed his doctoral studies in musicology in Germany, is today regularly referred

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² In this study, we use the term *Western* as a relative category and in the manner it was defined by Chinese intellectuals themselves in the period under review, when the European musical tradition was viewed as a single cultural entity. We use the term with the understanding that the concept of the “Western tradition” overlooks important differences and diversity.

to as the father of Chinese musicology, but wider interest in his life and work was renewed only in the 1980s when there was a general trend in China to rediscover its pre-revolutionary traditions. Before the 1980s his publications, originally published simultaneously with Feng Zikai's, were almost forgotten.

This paper is devoted to two publications intended for general audiences by the above-mentioned authors, which represent the two most popular categories of works dealing with Western art music in China around 1930: the first one by Wang Guangqi (*Xiyang yinyue shi gangyao* 西洋音樂史綱要 [An Outline of the History of Western Music], Shanghai, 1930) belongs to the genre of music history writings, and the other is a publication by Feng Zikai on Western music theory and methods of playing musical instruments (*Yinyue rumen* 音樂入門 [Introduction to Music], Shanghai, 1926). These works draw inspiration from two countries whose music education systems became at the time models for the Chinese system in many respects, namely Germany, where the new discipline of comparative musicology was an important source for understanding Western music culture in comparison with non-Western and mainly Chinese music traditions, and Japan, where promoting Western modernism and defending Japanese tradition overlapped each other.

Through a content and comparative analysis of these publications, this paper will present paradigmatic texts about music during the cultural transformation that took place in China following the May Fourth Movement. Written by two distinguished authors and intellectuals, the two books represent two different approaches to mediating Western music in China as an important part of cultural modernization. These approaches were shaped by the different personal experiences of their authors as well as by the different cultural milieus in which they encountered Western music and from which they transplanted new knowledge about music into Republican China. In the conclusion, the article summarizes how these two important books were received and examines their relevance to the problematic relationship between tradition and modernity, which fundamentally marked the process of reception of Western Art music during the 20th century and whose reverberations are visible even in today's China.

Wang Guangqi: Western Methods for Restoring Chinese Tradition³

"The study of music is a great way to cultivate morality."
(Wang 2009: 103)

Wang Guangqi was born in 1892 in the Wenjiang district of Sichuan to a family of rural gentry, from whose ranks civil servants were traditionally recruited. He spent the first half of his life there and thus directly witnessed the local events leading to the outbreak of the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. The educated people of his generation received both a traditional Confucian education and Western-style education (Han Liwen 1987: 15). In the first half of his life, Wang was only marginally interested in music, and exclusively in Chinese music: he played the dizi and xiao flutes as a child and was an enthusiastic listener of Sichuan opera.

³ The biography of Wang Guangqi presented here is based on Han Liwen 1987.

Between 1914 and 1918, while studying law at Zhongguo Daxue, a private college in Beijing founded by the first president of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen, he made a name for himself as the editor of *Jinghua ribao* 京華日報 (Beijing Daily). At the time, he was also the Beijing correspondent of *Sichuan qunbao* 四川群報 (Sichuan Daily) and therefore played an important role mediating information about the patriotic May Fourth Movement⁴ in the capital to Sichuan, thus allowing the student movement in Chengdu to flourish. Together with Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889–1927), Zhou Taixuan 周太玄 (1895–1968), and other influential like-minded reformers, he founded the Young China Association (Shaonian Zhongguo xuehui 少年中國學會) in 1918, which published an important radical journal, *Young China Monthly* (*Shaonian Zhongguo Yuekan* 少年中國月刊), and established the Work-Study Mutual Aid Group (Gongdu huzhu tuan 工讀互助團) a year later.⁵ In the founding report of the Young China Association published in *Young China Monthly*, Wang presented the following definition of its progressive goals, which could easily serve as the motto of all of Wang's activities throughout his life:

“Together with our peers, we will find a way to transform this ancient, rotten, groaning, oppressed and exploited country into a youthful, independent and prosperous one” (Wang 1919).

Wang's belief about the decaying state of China undoubtedly led to Wang going to study in Germany in 1920. He first studied political economy in Frankfurt and continued to work as a translator of diplomatic reports and a correspondent for *Shanghai Shenbao* 上海申報 (*Shanghai News*), *Shishi xinbao* 時事新報 (*Current Affairs News*), and *Chenbao* 晨報 (*Beijing Morning Post*). After discovering the irreplaceable role music played in the lives of Germans and how it helped maintain national unity in crisis, he decided to dedicate himself to this subject. Although Wang's first articles on music date back earlier (the first from 1922), it was not until 1927 that he officially began studying music in Berlin under the guidance of well-known ethnomusicologist and representative of the Berlin School of Comparative Musicology Erich von Hornbostel (1877–1935). He was the second Chinese person (after noted composer and educator Xiao Youmei 蕭友梅 [1884–1940]) to obtain a doctorate in musicology, he did so at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn. His dissertation was on traditional Chinese opera (“Ueber die chinesische klassische Oper, 1530–1860”).

During his studies in Germany, he wrote sixteen monographs in both German and Chinese on a wide range of topics and over twenty articles on music for German and Chinese journals and newspapers. In these works, he on the one hand presented basic knowledge about Chinese music to the European audience, and on the other hand, systematically introduced European art music and musicology to Chinese readers. He was a pioneering mediator of musical knowledge between China and Germany, and his dissertation is still cited by European scholars today.

⁴ The May Fourth Movement began on May 4, 1919, with a demonstration against the results of the Paris Peace Conference, which neglected China's demands to retake former German occupied territory in Shandong, and gradually developed into a national movement for intellectual and political enlightenment (Schwarcz 1986: 7).

⁵ The title of the journal is probably derived from Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 (1873–1929) famous article “Shaonian Zhongguo shuo” 少年中國說 (Young China), in which Liang as an 1898 reformer calls on the youth of China to rise up and show that China is not an old empire doomed in the modern world. For more information about Liang Qichao and his concept of the “new citizen,” see Chang, Hao, *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890–1907*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Wang Guangqi died young in 1936. His Chinese friends initiated the publication of a special short collection of articles in his memory (*Zhuidao Wang Guangqi xiansheng zhuan kan* 追悼王光祈先生專刊), which foreshadowed how Wang's legacy would be perceived for decades to come. In the collection, his friends remembered Wang primarily as a May Fourth social activist and patriot, while his contributions to musicology were only marginally mentioned.⁶ This bias about Wang's work is still evident today.⁷ For example, a published summary of a conference held to mark the 120th anniversary of Wang's birth emphasizes Wang's efforts to improve and modernize Chinese society and lists music last among his research focuses (Zhao Chonghua 2013). When Wang's musicological work is analyzed in Chinese research, it is always in relation to comparative musicology.

Several of Wang's treatises are connected with the introduction of comparative musicology in China: *The Evolution of European Music* (*Ouzhou yinyue jinhua lun*, 歐洲音樂進化論, 1924), *The Study of Musical Systems of East and West* (*Dong xi yuezhi zhi yanjiu*, 東西樂制之研究, 1926; where the term *comparative musicology* [*bijiao yinyuexue* 比較音樂學] appears for the first time), and *Music of the Oriental Nations* (*Dongfang minzu zhi yinyue*, 東方民族之音樂, 1929). His contribution to this field was recognized soon after he died in Japan (Shigeo Kishibe identified Wang as a pioneer in the introduction of comparative musicology in Asia in 1937)⁸ and among leading proponents of the New Chinese Music movement (Xian Xinghai, Lü Ji, etc.)⁹. However, it was not until much later that he would be linked to comparative musicology and earn the nickname "the father of Chinese musicology". Another area of Wang's work in music studies, musical historiography, specifically the presentation of Western music history in China, has not received sufficient attention until now.

Although Wang was an enthusiastic admirer of European music, he should not be categorized alongside his contemporaries who promoted the complete Westernization (*xihua* 西化, or *yanghua* 洋化) of Chinese music. Rather, he advocated the creation of a new, specifically Chinese music that must "be created by the Chinese themselves" (*bixu wuren zixing chuangzao* 必須吾人自行創造) and which "must not be forcibly replaced by Western music" (*bu neng qiang yi xi yue daipao* 不能強以西樂代跑; *Zhongguo yinyue shi* 2014: 2). Western music should only be an inspiration for original creation, while he put particular emphasis on the "scientific approach" to studying music. As mentioned, Wang was motivated to study music in part by the idea of using specific elements of Western culture for the social and cultural progress he believed necessary for the revival of China. Wang was a vocal supporter of the study of music for "the salvation of the country" (*yinyue jiuguo* 音樂救國),

⁶ Articles devoted to Wang Guangqi and his work have appeared in China, except for a pause during the Cultural Revolution, essentially continuously from 1924 to the present. Between 1924 and 1948 only a modest number of such studies were published, with a slight increase in 1936 when Wang died mainly due to commemorative articles. Early papers primarily consisted of a brief presentation of Wang's life and a summary of his most famous works. Even when his musicological work was mentioned, Wang was depicted primarily as a social activist and not as a musicologist.

⁷ A turning point in the study of Wang's works came in June 1984, when the Chinese Musicians Association *Zhongguo yinyuejia xiehui* 中國音樂家協會 together with the Sichuan Conservatory of Music organized the first Wang Guangqi Study Symposium (Wang Guangqi yanjiu xueshu taolunhui 王光祈研究學術討論). Since this event, Wang Guangqi's contribution to the establishment of music studies in China has been acknowledged. Chengdu subsequently became a center of "Wang studies" (*Wang xue* 王學), which gave birth to several editions of Wang's works and the proceedings of Wang conferences. He gained an undisputed place in the pantheon of Chinese musicologists in 1985, when Wang was included in the *Chinese Music Dictionary* *Zhongguo yinyue cidian* 中國音樂詞典 of the People's Music Publishing House Renmin yinyue chubanshe 人民音樂出版社.

⁸ Gong 2017: 7.

⁹ On "New Music," see mainly Liu J. & Mason C. (2010). *A Critical History of New Music in China*. Chinese University Press.

which no Chinese scholar researching Wang will fail to emphasize.¹⁰ However, it is worth mentioning that Wang, unlike proponents of full Westernization among the leading actors of the May Fourth Movement, defended some unquestionable qualities of indigenous Chinese music, as will be demonstrated in detail later in this paper.

The Berlin School of Comparative Musicology during Wang Guangqi's Time in Germany

Germany is the cradle of the discipline now known as ethnomusicology, which Wang Guangqi introduced to China. It grew out of comparative musicology, a tradition of music studies that itself was an offshoot of the older German historical musicology, *Musikwissenschaft*, founded in the late nineteenth century and later evolving into multiple traditions of thought.¹¹ One of them was the comparative study of music, developed in the 1870s at the universities in Berlin and Vienna.¹² As Bruno Nettl writes, what was “briefly called *Musikologie*” in the 1880s acquired the name *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft* (comparative musicology) in 1885, when Guido Adler coined the term.¹³ The scholars responsible for pioneering works in this movement were Alexander J. Ellis, Theodore Baker, and Carl Stumpf.¹⁴ In 1900, Stumpf established the Phonogramm-Archiv together with his colleague Erich Moritz von Hornbostel (who two decades later became a mentor to Wang Guangqi).

As Adelaida Reyes writes, comparative musicology differs from the traditional discipline of historical musicology in that it was “established through dichotomization.” In other words, it is based on the “contrasting pairs” of “the written and documented” and “the orally transmitted”; “the culturally close and the culturally distant”; and “the music of super-ordinate and that of subordinate culture.”¹⁵ Beyond these dichotomies, comparative musicology was, in the words of Nettl, “a code for inter-cultural and multi-cultural studies” of music,¹⁶ based on an epistemological premise that each musical system should be viewed as one of a universe of musical systems; that it is possible to use certain methods that apply to all musics and may be used to apprehend any of them; and that meaningful understanding can be accomplished by comparing the music of society to that of its geographical neighbors.¹⁷

¹⁰ After the Cultural Revolution, Wang was the focus of many researchers in both mainland China and Taiwan, not only musicologists and music enthusiasts. In this period, many topics of varying degrees of scientific importance were raised, which are still the subject of so-called Wang studies today, e.g. the reasons that led him to leave for Germany (Wang Yuhe 2010, Wang Yong 2007), Wang's relationship with Mao Zedong (Ma Xuanwei 2000, Wu Xiaolong 2002), or his contribution to knowledge about Western music in China, mainly the analysis of his most cited work *History of Chinese Music* (Zhongguo yinyue shi 中國音樂史).

¹¹ Kassabian, Anahid. Introduction: Music, Disciplinarity, and Interdisciplinarity. In: Schwarz, David, Kassabian, Anahid, Siegel, Lawrence. *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997, p. 1–10; p. 1.

¹² Schneider, Albrecht. “Comparative and Systematic Musicology in Relation to Ethnomusicology: A Historical and Methodological Survey.” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2006, pp. 236–258. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20174451>. Accessed 21 Sep. 2022. p. 240.

¹³ Nettl, Bruno. *The Study of Ethnomusicology*. Third edition. University of Illinois. 2015, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

¹⁵ Reyes, Adelaida. “What Do Ethnomusicologists Do? An Old Question for a New Century.” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2009, pp. 1–17. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25653044>. Accessed 21 Sep. 2022. p. 6.

¹⁶ Nettl, Bruno. Some Contributions of Ethnomusicology. In: McPherson, Gary E. Welch, Graham F. *The Oxford Handbook of Music Education*, Volume 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 105–124; p. 108.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

The adjective *comparative*, therefore, referred to an attitude of treating different musical traditions with equal attention and a similar methodological toolkit. These scholarly ambitions relied heavily on “new technologies of sound recording and mass publication,” as Jonathan P.J. Stock points out.¹⁸ Sound and printing technologies were necessary for transcription, the documentation of instruments, and the development of the discipline’s overarching paradigm. Comparison as the fundamental feature of this approach to the study of music was, however, later substituted with a focus on the particular music of a given locality. The term *comparative musicology* was replaced with *ethnomusicology*. The revised discipline was at the core based on the idea that the musics of the world should be studied separately, in their particular social contexts. The prominence of comparison was replaced with an emphasis on expertise in a specific music culture.¹⁹

When Wang Guangqi started his musicological studies in Berlin, comparative musicology was already a vital, well-established intellectual tradition with multiple centers and leaders based in Berlin. His teacher of organology was Curt Sachs (1881–1959), the director of Berlin’s Staatliche Instrumentensammlung, and his teacher of music psychology was Erich Moritz von Hornbostel. Both Sachs and Hornbostel were prominent figures in the field, and together they devised the musical instrument classification system published in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* in 1914, which is to this day widely used. Like many other intellectuals and academics, Hornbostel and Sachs fled Germany after the Nazi Party’s rise to power in 1933, which had a devastating effect on the field of comparative musicology, since it was a tradition of thought based mostly in Germany.²⁰

During his studies in various fields between 1923 and 1931, Wang Guangqi wrote many books and articles on Western and Chinese music.²¹ As Hong-yu Gong has summarized, the Berlin School of Comparative Musicology influenced Wang Guangqi mainly in the area of musical evolutionism and the study of musical instruments.²² According to Mei-Ling Shyu, Wang Guangqi believed that Western musicological methods should be implemented in the process of collecting and constructing the repertoire of Chinese national music.²³

¹⁸ Stock, Jonathan P.J. Documenting the Musical Event: Observation, Participation, Representation. In: Clarke, Eric, Cook, Nicholas: Empirical Musicology. Aims, Methods, Prospects. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 15–34; p. 15.

¹⁹ Cook, Nicholas. Computational and Comparative Musicology. In: Clarke, Eric, Cook, Nicholas: Empirical Musicology. Aims, Methods, Prospects. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 103–126; p. 103.

²⁰ Schneider, Albrecht. “Comparative and Systematic Musicology in Relation to Ethnomusicology: A Historical and Methodological Survey.” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2006, pp. 236–58. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20174451>. Accessed 21 Sep. 2022, p. 251.

²¹ Gong, Hong-yu. (2017, March). Wang Guangqi 王光祈: The man who introduced the Berlin School of Comparative Musicology to China. Paper presented at A Roundtable Discussion Paper delivered at the 20th Congress of the International Musicological Society, 19–23, Tokyo 2017 (IMS 2017 in Tokyo), Tokyo, Japan. p. 2. Available from: https://www.researchbank.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10652/4213/Wang_Guangqi_the_man_who_introduced_the_Berlin_School_of_Comparative_Musicology_to_China.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

²² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²³ Shyu, Mei-Ling. Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Musik und Politik in China und Taiwan. Hamburg: Dissertation .Universität Hamburg. 2001. p. 151.

Wang Guangqi's Inspiration and Visions

Wang Guangqi, like his Chinese contemporaries, had an evolutionary understanding of music. He believed that Western art music had developed its complex forms through an evolutionary process; its modern complexity emerged from earlier simple forms. However, he believed that no such evolution had taken place in Chinese music and was convinced that the highly sophisticated Western traditions “surpassed” the older Chinese musical forms, which had become stagnant.²⁴ To challenge this stagnation, he appropriated the periodization of music history developed by Austrian and German musicologists and used Western art music as a prototype for elaborating the history of Chinese music (*Zhongguo yinyue shi* 中國音樂史 [*Chinese Music History*], 1931).²⁵ As aptly summarized by Andrew F. Jones, Wang Guangqi's view of Chinese musical culture as stagnant and his efforts to revitalize its forms, and for this purpose to standardize music education, were technocratic in nature, as his endeavors were part of a broader social project of creating a modern Chinese nation-state and citizenry.²⁶ Thus, the evolutionary approach to music history was an instrumental part of a larger commitment to “modern science, enlightenment ideals, and, perhaps most centrally, the nation-building enterprise.”²⁷

Wang Guangqi's books on music education were written mainly between 1925 and 1928. In his musical textbooks, Wang Guangqi borrowed the periodization of Western art music developed by Austrian musicologist Guido Adler in *Der Stil in der Musik* (1911), *Methode der Musikgeschichte* (1922), and *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (1924).

Using Adler's chronology as a foundation, Wang developed ideas about the nature of music, in which he (similarly to other leaders of the New Music Movement, including Cai Yuanpei, later famous as the enlightened president of Beijing University) combined a traditional Chinese perspective on moral education with modern theories in the field of musical aesthetics, inspired by European authors (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche). For Wang, music combined moral and aesthetic qualities and could be used to influence listeners because it arouses an emotional response and “people accept social norms as their own through emotions” (Wang 1929).

By cultivating character through music, Wang sought to educate a “new citizen” (*xin min* 新民), a patriot involved in China's transformation into a modern, prosperous state. However, for Wang, music did not just stimulate emotions to directly inspire patriotism. He consistently linked listening to music with the development of intelligence.²⁸ His *Outline of the History of Western Music* aims to awaken the reader's interest in Western music in general and especially in scientific methods, in this case, the methods of Western historical and comparative musicology.

²⁴ Wang, 1926, p. 9.

²⁵ Chien-Chang, Yang, Janz, Tobias. Introduction. *Musicology, Musical Modernity, and the Challenges of Entangled History*. In: Chien-Chang, Yang, Janz, Tobias. *Decentering Musical Modernity Perspectives on East Asian and European Music History*. Bielefeld: Transcript publishing, 2020. p. 20. Available from: https://www.transcript-publishing.com/media/pdf/af/6d/09/ts4649_1MlcRxASdlzn6D.pdf

²⁶ Jones, Andrew F. *Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001, p. 25–26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁸ As he did in the article “The Importance of Music in Education” (“Yinyue zai jiaoyu shang zhi jiazhi” 音樂在教育上的價值) in connection with the description of acoustics as a scientific discipline.

In his writings about Western music, Wang also introduced various academic disciplines related to the study of music. In his *Outline*, he even mentions music psychology (*yinyue xinlixue* 音樂心理學). The German terms *Musikpsychologie* and *Tonpsychologie* that he refers to were originally developed by comparative musicologist Carl Stumpf (1848–1936), who worked at the Psychological Institute and the Phonogram Archive in Berlin, where he laid the groundwork for comparative musicology. Stumpf was taught by Wang's mentor, Erich Hornbostel. During his studies in Berlin, Wang Guangqi took Hornbostel's classes on tone psychology and music psychology because he was fascinated by the works of Stumpf. Wang also became familiar with the Hornbostel–Sachs system of musical instrument classification – a comprehensive system devised by Hornbostel and Curt Sachs and the most widely used method of classifying musical instruments. Thanks to these stimuli and knowledge acquired in Germany, Wang Guangqi was able to, in the words of Xiao Mei, “forward a comprehensive system for the evolution of musical temperaments, tone, music notation, and musical instruments,”²⁹ which he also incorporated in his *An Outline of the History of Western Music*.

Wang Guangqi was one of the main figures spreading knowledge about music written by Western composers in China, notably that of Ludwig van Beethoven. Wang greatly admired Beethoven's talent and dedication to music and compared the composer to the famous historian Sima Qian (206 BC–AD 220), who, according to Wang, despite his personal suffering and hardships, wrote monumental works with the same persistence and zeal that Beethoven had.³⁰

Guangqi's view on Beethoven was formed under his Ph.D. supervisor at the University of Bonn, Ludwig Schieder, a former colleague of the musicologist Hugo Riemann (1849–1919) from the University of Leipzig, whose *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (1919) and *Musiklexikon* (1929) are repeatedly referred to in Wang Guangqi's work. Schieder also founded the Beethoven Archive in Bonn when Wang Guangqi was studying there.³¹ He was also one of the examiners of Wang Guangqi's thesis on classical Chinese opera in 1934.³²

***Xiyang yinyue shi gangyao* (An Outline of the History of Western Music)**

An Outline of the History of Western Music is a two-volume work, published in 1930 in Shanghai. Since then, it has been published several times in China, most recently in 2017.³³

Wang was not the first Chinese author to write about the history of European music, but his approach was innovative in several ways. The preface and introduction of the book

²⁹ In the chapter on Western music theory in his *An Outline of the History of Western Music*, he determines the law of equal tempered tuning, then focuses on applying this law, and, finally, describes the study of harmony as an evolutionarily completed system and practice.

³⁰ Cai, Jindong, Melvin, Sheila. *Beethoven: China's Sage of Music*. Stanford, CA, 2020. Available from: <https://www.barduschinamusic.org/chinas-sage-of-music-article>

³¹ Gong, Hong-yu. *An Accidental Musicologist – Wang Guangqi 王光祈 (1892–1936) and Sino–German Cultural Interaction in the 1920s and 1930s*. Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland (New Zealand), 2016, p. 110.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³³ *Outline* was published in 1930 (Shanghai), 1937 (Kunming), 1941 (Shanghai), 1956 (Taipei), 1967 (Taipei), 1972 (Taipei), 1987 (Taipei), 2007 (Beijing), 2012 (Beijing) and 2017 (Henan). While Wang Guangqi's work was published fairly consistently in Taiwan after 1956, Wang was forgotten in the People's Republic.

deserve particular attention, as it is here that he presents his concept of the relationship between music and society and its importance for China's modernization, and reflects on the correct approach to studying music.

Although the book was never used directly as teaching material in schools, a certain pedagogical intention is clear, based on both the language of the preface and his more general stances regarding the desire to improve the overall state of China by educating new citizens. Wang was initially motivated to write it out of the desire to contribute to the general education of readers and to raise the level of Chinese culture. After all, this motivation is behind all of Wang's work. His attitude toward education and upbringing is encapsulated in the following quote: "It is enough to do well in the field of education and upbringing, and our spiritual and material life can reach the highest degree of fulfillment" (Wang 1919).

Wang wrote his outline of Western music as the music education system in China was being established and music-oriented schools founded (the first conservatory in China, the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, dates to 1927). He considered the introduction of the European music system and the history of music as the necessary foundation for building China's new music education system.

Wang did not hide his admiration for Western science (widespread among members of the May Fourth generation), whose progress he saw above all in the care and systematicity of scientific research:

"Whatever field we study, it takes an effort of nine bulls and two tigers to acquire even the slightest information. Most people who do not study scientific questions have no idea that there are so-called 'problems' and unless you study deeply, you will never discover that there are even very many of these problems. Western researchers often devote their whole lives to one trivial problem, which may seem ridiculous to onlookers, but this is precisely where the progress of Western science lies." (Ibid: 2)

Dissatisfied with his Chinese peers' lack of scientific rigor, in his *Outline* Wang Guangqi criticizes the prevailing Chinese approach to music history, whose narrative resembles mythical tales about great heroes. Instead, he proposed a "scientific" approach, inspired by more "empirical" methods and the aspirations of comparative musicology. In the chapter on organology, he even excludes the well-known ancient Greek myths about the origins of musical instruments to sustain the purely scientific commitment of his work, even though his Western sources do include chapters dedicated to the mythological beginnings of ancient Greek music. Hugo Riemann, in particular, in his *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* mentions "the mythical founders of music culture"³⁴ and the origins of instruments, for example, *Aulosmusik*, in Greek antiquity.³⁵

Another aspect of contemporary Chinese writing about music that Wang found unsatisfactory and lacking scientific rigor was the lack of a systematic approach taken by other Chinese music historians. It is evident from the opening passage of the preface, where he argues that limiting oneself to biographies of famous composers when writing musical history is not sufficient for understanding music and sets the stage for intellectual laziness, which he intended to avoid:

³⁴ Hugo Riemann. 1919, p. 36.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 58–59.

“Originally, I had only planned to talk about the lives of important authors and different musical styles, which I could write without much thought, and readers could read such work in one breath without any pretensions to thinking. But my readers certainly can’t expect such an easily doable thing from me, and I don’t expect anything like that from them either.” (Ibid: 1)

As a more suitable alternative to studying the life and work of leading European music figures through Chinese handbooks, he offers the reader to study music dictionaries and encyclopedias directly from the countries where the mentioned authors worked. In his attempt to disrupt the existing Sino-Japanese way of presenting music history through biographies, he emphasized the systematic description of music from all possible perspectives: musical forms, genres, instruments, and the development of musical notation. Wang chose this approach also to offer a possible source of inspiration for Chinese composers and musicians, as it was precisely these areas in which, in his opinion, Chinese music was lacking.

The main contribution of Wang’s book is that it was the first systematic, complex view of the history of European music by a Chinese author. The presentation and application of the procedures of European musicology, especially comparative musicology, were a complete novelty, both in China and in Japan. A Chinese audience could, for the first time, read about the connections between music studies and other disciplines, such as psychology and acoustics. Wang also systematically presented theories about the origin of music developed by European thinkers to Chinese readers for the first time. Among them, he mentions Charles Darwin, whose theory of evolution was very influential in China at the time;³⁶ Herbert Spencer, whose application of Darwin’s theory to learning about society was well received in China; German psychologist Karl Groos; economist Karl Bücher; and the great music theorist Fausto Torrefranca (Ibid: 16–17).

Wang’s emphasis on the scientific approach led him to mention the broad variety of academic disciplines that, in his opinion, should be part of musical research (aesthetics, physics, psychology, philology, art history, cultural history, political history, history of religion, history of philosophy, playing instruments, general musical knowledge, etc.).

Wang’s preoccupation with the relationship between musicology and social progress included both serious scholarship and achieving patriotic feelings. In the preface to the *Outline*, Wang summarizes his position on the relationship between music, scholarship about music, and society, emphasizing the necessity of considering scholarship as a value of its own. For him, purely academic achievement was part of the broader effort to help China evolve into a modern state. In the following quote, for example, he addresses ensuring competitiveness in science:

“Lately I have gotten the impression that the study of scientific problems is a kind of luxury, considering that we poor students under economic pressure are often forced to starve for days to solve even a minor problem, which is indeed extremely wasteful. But if men are to have any spiritual life in addition to eating, dressing, sleeping, and love affairs, and if we consider that besides the constant cry of ‘Down with

³⁶ See Pusey J. R. (1983). *China and Charles Darwin*. Council on East Asian Studies Harvard University; Distributed by Harvard University Press.

imperialism!' there is also the incessant academic competition between countries, then such wasteful luxuries are a necessity." (Wang Guangqi 1937: 2)

In the Introduction, Wang is also interested in purely scholarly issues and proves to be both well-informed about the latest trends and capable of independent judgment. He describes various existing European perspectives on the historiography of music (general history, history of instruments, history of genres, development of musical notation, changes in the philosophy of music, and biographies of famous musicians) and explains the potential pitfalls of each of them.

The whole book is based on the observation of changes in the structure of musical works. Unlike his contemporaries and their biographical approach, Wang consistently emphasizes musical composition to the extent that he only mentions names of composers where it is relevant to major changes in the structure of works. He understands this "structure" not only as a structure of compositions itself but also reflects changes in the development of notation or musical instruments.

The difference in his approach is evident when we compare the structure of his *Outline* with that of other Chinese books on European art music. Unlike Wang in his *Outline*, most authors simply divide their books into three sections focused on ancient, medieval, and modern music. Following the example of the classical Chinese division into court (*yayue* 雅乐) and folk (*suyue* 俗乐) music, the categories of religious (high) and secular (popular) music are also found in these works. Covering the period from Romanticism to the present day, these books are divided into chapters by country (German Romanticism, French Romanticism, etc.).

As in his other books, Wang divides the book into four main sections arranged chronologically, using Adler's periodization as a guide: 1. The era of monophonic music, 2. The era of polyphonic music, 3. Polymelodic style, and 4. Melodic-harmonic style. Wang places Chinese music only in the first, least-developed stage of music evolution (the monophonic era) and alludes to its "insufficiency." He writes that this inadequacy must be balanced out by studying the "advanced" music of Europe:

"Our Chinese music at the current stage of development is stuck in the era of monophonic music. Although accompaniment appears to a limited extent, it is very simple and cannot be compared to modern Western music. Therefore, our Chinese music should pay special attention to the development of the 'work structure' (*zuopin jigou* 作品結構) of this type of Western music" (Ibid: 8).

The very structure of the book and that of its individual chapters reflects the inspiration of German authors, especially those who taught Wang. Unlike other Chinese authors of the time, who refer to Western literature less explicitly, Wang Guangqi always cites the literature he used, listing references at the end of each chapter. His sticking to German terminology also testifies to the inspiration he drew from German authors. When translating musical terms, Wang Guangqi chooses transliteration and consistently gives the original German term in parentheses.

Wang addresses the following areas, dedicating a chapter to each one: the beginnings of music (Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Jewish music, Greece, and Rome, the beginnings of church music), the beginnings of polyphony (chivalric songs, the Renaissance, the invention of

chromaticism, harmony, and the Gregorian chant), the development of musical notation, the development of operas, the development of instrumental music, the development of instruments, the development of modern church music, the development of Western musicology, and the development of modern music.

Among Chinese scholars, Wang is unusually thorough about the beginnings of European music and its relationship to religious music. This seems to be related to one of his main ideas concerning the domestic musical tradition, that is, the revival of Confucian ritual music (*fuxing liyue* 复兴礼乐). He compares this ritual music to European religious music. He writes that ritual music is “the only valuable representative of domestic culture” and its revival can lead to the “renewal of the whole nation.” In his view, new Chinese music was to be created by combining renewed ritual music with folk music, that is, the pure voice of the Chinese nation (Wang 1924).

In terms of the relationship between vocal and instrumental music, the book departs from the approach of Chinese authors who utilitarianly emphasized vocal music, apparently based on the popularity of mass and school songs, the first genres of the so-called New Music (mixing Chinese tone material with Western compositional techniques). Wang pays equal attention to both vocal and instrumental music.

One chapter of Wang’s *Outline* titled “Methods of Research in the History of Music” is entirely devoted to criticizing the practices of contemporary Chinese scholars and researchers. Wang’s criticism addresses the already-mentioned presentation of music history through biographies of famous personalities, excessive emphasis on musical theory (tuning principles) over practice (playing instruments), excessive focus on detail, a separate examination of form and content, and the ignoring of historical context. Here, he also negatively evaluates the traditional Chinese practice of combining the study of music with disciplines that primarily have nothing to do with music (medicine, astronomy). In his criticism, Wang Guangqi alludes to the fact that most early studies of Chinese music theory dating from before China’s encounter with Western civilization arose within more general cosmological frameworks, and not as an independent discipline. His criticism is also based on an observation that Chinese music histories include few descriptions of actual authentic music.³⁷

Wang adopts German models in terms of content, method of presentation, and terminology, but makes it special with references to Chinese history and realities in terms of the choice of stylistic devices. Wang chooses a vivid and imaginative style of writing to help Chinese readers understand previously unknown knowledge, as demonstrated in passages in which Wang applies simile, using references to famous Chinese historical figures (e.g., Tang dynasty painter Wu Daozi), Chinese culture in general, and everyday life. Take, for instance, his explanation of the nature of polyphonic music:

“[The voices] flow forward independently, and like the Yellow River, the Long River, and the Pearl River, which create a beautiful picture of the Chinese landscape, they possess a harmonious beauty that complements each other. If you don’t believe me, then please take a map of China, hang it on the wall, and judge for yourself how beautifully these three rivers flow.” (Ibid: 33)

³⁷ Later researchers also point to this problem. Lau writes about the criticism that Hong Kong researchers levelled against researchers from the Chinese mainland in the 1990s. According to these scholars, published accounts of China’s musical past include little hard evidence about the structure and sounds of specific musical works (Lau 1994: 165).

We find a similarly styled explanation in his conclusion of the description of music after 1750:

“It used to be fried egg and rice (the egg was the main voice and the rice was the accompaniment); now it’s rice and scrambled eggs, all mixed, and unless you’re a gourmet, it’s going to be hard to tell one from the other.” (Ibid 12)

The main motivation of Wang’s work is not the pursuit of pure science, it must be understood in connection with the desire for social transformation, which is the legacy of the May Movement, as well as his often contemptuous relationship to Chinese tradition. Although Wang Guangqi repeatedly highlights the achievements of European musicology, which in his eyes represents a new, more advanced, and, above all, properly scientific approach to the study of music, in many respects his views are still based on the domestic tradition. Already his initial impulse to study European music has its roots in the Confucian idea of the connection between correct music and the preservation of social order.

Wang appeals to his compatriots to pay attention to current events in the field of musicology, but he himself remains a traditionalist in many ways, which is most evident in highlighting the values of Confucian ceremonial music over folk music, or in preferring European music of the Romantic period over newer truly modern musical trends.

This complicated interweaving of domestic tradition and new knowledge from abroad is characteristic of the 1930s in China and is a probable cause of the insufficient response of Chinese readers to Wang’s works. Although many intellectuals of that time considered themselves proponents of modernization, they remained strongly anchored in traditional value frameworks, and neither they nor the newly established educational system were prepared to accept truly new and modern disciplines. In finding a middle way between tradition and new knowledge, Feng was much more innovative, but not infallible in the least, which may have been one of the reasons for higher popularity of his works among ordinary Chinese readers.

Feng Zikai (1898–1975): Music as a part of aesthetic education

Music is nourishment for the soul.
(Feng Yiyin 2019)

Feng Zikai (1898–1975) was born in the late Qing dynasty, shortly after the end of the First Sino-Japanese War. Feng was a modern intellectual of the first half of the twentieth century involved in a broad variety of activities promoting new culture aimed at improving Chinese society. Unlike Wang Guangqi, he was not a political activist but a dedicated educator and artist. Feng Zikai produced an extensive body of literature; during his lifetime he wrote countless essays, handbooks, textbooks, and translated Japanese and Western literary and educational works, making a significant contribution to the development of Chinese culture in the first half of the twentieth-century.

Feng Zikai first encountered Western art music between 1914 and 1919 during his studies in Hangzhou at the Zhejiang Provincial First Normal School (Zhejiang shengli diyi shifan xuexiao 杭州浙江省立第一師範學校) through the singing of school songs, a musical form

that was a synthesis of Western, Chinese, and Japanese music. These songs became an indispensable part of the Chinese education system in the early twentieth century as it was believed they could cultivate the character of students.³⁸ Feng Zikai was particularly influenced by his friend and mentor, Buddhist scholar and influential composer Li Shutong 李叔同 (1880–1942) and his school songs.³⁹ Feng Zikai further deepened his musical knowledge in 1921 during a ten-month study stay in Japan, where he studied Western art at the Kawabata Academy of Oil Painting (Kawabata yōga gakkō). There he spent his time visiting museums, studying languages, and learning how to play the violin (Lin 2003: 99).⁴⁰ He started to write about music after returning from Japan, when he joined the White Horse Lake Group (Baimahu zuojia qun 白馬湖作家群) consisting of several distinguished intellectuals, educators, and essayists, such as educator and Feng's colleague Xia Mianzun 夏丏尊 (1886–1946) and Li Shutong (Chen Xing 2011: 85).⁴¹ Since then, Feng taught music and art education at Chunhui Middle School (Chunhui zhongxue 春暉中學; Chen Xing 2011: 81). Feng Zikai's career as a music educator reached its peak when he taught at Li Da Academy (Lida xueyuan 立達學園) between 1925 and 1928 (Barmé 2002: 194–196).

Feng Zikai devoted himself to music throughout his life. Since the early 1920s, Feng wrote many books about Western music, which greatly contributed to the broadening of knowledge about Western art music in China.⁴² Among his publications on music, the most widely read is *Introduction to Music (Yinyue rumen 音樂入門)*. This handbook was written in 1926 in the intellectually stimulating environment of the Li Da Academy. Immediately after its publication, *Introduction to Music* became a popular Chinese handbook on Western music. It found success not only because in it Feng presented information about Western art music in an original way. Feng's exceptional position certainly contributed to its popularity. He was a respected artist and educator living in the cultural center of Shanghai, where he was active in several artistic institutions, was acknowledged in wide intellectual circles, and to this day is frequently mentioned in the memoirs of many Chinese notables.⁴³ However, unlike Wang Guangqi, Feng Zikai was not a music professional, and many misinterpretations can be found in the book.

³⁸ See Chaloupková, Lenka. (2021). "The Chinese art song, yishu gequ 藝術歌曲: Between tradition and modernity." AUC, no. 4.

³⁹ In addition to pedagogical work and his interest in the fine arts, Li Shutong (Master Hongyi) made significant contributions to the spread of knowledge about Western music in China, publishing the *Small Music Magazine (Yinyue xiao zazhi 音樂小雜誌)* in Tokyo in 1906, and was one of the first composers of modernized Chinese music. See Liu Jingzhi and Mason, Caroline (2010). *A Critical History of New Music in China*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

⁴⁰ Japan was a model for China's modernization, having already gone through this process in the second half of the nineteenth century during the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912), becoming an important source of Western knowledge and ideas for China.

⁴¹ Both Li Shutong and Xia Mianzun were close colleagues of Feng and greatly influenced his work. Li Shutong (Master Hongyi) became Feng Zikai's teacher and mentor at the school in Hangzhou; they formed a lifelong friendship. Li Shutong's teaching style and personal approach to his students greatly influenced Feng and made him decide to pursue a career as an artist. As for Xia Mianzun, his teaching of Chinese language gave Feng a literary foundation. See Chen Xing. (2011). *Feng Zikai pingzhuan*. Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe and Wang Tao. (2019). *Research on Mr. Feng Zikai and Impressions of his Work*. (ICASSEE 2019). Published by Atlantis Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2991/icassee-19.2019.101>.

⁴² Feng's works on music include *Ten Great Musicians of Modern Times (Jinshi shi da yinyuejia 近世十大音樂家, 1929)*, *Great Composers and Masterpieces of the World (Shijie da yinyuejia yu mingqu 世界大音樂家與名曲, 1931)*, *Western Musical Knowledge (Xiyang yinyue zhishi 西洋音樂知識, 1951)*, and *Stories of Ten Great Western Musicians of Modern Times (Jinshi xiyang shi da yinyuejia gushi 近世西洋十大音樂家故事, 1957)*. His published translations of German and Japanese works about music include *Children's Music (Haizimen de yinyue 孩子們的音樂) (1927)* and *Life and Music (Shenghuo yu yinyue 生活與音樂, 1929)*, among others. See Chen Xing (2011). *Feng Zikai pingzhuan*. Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe: 116–117.

⁴³ See Ye Shengtao (2004). *Ye Shengtao ji: juan: San wen*. Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe. See Ding Shande (2006). *Ding Shande yinyue lun zhujì*, Shanghai: Shanghai yinyue xueyuan chubanshe.

Feng Zikai's inspirations and visions

Feng Zikai's interest in music stemmed from a slightly different place than Wang Guangqi's. Feng created his peculiar concept of art, which consisted in questioning the utilitarian use of art and its reduction to a mere instrument to reform society, and emphasized the role of art in the life of the individual (Andrš 2005: 154).⁴⁴ It is evident from his handbook that he applied his ideas about art to music as well. His interpretation sought to convince Chinese students that music has an enriching effect on human life. His understanding of music was in keeping with contemporary Japanese and Chinese trends and was inspired by the artistic milieu and people he encountered during his lifetime.⁴⁵ Feng Zikai, inspired by his environment and educational experience, created his own pedagogical concepts, which he discussed in his essays focused on the development of the human soul, aesthetics, and his love for the culture of his native land.

Feng Zikai had a traditional Chinese education but also received a partly Western education in Japan. His career made him an example of a modern intellectual who was directly influenced by the educational policies of Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940; Andrš 2005: 154).⁴⁶ One of the features of Cai's aesthetic education was practicing and using art in human life, a principle that also inspired Feng Zikai's own pedagogical work. Nevertheless, Feng never rejected his traditional Chinese education and cultural background but rather was inspired by it, which is evident in various aspects of his work. As a layman, he also actively participated in the Buddhist revival of the period, inspired by his mentor Li Shutong. Moreover, like many other Chinese scholars, Feng was heavily influenced by his time spent in Japan. Feng Zikai made no secret of his taking inspiration from prominent modern Japanese scholars in the prefaces to his writings on music, and it is evident that his perspective on music and the structure of his music handbooks are influenced by early Japanese works on Western music.⁴⁷

Feng Zikai was not the first to publish on the topic of Western music in China; similar handbooks had already appeared in the period between 1900 and 1910.⁴⁸ Feng Zikai followed the same model these publications used; they were meant to serve the needs of the new type of schools to shift from music education narrowly focused on the mere development of technical skills in playing an instrument, to education representing general knowledge about music intended for all students. He also tried to include information on European music history, but he took a different approach than Wang Guangqi, which will be demonstrated in the next section.

⁴⁴ See Andrš, Dušan (2005). "Role umění v životě člověka: Feng Zikai a jeho příspěvek k čínské estetice první poloviny 20. století." *Studia Orientalia Slovaca* 4: 153–174.

⁴⁵ See Chen Xing (2011). *Feng Zikai pingzhuan*. Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe.

⁴⁶ See Ying Xiaoyan (2019, February). *Cai Yuanpei's Thought of Promoting Moral Education through Aesthetic Education and Its Contemporary Value*. 2019 International Seminar on Education, Teaching, Business and Management, Hangzhou, China: Francis Academic Press, 54–57.

⁴⁷ See Chen Xing (2011). *Feng Zikai pingzhuan*. Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 149.

⁴⁸ From authors such as Zeng Zhimin and Shen Xingong. See Wang, Yuhe. (2006). *Zhongguo jindai yinyue shi 中国近代音乐史*. Beijing Shi: Zhongyang minzu daxue chubanshe.

***Yinyue rumen* (Introduction to Music)**

Introduction to Music was first published in 1926 in Shanghai by the famous Kaiming Bookstore. Since then, more than thirty-three editions of the book have been published, most recently in 2018.⁴⁹

The great popularity of Feng's publication is also evidenced by the fact that some of the greatest Chinese composers mention his *Introduction to Music* in their memoirs, for example, composer Nie Er 聶耳 (1912–1935) noted in his diary:

“After I bought Feng Zikai's *Introduction to Music* and read it, I realized the difficulty of learning the violin and the importance of basic practice. At that moment, it seemed to me that my heart had sunk so deeply into the abyss of sorrow and disappointment that I could not pick it up again. The violin case then sat quietly beside my pillow for more than a week because I was so restless and hesitant.” (Nie Er, 2004: 112)

Feng Zikai wrote *Introduction to Music* to complement his first music textbook, *Basic Knowledge about Music* (*Yinyue de changshi* 音樂的常識), published in 1925 by the well-established Shanghai publishing house Yadong Tushuguan 亞東圖書館, which published works by leading May Fourth intellectuals (Feng Zikai 1926: 33). *Introduction* is an excellent example of literature inspired by Japanese handbooks, which introduce the basics of European music theory and history. It is approximately 250 pages long and is divided into five chapters and several subchapters. The first four chapters provide a theoretical explanation of music and an introduction to the practice of instruments, while the last chapter presents a history of music.

In the first chapter, “Types of Music” (“Yinyue de zhonglei” 音樂的種類), Feng Zikai introduces the reader to the criteria by which music can be divided. He mentions polyphonic and homophonic music, absolute and programmatic music, secular and religious music, classical and Romantic music, and Western and Eastern music. Unlike Wang, he provides only basic descriptions and classifications and does not give his personal opinions on these matters. In the second chapter, “Entrance into Music” (“Yinyue zhi men” 音樂之門), the reader is introduced to the three musical steps necessary for “entering into” the foundations of music and beginning practical playing, “the time of sound,” “the quality of sound,” and “the expression of sound.” In the third chapter, “How to Read Musical Notation (Yuepu de dufa 樂譜的讀法), the author, besides addressing musical notation, also introduces the basics of music theory and terminology, including notes, scales, rhythm, and intervals. In introducing musical terminology, Feng draws on the translation work of educator and composer Zeng Zhimin 曾志忞 (1879–1929), who used Japanese translations of musical terminology.⁵⁰ Chapter four, “Introduction to Singing and Playing a Musical Instrument” (“Changge yanzoufa rumen” 唱歌演奏法入門), covers the basics of music performance. Here Feng Zikai emphasizes the importance of vocal music and also introduces the instruments that were most popular in China, such as the violin, piano, and harmonica. The last chapter, “A Brief History of Modern Music” (“Jinshi yinyue jian shi” 近世音樂簡史), is an outline

⁴⁹ 1926 (Shanghai), 2018 (Beijing).

⁵⁰ See Gild, Gerlinde (2004). “The Evolution of Modern Chinese Musical Theory and Terminology under Western Impact.” In: M. Lackner and N. Vittinghoff (ed.), *Mapping Meanings: The Field of New Learning in Late Qing China*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

of the history of European classical music. The author focuses mainly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its most important representatives and considers J. S. Bach (1685–1750) to be a groundbreaking composer.

Introduction to Music is clearly intended as study material. In it Feng Zikai strives to explain all the above-mentioned aspects of music and provide the practical knowledge needed to study music. He aims to truly understand the expressive dimension of music and to focus on the enjoyment of music while practicing, rejecting the utilitarian use of music as a mere means to strengthen the nation and recognizing its artistic value:

“The three steps that we have to take before we enter the gate of music are of varying difficulty: the first step is the lowest, the second step is slightly higher, and the third step, which is called ‘expressing oneself in tones,’ is the highest. If a student does not reach this step, he will forever be a musical amateur. Although he will continue to study music, he will not enter the gates of music, he will only peer into them.” (Feng Zikai 1926: 27)

Feng Zikai sought to present the art of Western music as clearly as possible. Accessibility for music laymen is apparent in the structure of the handbook. Feng Zikai selected topics that he considered essential to understanding Western art music and for beginning to practice musical instruments. However, the chapter on the history of European music foreshadows the way Feng wrote about European music in subsequent works: encyclopedia-style biographies of famous composers.

Although in many respects Feng drew inspiration from Japanese works, his distinctive contribution in the area of style and language is undeniable. The handbook is written in easy-to-understand language and does not avoid humor. The aptly chosen similes as well as quotations referring to Chinese culture contribute to the overall clarity of the work and it is evident that he puts traditional Chinese and Western music culture on the same level:

“When the people of old taught calligraphy, their attitude had to be very serious: ‘It is not important to have beautiful writing, it is the process of learning that is important.’ These are not the words of a rigid Confucian. It is a systematic approach to teaching by those who truly understood the technique.” (Feng Zikai 1926: 40)

Feng’s striving for clarity and comprehensibility finds expression also in his own illustrations and drawings. For example, on the picture on the next page we can see the correct technique for holding the violin and bow.

Feng Zikai in the *Introduction to Music* also attributes fundamental importance to singing. Behind this effort to emphasize vocal music may lie a connection to school songs, which significantly influenced Feng Zikai’s relationship to music, and also the fact that most schools did not have a sufficient number of musical instruments and singing was a suitable alternative.

Feng could have also been influenced by the Japanese education system, which since the reforms of the Meiji period had used singing as part of modern educational practices imported from the West. At the same time, according to Feng, singing has specific expressive qualities and directly affects the human heart:

“Music expresses human feelings. Vocal music uses the human voice, so it can express human emotions immediately. The direct expression of emotion is the freest and can most easily reach the human heart. For this reason, vocal music is of vital importance in the world of music.” (Feng Zikai 2018: 36)



(Feng Zikai 2018: 149)

Misinterpretations

Introduction to Music is a basic handbook written by a music non-professional. It is intended for those interested in Western music history, theory, and the practical playing of instruments by non-musicians. This all is reflected in the handbook's contents and its many simplistic explanations and resulting inaccuracies. One example of misinterpretation consists in Feng Zikai's periodization of Western music. In an attempt to make the interpretation of Western music more comprehensible for Chinese readers with no experience in this area, Feng limited himself to the musical eras of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the parts of the book dedicated to the biographies of famous composers, Feng usually draws on Japanese handbooks, but sometimes he also adds his own very unique takes on the composers' personalities and compositional styles. For example, he unusually credits J. S. Bach with playing a decisive role in moving away from religious music; for this reason, he refers to Bach elsewhere in the handbook as the "father of music" (Feng Zikai 2018: 165):

"We distinguish between religious music and secular music. In the Middle Ages, Christianity was strong in Europe, and almost all people were religious. All music praised God or Christ. Secular music expressing the feelings of life was very little developed. It was a time of religious music. It was not until the eighteenth century that the German music master Bach made music independent of religion and music became an art of free expression of life's feelings, which is the era of secular music." (Feng Zikai 2018: 8)

The reason for this line of thinking about Bach's influence on Western art music's secularism and autonomy remains unclear, as Feng did not provide further explanation as to why he thought that of all composers it was Bach, who wrote myriad works for the church, who indeed secularized and freed music from the shackles of religion. Feng certainly considered Bach a great and revolutionary figure (probably also under the influence of similar views persisting among Japanese authors), but at the same time, he, like many of his Chinese peers, greatly admired Enlightenment thinking, which led to secularization. Therefore, his high view of both Bach and the Enlightenment likely resulted in his ignoring of Bach's connection to religious music.

He also sometimes misinterprets musical terminology, as when he uses the term *monophony* instead of *homophony*.⁵¹

"We distinguish between polyphonic and monophonic music. In the composition of polyphonic music, two or more main melodies are used, which may be independent of each other, and are performed simultaneously, thus creating an overall effect of constant change. In monophonic music, each composition has only one main melody, which can be independent, and the rest is usually harmony, which only 'illustrates' the main melody and cannot be isolated." (Feng Zikai 2018: 7)

⁵¹ The term *homophony* refers to a texture that involves a melody line with supporting harmony or accompaniment, while *monophony* is a single melodic line with no accompanying harmonies.

Feng Zikai also made simplified claims about the eras of homophonic (the incorrect term *monophonic* persists) and polyphonic music:

“All religious music in the Middle Ages was polyphonic, and modern music from the eighteenth century onwards was monophonic only. Polyphonic music prevailed in the medieval era in vocal music, and monophonic music prevailed in the instrumental age, i.e., after the eighteenth century.” (Feng Zikai 2018: 7)

Feng Zikai uses the term *fu yinyue* 複音樂 for polyphony and *dan yinyue* 單音樂 for monophony. However, Feng did use the term *homophony* (*zhudiao yinyue* 主調音樂) later in the handbook when describing piano playing and in the correct meaning:

“The piano’s specialty is that it has keys that allow it to play numerous tones at the same time. The decline of polyphonic music (counterpoint) and the prevalence of homophonic music (harmony) in recent times are the result of the emergence of this instrument.” (Feng Zikai 2018: 209)

We can assume, therefore, that Feng Zikai was simply not sure what the terms meant exactly due to his lack of expertise or that there were various confusions around the terms *homophony* and *monophony* in the 1920s.⁵²

The publication’s undoubted contribution lies in providing translations of music terms and explaining some musical symbols for the first time in the Chinese environment. For example, it introduced the symbols for right- and left-pedal techniques on the piano. However, the descriptions of these terms also contain misinterpretations, for example, an incorrect caption for a figure depicting the term *con pedal* (with pedal). Feng Zikai incorrectly and consistently explains that the right and left pedals (i.e., the sustain pedal and soft pedal) are to be pressed (Feng Zikai 2018: 113). Instead, the correct meaning of the term *con pedal* is that the performer should use only the right pedal (the sustain pedal).

The Japanese Inspiration

As mentioned, *Introduction to Music* was partially shaped by Japanese writings on Western music, from which Feng had already drawn when writing his first handbook *Basic Knowledge about Music* (Chen Xing 2011: 149). In the introduction of this handbook, Feng Zikai mentioned Japanese music theorists such as Hisao Tanabe (1883–1984), Kōsaku Yamada (1886–1965), Kōsuke Komatsu (1884–1966), and Motoo Ōtaguro (1893–1979; Chen 2011: 149). In turn, these authors who shaped the modernization of music in Japan drew broadly on the German and French musical traditions. Especially in the late Meiji and Taishō eras (1907–1926), many Japanese intellectuals traveled to Germany for education, which influenced the direction of Japanese musicology. For example, the late Romantic era was especially popular. Rather than studying the technical aspects of music, Japanese intellectuals in this period focused primarily on the history of music and on the spiritual world and emotions that music could express (Ogawa and Mori 1988: 91). German influence and standards began to dominate at

⁵² The error might have also been introduced during the editing of one of the many editions of this book.

the Tokyo School of Music (Tōkyō Ongaku Gakkō) already at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵³ This German influence may have affected the pioneering Chinese students, who would become the first educators of Western music, who studied in Japan during the first decade of the twentieth century, such as Xiao Youmei 蕭友梅 (1884–1940) and Zeng Zhimin (Gong 2018: 104).⁵⁴ Therefore, Feng Zikai, not unlike Wang Guangqi, drew also on German sources in compiling his handbooks on music, not only mediated through Japanese students who studied in Germany before Wang but also mediated through the Chinese pioneers in Western music education who studied in Japan. Thus, his knowledge was based on older literature, and he did not know about comparative musicology or the latest trends in Germany.

When writing *Introduction to Music* Feng Zikai was clearly influenced by the pioneer of Japanese musicology, Hisao Tanabe. Tanabe's writings also inspired Feng Zikai's own thoughts on music, and similarities with *Introduction to Music* appear, for example, in Tanabe's 1924 handbook *Music and the Contemporary Lifestyle (Gendaijin no seikatsu to ongaku)*. This well-known modern intellectual was educated in traditional Japanese music but later studied Western music; his education in this field was based mainly on German and also American foundations (Suzuki 2016: 9).⁵⁵ Not unlike Wang Guangqi, Tanabe sought to modernize Japanese music but without completely replacing it with Western musical styles. Thus, the field of musicology in Japan, to which Tanabe made a significant contribution, was also built on the principle of “modernization without Westernization” (Shuhe 2007: 5–6). During his lifetime, Tanabe wrote many publications on traditional and Western music, some of which Feng Zikai translated into Chinese.

The most striking common feature of Tanabe's handbook and *Introduction to Music* is their similar narrative strategy, particularly the way they combine strict explanations of musical terms with passages introducing the reader to the topic through references to local culture. Further similarities can be traced in Feng's thoughts on the role of music in human life. Tanabe and Feng regarded music as a universal language, or as a tool for directly expressing human emotions, and both also emphasized the centrality of vocal music in this regard. Tanabe and Feng also shared the view that art contributes to the spiritual development of man, which is one of the key ideas that Feng sought to convey to the Chinese reader with his *Introduction to Music*.

⁵³ In 1883, the German composer Franz Eckert (1852–1916) was appointed music consultant to the Ministry of Education (Monbushō), and later more German musicians began teaching at this institution. See Gong, Hong-yu. (2018). Embracing Western Music via Japan: Chinese Intellectuals, Japan, and the Beginnings of Modern Music Education in China. *Journal of Music in China*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 99–134.

⁵⁴ The number of Chinese students enrolled at the Tokyo School of Music did not exceed twelve until 1919. However, in Japan there were also private music schools, such as the Japan Music School and the Tokyo Conservatory of Music. See Gong, Hong-yu. (2018). Embracing Western Music via Japan: Chinese Intellectuals, Japan, and the Beginnings of Modern Music Education in China. *Journal of Music in China*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 99–134.

⁵⁵ In his early years, Tanabe was inspired by manuals from the United States, such as *How to Listen to Music: Hints and Suggestions to Untaught Lovers of the Art* (1897) by music critic Henry Edward Krehbiel (1854–1923) and *How Music Developed: A Critical and Explanatory Account of the Growth of Modern Music* (1898) by music critic William James Henderson (1855–1937). Tanabe later graduated in physics (1907) from Tokyo Imperial University, where his musical research was inspired by the 1863 publication *On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music (Die Lehre von den Tonempfindungen als physiologische Grundlage für die Theorie der Musik)*, written by the German physicist and physician Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894). The ideas from this book concerning music and the connection between physical acoustics and music science and aesthetics heavily influenced European musicology at the end of the nineteenth century. More in Kursell, J. (2015). A Third Note: Helmholtz, Palestrina, and the Early History of Musicology. *Isis*, 106(2), 353–366. <https://doi.org/10.1086/682003> and Suzuki Seiko (2016), In *Cipango – French Journal of Japanese Studies: Gagaku, Music of the Empire: Tanabe Hisao and musical heritage as national identity* [Online] 5, accessed on 17 October 2022.

Both authors also equated music with religion; in their view, music is a medium that can move the masses but without having to be supported by religious motives/religion. However, Feng and Tanabe also differed in some of their ideas about music. While Feng stressed the importance of music in human life, without reference to state-building, Tanabe promoted music education on the grounds that only a country whose music was the most developed could become a world power (Tanabe 1924: 16).

Further similarities between Feng's book and his Japanese sources can be found in the focus on the musical eras of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is highly probable that Feng's emphasis on the work of J. S. Bach and his perception of Bach's influence as a pivotal factor in the development of Western music was mediated by Motoo Ōtaguro, a pioneer of Japanese music criticism, who published his books on music mainly between 1915 and 1920. He was the first to translate Bach's biography by French musicologist André Pirro (1869–1943) to Japanese (1931; see Higuchi 2012: 5). In 1915 Ōtaguro wrote a survey of the most important "modern" composers, from Bach to Schoenberg (*Bahha yori Shēnberuhi*). Ōtaguro's aim was not to present a detailed history of music but to give the reader a basic idea about musical styles and the lives of composers. As suggested in the title, Ōtaguro, similar to Feng, presents J. S. Bach as the "father of modern music" and as a genius who began to express emotions through music.⁵⁶

In his work, Feng Zikai combines a traditional Buddhist-influenced view of the aesthetics of art with Kantian aesthetics and the new achievements of Western music historiography and terminology. In the clash between the traditional interpretation of music there and the scientific approach to music, Feng Zikai like a true Buddhist strives for the middle path. He presents Western music history and music terminology, often with minor errors, but always puts everything in context with his own specific insight into the important role of art in an individual's life and its ability to arouse emotions. His study of Japanese authors, who rather than technical aspects in their works, preferred the connection of music with the spiritual life of the individual, may have played a crucial role in this unique combination.

Conclusion

Although in academic circles we encounter the general raising of Feng Zikai and Wang Guanqi to the same pedestal as the fathers of Chinese musicology, a comparison of their two important books introducing Western art music in China shows that they are completely incommensurable personalities. Although these publications by two prominent figures in Chinese culture were created in practically the same period and the continuity with the spirit of the May Fourth Movement is evident in both of them, their approach to Western music is not identical. The differences are certainly due to many factors, including the authors' different motivations for writing them, the different cultural milieu in which these authors encountered European music, and, of course, the striking difference between the two men.

Wang was a prominent activist of the May Fourth Movement, a believer in science, a holder of a doctorate in musicology from Germany, and the author of academic publications. Feng was above all an artist, a Buddhist, a teacher, and a promoter of aesthetic education.

⁵⁶ It is important to note, however, that Japanese authors had already focused on J. S. Bach earlier. For example, the first attempt to present his biography appeared in 1890 in the Japanese music magazine *Ongakuzasshi* (Higuchi 2012: 4).

Hand in hand with these different experiences go their different views on music's role in society and human life, namely, Wang's emphasis on changing society through music and Feng's idea of music as a means of personal cultivation. Both authors commit ideological distortions, although motivated by different reasons. Wang's main motivation for writing his book was to convey scientific knowledge, but in the spirit of believing that science will save China, he is often harsh on China's musical tradition. *Introduction to Music* by Feng Zikai, on the other hand, is a pedagogical manual written to engage as many people as possible, including students, however, Feng often distorts the nature of the main contributions of the featured composers in the spirit of his own ideas about the importance of the role of music in a person's spiritual life. The different selection of secondary sources from which they drew information for their publications is certainly related to the above-mentioned differences.

Although Wang's book took into account the latest scholarly knowledge and applied the scientific method, Feng simplified and even committed misinterpretations. Nonetheless, Feng's handbook became a fixed part of music-education plans after 1930 and still ranks among the most popular Chinese works on European music to this day, whereas Wang Guangqi's work, despite its many original contributions, has been largely forgotten. His *Outline* has been published several times in Taiwan, but in mainland China there was a noticeable break in interest in Wang. His work in the field of musicology did not receive significant interest from Chinese experts until the 1980s, when China, after a destructive thirty years of building Soviet-style socialism, set the goal of catching up with the West in all imaginable areas. Chinese authors in China were thus deprived of the opportunity to follow up on current developments in European musicology in the second half of the twentieth century and continued to compile European histories and manuals on musicology in a similar spirit to Feng Zikai, that is, in the style of comprehensive manuals of an encyclopedic nature with frequent inaccuracies, but without Feng's unique contribution of combining Chinese art aesthetics with new European knowledge. Although the reasons for Wang's falling into oblivion and Feng's prominence are not entirely clear, we can speculate that Feng, an artist, was given priority over Wang, a scholar and somewhat of a technocrat. Wang's clearly superior knowledge was not as accessible as Feng's somewhat simplified presentation. The fact that there was a market for Feng's shorter, more comprehensible, and more popularly oriented book, while Wang's more extensive, scholarly work did not find an audience, undoubtedly played a role. It also has certainly to do with the fact that while Western music was increasingly popular among the general public in China, musicology did not become a serious academic discipline in China until the 1980s.

The two publications analyzed here influenced the development of modern Chinese music historiography and how European art music was perceived in China for the rest of the twentieth century. Wang Guangqi is today celebrated as one of the most outstanding figures in Chinese modern musicology, and his popularity was further expanded among a wider audience with the performance of an opera bearing his name in 2021. Feng Zikai is recognized primarily as a caricaturist, painter and essayist, and his contribution to the mediation of European music in the Chinese environment is only slowly being appreciated. Yet, there is still much hidden in their work that, thanks to its originality, remains relevant to Chinese studies of Western music and could easily become an inspiration to scholars today, taking into account the context of the time in which they created and which shaped their insight into the nature of the Chinese domestic tradition and European-style modernity.

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