Research of Differences Between Chinese and Western Music

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Introduction
Music is the language of the world, and the carrier of culture. Like the Chinese and English languages, music has both ethnic and regional differences, due to cultural differences that lead to the diversity of Chinese and Western music. By learning about differences present in Western and Chinese Music, society can blend these cultures to create new and better styles of Music. In this research, we studied typical features in both Chinese and Western music via the analysis of relevant materials such as books, music and a student survey.

Background
The author has been trained playing “Guzheng”, a traditional Chinese musical instrument, for more than 10 years, and has a deep understanding of Chinese classic music culture. At the same time, as an immigrant student living in the US, the author has come to know about western music which has been helpful in studying and comparing both music types. This research will analyze and compare typical features of both Chinese and Western music via web research and questionnaire results, aiming to discover a new form of music by combining two very different types of music.

Data
Through an online survey, I collected 209 responses. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gauge whether or not students were interested in both Chinese and Western music and if students thought the two genres could combine to create a new form of music.

Results

a. Features of Chinese Music
Chinese music was originally created by priests, for the purpose of praying for rain and food, over thousands of years. During that time, the instruments were made of stones and animal bones. After the dynasties began, music developed quickly. It became a reflection of the world view, and included the beliefs of the primitive ancestors. Also in that time, Chinese created their own five music notes “宫商角徵羽” which matches the five natural elements of “metal, wood, water, fire and earth”.

During that time, the instruments developed more forms, some of them are mostly typical for classic Chinese music (pictured below).

Chinese music was mainly composed with monophonic melody, which dictated a very simple structure in the instrument. Through the music, the goal is not to tell specific stories, but is an expression of harmony and ceremony of the Confucian. Classic Chinese music has deep relationship with the theory of Chinese traditional religions, such as the combination of human and natural from Taoism, or the insights of Zen from Buddhism. An example is the world famous composition “Gao Shan Liu Shui”.

“Through performance of this composition, the deep friendship between mountain and river are described.”

b. Features of Western Music
Like the Chinese music, Western music also has a long history and can be traced back to ancient Greek and Rome. This artistic form combines music and poem, which evolved into classical drama set to music. These classical music dramas depicted real events, such as war, love, and daily life. This style of music is now known as classical Opera.

When the medieval times began, Pope Gregory The Great reformed Christian music into Gregorian chant, which created the link between music and religion.

During the Renaissance period, two famous genres were created. The minstrel told stories through music and Gothic style was born in Northern Europe. During this time, many modern instruments were also invented.

During the Baroque era there were many great musicians whose music is still famous and widely performed today, such as Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. At this time, forms such as the “Serenade”, the “Divertimento”, and the Symphony were developed. Some of the most famous compositions from this era were Haydn’s Cello Concertos, numerous concertos for winds and strings by Mozart, and Beethoven’s amazing piano works such as the “Pathetique”, and the “Moonlight Sonata”.

Symphonies were developed. Some of the most famous compositions from this era were Haydn’s Cello Concertos, numerous concertos for winds and strings by Mozart, and Beethoven’s amazing piano works such as the “Pathetique”, and the “Moonlight Sonata”. The “Romantic Period” refers to the late 19 centuries, when Chopin, Mendelssohn, Liszt and Tchaikovsky made their names. Music in this period has more emphasis on the expression of people’s spiritual realm and the subjective feelings of the music genre in the emergence of a new solo style of instrumental music.

 Differences in musical instrument development
Western music has specific rules and theory and is written down, Chinese classical music does not have specific rules or theory, it can easily be lost in the history because music is not written down.

3. Differences in musical instrument development
As the Chinese music is made up of monophonic melodies, this style lends to the simplicity of Chinese instruments. These instruments do not have harmony. The more simple instruments show more distant mood.

During that time, the instruments developed more forms, some of them are mostly typical for classic Chinese music.

4. The main reason for the differences
Chinese and western music genres are different, and the differences are generated by the culture. The root in Chinese music is influenced by the influence of religion, and Western music is influenced by the influence of science.

The differences of the overall music styles.

5. Possibility of combination
I believe that there is the possibility to combine the two kinds of music and create a new form of music.

Conclusions

1. Aesthetic Differences
Chinese music has harmony as its core culture. Key descriptors of Chinese music are harmony,Rotations, ethereal, charming, deep thinking, composition, intangible and respectful of human race.

Western music is more practical, in the background of opera. It focuses on expressing the functional life, describes specific stories, and most importantly has a well developed and structured music theory.

2. The difference of music creation and the idea of music
Chinese classical music does not have specific rules or theory. It can easily be lost in the history because music is not written down. Western music has specific rules and theory and is written down, which is why it is still widely performed today and has circulated throughout the globe.

Like Chinese classical painting and calligraphy, the music is mainly performed in single lines, but western music has greater diversity of harmony and rhythm, similar to how a painting shows real events.

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f. Further Research
Based on the above analysis results, it shows there are students in school who are interested in both Chinese and Western music. For further research there will be an initiation of a music club which will aim towards composing and performing music that combines by both Chinese and Western styles. Following are the next steps:

a. Discuss with the school music teacher to ask for help and ideas.

b. Set up the running system and instructions; activity rules.

c. Recruit by hanging posters throughout campus

d. Interview individuals. Candidate must have basic music knowledge and ability, with the goal of finding 5-10 students interested in this project.

e. Create works and seek performance opportunities.

Literature
1. Literature

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For further information
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