

The Establishment and Development of The History of Chinese Music--The Review of Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History

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ABSTRACT. *The English version of Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History has been published in March 2019. One of the most common problems with the history of Chinese music is that lacking the learning system and organized resources. Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History delivers a significant perspective on the history of Chinese music, and offers readers with the basic knowledge of Chinese music history and the sequential learning process on Chinese music. The emphasis in this paper is laid on reviewing the book, such as organization and contents, and discussing about the features of the book, including establishing the systematic approach in learning Chinese music history, Selecting the significant and indispensable entries in learning Chinese music, and Applying Pinyin to demonstrate Chinese music in a traditional way. The publication of the English version Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History is a significant step of promoting the Chinese music history to the world.*

KEYWORDS: *Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History; Chinese music history; Basic knowledge of Chinese music history; The sequential learning process on Chinese music.*

1. Introduction

In March 2019, the English version of Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History has been published by the New Classic Press. This book was presented at the 48th London International Book exhibition held at the Olympia Exhibition Center in London. The author Dr. Yuanyong Xu, the dean of the School of Music at Nanjing Normal University, is a specialist on the history of Chinese music, Chinese ancient music, and education and research of pop music. In addition to serving as an educator for nurturing music students, he is also an outstanding researcher and author specializing in Chinese traditional music, with an emphasis on Chinese music history. Dr. Xu's multifaceted background establishes him in a strategic position to gather and assemble key pieces of Chinese music history. His academic monographs include The Studies of Chinese Ancient Music History, The

Rheological Study of Folk Song in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, Basic Knowledge on Chinese and Foreign Pop Music, The Comparative Study between Chinese and Japanese Music, among others. In 2015, Dr. Xu's *The Studies of Chinese Ancient Music History* was awarded "Outstanding Scientific Achievement in Humanities and Social Sciences" by the Ministry of Education.

2. The most common problem with the history of Chinese music

The discipline of Chinese music history lacks a complete learning system and the effective classification of resources. In recent years, the Chinese government emphasizes on promoting the translation of Chinese classics. Through the ongoing projects and accomplish publications, such as Library of Chinese Classics, the project of Translating and Publishing Chinese Classics, and the project of Publishing Chinese Classics to the Overseas, one can find that many Chinese classics and the thoughts of the hundred schools are successfully promoted to the world. However, among those published translations and monographs, there are few studies regarding the principle of Chinese culture and the basic information of Chinese music history. The reason is that most of the Chinese music scholars are self-learners. In other words, they do not receive the necessary training in the historical culture, philology, linguistics, and other relevant subjects. Although some of them may have acquaintance with philosophy and literature, they may not able to take advantage of the knowledge appropriately into the studies of Chinese music history. Since the foundation knowledge is important in studying the history of Chinese music, building the organized learning system becomes the most essential mission.

3. The features of Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History

In contrast with many other studies in the area, *Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History* provides the readers with the basic knowledge of Chinese music history and the sequential learning process on Chinese music. The English version of *Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History* is completed by the panel of translation from Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing University, Southeast University, and New Classic Press. The contents include 372 entries, which are selected from the Chinese version of *Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History* by the author Dr. Xu. The organization of the book allows the reader to easily search the needed sources. The book is divided into seven parts: 1. Essential knowledge of ancient music literature, 2. Essential historical materials of ancient music, 3. Textual research on ancient musicians, 4. Textual research on ancient music instruments, 5. Textual research on the institutions, official posts, places, and types of ancient music, 6. Notation, score, and works of ancient music, and 7. Textual research on common musical vocabulary in ancient china. The construction of the book meshes well with its organization and lends itself successfully to the study of different time periods in Chinese music history. In addition, the features of this book include establishing the systematic approach in learning Chinese music history, selecting the significant and indispensable entries in

learning Chinese music, and applying Pinyin to demonstrate Chinese music in a traditional way.

3.1 Establishing the systematic approach in learning Chinese music history

Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History introduces effective approaches of studying Chinese music history. As mentioned earlier, one of the most common problems with the history of Chinese music is that lacking the learning system and organized resources. Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History has offered a different perspective on Chinese music history, which is emphasizing on the basic knowledge of Chinese music history sequentially and organizing every entry in detail stipulation. This book provides the readers with the direction of the learning process in studying the history of Chinese music. For instance, the author Dr. Xu indicates that the feature of Chinese music history is “silent,” as there is no recording in ancient China. Therefore, it is important to apply the Chinese classics and the historical materials as the reference while learning or doing the research of Chinese music history. The author further argues that in addition to understanding Chinese classics as being a blend of Chinese music history and other influences, they must also be viewed in dialectical terms. As a consequence, he states subsequent approaches in the following steps: being familiar, understanding, interpreting, and comprehending. According to the author, “Chinese music history” and “The study of Chinese music history” are two different subjects, which are the research object and the research method respectively. He further indicates that these two subjects can be deemed as the historical truth and the story tellers.

The history of Chinese music is constituted by the knowledge of philosophy, musicology, philology, history, linguistic, and Chinese culture, that are indispensable elements of building the systematic approach in learning Chinese music history. Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History offers an objective view of Chinese music history and illustrates the interactive nature with the other disciplines. It also provides the readers with the key points of numerous Chinese classics, the existent of the music historical materials, and the detailed explanations of entries. This book builds a systematic approach and establishes a useful classification of Chinese music history.

3.2 Selecting the significant and indispensable entries in learning Chinese music

The Chinese version of Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History includes 630 entries, and the author selected 372 essential entries to translate in English. All the selected entries are significant and indispensable in learning Chinese music history. These entries, including Chinese ancient musicians, different genres of Chinese music, instruments, music scores, literature, and events in music, are not only systematically organized in the column type but also verified the existence by the author. Every entry is composed of intelligible descriptions and comprehensible explanations that maintain a sense of continuity throughout the book. The author

supplies original texts, historical evidences, or relates bibliographical information to support the corresponding entry. When the unorganized resources of Chinese music history are so numerous as to distort the flow of the useful information, this book benefits confused researchers and allows them to search for needed sources from a large amount of Chinese literature. Furthermore, readers are able to build the solid foundation knowledge of Chinese music, master the principle of Chinese music in a short time, understand the method of studying Chinese music history, and get opportunities to contact with the core of the Chinese culture.

3.3 Applying Pinyin to demonstrate Chinese music in a traditional way

Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History applies Pinyin to demonstrate Chinese music in a traditional way. Since some of the entries, such as “教坊” and “黄钟,” are without the most relevant English translations, the foreign readers may face some difficulties while reading the literal translation. In other words, they cannot understand the meaning and the connotation of the Chinese music and culture directly via the literal translation. Accordingly, to translate these kinds of entries, Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History utilizes the transliteration to convert words into Pinyin in phonetic sound, and then follows the interpretations and descriptions consequently.

Jiao Fang is an official sector for the management of court music in ancient times [1].

Huang Zhong is the first of the Twelve rules of music. Kong Yingda of Tang Dynasty noted: “Huang Zhong Gong is the longest, which is the beginning of tone and the head of the 12 Gongs [1].”

In addition, to aid foreign readers to contact with the core of the Chinese culture, the book cites the original text of every entry and includes the transformation of each entry’s meanings. Moreover, since most of Chinese classics were written in classical Chinese with concise words, to help the foreign readers comprehensive the original text, the translators convert every quotation into the modern spoken form of Chinese first, and then translate it to English.

Zheng Shi, which means “official history”, first appeared in Book of Sui: Records of Classics and Literature as a classification of bibliography, which records that: “the history has been collected and recorded based on the order of emperors for the sake of preparation for the official history” [1].

4. Conclusion

“A country has its own history, and locals have their unique cultures.” History plays an important role in Chinese people’s lives. Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History delivers an important perspective on the history of Chinese music. This book is an excellent resource to students, educators, and ethnomusicologists. It contains in-depth descriptions and explanations of Chinese

ancient musicians, different genres of Chinese music, numerous Chinese instruments, and various Chinese music institutes. Moreover, it also includes the discussions of Chinese literatures, music events, notations, scores, and origins of every item corresponding with music. The translators apply the most appropriate words based on the reading habits of English-speaking communities to help foreign readers to understand the contents easily and comprehensively. Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History presents sequential information of Chinese music history that focuses on fundamental knowledge, as opposed to the many music history studies that single out advanced but random information. It not only simplifies and concise the extensive and profound Chinese music history, but also grows the global influence of Chinese music. The publication of the English version of Research Overview of Chinese Ancient Music History is a significant step of promoting the Chinese music history to the world.

References

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