

Interdisciplinary Teaching Design for Music and Chinese in General High Schools: A Case Study of the People's Music Edition of "Yangguan Sandie"

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Abstract:

In ancient China, the sonic harmony between poetry and music forged the unique essence of poetry. Today, the relationship between Chinese poetry and music has become a popular topic for interdisciplinary teaching. This paper, based on the concept of interdisciplinary education, explores the integration of ancient poetry into high school music classrooms. Using the example of "Yangguan Sandie", from the ninth unit of "Music Appreciation" by the People's Music Publishing House, this paper presents a teaching design for the music classroom. It offers new perspectives for contemporary interdisciplinary teaching, refines the existing theoretical framework, enhances the internal logic and coherence of the discipline, and provides fresh research ideas and directions for interdisciplinary education in music and language.

Keywords: Interdisciplinarity; "Yangguan Sandie"; Chinese poem; Music pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Ancient Chinese poetry and music form a comprehensive art that originated in antiquity and has now become a focal point for interdisciplinary exploration. In ancient China, poetry and music were closely intertwined, creating a unique musical dimension within poetry. Poetry, often accompanied by music and dance, was used by the ancients to express their lives and emotions. In the West, ancient Greek poetry displayed a similar artistic charm, blending rhyme and rhythm to form a timeless artistic bridge.

Today, interdisciplinary integration is gaining prominence. The Ministry of Education has implemented

policies promoting the fusion of music with other disciplines, allowing ancient poetry to be incorporated into music education. In high school music education, however, the integration of ancient poetry and music remains relatively novel. Duan Yawei [1] analyzed strategies for this integration, but his teaching suggestions were somewhat general and lacked specific practical examples. In primary and secondary education, Peng Zhengfang [2] emphasized the importance of focusing on students' reading practice and sensitivity to artistic expression. Li Yuanyuan [3] advocated for immersive classrooms and diverse interpretative methods. While these scholars provided

useful teaching strategies suitable for younger students, these approaches are not easily transferable to the high school level.

This paper seeks to bridge this gap by combining Chinese and music disciplines. It introduces the teaching of ancient poetry into high school music classrooms, establishing a connection between the two subjects. Using the Tang Dynasty poet Wang Wei's seven-syllable poem "Song Yuan Er Shi Anxi" and the ancient song „Yangguan Sandie“ as examples, this paper aims to apply an interdisciplinary teaching approach to enhance students' understanding of both ancient poetry and music.

2. Interdisciplinary Teaching Concepts

2.1 Interdisciplinary

The concept of "interdisciplinary" was first introduced by American psychologist Robert S. Woodworth [4]. Over time, scholars have further refined this idea. In its report "Promoting Interdisciplinary Research", the U.S. National Academy of Sciences defined interdisciplinarity as the merging of knowledge and information from multiple disciplines or fields to solve complex problems that cannot be addressed by a single subject, thus leading to new insights. In China, scholar Liu Zhonglin, in his "Theory of Interdisciplinary Education", describes interdisciplinarity as any practical activity involving two or more disciplines [5].

2.2 Interdisciplinary Integration of Ancient Poetry into High School Music Class

As society progresses and the demand for well-rounded talent grows, the need for interdisciplinary approaches in education becomes increasingly important. Historically, China's school education was subject-centered, often plagued by excessive subject compartmentalization and rigid disciplinary barriers. It wasn't until 1985 that China began to emphasize interdisciplinary education [6]. Interdisciplinary integration involves incorporating knowledge and methods from various disciplines into one, not as a mere overlap of curricula, but as a process of optimizing the discipline by effectively blending it with other areas. The ultimate goal is to achieve a more holistic and coordinated learning experience.

Upon reviewing the literature, the author found limited research on interdisciplinary teaching in high school music, and existing studies have not clearly defined what interdisciplinary integration in high school music entails. Therefore, this study defines the concept of interdisciplinary integration in high school music as follows: it centers

on music as the primary discipline, dismantling traditional boundaries between subjects, focusing on intrinsic connections, and organically combining music with ancient poetry from the language arts.

Following the reforms of the new curriculum standards, the integration of ancient poetry into music classrooms has gained significant attention in China. While some primary and secondary schools have developed independent curricula combining ancient poetry and music, the exploration of such integration at the high school level remains limited [7]. This paper will examine how music and ancient poetry can be effectively combined in high school music classrooms, using the ancient poem „Yangguan Sandie“ as a case study. The aim is to explore new possibilities for innovative music education practices that integrate ancient poetry.

3. Teaching Methods

3.1 Analysis of High School Students' Characteristics

Academic situation analysis refers to a teacher's examination of the learning conditions of the students in their class. Broadly speaking, it includes an analysis of students' physical, psychological, intellectual, and emotional attitudes. More narrowly, it refers specifically to an analysis of students' learning capabilities [8].

The musical literacy of high school students varies. Some students have been exposed to music throughout their nine years of compulsory education and possess a basic understanding of music theory and appreciation. However, others may have little meaningful musical training. At this stage of development, students' psychological, intellectual, and emotional capacities are more advanced. As a result, they can grasp the meaning of poetry, and many are familiar with Tang and Song Dynasty poems. However, exposure to traditional Chinese music is limited, and they often struggle to appreciate its charm. Therefore, it is novel for them to approach ancient poetry from a musical perspective.

3.2 Teaching Objectives

Teaching should begin with an emphasis on aesthetic perception. Teachers can use methods such as practice, comparison, experience, and discussion to guide students in appreciating the deep meaning of the works, combining music appreciation with ancient poetry. This approach aims to improve students' aesthetic abilities and creativity. Focusing on the goal of artistic expression, teachers can guide students to deeply experience the emotions of part-

ing contained in „Yangguan Sandie“, sparking an interest in traditional Chinese folk music and a sense of cultural inheritance.

In the creative practice portion of the lesson, students are encouraged to work in groups to design adaptations, incorporating modern elements or innovative performance styles, thereby revitalizing „Yangguan Sandie“. Additionally, under the teaching goal of cultural understanding, teachers can help students gain deeper insight into guqin music and qin songs, understanding core musical elements such as melody, rhythm, and timbre. This process also aids in comprehending Wang Wei’s poem „Song Yuan Er Shi Anxi“, deepening students’ knowledge of traditional Chinese culture.

3.3 Teaching Methods

No matter how engaging the content in a music class is, if the teaching methods are not applied effectively, the expected outcomes may not be achieved. Therefore, teaching content and teaching methods should complement each other. In this classroom case, which centers on „Yangguan Sandie“ from the People’s Music Publishing House, the methods used include situation-based lead-in, sight-singing, comparative analysis, discussion, and creative adaptation activities.

4. The Teaching Process

4.1 Creating a Situation

At the beginning of the class, the teacher introduces the lesson using a performance clip of the guqin piece “Archaic Sound” from the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Before playing the clip, the teacher asks students to focus on identifying ancient Chinese elements within the video. Afterward, the teacher discusses these elements, introducing the guqin and its history as a key teaching element.

4.2 Introducing the New Content

The teacher plays „Yangguan Sandie“ on the guqin, guiding students to explore the emotional expression and musical elements of the piece. During the initial listening phase, the teacher explains that „Yangguan Sandie“ is based on Wang Wei’s poem „Song Yuan Er Shi Anxi“, discussing the emotions and narrative within the poem to help students understand the feelings of parting it conveys.

Next, the teacher plays a choral version of „Yangguan Sandie“ (see Figure 1) and analyzes the relationship between the music and the poem, focusing on musical ele-

ments such as harmony, melody, and tonality. After reciting the poem, students are led through a sight-singing and chanting exercise for the first refrain. In this activity, the teacher highlights the rhyme scheme of the poem—“en,” “Chen, Xin, Ren”—and explains how ancient Chinese poetry differs from Mandarin (Pu Tong Hua, Standard Chinese), using fewer words to express profound emotions.

Figure 1 “Yangguan Sandie”, the first refrain [9]

The teacher emphasizes that specific words, particularly at the beginning and end of rhyming lines, should be more prominent in the musical rendition. For example, in the line “Wei Cheng Chao Yu Yi Qing Chen,” the words “Wei,” “Cheng,” and “Chao” should be pronounced with emphasis. The dotted rhythm commonly found in farewell songs like this should also be performed gently in certain places. Students then listen to the second refrain and analyze how it differs from the first in terms of mood, rhythm, melody, and voice parts.

Finally, they listen to the third refrain (see Figure 2), discussing how it contrasts with the first two refrains in terms of musical mood, harmony, intensity, and tempo.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Yangguan Sandie". It includes lyrics in Chinese and musical notation with various symbols like notes, rests, and dynamic markings (mp, p). The lyrics are: "历 苦 辛, 历 苦 辛, 历 历 苦 辛 宜 自 珍。 宜 自 珍。 清 城 朝 雨 洒 轻 尘, 客 舍 青 青 柳 色 新, 劝 君 更 尽 一 杯 酒, 西 出 阳 关 无 故 人。 依 依 顾 恋 不 忍 离, 泪 满 沾 巾, 感 怀, 思 君 十 二 时 辰, 感 怀, 谁 相 逢。"

Figure 2: “Yangguan Sandie”, the third refrain [9].

4.3 Comparative Analysis

During the inquiry-based learning session, the teacher plays „Yangguan Sandie“ again on the guqin and guides students to compare it with the choral version in terms of timbre, tempo, intensity, and artistic expression. The teacher encourages students to share their thoughts and understanding in group discussions, comparing the two versions and sharing their insights with the class.

4.4 Creative Adaptation

In the extension session, the teacher shows a video of Bian Liunian’s adaptation of „Yangguan Sandie“ for the erhu, which stimulates students’ creative thinking. Students are divided into groups to design their adaptations of „Yangguan Sandie“, incorporating modern elements or experimenting with performance styles. For example, percussion instruments such as sand hammers or triangles could be added to enhance the traditional guqin performance. Alternatively, interdisciplinary practices such as combining music with dance or theater can offer a more multi-dimensional interpretation. Each group presents its adaptation, and the teacher provides feedback.

4.5 Summary and Expansion

The teacher summarizes the key points of the lesson, emphasizing the unique fusion of ancient poetry and music. For homework, students are asked to listen to Gong Linna’s version of „Yangguan Sandie“ and reflect on their experience in the next class. Gong Linna’s rendition, notable for its use of the Guizhou dialect, departs from traditional singing methods and blends elements of American, ethnic, and operatic styles. This version offers a fresh interpretation of the poet’s deep emotions of parting with a dear friend [10].

5. Conclusion

This paper, based on the interdisciplinary approach of centering music with language as a complementary subject, presents an example of integrating music and literature in a high school classroom setting. Using Wang Wei’s poem “Song Yuan Er Shi Anxi” and the musical piece “Yangguan Sandie”, the teaching design incorporates scenario-based introductions, sight-singing, chanting, comparison, discussion, and creative adaptation. These methods encourage students to discover, appreciate, and create beauty, while fostering their creativity.

This teaching model enhances students’ cultural confidence and national identity, allowing them to experience the depth and charm of music and ancient poetry. The case study fills a gap in research by combining music education with ancient poetry in high school settings and serves as a valuable reference for interdisciplinary teaching practices in music education.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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