Teaching Beethoven in China as an American in Hong Kong

Jeffrey Levenberg

"China bans Beethoven's Ode to Joy in teaching materials" (appendix 1).[1] The news broke while I was preparing to teach a new course entitled "Beethoven in China and the West" at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. As reported in Hong Kong by *Apple Daily* on September 30, 2020, a whistleblower complaint from Beijing (text 1) implicated that revisions to syllabi across China were in order. Cancel the "Ode?"

The headline may ring a bell. "How Western classical music became Chinese"—despite being censored during Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966–76)—is an oft-told but still unfinished story.[2] In the documentary *Beethoven in Beijing* (2020)—now being shown on college campuses across the USA—Chinese and American musicians reminisce about the Philadelphia Orchestra's cultural-diplomatic mission to China in 1973 (still six years before Washington established diplomatic relations with Beijing).[3] There, as the story goes, Madame Mao mandated that the orchestra perform Beethoven's Sixth instead of his Fifth Symphony because the pastoral topic would appeal to comrades hard at work in the Chinese countryside. Not until after a broadcast of the Fifth Symphony from Beijing in 1977—"A Fateful Knock at the Door"—did China "open the door" to the world (in 1978, still two long decades before

1. "China bans Beethoven's Ode to Joy in teaching materials," *Apple Daily*, September 30, 2020, https://hk.appledaily.com/news/20200930/SSXZLYFQCRE3DNKTSO4BAPZPTI/. The link is broken for reasons discussed presently. The quoted headline is from *Apple Daily*'s English synopsis of the article (published for readers not literate in Chinese; this is reprinted in appendix 1).

2. See, for instance, Sheila Melvin and Jindong Cai, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese* (New York: Algora, 2004), 231–64. See also *The Red Violin*, directed by François Girard (Montreal: Alliance Films, 1998).

3. *Beethoven in Beijing*, produced by Jennifer Lin (Philadelphia: History Making Productions, 2020). See also Jennifer Lin, *Beethoven in Beijing: Stories from the Philadelphia Orchestra's Historic China Journey* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2022).

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joining the World Trade Organization in 2001).[4] Ever since, the growing middle class in China has "gone crazy for the piano," so some say, almost as if concerns about censorship were lost in the generational gap.[5] Now, however, journalists from Hong Kong have spied another cultural revolution in music on the horizon, beginning with a ban on Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" in schools. Real or fake news?[6]

Read it while you can. The largest "pro-democracy" news outlet in Hong Kong, *Apple Daily*, has since shuttered under an apparent cease and desist order;[7] only *Apple Daily*'s outpost in Taiwan remains online.[8] The founder of *Apple Daily* has been arrested on charges of violating the National Security Law (NSL), the enactment of which by the central Chinese government on July 1, 2020 marked the end of a long year of mass protests in Hong Kong.[9] The

4. Raymond Zhou, "A Fateful Knock at the Door," *China Daily*, November 16, 2015, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2015-11/16/content_22465794.htm.

5. See Richard Kraus, *Pianos and Politics in China: Middle-Class Ambitions and the Struggle over Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Bing Bai, "Piano Learning in the Context of Schooling during China's 'Piano Craze' and Beyond: Motivations and Pathways," *Music Education Research* 23, no. 4 (2021): 515–26.

6. As in the US, legislators in Hong Kong are studying how to prevent "fake news." See, for example, "Fake news to be addressed," *news.gov.hk*, May 11, 2022, https://www.news.gov.hk/eng/2022/05/20220511/20220511_163219_729.html.

7. *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報) (1995–2021), named after the "forbidden fruit" (Gen 2:16–17) and modeled on *USA Today*, was a Hong Kong tabloid with an anticommunist China stance. In general, *Apple Daily* often ran sensational-sounding stories of populist appeal (especially in Cantonese, the primary language spoken in Hong Kong and distinct from official "Mandarin" Chinese) that blur fact and fiction in effort to discredit the central Chinese government. See Jing Liu, "The Rise of Media Populism in the Neoliberal Age: A Comparative Case Study of *Apple Daily* in Hong Kong and Taiwan" (PhD diss., City University of Hong Kong, 2014). Opposing accounts of *Apple Daily*'s closure can be found in Zhang Zhouxiang, "Apple Daily a violator of press freedom," *China Daily*, June 25, 2021, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202106/25/WS60d5aae6a310efa1bd65e083.html; and Office of the Spokesperson, "Media Freedom Coalition Statement on Hong Kong's *Apple Daily*," US Department of State, updated July 10, 2021, https://www.state.gov/media-freedom-coalition-statement-on-hong-kongs-apple-daily/.

8. "「歡樂頌」變禁曲？微博瘋傳中國規避宗教音樂　貝九第四樂章竟中槍,"*Apple Daily* (Taiwan), September 29, 2020, https://www.appledaily.com.tw/international/20200929/BTMAVPZLEZHAPOHISJ2PIT3LVA/. Beginning with the title, variances between *Apple Daily*'s Chinese version and its English synopsis will be discussed below. As of August 31, 2022, *Apple Daily* (Taiwan) stopped updating its online news. Should this link also be broken, the core contents of the article are elsewhere preserved in a source sponsored by the US government, discussed in more detail below: "網傳中共以宗教理由禁貝多芬《歡樂頌》 蓬佩奧籲梵蒂岡同譴中," *Radio Free Asia* (Cantonese), September 30, 2020, https://www.rfa.org/cantonese/news/beethoven-09302020095213.html.

9. The former British Crown Colony, Hong Kong, was returned to China on July 1, 1997, under a joint declaration that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China would, in accordance with the governing principle of "One Country, Two Systems," retain its own electoral, judicial, and economic institutions. Subsequent tensions led to civil unrest in 2014 and 2019, after which the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was enacted.

demise of *Apple Daily*, if not also of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," is a reminder that (per the NSL) neither the "subversion" of state power nor "collusion" with foreign countries will be tolerated by Beijing in China's internal affairs.[10] Political Beethoven,[11] albeit hardly the protagonist in that affair, seems a controversial composer for law-abiding musicologists to teach in China.

Much has changed since the last reports on China (including Hong Kong) were issued in this **Journal**.[12] "The positive interaction between Chinese and American scholars of Western art music," as Craig Wright observed in 2012, was "a not-entirely-unexpected byproduct of the extraordinary rise of China as a world economic power."[13] On the one hand, there are reasons to remain optimistic that such interactions will continue. For instance, The Juilliard School recently opened a campus in China as a joint venture with the Tianjin Conservatory of Music, while, in upstate New York, the Bard College Conservatory opened a US-China Music Institute in partnership with The Central Conservatory of Music (Beijing).[14] On the other hand, there are signs that the US and China are elsewhere decoupling, over trade, technology, territory, and the COVID-19 pandemic, among other issues. On American campuses, some of China's Confucius Institutes—often generous state sponsors of musical events—have been shut down under (trumped up?) charges of espionage, while the US Department of Justice has carried out its "China Initiative."[15] Meanwhile, from

For more, see "The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," *China Daily*, July 1, 2020, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202007/01/WS5efbd6f5a310834817256495.html. With implications for academic exchanges, the US Department of State certified that Hong Kong no longer enjoyed sufficient autonomy from China to continue warranting different treatment under US law. See "2021 Hong Kong Policy Act Report," US Department of State, March 31, 2021, https://www.state.gov/2021-hong-kong-policy-act-report/.

10. See "The Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," chapters II and IV.

11. I borrow the appellation loosely from Nicholas Mathew, *Political Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). The text reconsiders the reception history of Beethoven's political works that are lesser known among today's (but not Beethoven's own) audiences.

12. See Craig Wright, Li Xiujung, et al., Roundtable, this **Journal** 2, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 153–91; and Brian C. Thompson, Annie Yen-Ling Liu, et al., Roundtable, this **Journal** 4, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 319–44.

13. Craig Wright, "Western Musicology in China: A Personal Perspective," this **Journal** 2, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 159.

14. Juilliard invited students in China to "discover the final working manuscript of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony." See "Juilliard Imagination," accessed September 1, 2021, https://www.tianjinjuilliard.edu.cn/school/campus/imagination. Bard College hosted a "China and Beethoven" festival in 2020. See "China and Beethoven," accessed September 1, 2021, https://www.bard.edu/news/events/china-and-beethoven.

15. See "Confucius Institutes in the United States: Selected Issues," *Congressional Research Service*, December 2, 2021, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11180; and "Information about the Department of Justice's China Initiative and a Compilation of China-Related Prosecutions since 2018," November 19, 2021, https://www.justice.gov/archives/nsd/

China, the Propaganda Department of the Central Communist Party (CCP) encouraged, "US universities should resist Red Scare on campuses [*sic*]."[16]

China should not—or rather, cannot—be decoupled from Western music history curricula. Along with "Mao and Music"—as discussed in this **Journal** by Lei Ouyang Bryant—Beethoven in China should be a fundamental topic to teach in Sino-Western music history.[17] Although the composer's peculiar reception history in China has been expertly treated in an accessible book by Cai Jindong and Sheila Melvin, there has yet to be a concerted effort to teach courses on "Beethoven in China and the West," whether in China or abroad.[18] This is another critical juncture in history to teach the topic: from the student-led protests in Tiananmen Square in 1919 (the "May 4th Movement") to 1989 (the "June 4th Incident") to 2019 Hong Kong, there was Beethoven, a key Western composer through which students of music history might appreciate certain aspects of China's modern development. The Beethoven in Beijing back then is not necessarily the Beethoven in Beijing—or Hong Kong, for that matter—today.

Beethoven is a Course Hero,[19] whose possibilities for study exceed limitations of geopolitical circumstance. That was my romantic hope, at least, as an overseas American musicologist (not of Chinese ethnicity[20]) teaching "Beethoven in China and the West" in Hong Kong in the 2020–21 academic year. In this report from the field,[21] I address some of the limitations on academic freedom now perceived in Hong Kong and outline a course that succeeded within certain constraints. As my critique of the situation—considering in particular the reputed ban on the "Ode to Joy"—might suggest, the problems and prospects for teaching topics of mutual interest across borders should occupy musicologists in China and the US for the foreseeable future.

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information-about-department-justice-s-china-initiative-and-compilation-china-related. The contentious "China Initiative" was closed in 2022.

16. Chen Weihua, "US Universities Should Resist Red Scare on Campuses," *China Daily*, May 31, 2019, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201905/31/WS5cf06228a3104842260bec41.html.

17. Lei Ouyang Bryant, "Teaching Mao through Music: Pedagogy and Practice in the Liberal Arts Classroom," this **Journal** 8, no. 2 (2018): 30–61.

18. Cai Jindong and Sheila Melvin, *Beethoven in China: How the Great Composer Became an Icon in the People's Republic*, Kindle (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 2015).

19. This is another wordplay on Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), this time borrowing the name of the popular American ed-tech company.

20. Distinctions may, of course, be made between my own perspectives as an "American" (having worked in Hong Kong for six years) and those of American citizens of Chinese heritage (and still more backgrounds) teaching in Hong Kong.

21. The writing of this report began in Hong Kong (2020), was completed in New York (September 2021 to November 2022, the end cut-off date for including current events and new scholarship), and readied for publication in 2024.

Beethoven and Academic Freedom in Hong Kong

Along with press freedom, academic freedom is at stake in Hong Kong.[22] According to Hong Kong's constitution, academic freedom is indeed protected by the local law.[23] Nonetheless, what that law has meant in practice before and after the 1997 transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China remains a subject of debate.[24] Under the governing principle of "One Country, Two Systems," it would seem that the education system in Hong Kong should be relatively distinct from that in Mainland China but, arguably, the two education systems have become more aligned. Since the enactment of the National Security Law (NSL) in 2020, the debate about academic freedom has intensified.[25] Censorship and self-censorship are allegedly on the rise in Hong Kong universities.

Daniel Chua's *Beethoven & Freedom*, from 2017, illustrates some of the debate's concerns. "As I write these words at the University of Hong Kong," Chua remarks, "I am conscious of the freedom I have because I can no longer take it for granted."[26] Clearly, previous mass protests in Hong Kong—notably the "Umbrella Movement" of 2014, in which student demonstrators occupied the central business district and university campuses to object to electoral reforms—had made an impact on this scholar's understanding of a fundamental attribute of Beethoven's life, works, and reception.[27] The Promethean power of Beethoven's music can, as Chua reminds us, be harnessed practically at will, for both good and bad, and those twin forces were taken to be deadlocked

22. I do not imply that current concerns about press and academic freedom are limited to Hong Kong and China.

23. Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. ch. 6. art. 137.

24. Among other sources, which include more extensive overviews of Hong Kong's governance as it pertains to higher education, see Gerard Postiglione and Jisun Jung, eds., *The Changing Academic Profession in Hong Kong* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017); Wing-Wah Law, *Politics, Managerialism, and University Governance: Lessons from Hong Kong under China's Rule since 1997* (Singapore: Springer, 2019); and Bryan E. Penprase and John Aubrey Douglass, "Balancing Nationalism and Globalism: Higher Education in Singapore and Hong Kong," in *Neo-Nationalism and Universities: Populists, Autocrats, and the Future of Higher Education*, ed. John Aubrey Douglass (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021), 202–19.

25. See, for example, Timothy McLaughlin, "How Academic Freedom Ends," *The Atlantic*, June 6, 2021, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/06/china-hong-kong-freedom/619088/; Ho Lok-sang, "Are there limits to academic freedom?" *China Daily* (Hong Kong), September 6, 2022, https://www.chinadailyhk.com/article/288910; and Peter Baehr, "Hong Kong Universities in the Shadow of the National Security Law," *Society* 59 (2022): 225–39.

26. Daniel K. L. Chua, *Beethoven & Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), v.

27. On the Umbrella Movement, see Ching Kwan Lee and Ming Sing, eds., *Take Back Our Future: An Eventful Sociology of the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

in a zero-sum competition in Hong Kong at the time of Chua's writing; freedom itself was "on trial" (as Chua observed) in Hong Kong. To find a fitting selection from Chua's rigorous monograph that might speak to undergraduate students in my class, I began by searching for one keyword: China. The results (nil) underscored the pressing need for both more research and teaching on this topic.

If "Beethoven and Freedom in China" is a chapter yet to be written, some of the ideas generated in class discussion during "Beethoven and China in the West" might be a point of departure. As it turned out, students all readily grasped Chua's fundamental premise—Beethoven's music "draws a blank,"[28] a canvas onto which politics are freely painted—and we enjoyed, as a class exercise, filling in our own blank canvases with discussion about the various nationalistic appropriations of Beethoven's music in world history. One student, in their reflective journal, even extended Chua's (Germanic) line of thinking to China:

> "Blankness" of music coincides with some of the Taoist ideology: as freedom itself is so abstract and immeasurable, it is similar to the idea of "Dao" in the Taoist philosophy, which argues that "Dao," the ultimate law or idea behind all phenomenon in the universe, is something cannot even be named. Thus, the unobservable is where the truth lies: just as the author wrote in the article, blank sign in music represents freedom.[29]

Such original and comparativist thinking evinces that the cross-cultural spirit of inquiry ("East-meets-West," as various university programs here and there still style it) is not lost in Hong Kong.

Still, teachers may choose to leave some blanks blank. As we shall see in the *Apple Daily* article (see text 1 in the final section of this report and in appendix 1), there is concern among teachers in China (also familiar in the US) about just what one can teach in class or say on social media.[30] Aside from the role played by Beethoven's music at the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest (mention of which is forbidden in China), his one opera, *Fidelio*, makes for a case in point. The opera's topic of a prison break, in which audiences can root for the wrongly accused prisoner to be freed and the corrupt governor to be jailed, has no parallel in the vast repertoires of Chinese opera or film (with the notable exception of Hong Kong cinema). The concern I had teaching *Fidelio* was not so much the opera's libretto but rather an article critical of Beijing written by

28. Chua, *Beethoven & Freedom*, 28.

29. Quoted with permission.

30. See Karin Fischer, "Nationalism Revived: China's Universities under President Xi," in *Neo-Nationalism and Universities: Populists, Autocrats, and the Future of Higher Education*, ed. John Aubrey Douglass (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2021), 160–201. On US contexts, see Michael H. LeRoy, "#AcademicFreedom: Twitter and First Amendment Rights for Professors," *Notre Dame Law Review* 90, no. 3 (2015): 158–66.

the last governor of British Hong Kong, Christopher Patten, now chancellor of the University of Oxford. "While I was listening to 'Fidelio,'" Patten remarked in 2014, "tens of thousands of Hong Kongers (organizers say hundreds of thousands) were demonstrating for liberty. They want a fair and open system for electing their government, and to defend the freedom and rule of law that make Hong Kong so special and successful, a genuinely liberal—in the classical sense—society."[31] I wanted to at least recommend this reading to the class, not necessarily to endorse it, but because it is the only article by a Hong Kong official (British or Chinese) that interprets Hong Kong politics in view of *Fidelio*. "Eventually, Hong Kong's people will get what they want, despite China's objections; freedom invariably wins in the end," Patten asserted.[32]

Since a performance of *Fidelio* was canceled at the 2020 Hong Kong Arts Festival (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), I thought the class might envision a more local rendition of the opera. Too "localist" a rendition, however, starring Hong Kong prisoners versus a Beijing-backed governor, might cross a red line.[33] Better, perhaps, for the instructor to teach *Fidelio* in China. Fortunately, the Goethe-Institut in Shanghai, in collaboration with local schools, had just created a children's version of the opera online, in celebration of Beethoven's 250th birthday. "Oh what a joy" (*O welche Lust*), the primary-school students sing in the opera, waving tree branches, in an adorable rendition of the "Prisoners' Chorus."[34] While they appear "trapped" in individual cell blocks on Zoom, these students hardly resemble the "political dissidents (like the captives in 'Fidelio')" of whom Patten spoke.[35] Rather than China dissidents, these are innocent students who have practiced their lines diligently, to foster cordial relations between China, Germany, and Austria in light of the Goethe-Institut's geopolitical impetus. The challenging music they sing beautifully is all original to Beethoven's *Fidelio*—except the surprise finale: "Ode to Joy."

As for Beethoven and protest music, the Fifth Symphony had already been pitted against the Ninth in Hong Kong: police broadcasted the former to drown out anti-China protestors prior to the transfer of sovereignty; students set a

31. Chris Patten, "History of Liberty from Beethoven to Beijing," *Project Syndicate*, July 14, 2014; reprinted at "[Chris Patten] History of Liberty from Beethoven to Beijing," *The Korea Herald*, July 16, 2014, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20140716001081.

32. Patten, "History of Liberty from Beethoven to Beijing."

33. Localism intensified in Hong Kong in the second decade of the twenty-first century, as dissatisfaction with both pro-establishment and pan-democratic political groups grew. See Malte Kaeding, "The Rise of 'Localism' in Hong Kong," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 1 (2017): 157–71.

34. *Fidelio in der Cloud: Eine digitale Kinder- und Jugendoper*, directed by Caterina Liberovici and Marco Monzini (Shanghai, 2020), 18 min., https://vimeo.com/493361473.

35. Patten, "History of Liberty from Beethoven to Beijing."

Guinness World Record with the latter during the Umbrella Movement.[36] Given those precedents, Beethoven's absence from the 2019 protests merits explanation. Perhaps a new anthem, "Glory to Hong Kong," locally composed by one "Thomas dgx yhl," assumed the symbolic place of the "Ode to Joy" as a more fitting representation of Hong Kong identity, as some demonstrators conceived it.[37] Correct or incorrect, I could not submit that hypothesis for classroom consideration because "Glory to Hong Kong" was by then effectively banned in schools under the NSL. Instead of "Glory to Hong Kong," classes could, according to Hong Kong's Secretary for Education, sing "Loving the Basic Law [of Hong Kong]."[38]

Leave it to musicologists, then, to summon Beethoven when protestors themselves do not. Again, I referred students to a timely contribution by Chua, this time published in the *South China Morning Post*: "What Beethoven can Teach Hong Kong Protestors."[39] Rather than inciting people to arms, Chua's piece encouraged protestors to listen beyond Beethoven's heroic middle-period works to his late spiritual ones, so that we all might treat each other humanely. It made for an interesting experiment in the classroom. At the time of the article's printing, several Hong Kong university campuses had been violently occupied by protestors—"penetrated by foreign forces," as the Chief Executive of Hong Kong put it[40]—and the teaching term ended prematurely as a result. Even if I selected, say, Beethoven's tearjerking "Cavatina" (from op. 130) for a listening assignment on protest music, I could not be certain that students would take Chua's advice to heart given the political climate. Moreover, a unit on Beethoven

36. On the police's use of the Fifth Symphony, see Ella Lee and Stella Lee, "Beethoven Blast was My Choice: Officer," *South China Morning Post*, July 8, 1997, https://www.scmp.com/article/203115/beethoven-blast-was-my-choice-officer. On the students' singing of the Ninth, see *Taste of Youth*, directed by Cheung King-wai (Hong Kong: On Lok Film Co., 2016). A clip of a student performance is available at "譜Teen同唱 萬人音樂會Ode to Joy刷新健力士紀錄 Guinness World Record Breaking," uploaded by M21媒體空間YouTube account, December 6, 2014, 6 min. 30 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8euKsSRWidE.

37. "Glory to Hong Kong" (in Cantonese, with English subtitles) may be heard at "'Glory to Hong Kong' - Anthem of The Hong Kong Protests," uploaded by Ingen YouTube account, September 17, 2019, 2 min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pe1gTPcWyds.

38. See "Kevin Yeung Says 'Glory to Hong Kong' Should Not be Sung at Schools," *The Standard*, June 11, 2020, https://www.thestandard.com.hk/breaking-news/section/4/148917/Kevin-Yeung-says-%27Glory-to-Hong-Kong%27-should-not-be-sung-at-schools. "Loving the Basic Law" may be heard at "熱愛基本法," uploaded by Tatsunori Hayashi YouTube account, June 7, 2008, 1 min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qVnqI-N8HM.

39. Daniel K. L. Chua, "What Beethoven can Teach Hong Kong Protesters: Tragedy is the Flipside of Heroism," *South China Morning Post*, December 8, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3040613/what-beethoven-can-teach-hong-kong-protesters-tragedy-flipside.

40. "Hong Kong universities 'Penetrated by foreign forces . . .'" *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 9, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2021/06/08/hong-kong-universities-penetrated-by-foreign-forces-intent-on-indoctrinating-students-claims-chief-exec-carrie-lam/.

and protests risked some students displaying prohibited paraphernalia in class (on Zoom, with students joining in from Mainland China, where coverage of the Hong Kong protests was censored).

Anticipating that some students would do that, I wanted to be on the record with administrators about protocol. Some university teachers in the US, for example, had already begun anonymizing class members and their assignments, so as to evade the extraterritorial reach of the NSL.[41] "Is Academic Freedom Threatened by China's Influence on U.S. Universities?"[42] Those teachers who anonymize students in classes about China are answering in the affirmative. No such option was made available in Hong Kong.

What can Beethoven teach Hong Kong protestors? This was no longer a fill-in-the-blank but a multiple-choice question. An administrator's answer was none of the above politics:

> As far as I am concerned the class is about Beethoven in China. . . . It could easily be Beethoven in Indonesia or other countries. Your point is to assess the greatness of Beethoven rather than the context in which he and his music was being used. I have no problems with what you are planning to do.[43]

So, to cover our bases, the record showed I would proceed in the tradition of "Great Composers" courses, in Greater China (Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan), with no problems ahead.

Drawing Up a Blank Syllabus

Meanwhile, the goal of the class, being a general education course for undergraduates, was of course to assess the contexts in which Beethoven and his music were being used in China. After all, this was The Chinese University of Hong Kong, with a distinct mission "to assist in the preservation, creation, application and dissemination of knowledge by teaching, research and public service in a comprehensive range of disciplines, thereby *serving the needs and enhancing the well-being of the citizens of Hong Kong, China as a whole, and the wider world*

41. Among other news reports on extraterritorial reach, see Lucy Craymer, "China's National-Security Law Reaches into Harvard, Princeton Classrooms," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 19, 2020, https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-national-security-law-reaches-into-harvard-princeton-classrooms-11597829402.

42. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights, and International Organizations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, Second Session, "Is Academic Freedom Threatened by China's Influence on U.S. Universities?" December 4, 2014, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg91663/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg91663.pdf.

43. Personal correspondence, December 2020.

community."[44] I explained succinctly to students on day one how this course would differ from Beethoven classes at Hong Kong University, Hong Kong Baptist University, and the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts (English remained the primary medium of instruction at all of those schools, unlike at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, where "Chinese" refers to the primary medium of scholarship and instruction). We would explore not just Beethoven, per se, or Beethoven's biography translated into Cantonese or "Mandarin" Chinese, but Beethoven *in China*, inclusive of Hong Kong. I anticipated that a majority of local Hong Kong students would, especially at that point in time, prefer to learn about Beethoven in Vienna but not in Beijing (enrollments for my offerings of the Eurocentric "Appreciation of Western Classical Music" course were closer to one hundred compared to the twenty eager students who had registered for "Beethoven in China and the West").[45] While a course on "Beethoven in Western Civilization" might also belong in Hong Kong, it should not, in my opinion, be taught there to the exclusion of accounting for Beethoven in China.

As I was unaware of any precedents for a full-semester course on either Beethoven in China or Beethoven in both China and the West, I started from a blank syllabus.[46] The following learning objectives were set:

- Compare and contrast Beethoven in the West and Beethoven in China
- Identify and critique biases in Western and Chinese writings on Beethoven
- Converse knowledgeably about Beethoven as a shared topic of interest among Western and Chinese peoples, from each other's perspectives
- Extrapolate beyond Beethoven to recognize and discuss other artistic and sociopolitical transfers between the West and China

To achieve such objectives, the teacher cannot simply condense the three familiar stages of Beethoven's life and works (like a traditional survey in the West might), and then tack on China. That narrative of Western history does not match the chronology of Beethoven's reception in Chinese history.

Another reason not to organize the class in the customary tripartite way is that many Chinese students might well have already read a biography of

44. "Mission & Vision, Motto & Emblem," The Chinese University of Hong Kong, accessed September 1, 2021, https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/english/aboutus/mission.html (emphasis added).

45. The course enrolled students from Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, and South Korea.

46. Although I prioritize US-China relations in this paper, the course more broadly engaged Beethoven's reception history in the West and throughout the world. On the vagueness of referencing "the West" in relations with China, see Hon-Lun Yang and Michael Saffle, eds., *China and the West: Music, Representation, and Reception* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

Beethoven prior to university coursework. The first biography of Beethoven translated into Chinese—Romain Rolland's *Life of Beethoven* (*Vie de Beethoven* [1903])—remains to this day a commonly assigned or optional reading selection in Chinese secondary schools.[47] The 1942 translation by Fu Lei, a casualty of the Cultural Revolution, is even performed in concerts in the form of poetic recitation over music. In one performance, the pianist (and professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing) Wu Chun draws rapturous applause from the audience, as he reaches Beethoven's "last" words as presented in the biography: "Derive joy from suffering" (用痛苦换来的欢乐).[48] When Chinese audiences hear or read these words, it is possible for them to recall not only Beethoven's perseverance but also their own nation's perseverance through the end of the long "Century of Humiliation" (1839–1949), when China was colonized by Western powers and Japan. It was during this period, as Cai Jindong and Sheila Melvin have illustrated, that Beethoven was introduced as a "New Sage for China."[49] Beethoven, as Chinese students generally recall, came to personify China's modern development. Foreign instructors do not necessarily need to teach them that again.

Rather than bringing Chinese students "up to date" with Beethoven biographies from the West, a course like this one offers an opportunity to retell familiar episodes in Beethoven's life in a new way, through a Chinese lens. For Beethoven to have been adopted by the Chinese people, he must, as Yang Chien-Chang emphasizes (in a compelling article I assigned to the class), have undergone a transformation to fit into local customs and history.[50] Yang shows that the transformation began by aligning Beethoven with Confucius—to create a "musical sage" (*yuesheng*), as it were—but it did not stop there and need not now.

Some teachers have continued to assimilate Beethoven into Chinese music history. Qi Yue (a music professor at Renmin University in Beijing), for instance, has recently written a play, *Beethoven's Adventures with the Guqin*.[51] Intended

47. Romain Rolland, *Vies des hommes illustres. Beethoven* (Paris: Cahiers de la quinzaines, 1903); idem.,「貝多芬傳: 附譯者著: 貝多芬的作品及其精神/羅曼羅蘭原著; 傅雷譯」, trans. 傅雷 (Fu Lei) (上海 [Shanghai]: 駱駝書店, 1946). See also Cai and Melvin, *Beethoven in China*, 75.

48. An excerpt may be seen at "[Wu Chun recites Fu Lei's translation of Romain Rolland's *Life of Beethoven*]," accessed September 1, 2021, https://www.iqiyi.com/w19s35wqdg9.html.

49. Cai and Melvin, *Beethoven in China*, 95–517.

50. Yang Chien-Chang, "Beethoven and Confucius: A Case Study in Transmission of Cultural Values," in *Musicology and Globalization*, ed. Yoshio Tozawa and Nihon Ongaku Gakkai (Tokyo: Musicological Society of Japan, 2004), 379–83.

51. 齐悦 (Qi Yue),"贝多芬之古琴奇遇记" ("Beethoven's Adventures with the Guqin"), 2018. A summary of the story and premiere may be found at "首演丨《贝多芬之古琴奇遇记》. . ." ("Premiere: 'Beethoven's Adventures with the Guqin'. . ."), August 6, 2018, https://www.sohu.com/a/245487466_727216.

for primary schools (but still engaging for older students), Qi Yue's story pairs Beethoven with an equally famous musician from Chinese antiquity: Boya, a master of the zither (*guqin*). While working on his Third Symphony during the Napoleonic Wars, Beethoven is magically transported back in time to the "Warring States" period in ancient China. There he encounters Boya and accompanies him on a pilgrimage to meet ancient Chinese philosophers, who offer words of wisdom on how to overcome artistic frustration. Albeit historical fiction, the play is not an esoteric exercise in alternative historiography. The play's identification of the similarities and differences between Beethoven and Chinese musicians—and between European and Chinese music history—represents a pedagogical process that can begin at a young age and should continue through university. Like Yang's discussion of "Beethoven and Confucius," "Boya and Beethoven: A Comparative Mythology" could make for an interesting thesis in light of the play. Beyond translation, then, a class on Beethoven in China has the potential to generate new Beethoven literature.

Although a chronology of Beethoven's reception in China (following Cai and Melvin's monograph) is essential for the class, a chronology of this sort would constitute only one or two of a dozen course units required to fill a complete semester. I therefore crafted the syllabus to include a variety of topics, which followed an introductory history of musical transmissions between China and the West that extended beyond Beethoven. One of the risks, of course, with such a topical syllabus is that it lacks the coherence of a syllabus organized around the standard three periods of Beethoven's life and works. Nevertheless, the students, coming from many majors, were not confused by this; according to their course evaluations, some instead questioned the near-exclusive focus on Beethoven. While there are many possible topics (and orderings) to choose from, those I decided upon for the first iteration of the course are listed below, with short summaries and select references.

Beethoven in/and:

- Portraiture: visual representations of Beethoven in China and the West (details below)
- Language: "topic-comment" structures are common in the Chinese language and might be heard topically (in the music-theoretical sense) in Beethoven's compositions[52]

52. On topics in music theory, see Leonard Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980); and Danuta Mirka, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

- Heroism: the *Eroica* and *Fidelio* in China, describing a hero's journey according to Ray Dalio (an American hedge-fund manager famous in China)[53]
- Education: Beethoven's childhood in cartoons for Chinese schoolchildren; "Tiger Parenting" (feminist writings by Sandra Tsing Loh)[54]
- Ethnicity: the search for a "Chinese Beethoven;" BIPOC Beethoven (i.e., "Was Beethoven Black?" and representations of Beethoven and Confucius from Africa)[55]
- Ability and disability: comparison with Abing (blind *erhu* player); fraudulent claims (i.e., "Japan's Beethoven"); genetic studies of "Beethoven mice"[56]
- Confucianism and Hinduism: Beethoven and nineteenth-century Orientalism; making of a "musical sage" (read Yang, "Beethoven and Confucius")
- Politics: compare and contrast Chinese enactments of "Ode to Joy" to Beethoven/Schiller (details below); read Chua, *Beethoven & Freedom*
- Cultural diplomacy: view and critique *Americans in Pyongyang: The New York Philharmonic's Trip to North Korea* and *Beethoven in Beijing*[57]
- Science and AI: Western and Chinese attempts to complete Beethoven's Tenth and Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphonies[58]
- Pop music: Canto- and Mando-pop (i.e., Wong Nga Man, "Don't Cry for Me Beethoven")[59]

53. Ray Dalio, *Principles* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017); idem, "原则," trans. 刘波 (Liu Bo), (北京：中信出版社, 2018); Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949).

54. Among others, see "从小勤学苦练的音乐大师 贝多芬" ("The Master Musician who Studied Hard since Childhood, Beethoven"), uploaded by 파워볼 수익팀176 YouTube account, October 27, 2020, 5 min. 30 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkH_VcBQK88; and Sandra Tsing Loh, "Sympathy for the Tiger Moms," *The Atlantic*, April 2011.

55. "Xian Xinghai [冼星海] as Chinese Beethoven," accessed November 1, 2024, https://project.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/continuousrevolution/main.php?part=1&chapter=1&img=29; Berwick Sanders, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Musician: His Life, and Letters* (London: Cassell and Company, 1915), 203.

56. Ekaterina Pesheva, "Saving Beethoven," Harvard Medical School, July 3, 2019, https://hms.harvard.edu/news/saving-beethoven.

57. *Americans in Pyongyang: The New York Philharmonic's Trip to North Korea*, directed by Ayelet Heler (EuroArts Music International, 2008).

58. *Beethoven X—the AI Beethoven Project*, Orchestra Bonn, performing with Dirk Kaftan and Walter Werzowa, 2021, Modern Recordings (B09CRM3HYD); Huawei Mate 20 Pro, "The Unfinished Symphony" [Franz Schubert - Symphony No.8 in B minor, D.759 ("Unfinished") finalized by artificial intelligence], uploaded by R. A. Villarroel YouTube account, March 17, 2019, 3 min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6OUGRsslJY.

59. "Don't Cry For Me貝多芬 [Beethoven]," 王雅文 (Wong Nga Man), 1985, Panasonic (SPPS-C-0101), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBWYmtXNHFw; "情敵貝多芬" ("Love

In one of the first units of the course, for example, students critique visual representations of Beethoven in Western and Chinese arts. Since the earliest portraits by Li Shutong (1880–1942) and Feng Zikai (1898–1975), Beethoven's guiding influence on Chinese artists can be felt in China—even where and when it should not. "He looks more like Beethoven than Chairman Mao, doesn't he?"[60] One of the course's graduate-student assistants asked me this routine question, when pointing to a picture of the massive "Young Mao Zedong" statue (2009) in Hunan Province, where the founder of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was born. Students in other classes on Beethoven or Mao might likewise be asked to identify this statue. After pondering that (mis)representation of Mao, the class considered two distinct trends in Chinese portrayals of Beethoven. In the first, Chinese artists follow traditional Western models, such as George Chann's (1913–95) portrait of the composer (ca. 1960).[61] In the second, Chinese artists Sinicize Beethoven. Shen Desheng, for example, chiseled Beethoven out of a crystal, an intangible heritage that emerged from jade carving in Shanghai.[62] Another trend to note would be the prevalence of Beethoven lookalikes in China (e.g., John Sham Kin-Fun, a Hong Kong actor, and Li Yong, a host on China Central Television).

Students were generally eager to be on the lookout for Beethoveniana in China. Indeed, I challenged them to seek out Beethoven in unexpected areas and to test me if I could relate Beethoven to their major disciplines in China. Nutritional science was a challenge, coming from a nursing student with interests in traditional Chinese medicine, but we did eventually find headline news that "Chinese vegetables grow to like Beethoven."[63]

There is much more research to be done both on the subject matter itself and how to teach it. While Beethoven in China is increasingly a subject for student theses, in China and abroad, the final projects conceived by non-music majors in "Beethoven and China in the West" proved equally promising for future class materials. Other than essays on their favorite pieces (e.g., the "Moonlight" Sonata performed as a duet for *erhu* and piano), students chose Beethoven and/in various contexts: Indonesia, dance and martial arts, and the

Rival Beethoven"), 王力宏 (Leehom Wang), 1995, Bertelsmann Music Group (Taiwan), 74321338954/6502-4, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zm6dqioOiXk.

60. *China on Four Wheels*, produced by Olly Bootle, season 1, episode 2 (London: BBC Worldwide, 2012), 32 min. Pictures may be readily found online by searching "Young Mao Zedong statue."

61. See George Chann's portrait online at MutualArt, updated 2024, https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Ludwig-van-Beethoven/DA038657F26B2FE8?fromAuction=1.

62. See Shen Desheng's sculpture at "非遗寻访丨刚硬易碎的海派水晶雕刻, 如何才能真正传承," December 5, 2017, http://www.ahssjy.cn/mtad/208.htm.

63. "Chinese Vegetables Grow to Like Beethoven," *Reuters*, September 10, 2007, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-beethoven/chinese-vegetables-grow-to-like-beethoven-idUSSP7649520070911.

ever-popular garbage trucks in Taipei, which announce collection time by playing *Für Elise*.[64]

One student studied essays on Beethoven written in China's Nationwide Unified Examination for Admissions to General Universities and Colleges (the *Gaokao*). Through computer analysis, the student abstracted a general template for high-scoring essays on the subject of overcoming life's challenges. Whether the question is about Beethoven, Stephen Hawking, or another role model, there are certain keywords that can form a template. The student exhibited these in a "word cloud" (figure 1). These findings not only evince Beethoven's prominence in Chinese general education but might also help test takers crack the *Gaokao*.

Figure 1: One student's final project abstracted "word clouds" from high-scoring essays on Beethoven (left) and Stephen Hawking (right) in China's Nationwide Unified Examination for Admissions to General Universities and Colleges (the *Gaokao*). Reprinted with permission.

Will China always revere Beethoven? That was a parting question I posed to the class. The country has long passed the "Century of Humiliation" and become a global superpower. Obviously, China has homemade heroes that need not be overshadowed by foreign idols, and the government recognizes that fact. In the former German colony in China, Qingdao (a northeastern city occupied by the German Empire from 1898–1914), the streets were apparently renamed in 2020 to be exclusively Chinese again.[65] In the "music square" on the

64. Some students also expressed interest in the transmission of Western music (including Beethoven) to China via the USSR, which, while a worthy topic, requires more language skills and library resources than I could muster.

65. See "Special Street Names in Qingdao," *China Global Television Network*, June 3, 2018, https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d774d7959444f77457a6333566d54/index.html; and Emilia Jiang, "Chinese City Bans Foreign Streets Names to Protect 'Ethnic Unity and Social Stability,'" *Daily Mail*, October 23, 2020, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8873039/Chinese-city-bans-foreign-street-names-protect-ethnic-unity-social-stability.html.

Qingdao waterfront, a tourist attraction, there is a rock carving of Beethoven, with the "Ode to Joy" melody etched above his name. Chinese and non-Chinese visitors alike may see Beethoven differently in Qingdao in the generations to come. Perhaps this Beethoven will still mean more than an old street sign. Or perhaps he will also be removed and replaced with a statue of a Chinese composer. In the meantime, as developments occur, teachers of music history must be prepared to revise their own representations of Beethoven in China in their class materials.

Banned?

Beethoven's 250th birthday was quickly approaching (in December 2020), and celebrations were in the final stages of planning across China—when either the government or *Apple Daily* crashed the party. *Apple Daily* ran its story, uncoincidentally, right before China's National Day (October 1, comparable in significance to Independence Day in the US), so either party or both could have been responsible. Before discussing such a sensitive source reading in Sino-Western music history in class,[66] the instructor of record might first hold a closed hearing on the case.

"The 'Ode to Joy' Becomes a Forbidden Song? A Tweet Goes Viral, China Avoids Religious Music, and the Fourth Movement of Beethoven's 9th Actually Gets Shot."[67] The title of *Apple Daily*'s story in the original Chinese obviously differs from that given in *Apple Daily's* English synopsis of it, which should also be read as a (mis)leading question. As with any pro- or anti-CCP source, we would be wise to take the *Apple Daily* story with a grain of salt.[68] Did China actually ban Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" and would it therefore be forbidden in teaching materials?

The evidence, according to *Apple Daily*, was a post on Weibo (a Chinese social media platform akin to Twitter), which is reprinted and translated below (text 1). In the post, a teacher (here anonymized as "T") at one of Beijing's two music conservatories evidently aired a complaint against a national education

66. I allude to the classic *Source Readings in Music History* and the need to broaden such compilations further. Oliver Strunk and Leo Treitler, eds., *Source Readings in Music History*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998).

67. "「歡樂頌」變禁曲?微博瘋傳中國規避宗教音樂貝九第四樂章竟中槍," *Apple Daily* (Taiwan), September 29, 2020, https://www.appledaily.com.tw/international/20200929/BTMAVPZLEZHAPOHISJ2PIT3LVA/. Translation mine. The Chinese character rendered in English by *Apple Daily* as "bans" may also be translated as "forbids" (as in "Forbidden City"); the character for "shot" refers to a firearm; the character for "actually" may also imply "finally." The links in the margin tend to exemplify *Apple Daily*'s strategy to depict China as uncivilized.

68. Refer to footnote seven for the broader context and references on Apple Daily.

guideline given by their administrator.[69] Two commentators (indicated here as "C1" and "C2") then sympathized with the teacher, who claims to have resigned in protest.[70] Thereafter, the post was presumably taken down by China's internet censors—but not quickly enough to escape *Apple Daily*'s around-the-clock journalists. The teacher tweeted:

T: 这是我收到的新学期教师纪律：转自领导指示：为了全面贯彻国家对教育工作的要求，我们要全面规避宗教音乐在教材中出现，包括有宗教背景的器乐音乐。（如唐好色、贝九第四乐章）请各位老师自行调整教材，出现问题个人负责。特此周知。谢谢老师们 🙏	3:35PM	T: This is the guideline for teachers I received in the new semester: From the superior's instruction: In order to fully implement the national requirements for educators, we must completely avoid the appearance of religious music in teaching materials, including instrumental music with a religious context (i.e., *Tannhäuser* and the fourth movement of Bee[thoven]'s Ninth). Teachers, please adjust teaching materials by yourselves; [you are] personally responsible for any problems that appear. Notice is hereby given. Thank you teachers🙏
C1: 音乐史怎么教?	3:36	C1: How would one teach music history?
T: 那叫《经典作品》，不是宗教音乐！	3:36	T: Those are called "classic works," not religious music!
T: 所以我决定不教书了。	3:38	T: So, I decided not to teach anymore.
C2: [T]老师，"我们要坚持开放，" 言犹在耳，怎么转眼间，禁了贝九第四乐章?	4:20	C2: [Teacher], the words "We must persist in opening up" are still ringing in my ears: How, in the blink of an eye, was the fourth movement of Bee[thoven]'s Ninth banned? There

69. The guideline discussed in text 1 was apparently issued after the semester had already started (for comparison, Peking University's start date was September 14, 2020, four days after Teachers' Day, which is widely observed in China on September 10). While the teacher's identity is withheld here, the curious reader may identify them and their institutional affiliation on *Apple Daily* (Taiwan) and via other media reports. A search (in Chinese) for their name and "Ode to Joy" yields multiple hits on Google and almost zero hits on Baidu (where one blog seems to have escaped censors).

70. Again, the curious reader may find that the teacher is (as of late 2022) on the faculty roster at a Beijing conservatory. If they ever actually quit, they returned to teaching there.

这课真的是没法教了。	is no way to teach this lesson anymore.

Text 1: Transcription and translation of a tweet on Chinese social media (Weibo) on September 27, 2020, as reprinted in "「歡樂頌」變禁曲?" ("The 'Ode to Joy' Becomes a Forbidden Song?"), *Apple Daily*, September 29, 2020. A teacher (anonymized as "T") at a Beijing conservatory of music complains about restrictions on teaching "religious" music, including the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Commentators (anonymized as "C1" and "C2") chime in on the complaint; the erudite C2 quotes the reforms of Deng Xiaoping (Mao Zedong's successor) to open China, as well as classic Chinese idioms. Translation mine.

Thus, because it is "religious music"—not "classic music" (as T would prefer, alluding to "classics" over "classical music" as such)—Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" was apparently banned in teaching materials in a Beijing conservatory; *Tannhäuser*, too. "Uh oh," one reader commented on *Apple Daily* online, "It's really starting to sound like the Cultural Revolution Mk II [*sic*]."[71] Even without a historical reference provided directly by *Apple Daily*, readers could hear an echo of the very same controversy that brewed in 1950s China. As reported then in *The People's Music*, "It is said that there are some situations like these: In a middle school, students are prohibited from listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony because in the translation of the last movement, 'Ode to Joy,' there are words such as 'God,' which are superstitious" (据說有这样一些情况: 某中学, 禁止学生听貝多芬的第九交响樂。因为最後一个樂章《欢樂頌》的譯詞中有《神明》等 字眼, 迷信。).[72]

As the question of religious freedom is also at stake in China, Christians in the US joined *Apple Daily*'s critical chorus. "Chinese Communist Party Bans Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy,'" *Christianity Daily* relayed, having cut teaching from the title (of the English synopsis of the *Apple Daily* article).[73] Meanwhile, the *Voice of America*, as broadcasted in Chinese on *Radio Free Asia*, assured Chinese Christians that the US Secretary of State was calling on the Vatican to condemn the ban.[74] The religious tensions remain high: in May 2022, for

71. "China bans Beethoven's Ode to Joy," *Apple Daily*. The Chinese transliteration of *Tannhäuser* deviates from the common one (唐懷瑟) and is quite lustful.

72. See Li Qian, "'Ode to Joy': The Trajectories of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Mainland China, 1927–1989" (master's thesis, Universität zu Köln, 2021), 22; and 文繡 (Wen Xiu), "问題在于学习" ("The Problem is Learning"), 人民音乐 (*The People's Music*) 11 (1955): 52.

73. Alex Best, "Chinese Communist Party Bans Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy,'" *Christianity Daily*, October 9, 2020, https://www.christianitydaily.com/articles/9975/20201009/chinese-communist-party-bans-beethoven-s-ode-to-joy.htm.

74. "網傳中共以宗教理由禁貝多芬《歡樂頌》 蓬佩奧籲梵蒂岡同譴中" ("CCP Bans Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' on Religious Grounds, and Pompeo Calls on the Vatican to Condemn the Ban"), *Radio Free Asia* (Cantonese), September 30, 2020, https://www.rfa.org/cantonese/news/beethoven-09302020095213.html. The Vatican established relations with Beijing in a 2018 deal that was the subject of controversy and the object of the US Secretary of State's

example, The Catholic University of America conferred an honorary doctorate on the founder of *Apple Daily* (*in absentia*).[75]

Religion would seem to be a questionable motivation to ban the "Ode to Joy" in Chinese schools today—and not just for the one reason given by T. As my Chinese teachers taught me, the "Ode" was already Sinicized after the founding of the PRC—cleansed of its Western elements, religious and superstitious ones included—into the Chinese translation still commonly used today. The historical transmission of the "Ode to Joy" to and within China, coupled with an analysis of Chinese translations of it, could be a central lesson plan in a course on Beethoven in China.[76]

Prior to the founding of the PRC in 1949, the "Ode to Joy" was indeed recognized as a Christian hymn in parts of China reached by missionaries: Beethoven's melody also entered China via Henry van Dyke's "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" in the *Hymns of Universal Praise* (1936), a Chinese-language hymnal.[77] It would not be until 1943, amid the War of the Chinese People's Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, that an all-Chinese orchestra performed Beethoven's Ninth in its entirety, with a 1940 translation of the "Ode" by Gu Yuxiu.[78] After 1949, publication of the *Hymns of Universal Praise* shifted to British Hong Kong, and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" underwent a transformation in Mainland China.[79] Performed for the tenth anniversary of the PRC, Beethoven's Ninth, with a new translation of the "Ode to Joy" by Deng Yingyi, became a different piece of propaganda; Chinese references were substituted in Schiller's stead.[80]

criticism. *Voice of America* and *Radio Free Asia* are US state–funded international media networks, both broadcasting in Chinese.

75. "Jimmy Lai, Imprisoned Hong Kong Human Rights Activist, to Receive Honorary Degree from The Catholic University of America at Commencement," The Catholic University of America, May 12, 2022, https://communications.catholic.edu/news/2022/05/jimmy-lai,-imprisoned-hong-kong-human-rights-activist,-to-receive-honorary-degree-from-the-catholic-university-of-america-at-commencement.html.

76. This is a topic of ongoing research, as in Li, "'Ode to Joy.'"

77. Henry van Dyke, "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee," in *Hymns of Universal Praise*, ed. Union Hymnal Committee (Shanghai: The Christian Literature Society for China, 1936), d32.

78. See 徐湘 (Xu Xiang), "科学家顾毓琇与音乐之情缘" ("The Scientist Gu Yuxiu's Affinity for Music"), 中国艺术报 (*China Art Daily*), January 11, 2013, extracted April 8, 2013, https://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/1661/56219.htm; and Li, "'Ode to Joy,'" 17.

79. See Tsang Yik-man (Edmond), "The Political Implications of Beethoven's Music in China, 1949–1959: An Examination of the Publication and Performance of Beethoven's Music," *Asian Education and Development Studies* 10, no. 4 (2020): 515–24.

80. Deng Yingyi's translation is available for comparative study on Carnegie Hall's online resource, A Global Ode to Joy, "Chinese Translation by Deng Yingyi," accessed September 1, 2021, https://www.carnegiehall.org/Education/Programs/All-Together-A-Global-Ode-to-Joy/Texts-and-Translations/Chinese. Recordings are available online. See Ludwig van Beethoven, *Ninth Symphony, "Choral,"* China Central Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Yan Liang Kun, 1959, DM-6014, DM-6015, LP recording, https://

I illustrated this transformation in class on several slides, of which one representative example is reproduced in figure 2. Even for non-Chinese persons, the Chinese referent in this excerpt of Deng's translation of the "Ode to Joy" may be familiar from other media. Here, Schiller's verse, "Be embraced, ye millions!" (*Seid umschlungen, Millionen*!), is set in Chinese context.[81] Beneath the text is a famous image from Beijing's Forbidden City: the iconic portrait of Chairman Mao that hangs over Tiananmen Square. The red-and-white slogan on the viewer's left reads "Long live the People's Republic of China," and the opposite one reads "Long live the great unity of the people of the world." These are reprinted on the slide under Schiller's verse. It is no coincidence that the slogan to the right of Mao (or, indeed, both together) may be called to mind by the Chinese translation of the "Ode to Joy."[82]

Figure 2: A slide for a class on Beethoven in China, in which the Chinese translation of Friedrich Schiller's "Ode to Joy" by Deng Yingyi alludes to the words of Mao Zedong displayed over Tiananmen Square, Beijing. Instead of "embracing" (Schiller),

www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfHZCvsJKPE; and Ludwig van Beethoven, *La 9e Symphonie*, Orchestre Philharmonique de Pékin, conducted by Yan Liang Kun, Kuklos Corporation, P 1983, 1984, cassette recording, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HObNezsongo.

81. "Chinese Translation by Deng Yingyi," verse 33.

82. As I underlined above, this impression is not mine but that of my Chinese teacher. Further empirical research could test how many Chinese listeners/readers make this association.

people are "uniting" (Mao). The overlap between the Chinese translation of the "Ode" and the slogan on the right of Mao's portrait is highlighted in red print.

Instead of "embracing" (as in the German), people are "unifying" (in the Chinese). The Chinese characters that perform this change of text are highlighted in red on the slide. For Schiller's "millions," Deng substituted an enormous abstract number that signifies either "hundreds of millions" or, what is more suggestive, "billions." Through this textual allusion, the "Ode to Joy" becomes, as it were, an Overture to Mao. When sung in Chinese, the "Ode to Joy" text-paints the masses assembling under Mao in Tiananmen Square.[83]

The exercise may be repeated for the verse "All men become brothers" (*Alle Menschen werden Brüder*). Here, Schiller's words become those of Confucius. In Chinese, the verse is rendered as "All within the four seas will be his brothers" (四海之内皆兄弟也).[84] Rather than joy, these words are, in their original context, meant to bring solace. One of Confucius's disciples fears being alone in the world:

> Si Ma Niu, full of anxiety, said, "Other men all have their brothers, I only have not." Zi Xia said to him, "There is the following saying which I have heard—'Death and life have their determined appointment; riches and honors depend upon Heaven.' Let the superior man never fail reverentially to order his own conduct, and let him be respectful to others and observant of propriety—then *all within the four seas will be his brothers*."[85]

These words greeted delegates and spectators at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics.[86] Elsewhere in Chinese discourse, the full sentence is abbreviated into an idiomatic phrase (*chengyu*, or like a proverb): "Four seas, one family" (四海一家). This is inscribed on the Chinatown gate in Sydney, Australia. The "Ode to Joy" in Chinese is one among many renderings of the *Analects of Confucius*.

83. This may be heard in Beethoven, *La 9e Symphonie*, Orchestre Philharmonique de Pékin, Yan Liang Kun, 57 min. 25 sec.

84. "Chinese Translation by Deng Yingyi," verse 12. As Li Qian found, a Japanese conductor in Shanghai quoted the same line to promote Sino-Japanese relations in 1936 (in an unrealized performance). See Li, "'Ode to Joy,'" 11. Alternatively, many performances in Chinese use a literal translation (人们团结成兄弟), as in Beethoven, *La 9e Symphonie*, Orchestre Philharmonique de Pékin, Yan Liang Kun, 50 min. 42 sec. The Confucian version elsewhere appears in Chinese-subtitled performances, as in the aforementioned *Fidelio in der Cloud*, 43 min. 41 sec.; and *Beethoven Symphonies 7, 8 & 9*, Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Herbert von Karajan, 2005, Deutsche Grammophon, DVD recording.

85. *The Confucian Analects*, ch. 12, trans. James Legge, December 10, 2004, https://www.international.ucla.edu/ccs/article/18487 (emphasis added).

86. "四海之内皆兄弟——北京奥运开幕式文艺表演侧记," *China News*, August 8, 2008, https://www.chinanews.com.cn/olympic/news/2008/08-08/1341250.shtml.

As for Western religious elements in the Chinese "Ode to Joy," these require a closer philological analysis that the teacher may undertake with a relatively bilingual class. Some of the spiritual connotations of Schiller's "Ode" remained in Deng's translation while other aspects turned agnostic. The "Divine spark" (*Götterfunken*) that ignites Schiller's "Ode," for example, was dulled in Deng's translation to but a "brilliant light" that "shines on the earth" (灿烂光芒照大地). Rather than from the "Daughter from Elysium" (*Tochter aus Elysium*), the light emanates from a "holy and beautiful goddess" (女神圣洁美丽), whose unstated place of origin is presumably from Chinese (not Greek) mythology. She is still holy—"chaste,"[87] even—but her "magic" (*Zauber*) was stripped away and replaced with a not-so-superstitious "power" (力量). The Creator (*Schöpfer*) is none other than *Shangdi* (上帝), the "highest deity" to whom Chinese emperors made sacrifices at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing.

Banning this "Ode to Joy" now would, as these (and other) examples suggest, effectively censor China's own indigenous history and literature. Put more pointedly, the superior at the conservatory would be censoring government policy in China. Indeed, Deng's translation of the "Ode" exemplifies one of China's core educational policies, as observed in music education by Law Wing-Wah and Ho Wai-Chun: the combination of Confucianism and nationalism in the "Ode to Joy" is there to promote social harmony and strengthen collective memory among the Chinese people.[88] Whoever issued that guideline at the conservatory did not, I dare say, study their Chinese music history. Perhaps this strange turn of events presents an opportunity for music historians to teach Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" in China, rather than avoid it.

There is not a blanket ban on teaching the "Ode to Joy" in all of China, as is also the case with *Fidelio*, as we already saw. *Apple Daily* exaggerated what appears to have been an isolated incident; scare quotes should therefore be understood around "China" in the headline. In fact, two months after the *Apple Daily* story was released, *China Daily* published "Ode to Joy and the genius behind it," thereby setting the stage for performances of the Ninth in Beijing for Beethoven's 250th birthday.[89] Sometimes, the "Ode" is still sung in the original German in China.[90] Other times, a *contrafacta* Ode is sung in Chinese instead:

87. The same Chinese characters are used to translate *Casta Diva* (圣洁的女神) in Vincenzo Bellini's *Norma*.

88. Law Wing-Wah and Ho Wai-Chun, "Music Education in China: In Search of Social Harmony and Chinese Nationalism," *British Journal of Music Education* 28, no. 3 (2011): 371–88. See also Ho Wai-Chung, *Culture, Music Education, and the Chinese Dream in Mainland China* (Singapore: Springer, 2018).

89. For the English translation, see Chen Nan, "Ode to Joy and to the Genius behind It," *China Daily*, November 21, 2020, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202011/21/WS5fb881fda31024ad0ba95963.html.

90. Recent recordings of these performances online were occasionally attacked by social media influencers reminding viewers of the "ban," as in a 2020 performance by the China

in the 2017 Chinese New Year celebration, the "Ode" was exuberantly sung to words extolling the natural beauty in all of China.[91] Then, the next year, in a music video that captured the attention of US media, the "Ode to Joy" melody was sung in a rap about "Socialism with Chinese characteristics."[92] In a coda to the rap, the "Ode" promises that "the Chinese dream is not far away!" Surely *that* "Ode" is not banned from teaching materials in China.

Why, then, as the second commentator inquired, was Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" banned "in the blink of an eye" at that conservatory? A foreign investigator in China may not get to the bottom of this matter, so far as I found. *Radio Free Asia* had already attempted to reach both the teacher and the conservatory in question but was (predictably) unsuccessful; so too were my students and I. Lacking a direct line of communication to Beijing, concerned parties were left to sleuth around the internet for any leads on this case (none).[93]

If I may be permitted to venture a hypothesis: an administrator at the conservatory received a national guideline and then filled in its blanks with a few specifics (i.e., *Tannhäuser* and the "Ode to Joy"), in order to carry out the directive and thereby satisfy their own superior's instruction.[94] Those of us who attended the 2019 meeting of the International Musicological Society Regional Association for East Asia (IMSEA) in China encountered a related scenario. While the conference program was being prepared, members of the host institution requested to screen the names and paper titles of all Hong Kong presenters (protestors, potentially, so far as they were concerned)—a request made presumably to satisfy the university's superior.[95] Laws in China like the NSL are

National Symphony Orchestra. A recording can be viewed at "李心草、石倚洁等《贝多芬第九交响曲》后段 2020.10.05 Beethoven Symphony No. 9, Finale - Li Xincao, Shi Yijie, CNSO," uploaded by Beautiful Music and Culture YouTube account, May 22, 2021, 20 min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pv_YL6Ct-0&t=120s.

91. See "2017春节晚会：歌曲《欢乐颂》" ("2017 Spring Festival Gala: the Song, 'Ode To Joy'"), uploaded by China Liaoning Official TV YouTube Channel, January 27, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cN8ge-CLrYg.

92. See Vanessa Piao and Patrick Boehler, "Video Extols China's Party Slogans, Turning to Rap and Beethoven," *New York Times*, February 2, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/03/world/asia/china-four-comprehensives-song-xinhua.html. The music video is available with English subtitles at "China's national strategy in a rap song," uploaded by New China TV YouTube account, February 2, 2016, 3 min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8v8ZeTKaAA.

93. See, for example, "说点国内的新鲜事吧, 贝九第四乐章被禁掉了," *Kantie* (North American Chinese Network), September 29–30, 2020, https://kantie.org/topics/huaren/2601471.

94. Universities in China are administered by both a president and a communist-party secretary, on which see Hua Jiang and Li Xiaobin, "Party Secretaries in Chinese Higher Education Institutions: What Roles Do They Play?" *Journal of International Education and Leadership* 6, no. 2 (2016): 1–13.

95. See Jen-yen Chen, Report on the IMS Regional Association for East Asia, *IMS Newsletter* 7, no. 1 (2020): 16.

often strategically vague and left open to local enforcement and self-censorship in this manner.[96]

Should teachers exclude *Apple Daily*'s article from class, from scholarship? As the above protest lodged by the professor in Beijing remains unverified outside of China and, moreover, was reprinted in a now (self-)censored tabloid of a populist bent, some readers might reasonably be wondering if *Apple Daily* is inadmissible as evidence of the actual state of affairs in teaching Western music history in Beijing.[97] While it is certain that there are problems of credibility in *Apple Daily*, which elsewhere may even cross the line between free and hate speech against China, between real and fake news, that is not, in my reading, necessarily the case here.[98] Scratching *Apple Daily* further from the records is precisely what certain authorities want readers abroad to do. Instead, let us critique *Apple Daily* freely as one source reading among many, including *China Daily*, recognizing their varied positions on the political spectrum.

To be safe, I canceled *Apple Daily*'s article in the class session devoted to the "Ode to Joy." Initially, I had the news queued in my slides, ready to briefly weigh Beethoven's place in pro- and anti-CCP media, but that was still two months before *Apple Daily* officially shuttered (June 2021). There is so much material to teach on the topic of Beethoven in China and the West, especially on the "Ode." Having run out of class time (conveniently enough), I cut *Apple Daily* from the slides I distributed afterward to students.

As for the 1989 Tiananmen Square protest, I included it in class, briefly, as Hong Kong still enjoyed the right to discuss it. In the next academic year (the end of the fall semester of 2021), however, the Tiananmen memorials on Hong Kong's university campuses were all removed.[99] Read retrospectively, *Apple Daily*'s article was a prescient warning: Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" at the Tiananmen Square protest is, it may be inferred, effectively banned in teaching materials in Hong Kong, as it is in China.

Perhaps the second commentator's question is best left rhetorical, just as it trails off in the Weibo chat. It may be hoped that China will indeed "persist in reforming and opening up," as President Deng Xiaoping had planned after Mao Zedong. For now, however, Beethoven does remain behind some red lines

96. See Chris Lau, "National Security Law: Hong Kong Academics Might Choose Self-Censorship to Protect Themselves, Law Dean Warns," *South China Morning Post*, July 15, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/3093337/national-security-law-hong-kong-academics-might-choose-self.

97. I thank the peer reviewer(s) for raising this issue.

98. On these thin boundaries, see Chris Yeung, "Hong Kong: A Handover of Freedom?" in *Losing Control: Freedom of the Press in Asia*, ed. Louise Williams and Roland Rich (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2013), 58–73.

99. See The Associated Press, "Hong Kong University Removes Tiananmen Massacre Statue," *NPR*, December 23, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/12/23/1067163101/hong-kong-university-removes-tiananmen-massacre-statue.

in China, and those lines can shift. By framing this report around one of those lines—*Apple Daily*—I have of course presented only a partial view of a vast topic, as I saw it, at a year in time, as one among several American teachers there in the field. Others from various backgrounds and viewpoints will no doubt present different reports on these interrelated matters, as they happened and continue to develop. Having registered some concerns, I would still encourage interested music history teachers to consider (co)teaching in China, in accordance with local regulations. After all, concerned Chinese citizens also read daily news reports about deep-rooted political, racial, and religious tensions in American schools, where attempts to ban given topics remain underway, too. For productive musicological exchanges to continue, both countries may have collective changes to make ahead. Beethoven is but one answer to the next fill-in-the-blank questions.

Appendix 1. *Apple Daily*'s English Synopsis of "「歡樂頌」變禁曲?" ("The 'Ode to Joy' Becomes a Forbidden Song?")

"China bans Beethoven's Ode to Joy in teaching materials"

Published (HKT): 2020.09.30 21:50

China has banned the fourth movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, also known as the Ode to Joy, by defining it as "religious music."

Posts circulated on Chinese social media sites Douban and Weibo.

A teacher posted his grievances online, saying that the Beethoven symphony was a classic and not a piece of religious music. He said he had decided to stop teaching.

Other internet users asked how musical history could be taught without using Ode to Joy, or pointed out that all classical music was related to the church.

Teachers also received a set of 10 guidelines in 2018 from the Chinese Ministry of Education. The guidelines laid out standards on political direction, patriotism, culture, teaching, caring for students, security, the teachers' words and deeds, integrity, cleanliness, and behavior. Teachers were also bound by educational discipline dictated by their respective schools.