

The Teaching of Western Music History at CCOM, Beijing, China

Yu Zhigang

(Slide 1, the Title)

Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) was founded in 1950, just one year after the founding of the People's Republic of China.

(Slide 2, Kandisky's lecture)

In 1956, A. Y. Kandisky, a music historian of the former Soviet Union, came to China and taught the course of Western Music History at CCOM for a teacher-training class. The text of his lecture was guided by the Marxist ideology (i.e., Historical Materialism and Class Struggle). It was translated into Chinese under the title *Xiyang yinyue tongshi* (General History of Western Music, 2 volumes) and published in 1959.

(Slide 3, Zhang and Yu)

Kandisky's book exerted a strong influence on Chinese scholars, such as senior professors Zhang Hongdao and Yu Runyang, who further developed and taught the Western Music History course at CCOM.

(Slide 4, Cover I)

The first textbook of Western music history compiled by Chinese scholars (an editorial group led by Prof. Zhang Hongdao) was *Waiguo yinyue shi, ouzhou bufen* (*A History of Foreign Music, European part*), which was published in 1961 when the relations between China and Soviet Union went downhill. What the writers tried to achieve in the book was to continue using the standpoints and methodology of Marxism to write the history. It was adopted as a trial textbook at CCOM in 1964. But it was criticized as a "revisionist outcome" when the Cultural Revolution began in 1966 and did not get published until 1983. The title was then changed to *Ouzhou yinyue shi* (History of European Music).

(Slide 5, Cover II)

The second textbook, *Ouzhou yinyue jianshi* (*Concise History of European Music*, 2 vols) was compiled by a large group under the aegis of the state Culture Ministry and went to print in 1973, towards the end of the Cultural Revolution. This book continued the historical conception of the 1960's, such as the thought of class struggle, and became more biased. It was only mimeographed and used on the CCOM campus and was never officially published.

Due to the political reasons, both of the two textbooks lacked and ignored the content of early music (before Bach, mostly sacred music) and modern music (after Schoenberg, so-called imperialistic music). For example, of the 460 pages of Zhang's book, only 10 pages were devoted to the section of Ancient Greece and Medieval music.

(Slide 6, Cover III)

The third textbook, *Xifang yinyue tongshi* (*A General History of Western Music*), is a newer and much better one, which was published by the Shanghai Music Publishing House in 2001. The editor-in-chief is Yu Runyang, and other editors include all of the six professors (including

myself) of the Teaching and Research Group of Western Music History at CCOM. The bibliography of the book goes beyond those works in Russian (as cited in the earlier two books) and incorporates many more books in English, such as the books by Grout/Palisca and M. Stolba. Moreover, the third textbook contains more materials for teaching the Medieval, Renaissance, and twentieth century music. For example, the ancient Greece and medieval section has been increased by 50 pages

The third textbook also includes a set of CD and PPT accompaniments selected by our teaching and research group, and has been used in our classes for almost ten years. As a standard textbook of Western music history, it has been adopted not only by music conservatories but also by many colleges and universities in China. It has been revised and reprinted many times ever since.

(Slides 7 and 8, and Handout 1, the Current CCOM Curriculum)

Since 1980s, Western music history has become a required course at CCOM. For musicological majors, the class attendance is four hours per week for 16 weeks over two semesters, and for performance majors, two hours per week for the same number of weeks and semesters. The teaching of these courses is undertaken and shared by 4 professors, who are also members of the Teaching and Research Group for Western Music History that I chair at the Musicology Department. The students attend the Western music history class in their third year, when they have finished the courses of Chinese traditional music and Chinese music history in the first two years.

(Slide 9, Teaching Plan)

Here is the teaching plan for the Western music history course at CCOM. As you can see, there are two semesters in an academic year, and 16 weeks per semester. We teach the history from the ancient Greece to Mozart in the first semester, and from Beethoven to the late 20th century in the second semester.

(Slide 10, Cover IV)

There is yet another textbook that came out in 2006. The title is *A Concise History of Western Music*, which I compiled myself and published by Higher Education Press of China. This book is full of illustrations and accompanied with one CD disk. Obviously, it is mostly suitable for the performance major students to use, who do not need to learn so much of the history in great detail.

(Slides 11-12, the Covers)

In addition to the textbooks, we also recommend several Chinese translations of Western scholars' works to our students as references. There are four important translations available in China. They are:

- 1, Grout/Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 6th edition, translated by Yu Zhigang, People's Music Publishing House, Beijing 2010
- 2, Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, translated by Gu Lianli, Zhang Hongdao,

- Yang Yandi, and Tang Yading, Guizhou Renmin Publishing House, 2009
- 3, Gerald Abraham, *The Concise Oxford History of Music*, translated by Gu Ben, Shanghai Music Publishing House, 1999
 - 4, Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Musik im Abendland*, translated by Liu Jingshu, Hunan Wenyi Publishing House, Changsha 2005

(Slide 13, the Covers)

Two music dictionaries have been also translated into Chinese and are widely used by Chinese students.

- 1, Sir Jack Westrup and F. Ll. Harrison, *Collins Encyclopedia of Music*, revised by Conrad Wilson, translated by Wang Qizhang, Gu Lianli and Wu Peihua, revised by Qian Renkang, Shanghai Music Publishing House, 1988
- 2, Michael Kennedy, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music* (4th edition), translated by a committee of 50 members, People's Music Publishing House, Beijing, 2002

(Slide 14, the Cover)

In recent years, we have offered not only general history courses but periodic history courses as well. They are optional courses for the upperclassmen and graduate students who have finished the general history course. Such courses cover the twentieth century music, the medieval music, and the Baroque music. They are all good supplements for further in-depth studies, especially for musicological majors. Here is the Chinese version of J. Yudkin's *Music in Medieval Europe* published in 2005, which I translated and adopted as the textbook for my optional course at CCOM.

(Slide 15, and Handout 2, Comparison of two course schedules)

Finally, I'd like to compare two course schedules—One is the Western Music History course of CCOM and the other is M401 and M402 of the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University Bloomington. The following differences are worth mentioning:

- 1, As regards the instruction time for the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods, there is one week less for each period in our CCOM schedule than in that of M401.
- 2, Our first semester finishes with Mozart, while M401 ends with Bach and Handel. Our second semester starts with Beethoven, while M402 begins from opera buffa of the 18th century.
- 3, M402 gives only five weeks to deal with the Romanticism, but we at CCOM allocate as many as 11 weeks to the same topic. That is still the biggest section in the current CCOM curriculum. We seem to be much more interested in the nationalist music in the Romantic period, as we give two weeks to talk about it. As for the text book coverage of this topic, there are 39 pages discussing the nationalism in Yu Runyang's book (i.e. the third Chinese textbook), whereas there are only 16 pages about the topic in Grout's/Palisca's book *A History of Western Music* (the 6th edition).
- 4, As for the 20th century music, M402 spends 6 weeks on the topic, whereas the CCOM schedule devotes only 3 weeks to the topic. Finally, it is a very good idea of M402 to

conclude the course with the topic of “film music.”

For CCOM, is it really necessary to spend as long as 11 weeks on Romantic music? Probably, we will need to readjust our course schedule to make it more balanced in the future.

Thank you. Questions?