

# A History of Teaching of Western Music History at the Central Conservatory of Music, Beijing, China

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The history of teaching Western Music history at the Central Conservatory of Music (CCOM) in Beijing, China, is most easily reviewed by a survey of the music history textbooks used at the Conservatory. At its founding in 1950, the CCOM used a textbook created by a Soviet musicologist which focused on Marxist ideas of history, such as historical materialism. Since then, successive generations of Chinese musicologists have written their own textbooks and brought their own historical perspectives to writing Western music history. In addition, Chinese scholars have also availed themselves of the best musicological scholarship in translation. Finally, this paper concludes with a comparison between the two-semester undergraduate survey courses taught at the CCOM and at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University.

## Textbooks of Western Music History used at the CCOM

The Central Conservatory of Music was founded in 1950, just one year after the founding of the People's Republic of China. In 1956, A. Y. Kanjinsky, a Soviet music historian, came to China and taught the course on Western Music History at the CCOM for a teacher-training class. His lectures were guided by Marxist ideology, focusing on such concepts as historical materialism and class struggle. His lectures were translated into Chinese and published in two volumes (**Figure 1**) as *A General History of Western Music* (*Xiyang yinyue tongshi*).<sup>1</sup>

Kanjinsky's book exerted a deep influence on professors such as Zhang Hongdao and Yu Runyang, who further developed and taught the Western Music History course at the CCOM. The first textbook of Western music history compiled by Chinese scholars in the 1960s (a group led by Prof. Zhang Hongdao, **Figure 2**) following the deterioration of relations between China and the Soviet Union. The Chinese writers tried to continue using the

1. (Beijing: Music Press, 1958–1959).

**Figure 1.** A. Y. Kanjinsky, *A General History of Western Music*.



**Figure 2.** Zhang Hongdao, ed., *A History of European Music*.



views and methodologies of Marxism to write history, and the book was initially used as trial textbook at the CCOM in 1964, but it was criticized as “revisionist” when the Cultural Revolution began in 1966. It was not formally published until 1983 as *A History of European Music* (*Ouzhou yinyueshi*).<sup>2</sup>

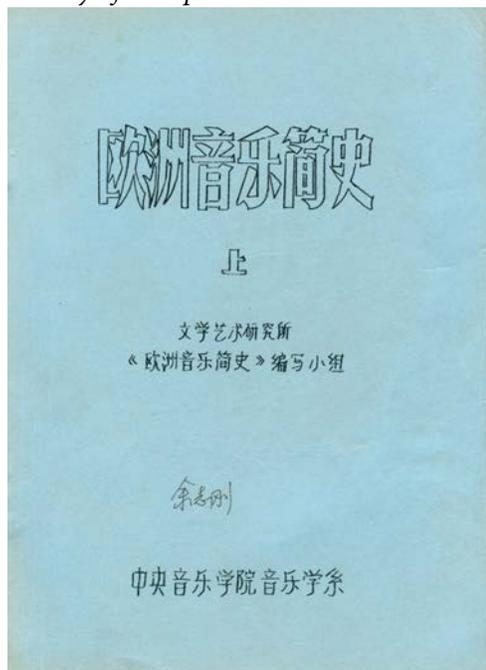
The second textbook used at the CCOM, *A Concise History of European Music* (*Ouzhou yinyue jianshi*), was compiled by a large group under the aegis of the state Culture Ministry in 1973, towards the end of the Cultural Revolution (**Figure 3**). This two-volume book continued the interpretations of the 1960's, such as the perspective of class struggle, and was more biased. It was mimeographed and used at the CCOM campus but was never officially published. Due to political reasons, both of these early textbooks omitted any mentions of early music (before Bach as well as most sacred music) and modern music (after Schoenberg, which was labeled “imperialistic” music). For example, of the 460 pages of Zhang's book, only ten pages were devoted to ancient Greece and medieval music.

The third textbook used at the CCOM is titled *A General History of Western Music* (*Xifang yinyue tongshi*).<sup>3</sup> The editor-in-chief is Yu Runyang, and

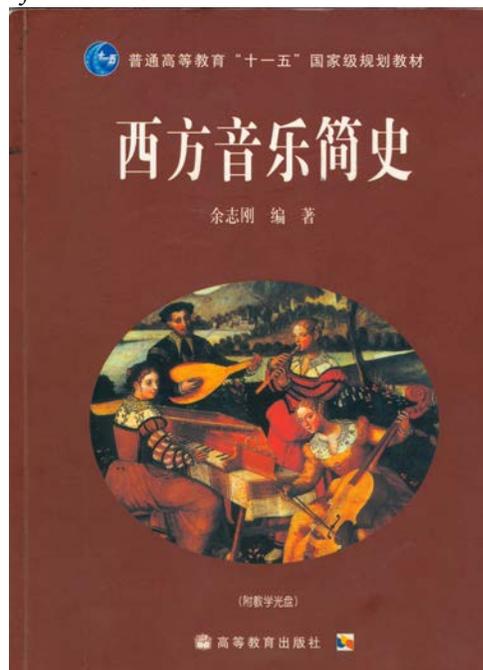
2. (Beijing: People's Music Press, 1983).

3. (Shanghai: Music Publishing House, 2001).

**Figure 3.** Yu Runyang, ed., *A Concise History of European Music*.



**Figure 4.** Yu Zhiqiang, *A Concise History of Western Music*.



contributors include all six professors (including myself) of the Teaching and go beyond the Russian works used for the earlier two books and incorporates information from many more textbooks in English, such as those by Donald J. Grout and Claude V. Palisca and K Marie Stolba. Moreover, the third textbook contains more material on music in the medieval, Renaissance, and twentieth-century eras. For example, the ancient Greece and medieval section has been increased by fifty pages.

The third textbook also includes sets of CDs and PowerPoint presentations selected by our Teaching and Research Group; all these have been used in our classes for almost ten years. As the 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 several times. The newest textbook to be used at the CCOM is my own text, *A Concise History of Western Music* (*Xifang yinyue jianshi*, **Figure 4**).<sup>4</sup> This book is extensively illustrated and accompanied by a CD of recorded examples. It is the most suitable summary of Western music history for performance majors.

In addition to the textbooks written by Chinese scholars, we also recommend several Chinese translations of Western scholars' works to our students as references. There are four important translations available in China: Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*,

4. (Beijing: Higher Education Press of China, 2006).

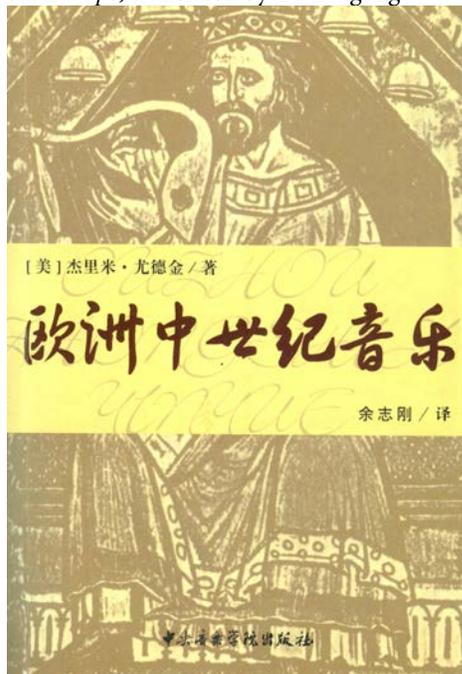
6th edition, translated by Yu Zhigang;<sup>5</sup> Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization*, translated by Gu Lianli, Zhang Hongdao, Yang Yandi, and Tang Yading;<sup>6</sup> Gerald Abraham, *The Concise Oxford History of Music*, translated by Gu Ben;<sup>7</sup> and Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Musik im Abendland*, translated by Liu Jingshu.<sup>8</sup>

### Translations of Reference Works and Period Histories

Chinese scholars have also translated musicological reference works and monographs on specific topics or and historical periods. Two English music dictionaries have been translated into Chinese and are widely used by Chinese students: 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<sup>9</sup> and Michael Kennedy, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 4th edition, translated by a committee of fifty members.<sup>10</sup>

In recent years, we have offered not only general music history courses but period-specific courses as well. These are optional courses for the upperclassmen and graduate students who have finished the general history courses. Such courses cover twentieth-century music, medieval music, and Baroque music. They are all good supplements for further in-depth studies, especially for musicology majors. I have translated Jeremy Yudkin's *Music in Medieval Europe* (Figure 5), which I adopted as the textbook for my optional course at CCOM.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 5.** Jeremy Yudkin, *Music in Medieval Europe*, translated by Yu Zhigang.



5. (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2011).

6. (Guiyang: Guizhou People's Press, 2001).

7. (Shanghai: Music Publishing House, 1999).

8. (Changsha: Hunan Press for Literature and Arts, 2005).

9. (Shanghai: Music Publishing House, 1988).

10. (Beijing: People's Music Publishing House, 2002).

11. (Beijing: Central Conservatory of Music Press, 2005).

### Comparison of Music History Courses at the CCOM and the Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University

Since the 1980s, Western music history has been a required course at the CCOM. For musicology majors, the required class attendance is four hours per week for fifteen weeks over two semesters, and for performance majors it is two hours per week for the same number of weeks and semesters. These courses are taught by four professors who are also members of the Teaching and Research Group for Western Music History that I chair at the Musicology Department. Students take the Western music history course in their third year, after they have finished the required courses in Chinese traditional music and Chinese music history.

Finally, I'd like to compare the Western Music History courses of the CCOM with those at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University (IU) in

**Figure 7a.** A comparison of the first half of the Western Music Survey of the CCOM and Indiana University, Bloomington.

Wk	CCOM	Indiana University, Prof. Burkholder M401, History and Literature of Music I
1	Ancient Greece & Rome	Why study music history? Ancient Greece
2	Medieval Chant	Gregorian Chant, Secular Monophony
3	Early Polyphony & Secular Music	Early Polyphony (until the 13th Cent.)
4	Ars Nova	Ars Nova
5	Early Renaissance, Flemish School	Italian Trecento, The idea of Renaissance
6	Italian Madrigal	English Music, Burgundy, Ockeghem
7	The Reformation	Josquin, Reformation, Palestrina
8	Baroque, Early Opera	Catholic music in Spain, New World, and Germany, and Italian madrigal
9	18C Opera, Oratorio, Cantata	Secular Song in other Countries, Renaissance Instrumental Music, Intro to Baroque
10	Instrumental Music	Monteverdi, Italian Opera and Vocal Music in 17C
11	Rameau, D. Scarlatti, Handel	Schütz, Italian Instrumental Music in Early 17C
12	J.S. Bach	French Opera and Keyboard Music, Germany and Austria in late 17C, England, Spain, the Americas
13	Early Classic, Vocal	Scarlatti and Corelli
14	Instrumental, Haydn	Sonata, Concerto, Bach's Instrumental Music
15	Mozart	Vivaldi, Couperin, Rameau, Bach's Vocal Music

Bloomington—course numbers M401 and M402 (**Figures 7a and 7b**).<sup>12</sup> For both schools there are two semesters in an academic year and fifteen weeks per semester. At the CCOM, we teach the history of Western music from ancient Greece to Mozart in the first semester, and from Beethoven to the late-twentieth century in the second semester.

There are differences worth mentioning for the first half of the survey in both schools. The IU schedule spends one week more on the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods than we do at the CCOM. The CCOM's first semester finishes with Mozart, while M401 ends with Bach and Handel. Our second semester starts with Beethoven, while M402 begins with *opera buffa* of the eighteenth century.

**Figure 7b.** A comparison of the second half of the Western Music Survey of the CCOM and Indiana University, Bloomington.

Wk	CCOM	Indiana University, Prof. Melamed M402, History and Literature of Music II
1	Beethoven	18th-Century Styles, Comic Opera
2	Romanticism, Schubert	Early Classic Symphonies, "Topics" in Classical Music
3	Mendelssohn, Schumann	Expectations of Genre, Mozart Opera
4	Chopin, Liszt	Beethoven
5	Berlioz, Liszt (Symphonic Poem)	Berlioz, Romanticism Expressed on the Piano, Romanticism Expressed in Song
6	Brahms, Strauss	Italian Opera, The Virtuoso
7	German Opera	Wagnerian Music Drama, Nationalist music
8	French Opera	Brahms, Classic Ballet, New Music in France
9	Italian Opera	Mahler, Strauss, Expressionism
10	Russian Nationalism	The 12-Tone Method and Musical Destiny, Popular Song and Jazz
11	Nationalism in Bohemia & Norway	Stravinsky, Modernism, Objectivity and the Usable Past
12	Late Romanticism & Impressionism	Are These Guys Serious? Ives, American; Still Searching for an American Music
13	The 20th century, Expressionism	Bartók, Noise, Tape music
14	Neo-Classicism, Nationalism	Minimalism, Serialism, Modern and Postmodern Opera
15	After 1945	Film music, Music and Society Today

12. For details on the classes at Indiana University taught by J. Peter Burkholder see <http://www.music.indiana.edu/som/courses/m401/M401schd.html> and for Daniel Melamed see <http://www.music.indiana.edu/som/courses/m402.s05/schedule.html> (as of Spring 2005).

There are a number of differences in the second half of the survey as well. The second semester of IU's course spends just five weeks on Romanticism, but we at the CCOM allocate as many as eleven weeks to the same topic, which is still the biggest section in the current CCOM curriculum. We place great emphasis on the nationalist music in the Romantic period, giving it two weeks as opposed to only one week at IU. As for the textbook coverage of this topic, there are thirty-nine pages discussing nationalism in Yu Runyang's book (i.e. the third Chinese textbook), whereas there are only sixteen pages about the topic in Grout and Palisca's book *A History of Western Music* (the 6th edition). For the CCOM, is it necessary to spend as long as eleven weeks on Romantic music? Probably, we will need to reconsider our course schedule to find a more equitable balance in the future. As for the Contemporary period, IU spends six weeks on contemporary music, whereas the CCOM schedule devotes only three weeks to the topic. Finally, the teachers at the CCOM consider it a very good idea to conclude the survey of Western Music with the topic of "Film music," as the IU course does.

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The history of teaching music history at the CCOM since 1950 has been characterized by the development of an appropriately Chinese view of Western music. While the study of Western music in China will make use of the best resources and scholarship of Western scholars, the history of teaching Western music history at the CCOM demonstrates the importance of textbooks, materials, and courses that are created by Chinese scholars for the use of Chinese students.