

# THE USE OF DIFFERENT INTERNATIONAL BASIC PIANO TEXTBOOKS IN CHINA

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## Abstract

Using a variety of international basic piano textbooks in China exposes students to diverse cultural perspectives, enriching their musical education and fostering a global understanding of music traditions. This cultural integration can enhance students' appreciation for different styles and techniques, contributing to a more well-rounded and culturally sensitive approach to learning and performing music. In China, although piano education started relatively late, its development momentum has been extremely rapid in recent years. In order to keep pace with the international community, many schools and educational institutions have introduced a series of foreign piano education materials. These materials have made bold innovations and attempts in content, form, and teaching methods, injecting new vitality into Chinese piano education. At the same time, these materials also provide Chinese piano learners with more diverse learning options, allowing them to choose a learning path that suits them according to their interests and specialties. This article presented (1) the use of different international basic piano textbooks in China, (2) Bastian's Piano Basic Course, (3) Thompson Basic Piano Book, (4) Beyer Piano Basic Course, and (5) Faber Piano Basic Course.

**Keywords:** Use of Different International; Basic Piano Textbooks

## Introduction

When it comes to the characteristics of foreign teaching materials in music learning, there are indeed many aspects that deserve our in-depth understanding and discussion. First of all, from the basic element of repertoire selection, foreign teaching materials show a wider range of inclusiveness and depth. The selection of repertoire is not limited to masterpieces of the classical music period, which is indeed an indispensable part of music education, but foreign teaching materials also attach importance to music works of the romantic period, modern and popular styles. This diverse selection is intended to provide students with a more comprehensive musical vision, allowing them to be exposed to different types and styles of music during the learning process, and thus form a richer and more three-dimensional musical cognition.

In terms of skill training, foreign teaching materials also emphasize the training of basic skills, but pay more attention to the combination of musicality and skill training. This means that students are not only practicing skills mechanically, but also experiencing the emotion and charm of music through performance. This teaching method encourages students to think creatively, try to break the traditional playing methods and styles, and pursue personal unique expression. This training method can inspire students' enthusiasm for music, make them love music more, and be more willing to invest time and energy in learning and exploring.

From the perspective of theoretical knowledge, foreign textbooks pay great attention to the practicality of theoretical knowledge points when teaching them. It emphasizes the importance of combining theoretical knowledge with performance practice, avoiding pure theoretical learning or mechanical skill training. By combining theoretical knowledge with specific performance repertoires, students can learn in practice and master in practice. This method not only improves the efficiency of learning, but also allows students to understand music knowledge more deeply (Zhou, 1998).

In terms of the structural arrangement of textbooks, foreign textbooks show higher flexibility and personalization. It breaks the traditional division of difficulty and style, and pays more attention to the actual situation and needs of

students. The content arrangement of textbooks can be adjusted and changed according to students' abilities and interests, providing exclusive personalized teaching plans. This teaching method is closer to students' actual needs and can better stimulate their enthusiasm and motivation for learning.

In addition, foreign textbooks have also made great efforts in the cultivation of comprehensive literacy. It not only focuses on the development of students' hearing and touch, but also focuses on cultivating students' visual literacy. The textbook layout is rich and colorful, presenting music knowledge through pictures, charts, music scores and other forms, so that students can feel the charm of music in all aspects during the learning process. This comprehensive literacy cultivation method enables students to understand, feel and express music more comprehensively.

The characteristics of foreign textbooks in music learning include a wide range of repertoire selection, a combination of musicality and skill training, practical theoretical knowledge, flexible and diverse textbook structure and the cultivation of comprehensive literacy. These characteristics make foreign textbooks of high value and significance in the field of music education, which is worthy of our in-depth study and reference.

There are many differences between piano teaching in China and the United States in terms of teaching philosophy, teaching institutions, curriculum setting, and assessment methods. In the United States, piano teaching, whether amateur or professional, pays more attention to the formation of students' thinking system of thinking, sight-reading, and practical creation. A diversified approach is adopted in piano teaching, so that students can achieve higher quality in piano learning. In China, although most amateur students' piano education is aimed at quality education, there is a certain degree of examination and utilitarianism in both professional and amateur education. Many children are required to participate in grading or competitions when learning piano, which makes many piano children's interest in piano gradually decrease, and at the same time, their love for music is not cultivated. The quality of piano teachers in the two countries is also quite different. The United States has strict requirements for piano teachers. All teachers have undergone strict door-to-door training and professional training for teaching, and teachers engaged in private

piano education in society are supervised by industry associations. There is no formal organization for amateur piano educators in China. They are half-way teachers or do not have the quality of teachers. People who have reached the intermediate or even elementary level of piano have also joined the ranks of piano teachers. In particular, many piano stores hire some non-piano majors to engage in children's piano enlightenment education, which has greatly affected the level of basic piano teaching in my country (Tang, 2011).

In summary, there are obvious differences between domestic and foreign basic piano textbooks in terms of repertoire selection, skill training, theoretical knowledge points and textbook structure. Domestic and foreign piano textbooks have achieved remarkable achievements in their respective fields, providing rich resources and diverse choices for piano teaching and learning. Domestic piano textbooks pay more attention to inheriting and promoting national culture, emphasizing the training of basic skills and the study of music theory. Foreign piano textbooks pay more attention to cultivating students' personality and innovative spirit, and pay attention to the diversity and personalized expression of music.

## **The Use of Different International Basic Pia Textbooks in China**

**Bastian's Piano Basic Course:** “Bastian's Piano Basic Course” was written by American pianists and educators, Mr. and Mrs. Bastian. Mrs. Bastian is now active in the teaching field. She opened a family studio in San Diego. She believes that only by directly contacting children can they write the repertoire they like to play. Mr. James Bastian teaches at many universities, as well as summer schools and the Michigan National Music Camp; and has opened family studios in New Orleans and Washington, DC. He is also teaching children's piano in San Diego. The content of the textbook “Bastien” is rich and comprehensive. It is specially designed for students who are just starting to learn piano. It contains interesting and comprehensive piano learning content. In addition to skill training, it also focuses on the cultivation of musical literacy, such as sight-reading ability. This basic piano textbook has a high reputation in the minds of some teachers and parents, and has gradually attracted attention through word-of-mouth communication.

Bastien's course starts with black keys, and uses the method of memorizing finger positions, counting rhythms, and singing finger numbers to learn piano. First learn finger positions and rhythms, and then gradually introduce music scores. Bastien breaks through the previous teaching idea of starting with white keys and using black keys as partials. Not only can black keys help students maintain their hand positions, which is conducive to finger gripping practice, but it also breaks the fear of black keys in children's later piano learning. (Wang, 2017) "Bastien" first teaches playing on black keys and then introduces five-line staff and clefs. It uses the progression, jump, and repetition of intervals to learn to read music. It starts with recognizing the pitch and piano keyboard, and first learns the position of central C, and learns c-g and c1-g1. A gradual learning method is used according to the direction and position of the sound. Through the study of G hand position, G-B and a1-d2 music scores are added. In the first set of courses, all black and white keys in four octaves are taught, and ledger lines are used. In the last four sets of "Bastien Piano Course", the notes learned in the previous set are continuously consolidated, and new notes are added according to the learning of different hand positions and the deepening of music theory knowledge (Ma, 2019).

"Bastian Piano Course" first clarifies the sitting posture, finger numbers and playing positions. Unlike other textbooks, it takes the keyboard as the entry point, gives priority to learning rhythm, skips the five-line score and directly enters the rhythm learning, and then plays the music directly according to the rhythm and finger numbers. "Bastian Piano Course" clearly puts legato in the "Basics" section of the first volume, and sets it as a separate lesson for teaching. The playing methods involved in the first volume include: single-note staccato, single-note legato, double-note staccato, chord staccato, melodic intervals, harmonic intervals, chords, second and third intervals, staccato, and phrases. Bastian Course has a separate "Music Theory" volume, which expands and extends the content of the "Basics" volume. The music theory content involved is more extensive. In addition to the content that must be mastered in playing, there are also chord properties, interval harmony, tonality and other content, combined with exercises, to comprehensively expand music theory knowledge.

Basic music theory and performance are inseparable. In general, each volume of "Bastian Piano Course" sets "Music Theory" as a separate volume, which is used simultaneously with the "Bastian Piano Course". Theoretical knowledge is distributed in each volume, and music theory knowledge is closely linked to playing, almost at the same time. In terms of chords and modes, "Bastian Piano Course" explains the intervals from the second to the fifth in the form of a special topic in the "Music Theory" volume of the first volume, and teaches the direction and structure of the intervals in detail. After the preparation and learning of the intervals, chords are added, and the playing method and composition of chords are explained by taking the C chord as an example.

**Thompson Basic Piano Book:** "Thompson basic piano book" This textbook entered the Chinese market relatively early, with a wide user group and a certain degree of popularity. The content of the textbook is reasonably arranged, starting from Bai Jian, with clear logic and clear goals, which is suitable for beginners to gradually establish the foundation of piano learning. The supporting resources of this textbook are also very rich, with a large number of demonstration videos and explanation videos, which are convenient for students to learn by themselves and teachers to assist in teaching (Liu, 2021).

John Thompson is a famous American music educator. There is new knowledge in each lesson of the Thompson course, and the content of each book is easy to master. At the end, there is a certificate signed by the teacher to encourage students to continue learning. Xiaotang can fully mobilize the senses of piano children, prompting students to not only stay on the basis of reading music scores and playing, but also develop in all aspects at the same time. The Thompson course introduces the whole note middle C, and gradually deepens the difficulty and rhythm of the notes. The study of music theory in the Thompson course is mainly to prepare for playing, mainly introducing music theory content related to playing. The Thompson course introduces the whole note, followed by half notes, quarter notes, floating half notes, and eighth notes. The first lesson of the Bastian course touches on quarter notes and half notes, and then quarter notes and floating half notes. In contrast, the Bastian course progresses faster, allowing students to first master the note value in practice, and gradually deepen their understanding in constant review. The Thompson course

focuses on solidity and stability, adding a little new rhythm content in each lesson, and steadily improving the cognition of note value (Wang, 2017).

In terms of playing methods, Thompson's course starts with the white key middle C, first with the left and right thumbs standing up, and then with other fingers standing up. Thompson's course starts with the second legato of "drop and lift", and then expands to the third legato of "drop, roll and lift". In the third book, it requires playing with a sense of phrases in a legato method. Thompson's learning of piano legato techniques is more solid, from two notes to three notes, which is conducive to children's experience of power transfer. Thompson's course cleverly adds various playing techniques to the new course based on the characteristics of children's bone development, from chord playing to legato, staccato, staccato, scales and other techniques, layer by layer. Although there is no in-depth explanation of the corresponding music theory knowledge, it systematically involves all the necessary skills that children should master in piano learning. From shallow to deep, it plays a great role in steadily improving piano skills (Duan, 2013).

Most of the illustrations in Thompson Piano Course are in black and white. Most of the tracks are adapted from popular music, folk music and classic works from abroad. The tracks are short but comprehensive. The pleasant melodies can not only help children understand the diverse music culture, but also increase students' interest in music, so as to achieve the goal of learning piano happily. The content of each volume of Thompson Piano Course is progressive, and the new content also incorporates old techniques. While accepting new tracks, students repeatedly practice the content they have mastered. The difficulty and number of tracks increase slowly with the number of volumes. Each volume is like a step. It is not difficult for students to complete the content of a volume, and a new volume can increase students' new interest. (Zhou, 1998).

**Beyer Piano Basic Course:** As a piano textbook with a long history, the classicism and authority of Beyer Piano Basic Course have been widely recognized. This textbook provides systematic training content from basic to advanced, which is suitable for long-term learning and improvement. Many piano teachers recommend this textbook to students as the first choice.

As early as a century and a half ago, a German composer named Ferdinand Beyer wrote a typical textbook as an introduction to treble clef, which made an indelible contribution to piano enlightenment teaching. The main purpose of this textbook is to provide a simple introduction to piano art for piano beginners. This is the "Beyer Piano Basic Course" (Ke, 2009) that students often use when they first learn. The "Beyer" course consists of three parts: the first stage, the second stage and the appendix. From the introduction of music knowledge at the beginning of the course to 64 is the first stage, and from the C major scale to 109 is the second stage. Each stage can be divided into two chapters. The appendix consists of 34 finger exercises and 24 major and minor scales, key sequences and relative major and minor exercises (Li, 2018).

As a classic children's piano textbook, "Beyer" stands out among many piano textbooks for its uniqueness and educational value. First of all, the arrangement system of "Beyer" is very scientific. Starting from the starting point of children's piano learning, it gradually guides them to the palace of piano performance. The textbook starts with basic fingering training, such as five-finger exercises and scale exercises. These basic trainings lay a solid foundation for children's finger flexibility, coordination and strength control. Through systematic practice, children can gradually master the basic skills of piano playing and lay a solid foundation for subsequent learning.

Secondly, the repertoire selection in the teaching material is rich and colorful, including both classical music classics and elements of modern pop music. This diverse selection of repertoires meets the aesthetic needs of children of different ages, allowing them to feel the charm of different musical styles in the process of learning piano. At the same time, these repertoires are also challenging and expressive, which helps to stimulate children's interest and enthusiasm in learning.

Furthermore, "Beyer" is very reasonable in terms of difficulty setting. For children of different levels, the teaching material has made scientific arrangements in terms of the difficulty of the repertoire, which is neither too simple to make children feel bored, nor too complicated to make them feel frustrated. This moderate arrangement helps children maintain their continued



enthusiasm and confidence in piano learning while gradually improving their skills.

When using "Beyer" for children's piano education, teachers should formulate scientific and reasonable teaching plans according to children of different ages and levels. For beginners, teachers should focus on the training of basic fingering, so that they can master the correct playing posture and skills through repeated practice. As children's skills improve, teachers can gradually guide them to try to play some simple music to cultivate their musical expression and self-confidence.

At the same time, in the teaching process, teachers should pay attention to children's interests and needs. According to the age and interests of children, choose suitable repertoires for practice, so that they can learn piano in a pleasant atmosphere. In addition, teachers can also introduce some interesting nursery rhymes and pop music appropriately, so that children can feel the charm and fun of music while learning.

Some studies have shown that using classic teaching materials such as "Beyer" for piano enlightenment education can help children establish good music literacy and piano foundation. These classic teaching materials not only contain rich music knowledge and skills, but also focus on cultivating children's music perception and expression. Through systematic learning and practice, children can gradually master the essence of piano playing and lay a solid foundation for future music learning and development.

In addition, with the continuous advancement and development of modern scientific and technological means, teachers can use modern teaching methods such as multimedia teaching and online courses to improve the effect of children's piano education. These modern teaching methods can not only enrich the content and form of teaching, but also stimulate children's interest and enthusiasm in learning, so that they can participate in piano learning more actively.

In summary, as a classic children's piano textbook, "Beyer" is characterized by its scientific arrangement system, diverse repertoire selection, reasonable difficulty setting, and emphasis on cultivating children's musical literacy and expression. In the process of use, teachers should formulate scientific and reasonable teaching plans according to children of different ages and levels, pay attention to children's interests and needs, and let them learn piano in a pleasant atmosphere. At the same time, using modern teaching methods to improve teaching results is also a method worth trying.

**Faber Piano Basic Course:** The textbook "Faber Piano Basic Course" combines the research results of American child psychologists, making the textbook more innovative and interesting. The content of the textbook not only focuses on skill training, but also focuses on the cultivation of comprehensive musical qualities. In recent years, this textbook has been more promoted and recognized in the Chinese market, and its usage rate has gradually increased.

"Faber" Children's Piano Textbook is a set of piano enlightenment textbooks co-authored by pianist and music educator Randall Faber and his wife Nancy Faber. Based on many years of research on child education psychology, after twenty years of creation and practice, the textbook aims to provide children with a happy and efficient piano learning experience through scientific and systematic methods. The textbook is suitable for children aged 5-12, and through gradual learning, it cultivates children's musical interest, skills, literacy and creative ability.

"Faber" Piano Textbook takes "Happy Piano Learning" as its core concept, and stimulates children's interest in piano learning through vivid illustrations, interesting repertoires and interactive practice methods. At the same time, the textbook focuses on cultivating children's music perception and art appreciation, so that children can improve their piano skills while enjoying music. The textbook covers piano skills, music theory, improvisation and creative ability, aiming to achieve the comprehensive development of children's piano learning. Starting from basic skills such as sitting posture, hand shape, arm, wrist, and finger, the textbook gradually guides children to master advanced skills such as scales, arpeggios, and chords. At the same time, through repertoire learning, children can understand different music styles and broaden

their musical horizons. The "Faber" piano textbook selects a rich repertoire, including classical, jazz, pop and other styles, so that children can be exposed to different types of music works during the learning process, thereby enriching children's music experience and music expression ability.

Before starting to learn, parents and teachers need to preview the content of the textbook with their children to understand the course schedule and learning objectives. Parents can enjoy the demonstration performance with their children based on the CD provided by the textbook to stimulate their children's interest in learning. In class, teachers need to guide children to actively participate in learning, and help children master piano skills and music knowledge through demonstration, explanation, interaction and other methods. At the same time, teachers can adjust the teaching progress and teaching methods according to the interests and characteristics of children, so that children can learn piano in a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. After class, parents need to urge their children to complete their homework on time and consolidate what they have learned. Parents can practice repertoires with their children to help them correct mistakes and improve their performance level. At the same time, parents can encourage their children to try improvisation and creation to cultivate their children's musical expression and innovation abilities.

The Faber piano textbook is roughly divided into three stages: elementary, intermediate and advanced. In the first stage, the elementary level requires mastering sitting posture, hand shape, learning basic note recognition and cultivating a sense of rhythm. Learn the basic repertoires in the first volume of the "Faber" piano textbook, such as "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and "Ode to Joy". Through demonstration, imitation, practice and other methods, help students master basic piano skills and a sense of rhythm. Through demonstration, imitation, practice and other methods, help children master basic piano skills and sense of rhythm. In the second stage, intermediate, you need to master advanced skills such as scales and arpeggios, and be able to play more complex repertoires. Learn the repertoire in the second volume of the "Faber" piano textbook, such as "Minuet" and "Lullaby". Through explanation, practice, performance and other methods, guide children to master advanced skills and improve their performance level. In the third stage, advanced, through the study of elementary and intermediate teaching materials as a foundation, you can

improvise and play simple music works in advanced learning, and have a high level of musical literacy and innovation. Through appreciation, discussion, practice and other methods, encourage students to improvise and play, and cultivate students' musical expression and innovation abilities (Tan, 2016).

The third stage of the "Faber Course" formally introduces the tonic and dominant chords of C major, G major, and F major, as well as their fixed-mode chord connections. (Two fixed modes of connection, taking C major as an example).

The I-level original position chord is connected to the V7 chord with the third and fifth notes omitted; the V7 chord with the fifth note omitted is connected to the I-level original position chord. These chord connections will be listed separately as preparatory exercises before the performance of the music. For example, the exercises of the I-level chord and the V7 chord in C major are preparatory exercises for the music "Walking in the Bay", and the left-hand accompaniment of the music is a concentrated exercise of fixed modes and line connections.

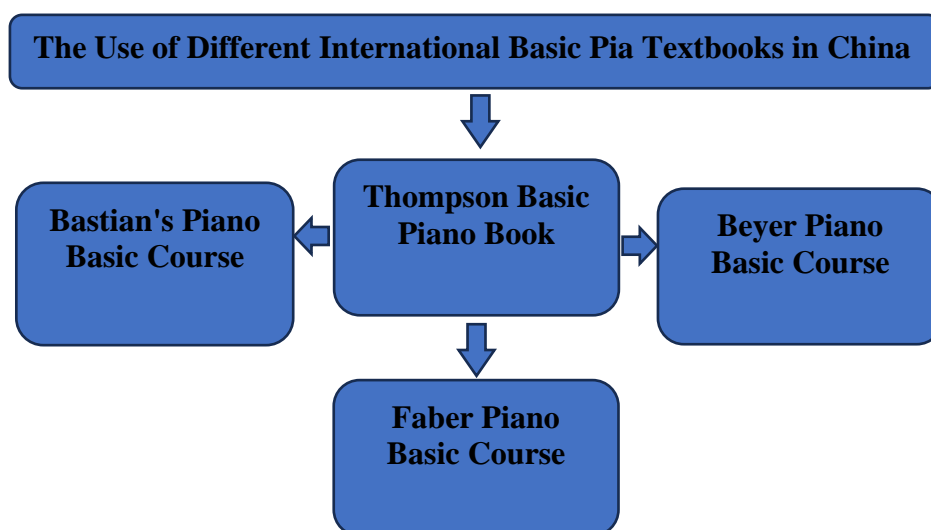
The IV-level chord is added to the back of the textbook, forming a fixed chord connection of I-IV-I-V7-I. Take G major as an example.

The selection of songs in the Faber Tutorial is based on "what children like to play" and breaks through the limitations of previous classic songs. In addition to traditional folk songs and nursery rhymes, a large number of modern music styles are also selected, including jazz, rock, pop and other styles. Many famous classical music excerpts are retained in the classic music, such as Bach Minuet, Beethoven Turkish March, Brahms Lullaby, New World Symphony Theme, Vivaldi Spring Theme, etc., but most of these songs will be given new adaptations or teacher accompaniment by Faber, and some traditional music will be added with new lyrics.

It is worth mentioning that the songs in the textbook are conducive to the development of children's innovative ability. For example, in the third level "Bach Minuet", Faber adapted the popular classic melody into a collaboration between the left and right hands, and with the teacher's accompaniment, the

sound effect is also rich and full, and the difficulty of practicing the song is greatly reduced. Next, based on the original melody, it was adapted into a four-beat popular style "Jazz for Mr. Bach". The teacher's accompaniment is rich in popular elements, and the music of the Baroque period has become a popular song. The second adaptation of the same song also amazed the children. For example, in the improvisation "Shadow of the Satellite", according to the rhythm of the teacher's accompaniment music, the students arrange and combine the notes in the whole-tone scale given in the keyboard diagram to improvise. This is a modern style piece with whole-tone scales and whole-tone chords. It uses the independence of whole-tone chords and the characteristics of non-tonality and non-inclination to allow students to create their own pieces according to their own feelings, which not only expands the hearing of whole-tones, but also allows students to experience the fun of improvisation, and subtly cultivates students' creative ability in the learning process.

## New Knowledges



**Figure 1:** Diagram of The Use of Different International Basic Pia Textbooks in China

## Conclusions

In China, piano education has also received more and more attention, and more and more children have begun to learn piano. What is the current situation of piano education? This article will analyze the popularity of piano education, teaching quality, learning atmosphere, teaching model and other aspects. Let's take a look at the popularity of piano education in China. In recent years, China's economic and cultural levels have continued to improve, and more and more families have more economic conditions and cultural qualities, and they have begun to pay attention to their children's music education. Piano education has also received more attention and support. According to statistics, there are currently thousands of piano training institutions and millions of piano students in China. It can be said that piano education has become very popular in China. Not only in big cities, but also in many counties and villages, piano teachers and training institutions can be found, which has promoted the popularization of piano education to a certain extent. The popularization of piano education does not mean the improvement of education quality. At present, there are some problems in piano education.

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