

# The Aesthetic Education Segment of Music Education: An Example of the Teaching Design of Jasmine and Ode to Joy

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**Abstract:** Jasmine Flower and Ode to Joy are classical vocal works widely used in Chinese high school music textbooks. This study will utilize these two classical works as case studies to explore how to realize the diversification and internationalization of Chinese aesthetic education through classroom design from a cross-cultural perspective of the East and the West. This paper will also explore the elements of Jasmine Flower and Ode to Joy in terms of tuning, composition, and singing techniques. Through the teaching design, students will be guided to root their national cultural confidence in the process of ‘Educating People Through Beauty’, thus providing feasible curriculum examples and teaching ideas for the new era of general high school music aesthetic education.

**Keywords:** Music Education; Chinese Music Education; Aesthetic Education; Jasmine; Ode to Joy

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## 1 Introduction

In the context of globalisation and multiculturalism, music aesthetic education is not only an important part of the school aesthetic education teaching system but also an important way to promote young people’s international understanding and strengthen national cultural identity (Guo et al., 2020). General Secretary Xi Jinping of China has repeatedly emphasised in his speeches that ‘we should insist on educating people with beauty and culture, pass on the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and enhance students’ aesthetic and humanistic qualities.’ In 2024, the Ministry of Education issued the Notice on the Comprehensive Implementation of School Aesthetic Education Immersion Actions, which made it clear to deepen the construction of the aesthetic education curriculum system in the context of the new era. The country’s strategic goal of valuing artistic practices and promoting the mutual integration of aesthetic education and other disciplines (Freedman, 2025). This series of policies and concepts provides theoretical support and action guidelines for the reform and practice of music education in China’s general high schools.

From China’s ‘Notice of School Aesthetic Infiltration Action’ and the comparison of the current situation of music education in the UK, it is clear that the policy of merging Chinese and Western music education is not just an empty slogan, but rather a practical manifestation of the cultural strategy and internationalised educational co-operation at the national level. The core of this policy lies in the need to not only pass on the excellent traditional Chinese culture, but also actively absorb the diverse musical cultures of the world (Li, 2016; Tang, 2024). The state forms an open, inclusive, and confident new generation cultural system through educational means. On the one hand, the core content of music education is ‘aesthetic education’, as emphasised in the Notice of School Aesthetic Education Infiltration Action. “Aesthetic education is a channel for nurturing Chinese cultural confidence and national spirit. Aesthetic education seeks to combine traditional culture and modern art, and to make ethnic music education an important part of school music education (Guan, 2023). This enhances students’ motivation to understand and love their own musical language and aesthetic traditions. At the same time, the Circular on School Aesthetic Education Immersion Action also clearly states that to build an aesthetic education curriculum system that is synergistic with other disciplines, it is necessary to encourage the development of interdisciplinary aesthetic education resources. This means that Chinese folk music, Western classical music, modern pop music, and other diversified music content should be added to the teaching content. This will broaden students’ artistic horizons and foster international understanding. On the other hand, Cao Qun’s interview further explains the complementarities and differences between Chinese and British music education in terms of philosophy and methodology, and discusses in detail the feasibility and necessity of ‘merging the East and the West’. In the interview, he said, “Chinese music education traditionally emphasises the practice of technique and performance, and the formation of a solid performance and technique inheritance system; whereas British music education focuses more on the development of individual expression and creativity, and emphasises students’ self-discovery, collaborative learning and cross-cultural

communication (Finney, 2016). If the two are combined, it can not only retain the technical advantages of Chinese music education but also make up for the shortcomings of innovation and international communication.” Therefore, many Sino-British co-operation programmes have made the ‘merging of East and West in music’ a core objective from policy to practice. For example, transnational arts exchange programmes have been set up in universities, students are encouraged to design and perform in concerts that combine East and West, and teachers from different cultural backgrounds are encouraged to develop multicultural music teaching materials (Wang, 2023). These concrete initiatives are precisely the practice of the State’s cultural strategy of ‘importing and exporting’ in the field of music education.

At the same time, music, as a ‘world language’ that transcends linguistic and ethnic boundaries, plays an important role in the exchange and integration of Chinese and foreign cultures (Jin & Hongyin, 2016). Cao Qun, a Chinese educator, said, ‘Music and art education can not only communicate human emotions and break down cultural barriers, but also enhance the understanding and recognition of history, traditions, and values of different cultures in the process of learning and performing.’ In contrast to Western music education, traditional Chinese music education tends to focus on technique and national cultural expression. In contrast, Western music education, such as that in the UK and the US, places more emphasis on personality development, creative thinking, and interdisciplinary practice. This difference also reminds China’s new era of school music education needs to focus on students’ cross-cultural understanding and even improve their individual creativity while inheriting national music traditions.

## 2 Teaching Design of Chinese Song “Jasmine”

The present music education in our schools is dominated by folk music cutting from the music teaching materials . For example, the folk song Jasmine Flower of Jiangnan mentioned in this paper and Yellow River Cantata of Mr. Xian Xinghai are common songs in the teaching materials. As a masterpiece of Jiangnan folk song, Jasmine Flower is based on its typical pentatonic scale modulation and single two-part structure. It vividly embodies the beauty of ambiguity, symmetry and imagery of traditional Chinese music melody, and carries a deep national cultural memory (Tao et al., 2023). Beethoven’s Ode to Joy, on the other hand, is a representative of Western symphonic choral art, with its bright natural major key, repetitive development of thematic motifs and humanistic idealistic connotations, which focuses on the salute to humanity and the idea of world commonwealth during the European Enlightenment (Geck, 2017). This kind of folk music makes students deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and helps to cultivate young people’s patriotism. However, with the acceleration of social development and international interactions, students who are limited to traditional Chinese culture cannot meet the requirements of the new age students’ knowledge of the world’s multiculturalism. As Cao Qun emphasised in the interview, ‘In British music education, there is often a focus on diversity and cross-border integration, encouraging students to understand different cultures and develop their individuality and creativity through composition and performance.’ This revelation is an important reference for China’s current general high school music education. Therefore, the state supports the methodical introduction of Western classical music works in school aesthetic education, respecting global multiculturalism and enhancing the international outlook of young people.

In addition, China has had exchanges of Chinese and Western musical instruments since the ancient Silk Road, to the introduction of Western orchestral and choral art in modern times. From the ancient Silk Road to the introduction of Western orchestral and choral music in modern times, and nowadays the Chinese symphony orchestra and folk orchestra are performing together, the Chinese and Western music cultures have been colliding and absorbing and even re-inventing themselves (SIWEN & Jamnongsarn, 2024). This is a reflection of China’s cultural confidence. The state’s support for the introduction of foreign cultures in education is not only to enhance students’ global competence, but is also a contemporary expression of the spirit of Chinese culture, which is eclectic and advances with the times

Pedagogical objective	1. Students feel the beauty of Chinese folk songs and appreciate the author’s feelings for the love of a better life. It promotes national music and strengthens national self-confidence. 2. Through the combination of audio-visual, contextual approach and group co-operation and investigation, students can further improve their music appreciation skills. 3. Understand the structure of folk tuning (pentatonic tuning) and be able to express the song completely.
Introduction to the classroom	Teachers use multimedia to show students pictures of jasmine flowers to stimulate interest and introduce new lessons.

Preliminary perception	Listen to the song for the first time and ask the class about the mood and tempo of the song (beautifully, medium tempo). Listening to the song again, ask the students to close their eyes and think: what kind of image comes to your mind (the image of jasmine flowers in full bloom) Third listen to the song and ask students to share their own humanities knowledge related to the lesson
Exploring music	(1) The teacher plays and sings the song, and asks the students to follow the teacher's voice to sing the melody sheet, to find out the teaching difficulties and solve them one by one. 1. Syncopated rhythm 2. Dotted rhythm 3. One-word polyphonic singing (2) Please add the lyrics to sing in full, prompted by the breath smooth, sing a beautiful feeling (3) group chorus practice, and do practice tips (4)Teacher asks: What kind of feelings does this song express? (Love for a beautiful life)
Consolidation and extension	Students use the sand hammers, triangles and tambourines distributed before the lesson to make up an accompaniment to a song and perform an integrated art performance. 10 minutes for groups of 4 students to work together and present their work freely, with a combination of self-assessment and teacher's assessment.
Group work	(1) Teachers and students sum up what they have learnt from this lesson (2) Please come down to search for Jasmine music related materials with online resources to share in the next lesson.

### 3 Teaching Design of West Song Ode to Joy

Ode to Joy originates from the fourth movement of German composer Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. The work adopts a major key tuning with a bright rhythm and a complex polyphonic and harmonic structure in the choral part, which is a concentration of the humanistic ideals and rational spirit of Western classical music. The lyrics of Ode to Joy is originally from Schiller's poem, expresses the yearning for human freedom, fraternity and world unity (Baird, 2013). It contrasts with the beauty of oriental imagery represented by Jasmine.

In the specific classroom, through the comparative teaching of these two works, teachers can not only let students feel the differences and similarities of different modes, such as, pentatonic scale and natural major, and the structure of the piece (single two-part form and large-scale choral form), but also stimulate students to think deeply about the Chinese and Western cultures in terms of values and artistic expression through the interpretation of the cultural background. For example, the national memory and idyllic sentiment behind Jasmine Flower, and the rational enlightenment and humanistic spirit in Ode to Joy will help students to understand the universality of mankind's common pursuit of beauty and ideals in different cultural contexts. These concepts will also be displayed in the teaching design of Ode to Joy.

Pedagogical objective	1. Students feel the beauty of West songs and appreciate the author's feelings of yearning for freedom and to understand multiculturalism 2. Through the combination of audio-visual, contextual approach and group co-operation and investigation, students can further improve their music appreciation skills. 3. Understand the structure of the progressive scale and be able to perform the song in its entirety.
Introduction to the classroom	Teachers use multimedia to show students pictures of Beethoven to stimulate interest and introduce new lessons.
Preliminary perception	Listen to the song for the first time and ask the class about the mood and tempo of the song (Cheerfully, medium speed). Listening to the song again, ask the students to close their eyes and think: what kind of image comes to your mind (Images of people's unity) Third listen to the song and ask students to share their own humanities knowledge related to the lesson
Exploring music	(1) The teacher plays and sings the song, and asks the students to follow the teacher's voice to sing the melody sheet, to find out the teaching difficulties and solve them one by one. 1. Progressive scale 2. Dotted rhythm 3. Iterative notation (2) Please add the lyrics to sing in full, prompted by the breath smooth, sing a beautiful feeling (3) group chorus practice, and do practice tips (4)Teacher asks: What kind of feelings does this song express? (The desire for freedom)
Consolidation and extension	Students use the sand hammers, triangles and tambourines distributed before the lesson to make up an accompaniment to a song and perform an integrated art performance. 10 minutes for groups of 4 students to work together and present their work freely, with a combination of self-assessment and teacher's assessment.
Group work	(1) Teachers and students sum up what they have learnt from this lesson (2) Please come down to search for Beethoven related materials with online resources to share in the next lesson.

### 4 Conclusion

First of all, Jasmine Flower as a famous folk song of Jiangnan, contains rich ethnic heritage and regional cultural characteristics. Through learning and singing this piece, students can not only fully feel the unique pentatonic tuning of Chinese folk songs, but also feel the

unique aesthetic and cultural context of the Chinese nation in the melody. It helps young people to build up a sense of pride in their own culture from childhood, and to enhance their cultural identity and self-confidence through subtle influence. Ode to Joy, as an immortal classic of Western music, carries the concept of liberty and fraternity of the European Enlightenment. Through the study of this work, students are exposed to the western music language and singing techniques, such as major and minor modes, polyphony and chorus, which are very different from those of Chinese national works. More importantly, they will be able to feel the different values of 'joy' and 'freedom' that different cultures pursue. This cross-cultural perspective is decisive for the cultivation of students' international understanding.

Comparing and contrasting Jasmine and Ode to Joy as a teaching combination is a kind of aesthetic education practice based on the concept of multiculturalism. The two works are different in terms of historical background, cultural connotation, musical language and aesthetic style, and such differences and complementarities can precisely provide the classroom with rich comparative perspectives, as well as an entry point for cross-cultural understanding, which opens up a new way of thinking about aesthetic education and diversified education in schools in the new era. Among other things, comparative teaching in the classroom helps to cultivate students' aesthetic ability from multiple perspectives. Different from the single repertoire explanation, comparison teaching encourages students to compare and contrast from multiple perspectives, such as tuning, style, lyrics, cultural background, and singing techniques. For example, the teacher can introduce the historical background of the differences in musical modes, such as the audio-visual differences between ethnic pentatonic modes and Western natural major and minor modes. Another example is that teachers can compare the beauty of the differences between Chinese and Western tunes (Wang & Webb, 2024). In this kind of comparative discussion, students can be more sensitive to the diversity and commonality of 'beauty' in different music systems. This will further enhance their aesthetic ability.

The selection of Jasmine and Ode to Joy as a teaching combination provides a model lesson that can be learnt from for other Chinese and Western music teaching. On the one hand, it is rooted in the local community, and on the other hand, it is orientated towards the world, which is not only in line with the teaching contents of the textbook, but also provides students with flexible aesthetic education from multiple perspectives, making it an operable, replicable and replicable teaching case. This is of guiding significance in promoting the goal of 'comparing and exchanging Chinese and foreign cultures in aesthetic education' advocated in the 'Notice of School Aesthetic Education Immersion Action'.

From the perspective of the function of aesthetic education, the intermingling of Chinese and Western music in teaching is the enrichment of musical skills and knowledge, but also the mutual nourishment of aesthetic literacy and humanistic sentiments. On the one hand, the study of national music makes students rooted in the soil of local culture and enhances their sense of cultural pride and identity; on the other hand, the introduction of classical western music provides students with new thinking and expression paradigms, broadening the technical vision and aesthetic space of musical expression. Meanwhile, through diversified vocal practices in the classroom (e.g. comparing and contrasting Chinese and foreign repertoire, group discussions, cultural background seminars), students not only mastered vocal techniques, but also learnt to respect and understand different cultures with an open mind, which is exactly what is advocated in the Notice of Aesthetic Education Immersion Actions. This is exactly the embodiment of the 'combination of aesthetic education programmes and practical activities' advocated in the Notice of the Aesthetic Education Immersion Initiative.

In addition, from the perspective of teaching methodology, the merging and fusion of Chinese and Western music has also inspired teachers to continuously update their teaching concepts and design ideas. Taking the combination of Jasmine Flower and Ode to Joy as an example, teachers need to not only teach vocal skills, but also guide students to make comparative analyses of tunes, patterns and singing styles, and encourage students to ask questions, explore answers and express themselves in music. This kind of classroom logic of 'Comparison-Exploration-Experience-Innovation' is the concrete practice of the educational concept of 'educating people with beauty, beautifying people with beauty, cultivating people with beauty' in the new era of aesthetic education. The logic of the classroom is the specific practice of the new era of aesthetic education 'to educate people with beauty, to beautify people with beauty, to cultivate people with beauty'. For young high school students, they are in the stage of gradually establishing their worldview, values and aesthetics. Every cultural explanation and aesthetic experience in the music classroom has a subtle influence on them. Teachers through the Chinese and Western teaching classroom, so that students show a stronger international understanding and cross-cultural understanding, this 'silent' teaching method is the 'aesthetic ed-

education' pursued. In the process of teaching, I, as a music teacher who has received both domestic and foreign American vocal education, am well aware of the differences between the Chinese and Western vocal systems in terms of musical language, singing skills and aesthetic orientation. This dual educational background enabled me to combine the oriental aesthetics of Chinese folk songs with western music science vocalisation in classroom design, and to construct teaching activities with comparative line and integration (Cui, 2021). At the same time, my understanding of Western art education concepts and classroom methods during my study abroad period also enabled me to organise my teaching from a more open and cross-cultural perspective, guiding my students to go beyond 'technique' and learn the connotations of Chinese and Western music from a cultural and aesthetic perspective.

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