

# **Research on the Applicability of Guitar in Chinese Middle School Music Curriculum**

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## **Abstracts**

Under the context of global economic integration and cultural diversification, the comprehensive reform of China's basic music education is in full swing, and instrumental music education in junior high school music curriculum is an inevitable trend. In this paper, the guitar is chosen as the instrument to be introduced into the middle school music classroom.

The performance form of guitar is rich, the playing skills are flexible with various styles of music, so we make full use of the characteristics of the guitar and combine them with the current situation of the Chinese junior high school music curriculum and the actual situation of the students to study the practicality and applicability of the guitar in the Chinese junior high school music classroom, so as to fully realize the unique charm of the guitar. It will also provide a theoretical basis for future guitar teaching activities and form a better development.

**Keywords:** Applicability; Guitar; Chinese Middle School; Music Curriculum

## **Introduction**

Guitar was introduced into China only a few decades ago, although it started slowly, in the twenty-first century, especially in the last ten years, with the acceleration of the process of specialization, more and more students were admitted to professional colleges and universities to learn guitar. There are more and more children learning guitar in extracurricular interest classes, and the education of guitar instrument also presents the characteristics of low age of learners, extensiveness, fashion and popularization. The author, from his own specialty, based on the characteristics of guitar as a musical instrument, elaborates on the applicability of guitar in the music classroom of Chinese junior high schools from the following aspects (Jin and Zhao, 2018 : 175).

## **Main Body**

### **Learning guitar can improve students' music theory foundation**

In the teaching of music in junior high school, most teachers only focus on the teaching of basic music theory knowledge to students. The knowledge on the textbook often makes students feel boring, and the teacher spends a lot of time to let the students to recognize the music score, and let the students access to the music works only after they are exhausted, which leads to the final failure to achieve a good teaching effect. In order to stimulate students' interest in learning, it is possible to try to solve certain problems in teaching by combining the guitar. In the teaching of musical instruments, music score reading is an important part. The way of

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music score reading is usually categorized into five-line musical notation and numbered musical notation. With the emergence of the guitar instrument, there is also a new way of score reading - six-line numbered musical notation. Teachers can introduce and explain the characteristics of these notation methods to students diversely (Liu, 2010 : 87).

(1) Simplified notation includes both alphabetical notation and numerical notation. Whether it is oral literature, or the instrumental composition, basically the first reaction is to pick up a pen and write down a melody with Arabic numerals. In many popular songs, the melody part of the guitar sheet music is notated using the simplified notation. Guitar teaching can use simplified notation.

(2) The five-line notation was first used for the development of symphonic music and gradually became the most complicated way of notation. Guitar is a harmonic instrument, the music is composed of a number of single melodies, with colorful chords interspersed, and the five-line notation plays a huge role here. The classical guitar is traditionally notated in five-line notation. So guitar instruction can be done using the five-line notation.

(3) Six-line notation is a separate form of notation designed for the guitar today. Its basic structure consists of six lines. It is characterized by the parallel composition of the six lines, which corresponds to the total number of strings on the guitar. The six horizontal lines represent the six different strings on the guitar, with the bottom line representing the sixth string of the guitar. The top line represents the first string of the guitar. The six-line notation uses numbers to record the pitch of tones, i.e., the position of strings pressed by the left hand, and the specific numbers are written on the corresponding horizontal lines to indicate the position and movement of the two hands (i.e., fingering), which belongs to the sheet music that records the fingering. The simple and easy-to-understand special way of reading sheet music has solved the difficult problem of reading sheet music for beginners or students with weak knowledge of music theory, which is also one of the reasons why the threshold of guitar learning is low. Therefore, choosing the guitar in the music teaching classroom can make the problem of recognizing the sheet music to be solved well (Ren, 2018 : 190).

In short, whether it is simplified notation, five-line notation or six-line notation, it is possible to utilize in the guitar, and there is no limitation in the choice of music teaching notation methods to improve the students' music theory foundation. Through the teacher's introduction and explanation, students will make their own learning choices according to their actual needs and future development direction. Regardless of the choice of the way to read sheet music, the learning of music theory knowledge will be the focus and difficulty of teaching students in the music classroom. The use of the guitar in music teaching maximizes the solution to the problem of the students' boredom in the face of music theory. Through the guitar as an auxiliary means, students actually operate the guitar in their hands, materializing the abstract knowledge of music theory and facilitating their understanding and mastery.

## **Learning guitar can cultivate students' teamwork ability and awaken them to a deeper sense of music**

In recent years, guitar ensembles have been developing better and better in Asia, represented by Japan, South Korea and Singapore, and China has also entered the beginning stage. Due to a variety of internal and external factors, there is a certain degree of variability in students' learning of the guitar instrument. The variability of students' learning of the instrument is well resolved in the emerging ensemble performance of the guitar. Students can be divided into four echelons based on their variability, and each group contains members of

each echelon, with a balanced distribution, to develop cooperative group learning in guitar teaching. Music education has the purpose of cultivating the spirit of mutual help and cooperation and communicative ability. Using the guitar ensemble as a carrier, the students will produce pleasant feelings in mutual cooperation and sociability and communication, so that they will have a strong need to pursue such pleasant emotions, and then this educational purpose can be realized. In the process of implementing the cooperation, the diversity of musical experience is delivered to the students, enriching the cultivation of this experience, so that the environment of music and the surroundings of the existence of interpenetration and influence, so that the students will feel in the music, on the one hand, highlighting the ability of music to improve the emotional life, on the one hand, it will also evoke a sense of participation in the music of the students, which is what we call the inculcation. Through this way, it gradually changes the students' feeling, produces the beneficial emotion to music, from disliking music to liking music, from being insensitive to music to being intoxicated by the wonderful music. Finally, we can reach the goal of aesthetic education, namely, to cultivate noble sentiments and improve the cultural literacy of music in terms of "experience", "enrichment" and "emotion". Individual students learn, train and communicate with each other in a certain period of time, so that they can gain more music-related knowledge, enhance group consciousness, cultivate students' cooperation and coordination ability, communicate in cooperation, learn in communication, grow in learning, and gain in growth (Sun, 2015 : 152 ; Sun 2012 : 41).

## **Learning guitar can improve music appreciation ability**

(1) The study of musical instruments helps students to listen to and perceive the basic elements of music, and enhances their understanding of music. The many types of guitars and the diverse playing techniques of guitars transmit multi-level vibrations from the "cochlea" to the receptors of human hearing, and the final formation of the sense of hearing is also ever-changing. For example, in the classroom of music theory, if the students fall asleep because of the boring lectures, the teacher can always play the guitar to solve the problem. At the same time, we can also find another way to add the guitar to assist in teaching, encourage students to train each other, improve mobility, personal involvement in the learning will produce better learning results relative to passive learning. Guitar resonates through the fingers of the student, and as the student's training time increases, his/her perception of the sound will be gradually strengthened, and he/she will become relatively sensitive to the subtle changes in the sound.

(2) The selection of guitar works for appreciation can enrich students' artistic development imagination and improve their artistic creativity. Guitar has a long history of development, and there are many kinds of guitars. At present, the common types are classical guitar, folk guitar, fingerstyle guitar, jazz guitar, flamenco guitar, electric guitar, etc. Different types of guitars have different styles. Guitar is mainly used in song accompaniment or solo, mainly folk guitar, which can be played with professional instruments "plectrum" or fingers of the player, with high entertainment, because of the use of steel strings, the sound is bright. In the West, the classical guitar is widely used, also known as the Spanish classical guitar, mainly performs classical, romantic and religious music, with rich techniques and high artistry, mainly using nylon ropes, with a gentle and elegant tone. The flamenco guitar was originated in the Andalusian region and is very popular in Spain as an accompaniment to dances and songs. The electric guitar has a special position in rock, blues, jazz and pop music. It is an important

accompaniment and solo instrument in modern popular music. In recent years, the fingerstyle is emerging, which is a combination of classical guitar, folk guitar, and a few electric guitar playing techniques and skills, so the fingerstyle guitar can be said to be quite rich and diversified in the sound effects of the music. Since the 20th century, the guitar has occupied a certain position among the most popular musical instruments in the world, attracting people with its own diversity of styles, richness of techniques and fascinating tone. The diverse styles of music works of such a large and colorful guitar family satisfy the enthusiasm of different groups of students in appreciating music, and provide a broader space for students to create music.

The appreciation of guitar music works is a comprehensive music aesthetic art, involving various aspects of knowledge and theory. It even involves the general knowledge of the country, nationality, geography, environment, religion, humanities and culture in one work. Therefore, guitar music appreciation class can not only enrich students' professional knowledge and broaden their horizons in many fields, but also cultivate students' interest in different musical works. When appreciating the works, students should learn to analyze the works and establish the concept of harmonious system in order to better understand the works and their development trend. It improves students' aesthetic education ability and strengthens the cultivation of students' emotions, attitudes and values (Wang and Joseph, 2012 : 192).

## **Guitar playing techniques**

Guitar performance can be characterized by a free flowing line, or a dynamic piece of music that does not rely on drums, bass and other percussion instruments. The rhythms of music can be light, bright, calm, turbulent, high, melodious, soothing, etc. Although these rhythms can be interpreted and expressed by different instruments, they can be performed by the guitar through a variety of performance techniques. The guitar performance techniques are as follows. Hitting is to hit the strings with the left hand and play with the regular right hand, with good continuity; pulling is to press the strings with the left hand first and move in a fixed direction, then leave the strings and play, with natural continuity; sliding is to pluck the strings and change the position of the frets by sliding them from side to side, so that the sound changes continuously; mutting is to press the end of the main string with the edge of the right hand palm, and pluck the string at the same time, giving out a muffled low tone; overtones is to press the top of the string with the left hand finger with light strength, and when the right hand plucks the string, the left hand leaves the string completely, the sound is similar to a bell chime, clear and metallic; strum refers to plucking multiple strings in a certain direction at the same time, which have a wide range of applications and strong sound combinations, and are often used in the climax of music. Various techniques can be combined to form different styles, with diverse rhythmic changes and remarkable acoustic effects, which can stimulate students' senses and their emotions. Students' emotions and wills are also stirred, and their interest in learning music is stimulated (Wang, 2019 : 54).

## **Musical styles of the guitar**

The guitar is suitable for a wide range of musical styles. It is often used as the main instrument in popular music, folk music, light music, rock music, blues music, and very distinctive folk songs of various ethnic groups, bossa nova, and flamenco, all of which demonstrate the variety of musical styles played on the guitar. Classical guitars of the guitar type can also play classical music, appearing in use in a large number of solo pieces, repertoire, chamber music and orchestral music. There are two main types of guitars: the time-honored acoustic guitar, which is amplified by a wooden resonator box, and the electric guitar, which was invented in the twentieth century and is amplified by electric horns. There are four types of acoustic guitars: the classical guitar, the flamenco guitar, the flat guitar (which may also be called the folk guitar), and the arch guitar (which is also known as the jazz guitar). Acoustic guitars are usually used in classical music, romantic music, religious music, folk ethnic music and modern pop music. Electric guitars are usually widely used in rock music, heavy metal music, and blues music. The electric guitar plays an important role and has an important influence on Western popular music culture. The guitar is a highly independent instrument, with a very personalized tone and expression, and can be performed solo, showing classical, romantic, modern, subtle, natural and simple musical emotions. The electric guitar, on the other hand, is a rugged and flamboyant instrument that can be played with effects and a wealth of playing techniques, and can perform extremely poignant tunes, as well as beautiful and majestic melodies and atmospheres, with an endless charm. Different music styles have different audiences. Guitar instruments are of various styles, and junior high school students can experience the guitar music, and always find emotional resonance in the process of experiencing, so that the aesthetic education function of guitar instrument education can be realized (Wang and Joseph, 2012; Jin and Zhao, 2018 : 175).

## **Guitar performance forms**

The guitar has a variety of performance forms. In popular music, the guitar can be used as the intro, interlude, outro, harmony and rhythm of a piece of music in a band, and it can also be used with a band to fulfill different styles of musical works. The guitar can also be used as an accompaniment instrument. Guitar is a combination of harmonic and melodic instruments, and can be used as an accompaniment, taking advantage of its harmonic instrument. Most of the guitars purchased by the school are acoustic guitars, and there are fewer guitars with harmonizers. This does not affect our teaching in any way. Teachers at the school usually use the piano or the electric piano to accompany the students in their songs. Students are unable to participate in song accompaniment activities due to skill limitations. Piano accompaniment is a process of sensual cuts, students do not have a firm grasp of the theory to apply this objective reality, so they will not be able to participate in more practical musical activities. The emergence of the acoustic guitar makes the problem solved, the guitar's special six-line sheet music accompaniment features strive to be in-depth, easy to understand, so that students can see and understand, comprehend fast. Many of the secondary compositions of popular song compositions favored by students have added guitar accompaniment, which attracts the attention of students and their willingness to lean more toward the guitar (Sun 2012 : 54).

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, we can know that no matter from the guitar's own playing skills, playing form and music style, or from the enhancement of the guitar for the students' music theory, music appreciation and teamwork ability, the guitar plays a positive role in promoting the teaching effectiveness of junior high school music classroom. It will enhance students' sense of learning experience, subjective initiative. Through the experience of feeling various elements in music, students' perception and understanding of music are enhanced, so that the function of aesthetic education is realized.

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