

Constructing Shanxi Folk Music Violin Ensemble Workbook for Teaching Students at Shanxi Vocational College of Art, China

Zhang Jing,
Chutasiri Yodwised and Watchara Prempree
Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand
Corresponding Author, E-mail: 1478573992@qq.com

Abstract

This article presents the development, implementation, and evaluation of a violin ensemble workbook explicitly designed for teaching at Shanxi Vocational College of Art, focusing on Shanxi folk music. The workbook aims to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application, enhancing students' understanding and performance of regional folk music. The study includes a comprehensive evaluation of the workbook's feasibility and effectiveness, incorporating expert feedback to ensure its accuracy, relevance, and applicability in an educational setting. The findings suggest that the workbook is a valuable educational tool that can significantly contribute to preserving and promoting Shanxi's rich musical heritage.

Keywords: Constructing; Shanxi Folk Music; Violin Ensemble; Workbook; Shanxi Vocational College of Art; China

Introduction

The violin, a cornerstone of the stringed instrument family, has its origins traced back to early instruments such as the viola, lira, and Rebecca. Its design reached a pinnacle in 16th-century Italy, with cities like Bologna, Milan, Venice, and Florence initially spearheading violin craftsmanship. Cremona later emerged as the heart of violin making, significantly due to Andrea Amati's pioneering work. Amati was not merely an exceptional instrument maker; he also established a design standard that his descendants, including Antonio, Girolamo, and Niccolo, would refine (Wang, 2021). The Baroque period marked the violin's ascendancy, becoming indispensable in both solo and ensemble compositions, with significant contributions from composers such as Vivaldi, Bach, and Telemann. This era enriched the musical landscape, with the 18th century celebrated as the golden age of violin making, thanks to the outstanding works of Antonio Stradivari and Giovanni Battista Guarneri (Schoenbaum, 2012).

The Classical period saw the expansion of the violin's repertoire, with composers like Mozart and Beethoven introducing more complex technical demands. This evolution persisted through the 19th and early 20th centuries, with virtuosos like Paganini and Verecke Stamps expanding the instrument's technical and expressive capacities. The Romantic era, emphasizing the emotional depth of music, saw the violin playing a pivotal role in conveying the period's emotive intensity (Finley, 2016). In contemporary times, the violin has transcended classical music boundaries to influence genres such as pop, jazz, and folk. Modern luthiers have preserved the instrument's esteemed status through a combination of traditional craftsmanship and material innovation, affirming its global cultural significance.

The integration and evolution of the violin in China underscore the nation's cultural openness. Initially introduced by missionaries during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, the violin's popularity soared in the 20th century, driven by the influx of Chinese students and intellectuals from abroad. The establishment of music schools and the Chinese populace's gradual acceptance further propelled the violin's popularity. The 1930s and 1940s were formative years for the violin in China, with composers like Ma Sicong and He Zhanhao skillfully incorporating Chinese melodies with Western violin techniques. From the 1950s onwards, the contributions of performers and educators, such as Yu Lina and Lin Yaogi, were crucial in advancing the art of violin playing. Following China's economic reforms, the music community embarked on new explorations, blending Western and national elements to create expressive works with national characteristics (Ding, 2017).

The violin ensemble, as a distinct form of musical collaboration, offers a rich avenue for exploring the interplay between individual artistry and collective harmony. The ensemble setting provides violinists with the opportunity to delve into a repertoire that spans various genres and periods, fostering a deeper understanding of musical dialogues and textures. Within educational settings, the violin ensemble plays a crucial role in developing ensemble skills, such as listening, timing, and blending, which are essential for any aspiring musician. The inclusion of violin ensemble practice in music curricula supports the holistic development of students, enhancing their technical proficiency, musical expression, and collaborative abilities.

Drawing inspiration from Shanxi folk songs and other regional music, composers have ventured into creative explorations, producing works that meld Chinese folk melodies with violin ensemble arrangements. These compositions not only serve as cultural emissaries, promoting musical exchanges between China and the West but also highlight the versatility and expressive potential of the violin ensemble. Works adapted from Shanxi folk songs, such as "Autumn Harvest," "Going West," and "Gathering Wheat Roots," underscore the depth of Chinese musical tradition while showcasing the ensemble's ability to convey complex emotional narratives (Li, 2020).

In an era characterized by vibrant international cultural exchanges and a burgeoning art market, there is a heightened demand for specialized, applied, and interdisciplinary senior music talents. Music colleges have increasingly emphasized the importance of artistic practice capabilities, making violin ensemble rehearsal lessons an integral component of higher music education programs. These lessons are pivotal in assessing professional learning outcomes and in cultivating comprehensive stage practice skills. By integrating folk music ensemble practice, students gain firsthand experience of the charm of folk music, bridging music theory with cultural traditions (Zhang, 2016). Reflecting on my experience as a violin teacher at Shanxi Arts Vocational College, the motivation to develop a violin ensemble course dedicated to Shanxi folk music is evident. An in-depth analysis of the forms, techniques, styles, and structures of violin ensembles, combined with practical teaching experience, will provide valuable insights for devising a curriculum at Shanxi Arts Vocational College. The initiative to create violin ensemble practice pieces in a Shanxi musical style aims to enhance the performance and teaching of violin ensembles, supporting composition and stage practice. This endeavor seeks not only to elevate violin education in Shanxi but also to amplify the significance of the violin ensemble in folk music and art.

Research Objectives

1. To study the Shanxi folk music Violin ensemble workbook
2. To construct a Violin ensemble workbook for teaching at Shanxi Vocational College of Art
3. To use the Violin ensemble workbook for teaching at Shanxi Vocational College of Art
4. To evaluate the results of the Violin ensemble workbook for teaching at Shanxi Vocational College of Art

Research Methodology

This is mixed method between qualitative and quantitative research.

In this process, quantitative research mainly refers to the validity of the work manual test and students' satisfaction survey.

Population and Sample

Nine violin students in Shanxi Vocational College of Art. All populations are samples, as the total number of violin students at Shanxi Vocational College of Art is 9.

Key informants

There are currently three university professors, including three from the Sichuan Conservatory of Music, Shanxi University Conservatory of Music, and Shanxi Symphony Orchestra.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research: Interviews and observations are used for descriptive analysis.

Quantitative research: IOC evaluation, Formative, and Summative tests were used for statistical analysis.

Conceptual Framework

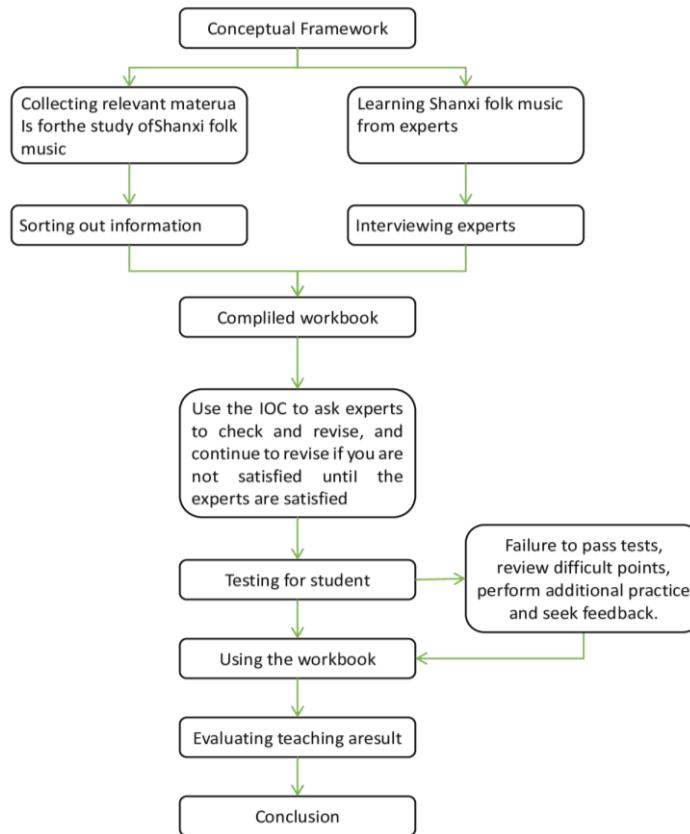


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Findings

To study the Shanxi folk music Violin ensemble workbook with experts

The study's conclusion on the "Shanxi Folk Music Violin Ensemble Workbook" illustrates the multifaceted research and development processes undertaken to create a resource tailored to violin ensemble pedagogy in the realm of Shanxi folk music.

The formative stages of the workbook's composition were marked by extensive scholarly review and collaborative discourse with experts in violin pedagogy and Shanxi musical tradition. The dialogic interaction with these experts underpinned the conceptual framework of the workbook and ensured its alignment with pedagogical strategies appropriate to this specialized field.

The assessment revealed an apparent void in academic resources tailored to interweaving Western string instruments with the indigenous music of Shanxi, specifically highlighting a deficit in available arrangements and scholarly treatises geared toward the violin. This observation underscores the usefulness of the workbook in filling a gap in the field of cultural music education.

Expert testimony foregrounded the indispensability of immersive cultural narratives, granular expositions of the folk genre's distinctive characteristics, and thorough methodological guidance on ensemble cohesion, affirming these components as critical to the workbook's architecture. The iterative pedagogical strategy recommended by the experts was seen as critical, allowing for a substantive assimilation of the regional soundscape by the students.

The selection of emblematic folk songs - "Meng Meng" " Tao Hua Hong Xing Hua Bai," and "Qin Ge Dan Xia He Xi Yi Shang" - for transcription and instructional purposes within the workbook serves the dual purpose of cultural preservation and academic instruction. Including additional didactic activities, such as aural folk performances and tests to measure pedagogical impact, enhances the pragmatic value of the workbook.

In sum, the workbook's contribution to the field of violin ensemble teaching in Shanxi folk music is comprehensive and groundbreaking. The confluence of theoretical scholarship and empirical practice within the workbook's purview ensures that students are not only imbued with the requisite technical competencies but are also culturally enriched, thereby fostering a cadre of violinists adept at perpetuating the stylistic lineage of Shanxi's rich musical heritage.

To construct a Violin ensemble workbook for teaching at Shanxi Vocational College of Art

The "Violin Ensemble Workbook" presents itself as an impeccably crafted pedagogical tool tailored to the educational milieu of the Shanxi Vocational Art College. This comprehensive guide is astutely divided into four meticulously delineated sections, each of which plays a pivotal role in the holistic education of violin ensemble performance in the context of Shanxi folk music.

Introduction: The first section sets the stage for the workbook, articulating its overarching goals and the critical importance it plays within the curriculum. By providing a solid content outline and pragmatic instructions for using the workbook, this section ensures an accessible and productive learning experience for students. It anchors the pedagogical intent of the workbook and operationalizes the framework for effective pedagogical engagement.

Overview of Shanxi Folk Music: Based on the informed recommendations of a distinguished group of experts, this section ventures deep into the heart of Shanxi's folk music tradition. It unfolds the rich tapestry of the genre's historical antecedents, cultural moorings, variety of musical forms, and quintessential stylistic attributes that characterize Shanxi folk music. This exploration highlights the importance of Shanxi's musical heritage within the broader field of regional music and instills a deep cultural appreciation in students.

Technical Section: Reflecting the sage advice of specialists, the workbook's technical scaffolding is designed to confront and conquer four intricate skills central to mastering violin ensemble performance. Each skill is meticulously paired with a designated practice piece, facilitating intricate dissection and analysis. This structured approach provides students with a deep understanding and dexterity of technical skills, paving the way for their mastery of violin performance.

Performance Pieces: The heart of the workbook culminates in the inclusion of three compositions ranging in difficulty from low to medium, all carefully curated based on expert advice. These selections serve as practical channels through which students can integrate theoretical insights with real-world applications, thereby enriching their understanding and proficiency in Shanxi folk music.

The unanimous endorsement of the expert panel underscores the workbook's excellence in blending theoretical knowledge with practical execution. It achieves a nuanced balance between dissecting style and technique while presenting adapted and original compositions embodying the essence of Shanxi folk music. This symbiotic integration ensures that students not only acquire the technical skills necessary for performance but also become deeply immersed in the cultural and stylistic nuances characteristic of Shanxi's rich musical heritage.

To use the Violin ensemble workbook for teaching at Shanxi Vocational College of Art

The pedagogical experiment conducted at the Shanxi Art Vocational College, involving a cohort of nine violin students within a 12-week curriculum, serves as a prismatic lens through which the efficacy of the "Violin Ensemble Workbook" can be scrutinized. The curriculum, designed to unfurl over 120 minutes per week, sought to create a symbiosis between the theoretical constructs of Shanxi folk music and the visceral experience of violin ensemble performance.

As part of this curricular framework, students were steeped in the rich theoretical ethos of Shanxi's folk music legacy, complemented by the practical exploration of violin techniques intrinsic to this genre. To augment this foundational knowledge, the pedagogic strategy encompassed listening sessions that showcased seminal compositions within the Shanxi folk repertoire, thereby anchoring theoretical knowledge in the auditory experience.

Instructional methodologies were strategically diversified, incorporating direct demonstrations by the educator alongside the deployment of multimedia resources. This dual-channel approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of the unique violin ensemble techniques that hallmark Shanxi folk music, thereby broadening the students' interpretive and technical repertoires.

Over the curriculum's tenure, students were methodically introduced to three meticulously selected pieces, each escalating in complexity. This progressive learning structure was formulated to calibrate the students' technical acumen and interpretive sensibilities to the demands of increasing musical challenge.

The commitment exhibited by the students, punctuated by their consistent punctuality, an affirmative learning disposition, and a burgeoning appreciation for Shanxi folk music, paints a portrait of a deeply engaged and motivated cohort. The culmination of this pedagogical venture is encapsulated in the palpable enhancement of the students' affection towards and understanding of Shanxi folk music. This outcome not merely attests to the student's individual growth but, more critically, underscores the "Violin Ensemble Workbook" as an invaluable pedagogical artifact.

In essence, this educational initiative has not only facilitated the acquisition of advanced musical competencies among the students but has also seamlessly intertwined these technical pursuits with an immersive cultural education. Through this integrative pedagogic approach, the "Violin Ensemble Workbook" has proven itself as a catalyst in fostering a profound connection with, and an enduring appreciation for, the nuanced tapestry of Shanxi's folk music heritage.

To evaluate the results of the Violin ensemble workbook for teaching at Shanxi Vocational College of Art

The experiment proves the feasibility of compiling the workbook of the Violin ensemble of Shanxi folk music. After one semester of use, students take two formative tests in weeks 6 and 9, a summative test in week 11, and a one-time performance test in week 12. The students have made great progress in performance, violin skills, Shanxi folk music style, etc.

The average score of the first formative test is 74, the average score of the second formative test is 77.37, the average score of the summative test is 84, the proportion of A-level has increased from 0 to 37.5%, the average score of the performative test is 4.42, and the grade is Good.

The results show that using the workbook improved students' average level, and their performance level, playing skills, and mastery of Shanxi folk music style have made great progress. The experiment proves the feasibility of compiling the workbook of the Violin ensemble of Shanxi folk music. The students have a deeper understanding of the performance of Shanxi folk music, which also makes the students have a significant improvement in the overall level of the violin to achieve the expected effect.

However, there are some imperfections in this study. For example, the sample size of this study is small; only 8 undergraduates majoring in Violin from Shanxi Vocational College of Art are selected, and large-scale experiments and large sample data analysis are not allowed. For another example, teaching research only focuses on the single teaching mode of the group class. It does not involve more teaching modes, so there is room for continuous improvement and progress.

Discussion

"Shanxi Folk Music Violin Ensemble Workbook" is an educational resource that delves into Shanxi folk music's historical background, unique styles, and musical structures. It also explores the intricacies of performance techniques. The workbook is based on Shanxi folk songs and creates violin ensemble pieces that preserve the essence of local folk music. This workbook utilizes a comprehensive pedagogical approach that combines theory with practical application and incorporates multimedia to stimulate student interest. This pedagogy is very similar to that of Wang (2021), but it favors an integrated approach that combines creative, pedagogical, and theoretical disciplines to promote innovation in today's age.

Listening is a fundamental aspect of music education, especially for folk music. The workbook strategically includes lessons on appreciating iconic Shanxi folk tunes, using video playback to deepen students' understanding of and engagement with the genre. This approach aligns with Zhang's (2016) advocacy of a diverse approach to music education that goes beyond traditional teaching methods, focusing solely on technique or theoretical knowledge. Students can develop an emotional connection and aesthetic appreciation for folk music by facilitating music appreciation through various media.

This study used small-group teaching as the core teaching model, and students were divided into nine groups. This approach has been shown to enhance classroom dynamics, collaborative learning, and problem-solving skills, echoing the findings of Zhang (2016) on the effectiveness of group lessons in improving musical skills and expression.

The participants in this study were from Shanxi Arts Vocational College and shared a common background with a deep affinity for local music. Their intrinsic motivation and appreciation for their musical heritage echoed Li (2021) view that disseminating local musical culture should begin at local academic institutions and utilize emotional connection and accessibility for effective music education.

Recommendation

1. Practical Recommendations

Continue in-depth research on Shanxi folk music by engaging with local musicians and violin specialists. Understand their pedagogic techniques and performance skills. Conduct surveys and interviews with violin students in Shanxi to grasp their educational needs, aspirations, and obstacles. This will inform the customization of the manual to meet learners' specific requirements. Curate a collection of Shanxi folk melodies suitable for violin adaptation. Formulate an effective violin music teaching manual that merges traditional and contemporary pedagogical approaches.

2. Recommendation for future research

Publish and disseminate the ensemble workbook, ensuring it reaches violin educators and students in Shanxi and beyond. Consider establishing a dedicated body to oversee the ongoing evolution and preservation of Shanxi folk music performances, guaranteeing its enduring legacy. Encourage collaboration among educators, musicians, scholars, and cultural organizations to safeguard and perpetuate Shanxi's folk song heritage.

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