

# Orff Teaching Methods in Music Classroom in China

**Tang Yan and Thanyawat Sondhiratna**

Bangkokthonburi University, Thailand

Corresponding Author, E-mail: nicha.musiced@gmail.com

\*\*\*\*\*

## Abstract

Since its introduction in the early 1980s, the Orff method has played an important role in the reform and development of music education in China. In Liu Lihua's Analysis on the Application of Bluff Training in Primary School Music Teaching, it is mentioned that the actual teaching of music courses in primary school can affect students' sentiments and aesthetics. The actual teaching of music course is the key way to improve students' comprehensive quality and establish the correct consciousness of three views. Bluster practice can enhance the quality and effectiveness of the actual teaching of music course in primary school, and effectively enhance students' interest and enthusiasm in participating in learning. Orff's concept of music teaching also reflects the three basic elements of "let students take the initiative to develop", "face to all students" and "all-round development" in the quality education we are implementing now, emphasizing the development of students' creative ability. This article presented the Orff teaching method in music classroom in China.

**Keywords:** Orff teaching method; music classroom; China

## Introduction

With the continuous development of China's current society and the improvement of quality education, the country pays more and more attention to musicology lessons. However, as far as the current development of school teachers is concerned, most county-level music teachers still use traditional teaching methods, ignoring the requirement of "teachers should be the main body of students" in the "New curriculum Standard", and still adopt the traditional "teachers teach and sing". The teaching method of "students singing along" does not have a detailed understanding of different students' psychological state, acceptance ability, and whether they are interested in learning, which essentially ignores students' experience of music rhythm. Therefore, students are unable to concentrate in class, have low enthusiasm in class, and are passive in learning, which leads to stagnation or even decline in singing level and musical ability. It can be seen that the unchanging traditional teaching methods cannot meet the current national requirements for music teaching, and a more appropriate, scientific and systematic music teaching method is more needed by modern primary school children, and can also help students learn and feel the beauty of music.

---

<sup>1</sup>Received: December 14, 2023; Revised: January 4, 2024; Accepted: January 5, 2024

## **The Orff teaching method**

The Orff music teaching method originated in Germany and was created by the famous music educator Carl Orff. In Carl Orff's concept of music education, he advocated the liberation of children's nature and guided children to grow up healthily according to their own character colors with "original nature". The "original nature" of Orff's music teaching method does not take music knowledge as a single educational element, but integrates various aspects such as games, movements, limbs, cadence and rhythm. Orff music teaching method aims to let students enjoy more diversified music teaching services in music class, let them feel the happiness and satisfaction of music from the heart, so as to improve the enthusiasm of students to learn music.

In 1932, a work that would revolutionize music education, *The Orff Textbook - Music for Children, Music for Children by Themselves -- Folk Songs*, was ready for publication, but the project was derailed by political and historical reasons. Orff decided to leave music education to specialize in composition.

From 1950 to 1960, Orff was the professor and director of the composition Master class at the Conservatory of Music in Munich. His teaching aim is to let students discover themselves, which still runs through his lifelong educational thought in the field of professional music education. Orff began writing "Music Education in Schools" for Bavarian radio in 1948. It ran for five years and was very popular with the school. This is the Orff music education system has the fundamental significance of the great event.

In 1961, the "Orff Institute" was founded at the "Mozart University of Music and Plastic Arts" in Salzburg, Austria, to establish the first research and training center of the Orff method.

In 1962, Orff and Ketterman visited Japan, which set off an upsurge of studying and practicing Orff teachings in Japan. The combination of Orff teaching method and Oriental culture begins a new milepost of Orff teaching method.

In 1962, Orff and Ketterman visited Japan and brought the Orff music education method to the East, opening a new milestone for the combination of Orff music education and Oriental culture.

## **Elemental music education**

In Orff's teaching method, the core content is about the elements of music education. He is also famous for saying that "all our ideas are a kind of musical education of the original nature". In music education, Orff emphasized that we should take elemental music education as the basis, try to use the initial pitch elements or rhythm, and educate children with different talents through some of the most basic musical practices that have been passed down to date, such as clapping hands or beating instruments. Through this simple method, music can be gradually integrated into children's thoughts. In order to stimulate their own potential in music.

Orff also put forward some effective suggestions for younger children's exposure to music. He believes that some of the simplest, basic, natural and elemental music should be selected in order to provide more possibilities for re-creation, so that every child can participate in and re-create. In Orff's teaching method, it not only explains the teaching means and organizational form, but also provides references for setting up courses and selecting teaching materials. Elemental music is expressed in rhythm, synthesis and so on (Zhang, 2011).

One characteristic of Orff's teaching practice is to cultivate children's sense of rhythm through the combination of rhythm, action and language. He emphasizes that music education should start from rhythm. Orff believes that melody cannot be separated from the support of rhythm, and rhythm can exist alone without melody, that is, "the first element of music is rhythm rather than melody". By integrating movement into rhythm, students can gradually enhance their perception of rhythm in some movement combinations, which are relatively basic and elemental, such as stomping and clapping at the same time. The combination of language and rhythm refers to the rhythmic recitation of language. Orff had a point about this. He thought that the main inspiration for the rhythm of music came from people's language, because these languages have vivid rhythms of their own. It is not only easy but also full of vitality for children to master certain rhythm patterns by combining certain sentences or phrases.

Orff also said a famous remark about this feature, that is, "the music of elements is not only music alone, it is closely integrated with movement, dance and language." He emphasizes the combination of music and movement. This movement does not specify the necessary posture or movement, but refers to the most natural and impromptu movement to the music, such as the pitch level, the speed change, the volume, the emotional change and the style, which can enable students to make different movements. The movement can also reflect different cultural characteristics, but also can show some of the most basic form structure, such as two-stage or three-stage form, and cyclotron form. From the point of view of the movement itself, different movement modes and spatial positions can represent the movement, and even different parts of the body can reflect the degree of change when doing the movement. In addition, movement can also promote the creation of music, and students can immediately play corresponding music according to different movements. Orff's method of teaching also involves making movements according to a children's song and improvising at the same time, but rhythm is the soul of these comprehensive arts. Rhythm is also an element in human language, and the organic combination of music and dance in drama performance also belongs to a rhythm. Orff discovered and utilized the original rhythm element of human beings, and used it for the music education system he created.

According to Orff, "Children are not passive listeners but active participants in the creation of music." He believes that music education must also foster children's creativity. He advocated allowing children to create their own music. Let children participate in the process of music can improvise their own performance and creation. With the rhythm of music as the support point, students are allowed to arrange freely, improvise while singing and dancing, improvise according to their own feelings to do movements, beat the rhythm, improvise to create melody, cooperate with others, or play music with others, and follow from their own heart. Develop students' independence and autonomy, and let students truly participate (Liu, 2016).

### **Orff's approach to music teaching**

This teaching method is a scientific teaching method. Children use the most interested forms, such as games, nursery rhymes, rap, clap, etc., to cultivate children's sense of music, especially rhythm sense and hearing, so that children can feel the joy of music, and fall in love with music.

Orff music is close to the soil, close to nature, close to the body, allowing everyone to learn and experience, is the most appropriate music for children to learn. The concept of rhythm is relatively abstract in people's perception, but the rhythm type of music is created from all aspects of life, we can find a variety of rhythms in daily life, let students perceive the rhythm of nature and life, rhythm is transformed from life and nature, so as to strengthen children's understanding of rhythm. For example: all kinds of natural sounds, vehicle sounds, etc., can show a very vivid rhythm.

The most important method in developing children's sense of rhythm and musical ability is language rhythm. The main source of musical rhythm is human language, which contains rich, vivid and mysterious rhythms. In children's language environment, it is relatively easy to grasp the rhythm of music from the perspective of language rhythm. Rhythm is basically extracted from people's life. The rhythm of music is closely related to the rhythm of language. In order to show the rhythm, we can read aloud rhythmically, speak some words and simple sentences, and ask the students to clap the rhythm. This is the practice of rhythm, but also can improve the child's language ability, experience the rhythm of music.

This method of teaching uses percussion instruments to create a teaching method that leads students to display their creativity through playing. There are many rhythms that we can play with different instruments. For example, in the music game "The Wind is Blowing", you can choose to string bells and triangle iron to play. By feeling the rhythm of the wind "whoo whoo whoo", the sound of the wind can be more vividly presented in the audiovisual perception of children.

The children's sense of rhythm demonstrating through improvisational music performance

Improvisation is a highlight of this teaching method, and students are born with the ability to create music. When they hear a piece of music, they can improvise their body movements according to the rhythm of the music. "Human instruments" are our body movements, such as patting the head, stomach, legs and other parts of the body rhythmically, while also stamping feet, shrugging shoulders, twisting fingers and other different sounds combined.

### **The basic form of Orff's bluff teaching**

The use of the bluff action is not limited to the venue, and the action can be adjusted according to the venue. The four movements of clapping the hands, slapping the legs, stamping the feet and twisting the fingers are the basic forms of this teaching method, which can be used in the two positions of "standing" and "sitting".

Clap practice is the most common and common Orff bluff teaching, in addition to the basic hands clap, but also beat the back of the hand, fingers, wrists, fingertips, arms and other different parts. The speed, strength and Angle of the clap can reflect the rhythm, volume and timbre of the music respectively. Teachers can remind students through practical operation: when one hand beats the other hand in different positions, the timbre and volume will be different. For example, when students keep the left hand movement unchanged, they are

asked to feel the difference in timbre and volume between "right hand fingertips beat the left hand palm" and "right hand palm beat the left hand palm". Due to the frequent and high frequency of clapping, students often do not master the strength in the practice process, and too much strength will lead to palm pain and hand fatigue, thus affecting the stability of the rhythm. Therefore, teachers should control the practice time well during the clapping training. The sound of the clap is clean, the action is crisp, and it is easy to control the volume. This bluff action can be used in the song where the strength is strong, and can also be used in the song where the rhythm type is rich.

The leg tap refers to the tapping of the hand on the thigh, which is easy to understand and use. When the teacher adds this bluff action in the actual teaching, in addition to tapping the thigh with both hands, he can also add tasks in the leg patting practice, such as when the students pat the leg, they are asked to beat their hands respectively using different rhythms, and carry out two-voice leg patting training. It is of great significance to improve the difficulty of bravado to train students' coordination ability, sense of rhythm and responsiveness. Leg patting can promote blood circulation, which is beneficial to the maintenance of students' health. This bluff action still relies on the sensitive operation of the hands, which is suitable for applying it to the faster rhythm of the song. Because the volume of the leg clap is not bright enough, it is necessary to pay attention to the use of this bluff action in the actual operation.

The foot movement is widely used in Orff's bluff teaching and is one of the many ways to express emotions. In the seated state of stomping training, teachers need to ask students to maintain a upright sitting posture, heel on the ground, slightly lift the ball of the foot when stepping on the foot, timely remind students to lift the foot Angle should not be too high, the degree of leg bending should be moderate, the thigh and the calf form a 90-degree right Angle. In the standing state of stomping training, often use the form of standing, stepping, teachers need to ask students speed can not be too fast, the strength of light. When stepping on the foot, the timbre is relatively heavy, and this bluff action should be arranged in the song with stress or rhythm. Since students cannot strictly control the rhythm duration when stomping their feet, it should be noted that this movement should not be placed in the song rhythm type is complex, dense and too fast.

Fingering refers to the process of touching the thumb with the middle finger, then pressing the fingers together, rubbing the middle finger down and the thumb up, and finally separating the two fingers. In actual operation, this action is generally not used alone, but is combined with the clap, stomp and other actions. In order to avoid the boring implementation process, teachers should further enrich and diversify the practice content, and the difficulty can increase with the number of exercises, so that students can pay more attention during training and maintain longer learning interest. The volume of the twist finger is not large, so it is mostly used where the weak beat and the rhythm are not closely connected (Xu & Dai, 2013).

### **The significance of the application of bluff teaching in primary school music class**

#### **(1) Helps stimulate students' interest in learning**

Interest is a necessary prerequisite for students to love something for life. Primary school students are in the active stage, their attention is not easy to concentrate, and the time for focusing on thinking is very short. If the teacher's teaching method and teaching content are too simple, students will not be attracted from it and will not actively participate in teaching activities. However, the bluff teaching is lively and interesting. In the teaching process, the teacher can add the bluff action according to the teaching content, which can not only prolong the students' concentration but also help stimulate the students' interest in learning.

#### **It is helpful to improve students' creativity**

In the traditional teaching mode, teachers generally teach, and students imitate their behavior and language. In this process, students do not need to think at all, just imitate, so that students are passive, then their imagination and creativity will not get better exercise. The teaching involves creative activities. Teachers encourage students to improvise and make up all kinds of creative movements, and students actively participate. In this process, even if students create a small movement, it will help students to further improve their creative ability.

#### **Help to improve students' sense of cooperation**

The new curriculum standards require students to have a good quality of close communication and cooperation with others in art practice, and always have a sense of collectivism. However, due to the influence of traditional teaching concepts, the training of cooperation ability between teachers and students needs to be strengthened. If we only pay attention to the surface form and ignore the exploration of the substance, students' cooperation consciousness will not be improved. However, the application of Orff bluff teaching in primary school music class is very beneficial to improve students' cooperative consciousness. In the bluff teaching, in order to make the bluff action and music rhythm achieve better results, teachers can group students into groups, and students can cooperate with each other to complete the teaching task, which is helpful for students to develop a good sense of cooperation (Niu, 2019).

### **The Orff teaching method in China**

In order to improve the quality of music classroom, Chinese scholars and experts in music education are gradually influenced by foreign education systems (such as Orff, etc.). In 1979, Professor Liao Naixiong, then director of the Institute of Shanghai Conservatory of Music, personally went to the Orff Academy in Germany to learn the Orff music teaching method through field study, and in December 1980 visited the elderly Karl Orff, which was a historic meeting.

The earliest published textbook to systematically introduce Orff's music education in China is the book "Rhythm-Melody Practice" translated by Liao Naixiong after his return to China in 1986. This book is a basic teaching material for children to practice rhythm and melody, which has scientific and practical value for cultivating children's musical quality. In addition, the Orff Children's Music Teaching Method (1987), translated by Liao Naixiong and edited by Ketterman, is also one of the important bases for studying Orff's music education system.

After Professor Liao introduced the Orff method to Chinese music education for the first time, in 1989, Chinese educator Qin Dexiang wrote the book "Elementary Music Education", which is one of the few systematic and specific works on the Orff education system in China. The book shows that "the training of the force has positive effects on children's ability of reaction, hearing, memory and so on". It emphasizes that Orff's music is elemental music, which pays attention to people's spontaneous feeling and experience of music (Xue, 2016).

After the 1990s, the research on Orff's music education in China has become increasingly hot, and a large number of representative academic achievements have appeared. In the aspect of papers, he published "Orff Music Teaching Method" translated by Chen Ping in April 1992, "Orff Music Teaching Method" translated by Qin Dexiang in March 1993, and so on. His works include "Music Pedagogy" by Liu Yunxiang and Wei Huang, "Introduction to General Music Pedagogy" and "Music Pedagogy in General Schools" by Cao Li, "Collection of World Music Education" and "Selected Literature on Music Education" edited by Li Dana, "Middle School Music Pedagogy" edited by Shao Zuliang, "Research on Primary School Music Teaching" edited by Wang Yingkui, and "Music Pedagogy" edited by Liu Yunxiang. Cao Li, Miao Peiyan edited the "Middle School Music teaching Theory" and so on. In these music education books, there are more comprehensive and accurate discussions on the educational concept, teaching content, teaching method, instrument ensemble and improvisation of Orff's music education system (Wang, 2012).

### Compare Orff with Dalcroze teaching method

Dalcroze became professor of music theory at the Geneva Conservatory in 1892. During this period, in order to make the training of musical sense not only limited to the interpretation of rhythm, but also reflected in the human movement, he pioneered a set of "rhythmic gymnastics", that is, the rhythm of the body to express the rhythm of music. He thinks: the previous music education is very musical, that is, does not conform to the nature of music. Music itself cannot be separated from rhythm, and rhythm is closely related to the movement of the human body itself. Therefore, simply teaching and learning music without combining it with the movement of the body is at least isolated and incomplete. In 1905, Dalcroze founded the rhythm education system, which uses physical movements to reflect the rhythm of music, called body rhythm. In 1913 the Dalcroze School of Body Rhythm was established in London. This teaching system has a great influence on the music education and dance education in Europe and the United States. It provides the basis for the rhythm of music and the coordination between dance movements (Hua, 2008).

Emile Jacques Dalcroze published in 1916 a tutorial on the musical training of the body, the Dalcroze Method - Body Rhythm. The book consists of ten chapters, including the time signature from 2/4 to 9/8 usage, planning and advice, practice. This book has far-reaching influence and practical significance on both music education and dance education.

### **Dalcroze teaching method**

The teaching practice of Dalcroze system is composed of three parts: body rhythm, solfeggio and impromptu music. His main characteristics are:

Based on listening (music), and based on the teacher's improvisational accompaniment.

Students are required to use each organ of the body as an instrument to reproduce the music they hear.

The teaching method is mainly games, and when individual students are lax and lax, they change immediately and are always in a fresh state.

The teacher's musical attainments, finding problems at any time, timely induction and other aspects of "improvisation" are directly related to the teaching effect.

Although body movement has long been recognized as an effective means of music education because of its originality and science, and has become an independent field of study, Dalcroze himself prefers to treat his music course as a whole, emphasizing that "music is the art of movement", the music must reflect its typical characteristics such as break and connection, and the movement should have a musical sense. In his article Rhythmic Movement, solfeggio Ear Training and Improvisation, he pointed out that rhythmic movement, solfeggio ear training and improvisational music activities are three important branches of music education, and it is very important to study the basic relationship between these three.

Body rhythm requires students to use their body as an instrument to reproduce the music they hear. Body rhythm is different from dance. It takes the body as a musical instrument, and experiences the changes of speed, strength and time value of the music rhythm through body movements. It aims to train students to obtain a relaxed and coordinated sense of rhythm by hearing. The movement of body rhythm is generally divided into two categories: in situ movement and space movement.

Let students feel music-oriented, improve students' musical sense through training. Students are allowed to use their bodies as Musical Instruments and make corresponding movements to feel the music according to the changes of various elements in the music, such as rhythm, pitch, speed, strength, etc. Such training can not only deepen students' feelings of music, but the exercises for students' mastery of rhythm can also lay a good foundation for students' future study and enhance their self-confidence.

The teaching content of Dalcroze body rhythm method is different from traditional music teaching. The teaching method aims to make students accept music experience rather than simply learn music knowledge. Dalcroze usually asks students to listen to more music and listen to less explanation, and uses music to stimulate students' hearing and heart, so that students can express the music they feel with their body movements, so as to deepen students' impression of the song, and then extract the concept of the song from their impression and transform the concept into music knowledge.

Dalcroze's teaching usually begins with speed exercises. He would ask students to move their bodies or step forward at a prescribed pace, like a metronome, adding emotional changes to this, but at the same pace, allowing students to explore their body's emotional changes under a fixed beat.

Use game method to teach. In order to enhance students' sensitivity to music, cultivate students' musical sense. Therefore, the body rhythm class is more suitable for children and music and dance students.

## Conclusion

In terms of training objectives and functions of teaching, "Dalcroze teaching method" focuses on developing students' inner hearing, while taking into account students' kinesthetic and creative expression abilities. The Orff teaching method focuses on cultivating students' creativity.

In terms of the selection of teaching content: Dalcroze teaching method mainly focuses on the three aspects of body rhythm, solfeggio and improvisation. It adopts improvisational music materials with musical elements learned by students and classical creative music materials, and pays attention to the familiarity and classics of teaching content. Orff teaching method pays attention to the characteristics of children, advocates the use of elemental music education, "guide music back to its elemental form, into the deep spiritual perception process" (Wu, 2008). It embodies Orff's teaching concept of people-oriented teaching content and educating people based on music.

In terms of teaching methods: Dalcroze teaching method is mainly carried out through rhythmic vocabulary in the teaching of body rhythm, that is, the ear and the body are used as Musical Instruments to learn rhythm. Orff teaching method according to children's learning characteristics, starting from perceptual experience, through vivid and pleasant games and sound feelings to learn knowledge and master skills, which is a kind of knowledge and skills into the interesting music teaching process.

In terms of the teaching process: the Dalcroze method emphasizes the suppression of external activities to the internal imagination. At the same time, it can also be seen from its lesson examples that "step-by-step teaching organization process". Orff teaching method is divided into four stages: exploration, imitation, improvisation and creation.

In terms of the grasp of the role of teachers: Dalcroze teaching method In a sense, music teachers are similar to sports coaches. Orff teaching method advocates that music teachers raise questions and encourage students to explore the answers themselves. By raising questions and organizing discussions, music teachers can find out the possibilities of various conditions and guide students to learn and master the content. It has the characteristics of autonomous learning.

## References

Hua, C. (2008). A brief discussion on the characteristics and reference of Dalcroze, Orff and Kodaly teaching methods. *Fujian Forum, Humanities and Social Sciences Edition* (2008 special issue).

Liu, X. (2016). *Orff teaching method in primary school Chinese orchestra, training and research*. Jiangxi Normal University.

Niu, Y. J. (2019). *The Application of Orff Sound Gestures Teaching in Primary School Music Classroom—A Case Study of the Fifth Experimental Primary School in Qian'an City*, [Master's Thesis]. North University of China.

Wang, L. X. (2012). *Research on Localization of Orff Music Teaching Methods*, [Master's Thesis]. Northeast Normal University.

Xu, Z. Y., & Dai, H. Y. (2013). *Compulsory education textbook volume 1*. Jiangsu Phoenix Children's Publishing House.

Xue, Y. J. (2016). *On the application of Orff teaching method in music teaching—Take Baer Road Primary School as an example*, [Master thesis]. Inner Mongolia Normal University.

Zhang, X. (2011). Analysis on the localization of Orff's music teaching method in China. *Grand Stage*, (1), 145-147.