

Development and Practice of Southeast Asian Traditional Music Curriculum from the Perspective of Regional and National Music

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Abstract: With the continuous advancement of the construction of new liberal arts disciplines and the ongoing cultural exchanges between China and ASEAN, regional musicology has emerged as a new research direction in music education abroad. Currently, Southeast Asian traditional music courses in domestic universities generally suffer from problems such as a lack of national context, generalized and singular content, teaching divorced from regional culture, and rigid assessment models. This paper takes regional musicology as its core theoretical support and conducts research from three dimensions: the theoretical foundation of the discipline, the value of curriculum development, and practical implementation paths. It proposes concrete implementation measures from three aspects: curriculum content, teaching models, and assessment, deeply integrating regional culture with the teaching of Southeast Asian music itself. The research aims to optimize existing teaching models for overseas music courses, address the shortcomings in national culture, help universities cultivate compound art talents with both musical literacy and regional awareness, and provide feasible references for cross-cultural music education exchanges between China and Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Regional musicology; Southeast Asian traditional music; Curriculum development; Blended learning; Diverse assessment

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1. Introduction

Driven by the establishment of regional musicology as a first-level interdisciplinary discipline, cross-border curriculum reform between art and regional music disciplines has become a common phenomenon in the development of domestic universities. Southeast Asia, with its unique geographical location, boasts a rich and diverse array of traditional music arts, each rooted in the distinct religions and customs of its respective countries, providing an ideal platform for international music education. Currently, domestic courses on Southeast Asian traditional music arts largely adopt traditional world music teaching models, focusing

solely on the instruments and melodies of the music itself, neglecting the analysis and exploration of the geographical, historical, and religious factors of the respective countries and regions. This results in repetitive and monotonous teaching methods, failing to effectively serve the artistic training needs of internationally-minded individuals. Therefore, this paper takes a regional perspective, exploring the development philosophy and feasible teaching pathways for Southeast Asian traditional music courses based on specific teaching contexts, thereby enhancing and developing international music education.

2. Regional and national musicology theory

Regional and national musicology is a new theory formed by the intersection of regional and national studies and ethnomusicology. Its core is to divide according to national geography and borders, or according to different regional cultural spheres, and to place music in the social history, religion, and customs of a specific country for research and teaching, which is different from general music worldwide. This theory rejects the universal music represented by Western music under Western centrism, and emphasizes that different countries and different cultural contexts have different independent and unequal national music. Therefore, music teaching should adopt the teaching method of one country's music and one national cultural context. According to the geographical characteristics of Southeast Asia, Southeast Asia can be divided into two major regions: the Buddhist music sphere of the Indochina Peninsula and the Islamic maritime music sphere of the Malay Archipelago. Combining this theory with curriculum development can completely solve the previous problems of no national distinction and no cultural context, and provide a direct and appropriate theoretical basis for this curriculum reform ^[1].

3. The significance of developing Southeast Asian traditional music courses from the perspective of regional and national music

3.1. Improving the interdisciplinary research system of regional and national music

Currently, research in regional and national studies in China mainly focuses on politics, diplomacy, economics, trade, and social governance, neglecting the study of soft power in art and culture, resulting in a deficiency in its research scope. Simultaneously, the research content of ethnomusicology is limited to the analysis and research of music itself, lacking a broad perspective encompassing macro-geographical and national considerations, leading to a disconnect between the two disciplines. The development of Southeast Asian traditional music courses integrates macro-geographical and socio-cultural analyses and research conducted at the national and regional levels into the curriculum, achieving a synergy between the two. This can enrich and improve research examples in art and culture related to regional and national studies, compensate for and improve the lack of a systematic curriculum system for Southeast Asian traditional music; it can also expand the research field of ethnomusicology's teaching content outside the region, extending from single-faceted art teaching to a comprehensive educational function.

3.2. Addressing existing pain points in Southeast Asian music courses

Currently, Southeast Asian traditional music courses offered in universities suffer from several shortcomings. The courses are too broad, lacking specific national context, and provide only a general overview of traditional music across Southeast Asia. Students fail to learn about the specific traditional music of

countries like Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The teaching process focuses only on musical performance, instrument shapes and structures, and melodic patterns, neglecting the connection between music culture and religious rituals, court etiquette, and folk celebrations. In practice, teaching relies heavily on theoretical lectures and audio-visual presentations, resulting in a monotonous teaching style lacking interactive discussions, practical exercises, and comparative lessons between different countries. Constructing a new course based on regional and national music perspectives can effectively address these problems. It breaks down national content into smaller units, adds relevant regional cultural background, changes the classroom teaching model, effectively corrects the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods, and improves the relevance and effectiveness of Southeast Asian traditional music courses.

3.3. Adapting to the national demand for compound foreign art talents

Under the background of the “Belt and Road” initiative and the construction of the China-ASEAN community of shared future, the demand for positions in cultural and tourism exchanges, art performances, and people-to-people cultural diplomacy has shown an upward trend. Music talents who only know professional skills can no longer meet the demand. There is an urgent need for compound talents who are familiar with the culture and art of Southeast Asian countries and the local customs and traditions of the region and have cross-cultural communication capabilities. The original music courses can only teach students to appreciate, but do not cultivate students’ ability to think critically and communicate across cultures. The new course developed in this study integrates national and regional knowledge into the entire music classroom, so that the process of students learning music, dance, and musical instruments becomes a process of acquiring cultural taboos and artistic customs of Southeast Asian countries. It not only enables students to master the basic core skills of music, but also overcomes the problem of insufficient knowledge of national and regional areas, forms an equal and inclusive cross-cultural art aesthetic concept, and conforms to the national strategy of cultivating talents with foreign humanistic communication concepts ^[2].

4. Development and teaching practice path of Southeast Asian traditional music courses from the perspective of regional and national music

4.1. Reconstructing the course objectives and content system

Based on the requirements of the music professional talent training program of the university, and according to the needs of local and national music teaching, the course practice objectives are broken down into three dimensions that can be quantified and evaluated. Modularized class content is also implemented, and national-level teaching design is carried out throughout the course. In terms of knowledge objectives, rigid learning tasks are proposed to ensure that students can accurately identify the music of the Indochina Peninsula and the Malay Archipelago, and can independently identify four main music categories: Indonesian Gamelan, Thai Pipat Band, Vietnamese Court Music, and Cambodian Traditional Music and Dance. Students should be familiar with the folk contexts used in each category of music. The learning does not require mastering tedious music theory; the focus is on cultivating the ability to identify national music. In terms of ability objectives, rigid operational tasks are set, stipulating three national music comparative analysis assignments per semester. Students should master the basic fingering of two simple Southeast Asian playing instruments: the angkron and a simple bamboo percussion instrument, and be able to complete the compilation of traditional music data for a single country. In terms of competency objectives, a fixed

classroom teaching format guides students to objectively identify the differences in music between different countries and to complete cross-cultural music appreciation activities. The course content is divided into three major sections according to the standard 32 class hours, and the teaching content of each lesson is detailed. The basic knowledge of the country is 10 class hours, which is taught by country. The original folk music of Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia is introduced in turn. Each class focuses on one country and combines local ritual audio and field video taken on site. The music genre appreciation section is 14 class hours. It avoids general topics and shows the representative music genres of each country one by one, and compares the different forms and playing methods of the same instruments in different countries. The practical operation section is 8 class hours, which focuses on instrument operation practice, collection and organization of national music materials, and classroom teaching and small performance activities. The school-based teaching materials are compiled, and the common European and American music and African music in the world music teaching materials are removed. All lecture materials are based on first-hand field materials from Southeast Asia, which is in line with the national teaching requirements of this course ^[3].

4.2. Innovative blended classroom teaching

Paradigm based on a blended teaching model consisting of three stages: online self-study before class, in-class in-depth study, and post-class extracurricular extension, this section details the specific teaching process and steps for each stage. Before the course begins, a dedicated class is established through the online learning platform. Weekly pre-class tasks are assigned by country, requiring students to upload unedited music audio files and live videos of folk music and dance to the platform, along with five objective pre-class questions. Students are required to complete these tasks before class, and teachers review the backend data and analyze weaknesses to adjust the lesson content accordingly.

During the in-class offline session, the method of simply presenting PowerPoint slides is abandoned. Three conventional teaching methods are employed: First, conventional country-specific group comparison and discussion. The class is divided into five groups representing five countries, who then conduct a comparative group discussion on instrument shapes, rhythms, and performance styles, followed by a five-minute oral presentation. Second, conventional scenario-based teaching. Musical videos of Southeast Asian rituals and court celebrations are played, along with physical exhibits, to visually demonstrate the structure and performance methods of musical instruments. Third, regular instrument practice learning: a practical course is set up every two weeks, and low-cost teaching simple Anglong instruments and bamboo clappers are uniformly distributed. Teachers demonstrate the playing methods step by step and lead different voice parts to play short tuned pieces.

After class, regular extension activities include a monthly offline music sharing session with various countries, where students bring their collected foreign music to show; a cross-border cloud connection activity every semester to interact and exchange music with art classes in Southeast Asian universities in real time; and fixed practical tasks are assigned after class to shoot short videos of instrument practice and upload them to the course platform, where teachers comment and correct the playing movements one by one, completing the closed-loop teaching process ^[4].

4.3. Improve the diversified assessment mechanism

The final exam is canceled, and a 100-point process-based quantitative assessment method is set up, divided

into three assessment items, and specific requirements, scoring rules, and assessment methods are formulated for each item. The assessment content is all practical and process-based, without any memorization questions such as explanations or short answers.

4.3.1. Daily process assessment (40 points)

The daily process assessment includes four sub-items, with detailed scoring standards as follows:

- ① Online pre-study check-in (10 points): Automatically scored based on completion rate of learning tasks and accuracy of exercises; failure to pre-study on time will result in a deduction of points.
- ② Class group presentations and participation in class interaction (10 points): Scored on the spot based on the completeness of each group's presentation and the number of times they participate in class.
- ③ Daily instrument practice (15 points): Recorded based on proficiency and coordination in each lesson.
- ④ Weekly study notes (5 points): Requiring students to record and submit their weekly study notes on the music of the corresponding country.

4.3.2. Intermediate Skills Test (30 points)

The format is a blind audition test (six representative Southeast Asian traditional music audio recordings are played live without labels; students fill in the corresponding country name and the context in which the music is used; scores are based on accuracy. No written theoretical questions are required).

4.3.3. Final practical assessment (30 points)

Students choose one of the two assessment forms below:

In small groups (3–5 people), students will perform a 3–5-minute Southeast Asian traditional instrumental ensemble piece, graded on three aspects: uniformity, rhythmic accuracy, and stage coordination.

Students will choose a specific Southeast Asian country's music research report, detailing its application in folk music and accompanied by illustrations. Avoid general discussions of the entire Southeast Asian music culture.

All grading criteria will be communicated to students in advance, and a detailed score sheet will be provided to each student after the assessment to identify areas for improvement and thus inform future lessons.

5. Conclusion

This paper, based on the fundamental theories of regional musicology, demonstrates the significance of developing a Southeast Asian traditional music curriculum in three aspects: discipline, teaching, and talent cultivation. It also proposes directly implementable and immediately applicable teaching solutions in curriculum design, classroom teaching, and evaluation. This curriculum reform consistently avoids overly generalized lectures, focusing on music education based on cultural differences between countries, thus addressing the issues of insufficient cultural context, simplistic teaching methods, and outdated evaluation tools. This study only focused on classroom teaching and did not conduct long-term follow-up on off-campus field practice teaching activities. In the future, we can further collaborate with art organizations in Southeast Asia to expand off-campus practice teaching bases, optimize curriculum design, and continue to leverage the cross-cultural art aesthetics and humanistic exchange functions of regional and national music courses.

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