



# DEVELOPING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MUSIC TALENT FOR CIVILIZATIONAL EXCHANGE AND MUTUAL LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

*With the deepening of globalization, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations have become a crucial driving force for promoting global harmony and development. As an art form that transcends human language and culture, music plays a vital role in fostering communication and understanding between diverse civilizations. Against the backdrop of civilizational exchange and mutual learning, this paper explores the importance and necessity of cultivating cross-cultural competence in music talent. It further investigates implementation pathways and strategies, aiming to provide valuable insights and references for the field of music education.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Civilizational Exchange and Mutual Learning; Music Talent; Cross-Cultural Understanding; Global Landscape; Musical Cultural Literacy*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

On March 27, 2014, President Xi Jinping, in his speech at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, stated, "Civilizations become enriched through exchanges and vibrant through mutual learning. Civilizational exchange and mutual learning are crucial driving forces for the advancement of human civilization and the peaceful development of the world" (Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the People's Republic of China, 2024). Deepening civilizational exchange and mutual learning is essential for eliminating barriers and misunderstandings between people, fostering emotional and intellectual connection, and strengthening the foundation of a shared future for humanity. As a universal and shared language of humankind, music possesses unique characteristics in its melodic expression, making it a global "language" with distinct cross-cultural exchange value. Music has played a unique role in fostering understanding and respect for cultural diversity through interaction among peoples of various nations. Therefore, cultivating the cross-cultural competence of music talent is of significant importance in advancing global civilizational exchange and enhancing confidence in Chinese culture.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTIVATING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MUSIC TALENT

Over the past four decades of reform and opening-up, China's comprehensive national strength and international standing have undergone substantial enhancement, leading to increasingly close ties with the world. There is a growing global interest in understanding China—this Eastern nation's history, culture, and rapid development. Simultaneously, China must systematically

and accurately comprehend the cultures of other nations to better integrate into the global community. Actively introducing Chinese musical culture, disseminating its distinctive sounds, and amplifying its voice have become integral to China's journey toward globalization. Amid the ongoing process of globalization, President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative has guided China into constructive engagement with the world. Strengthening the international communication capacity of Chinese musical culture and deepening exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations have become urgent imperatives.

### 2.1 Asserting Discourse Power: From "Other-Molded" to "Self-Molded"

Chinese musical culture bears a significant mission in amplifying the Chinese voice, narrating compelling stories about China, and presenting a genuine, multidimensional national image. However, merely mastering Chinese musical culture is far from sufficient to establish meaningful connections between Chinese and global musical cultures. Only by conducting in-depth studies of Western musical culture, the musical traditions of non-Western countries, and the history and current state of contemporary global music can a systematic and comprehensive understanding of world music be achieved. Cultivating exceptional cross-cultural understanding and communication abilities in music talent—specifically, the ability to grasp the aesthetic philosophy of Chinese music and the cultural significance of global music—is crucial. Thus, enhancing cross-cultural understanding and promoting the broad dissemination of Chinese musical culture are integral to fostering civilizational exchange and mutual learning between China and other nations (Li, 2019).



Nonetheless, the dichotomous framework of "Western dominance and Eastern inferiority" and "Eurocentric cultural superiority" persists in the international music community. Consequently, Chinese music continues to face challenges of "imbalance" and "silence" within the global music ecosystem. Historically, the image of Chinese oriental music was often shaped by external biases or tailored to suit others' needs. For instance, early Western writings frequently described the vocal techniques of Chinese opera—such as Peking opera—as sounding "like a fishbone stuck in the throat" or "like a cat whose tail has been stepped on". Such depictions reflect how Western perspectives, from the "Sick Man of East Asia" stereotype to the contemporary "China threat" narrative, have imposed labels on China. These externally constructed images are neither inherent nor objective but rather are creative fabrications devised to denigrate others and elevate themselves by projecting a dominant posture over less affluent nations.

To transform the externally constructed image of China, Chinese musical culture practitioners must dare to "speak out", using the platform of Chinese music to shape the national image and assert a narrative of Chinese culture through their voices. Elevating the international communication efficiency of Chinese musical culture and aligning its global discourse power with China's comprehensive strength and international status has become a strategic imperative at the national level.

## 2.2 Shifting Perspectives: Balancing "Performing China" and "China Performing"

The mission of Chinese music talent has evolved from a sole focus on "performing China" to a balanced emphasis on "China performing". Similarly, it has shifted from merely enabling "China to understand the world" to facilitating "the world to understand China". This proactive approach seeks to "self-mold" a comprehensive, multidimensional, and authentic image of China for the world. Mastery of Chinese music, even in its diverse forms, is insufficient to establish meaningful connections between China and the global community. A deep understanding of Chinese music's history, culture, and contemporary context, alongside extensive research into the histories, cultures, and realities of foreign musical traditions, is essential for attaining a systematic and holistic grasp of world music. This necessitates the cultivation of cross-cultural competence in music talent—the ability to accurately comprehend both Chinese philosophical and cultural thought and the broader spectrum of global musical culture. The application of global music cultural perspectives to disseminate Chinese cultural thought internationally is a cornerstone for implementing China's international communication strategies and strengthening its global communication capabilities.

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to "enhance international communication capacity, tell China's story well, present a real, multidimensional, and comprehensive China, and improve

national cultural soft power". Successfully narrating China's story to foster a better global understanding of the nation hinges on cultural outreach. Music, with its capacity to "harmonize the world", offers a powerful medium for this purpose. Since the reform and opening-up period, Chinese music culture has transitioned from merely "going out" to deeply "going in" on the global stage. Moving from superficial outreach to meaningful, sustainable engagement represents a pivotal historical evolution. The future of Chinese music education hinges on finding ways to deepen and sustain this engagement, ensuring that global audiences not only hear but also understand China's voice and, through it, its culture (National Committee Member of the CPPCC, 2020).

A nation or people cannot thrive without a spiritual essence. Artistic endeavors are foundational in shaping and nurturing this essence. In recent years, China's cultural industry has experienced exponential growth, thriving domestically and extending its influence internationally. The global dissemination of Chinese music culture aligns with China's strategic response to globalization and its commitment to deeper reform and opening-up. Through music, artists convey the sounds of China, its cultural identity, and the achievements of the Communist Party of China in leading the people toward the realization of the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation. Against the backdrop of today's complex international landscape, the balanced approach of excelling in both "performing China" and "China performing" carries profound and far-reaching significance.

## 2.3 Seizing Opportunities to Share China's Musical Voice with the World

Culture, as the soul of a nation and a people, is deeply rooted in their rich heritage, reflecting unique characteristics, identity, and value. Only by thoroughly understanding the origins and foundational elements of a nation's or people's culture can one develop an objective and insightful perspective on the world. Similarly, gaining an in-depth understanding of the music, history, and civilizations of different regions and nations globally—including their aesthetic values and audience preferences—is essential to establishing a comprehensive and systematic understanding of world music. Music, as a medium of exchange, enables emotional connection and fosters mutual trust and understanding. It bridges civilizational divides, transcends cultural conflicts through mutual learning, and moves beyond notions of civilizational superiority through coexistence. Music assumes a pivotal role in human communication and integration. As a key means of interaction, it leverages the beauty of lyrics and melodies to relax audiences and enhance mutual cultural understanding. By sharing Chinese music with the world, the melodies and lyrics facilitate cross-cultural exchange, while the essence conveyed is rooted in Chinese cultural philosophy. Across the vast dimensions of time and geography in the history of music, musical language has recorded aesthetic philosophies from various periods, regions, and peoples, constituting a valuable asset for human civilization. Consequently, every



possible opportunity must be seized to share China's musical voice globally.

Encouraging the integration of music with other art forms—such as dance, drama, and film—can inspire the creation of innovative and appealing works. These interdisciplinary creations can effectively showcase the diversity and inclusiveness of Chinese culture (Sheng, 2023). Cross-cultural musical exchanges break linguistic and geographical barriers, fostering global cultural dialogue and integration. Musical language plays a crucial role in facilitating international collaboration and cooperation, acting as a vessel for the exchange of ideas and cultural insights. Musicians fluent in two or more musical "languages" naturally become vital "guides" for cultural exchange, serving as bridges between diverse traditions (Gao, 2013).

### 3. USING MUSIC AS A MEDIUM FOR INTERNATIONAL DISSEMINATION OF CHINESE CULTURE

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasizes, "Respect the diversity of world civilizations; use civilizational exchange to transcend barriers, civilizational mutual learning to overcome conflicts, and civilizational coexistence to surpass notions of superiority." This principle has established a new direction for the teaching and development of contemporary Chinese and global ethnomusicology (Zhang, 2018).

#### 3.1 Music as a Medium

To effectively use music as a medium for the international dissemination of Chinese culture, profound knowledge of Chinese, world, and regional music is indispensable. It begins with an understanding of Chinese musical traditions and extends to a deep exploration of the cultural context and nuances of international audiences. This requires a comprehensive grasp of their worldview, values, historical perspectives, cultural outlook, thought processes, and discourse systems. Musical language is inherently interdisciplinary, built upon melodies and centered on culture. Studying and researching the melodies and lyrics of traditional Chinese music inevitably involves knowledge from disciplines such as politics, economics, history, philosophy, geography, and even natural and information sciences. This interdisciplinary approach often relates to the linguistic and historical cultural heritage of the target country or region and necessarily entails an understanding of their core values and ideologies.

Thus, music transcends its role as a mere communication tool; it becomes a critical "medium" that provides theoretical guidance and research support for the study of national and regional cultures. Through primary research on the music of a target nation or region, it is possible to absorb and integrate beneficial musical theories and academic achievements from across human history. This enables a thorough analysis of the value systems and discourse frameworks of other regions, nations, and ethnic

groups, thereby better serving the state and supporting the global dissemination and promotion of Chinese music culture and values.

The cultivation of cross-cultural competence in music talent for civilizational exchange and mutual learning is an essential skill for all music professionals. This competence equips them to navigate the influx of new musical influences from abroad with clear discernment and critical thinking. It enables them to quickly, deeply, and accurately understand trends in international music, minimizing the disparity between Chinese and global music discourse systems. Moreover, it provides an opportunity not merely to understand other nations and regions but also to reevaluate and redefine the self from a Chinese perspective. By doing so, Chinese musicians can construct a comprehensive and systematic understanding of world music, contributing meaningfully to the progress of human civilization.

#### 3.2 Research and Understanding of Foreign Cultures as the Basis for Successful International Dissemination of Chinese Thought and Culture

The rich diversity of human civilizations underscores the inherent value of each. Recognizing that every nation and ethnicity has a unique civilization is essential. Properly addressing the civilizations of different countries and peoples, as well as their traditional and contemporary cultures, requires continuous exploration and utilization of the outstanding ideas and extensive knowledge created by humanity. Only through this understanding can we better perceive the world, society, and ourselves, ultimately contributing to a brighter future for human society. Each country and nation possesses distinct ways of thinking and discourse systems, and understanding their historical and cultural backgrounds is crucial for grasping their national characteristics and the historical context of their citizens' spiritual worlds.

To truly achieve the desired effect of international dissemination of Chinese musical culture, it is necessary to ensure that the emotional resonance of music deeply touches global audiences. This requires an attitude of equality and respect toward other civilizations. Regardless of size or strength, every nation and ethnicity's musical culture deserves recognition and respect. As the saying goes, "There is no superior or inferior in musical culture, only diversity and regional distinctions. Fusion can only occur through exchange, and progress can only be made through fusion."

In terms of content, the dissemination of Chinese musical culture must fully account for cultural differences and involve an accurate understanding of the thoughts and cultures of relevant countries, regions, and ethnicities. This approach is vital for improving the ability to construct an international communication framework for Chinese music. Regarding dissemination methods, telling China's musical story requires first understanding and internalizing the essence of that story. Familiarity with the customs, psychology, and lives of the target audience allows



performers to use musical expressions that resonate with local audiences. By bridging psychological distances with familiar modes of performance, the cultural and musical content can be communicated effectively. This approach makes the symbolic spirit of Chinese musical culture widely recognizable and fosters emotional resonance on a larger and broader scale (Li, 2023).

### 3.3 Precision in International Expression as the Core of Building China's Music Communication Capability

The dissemination of Chinese musical thought and culture abroad is rich in compelling stories, but what is lacking are methods and expressions that align with the cultural psychology of international audiences, touching their hearts with precision. This necessitates that China's international communication efforts, while rooted in its outstanding traditional musical culture, also draw on shared human values and the diversity of civilizations. A deeper understanding and comparison of musical cultures from other nations is essential to achieving integration in musical exchanges and transcendence in mutual interactions.

The Chinese people's aspiration for truth, goodness, and beauty aligns with the universal pursuit of a better life shared by people worldwide. For instance, in music, the West has *Romeo and Juliet*, while China has *The Butterfly Lovers* (*Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*). Although numerous classic works in foreign art focus on the theme of love, their cultural contexts, artistic techniques, and forms of expression often resonate with *The Butterfly Lovers* in strikingly similar ways. Therefore, when appreciating these works, we must adopt an open mindset to understand and experience the themes of love and artistic charm they convey.

However, as humanity faces increasingly shared and severe challenges, these remind us of the necessity to respect the diversity of world civilizations and cultures. On October 25, 2021, during the 50th anniversary of the restoration of the People's Republic of China's lawful seat in the United Nations, President Xi Jinping stated, "Promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind does not mean replacing one system with another, nor one civilization with another. It involves countries with different social systems, ideologies, historical cultures, and development levels coexisting and sharing benefits, rights, and responsibilities in international affairs, finding the largest common ground to build a better world."

This perspective reflects China's approach of engaging with the world from a humanistic and global standpoint. By integrating Chinese practices into the global framework, it presents the world with a new perspective on civilization and development rooted in Chinese wisdom. This is China's contribution to the evolution of human civilization.

## 4. PATHWAYS TO CULTIVATING CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MUSIC TALENT

In the context of the new era, Chinese music talent faces the dual mission of transitioning from solely "performing China" to balancing it with "China performing", as well as shifting from "China understanding the world" to "the world understanding China". To achieve this transformation, a proactive approach toward "self-molding" a comprehensive, multidimensional, and authentic image of China is essential. Below are specific strategies to achieve this:

### 4.1 Building Platforms to Deepen International Exchange and Cooperation

Strengthening international exchanges and cooperation in music culture requires, at the macro level, establishing stable and long-term partnerships with foreign music academies, music groups, and art institutions. This includes jointly planning and implementing music exchange projects, facilitating mutual visits of artists and scholars for lectures, performances, and creative endeavors, as well as co-organizing music festivals and concerts. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaborations between music and other art forms—such as dance, theater, and film—can result in the creation of more innovative and captivating works, showcasing the diversity and inclusiveness of Chinese culture.

At the national level, implementing international music cooperation projects plays a critical role, with the Music Confucius Institutes serving as a prominent example. These institutes, as specialized branches of the broader Confucius Institute network, are key platforms for promoting Chinese musical culture. Through overseas courses, concerts, and lectures, they introduce the unique charm and profound depth of Chinese music to students and audiences worldwide. Furthermore, Music Confucius Institutes contribute to cultivating international music talent by partnering with foreign music schools to provide opportunities and platforms for learning Chinese music. Students at these institutes receive systematic Chinese music education while engaging directly with Chinese music teachers and artists, deepening their understanding of the essence and richness of Chinese music (Wang, 2016).

As an essential platform for international music exchange and cooperation, the Music Confucius Institutes create ample opportunities for collaboration between global musicians and institutions. By organizing events such as concerts, music festivals, and seminars, they facilitate cultural exchange and cooperation among musicians, promoting the diversity and integration of international music cultures. Collaborations between Chinese and international music schools further enhance the global influence of Chinese music education, highlighting its progress and development while opening doors for its continued international growth.

Additionally, these institutes encourage Chinese music talent to participate in multinational creative, performance, and research



projects. Examples include collaborations with renowned international musicians, composers, and producers to develop music with cross-cultural appeal. Platforms such as international music festivals, competitions, and exhibitions are leveraged to promote Chinese music works and artists. Specialized concerts, exhibitions, and lectures further amplify the visibility of Chinese music culture and its artists globally (Wang, 2016). These initiatives not only increase international understanding and appreciation of Chinese music but also play a vital role in the global dissemination of Chinese music culture, fostering deeper exchanges and cooperation in international music and communicating the unique charm and cultural essence of Chinese music to global audiences.

#### 4.2 Cultivating Internationally-Oriented Music Communication Talent

Enhancing the professional skills, cross-cultural communication abilities, and creativity of music talent can be achieved by strengthening music education, providing ample practical opportunities, and broadening international perspectives. This fosters the international development of music professionals. For instance, encouraging and supporting music talent to showcase their skills and strengths on global stages—by participating in international competitions, performances, and research projects—significantly boosts the global recognition and influence of Chinese music talent. Additionally, fostering collaboration and exchanges with the international music community offers more opportunities and resources for growth.

Building and managing music talent teams is also critical. Establishing specialized music groups and orchestras creates opportunities for greater collaboration and interaction among music professionals. Focusing on teamwork and internal coordination enhances the overall strength and competitiveness of such teams. By promoting international exchanges and cooperation, reinforcing local music education and innovation, narrating compelling stories about Chinese music, constructing a global Chinese music discourse, and cultivating internationally-oriented music talent, these efforts collectively drive the global dissemination and development of Chinese music. Ultimately, they allow the world to gain a more comprehensive, multidimensional, and authentic understanding of China and its musical culture.

#### 4.3 Strengthening Local Music Education and Innovation

To reinforce the education and inheritance of Chinese traditional music, the music education system should prioritize the introduction of courses on traditional music, as well as the organization of traditional music lectures and concerts. These initiatives aim to cultivate students' love and appreciation for Chinese traditional music. Furthermore, music talent should be encouraged to explore diverse styles and forms of creative expression. By integrating various musical elements and styles, musicians can produce innovative and contemporary works.

Special attention should be paid to uncovering and revitalizing traditional Chinese musical elements, ensuring their transmission and development in modern music. This includes hosting training programs, seminars, and workshops to enhance the professional skills and teaching capabilities of music educators. Encouraging music teachers to actively engage in international exchanges and collaborations allows them to absorb advanced educational concepts and teaching methodologies from around the world. These strategies are key to strengthening local music education and fostering innovation.

#### 4.4 Constructing a Chinese Music Discourse System

The music culture of every nation and ethnicity has its unique developmental trajectory. This serves as the foundation for corresponding ideas and conceptual systems, forming discourse systems with historical significance and contemporary relevance. Discourse and discourse systems exist to support discourse power. They reflect the systematic and distinctive features of academic research while possessing strong ideological characteristics. Building a mature and robust discourse system is directly related to the consolidation and enhancement of national discourse power. Therefore, the discourse system of Chinese music must be rooted in traditional Chinese music theory and knowledge systems while advancing the ability to interpret both China and the world through Chinese music theory and scholarship (Liu, 2018).

To achieve this, it is essential to enhance research in Chinese music theory by focusing on the origins, development, characteristics, and values of Chinese music, which will help develop a music discourse system with distinct Chinese characteristics. Collaboration and exchange with the international music community are equally important for absorbing cutting-edge research and theoretical advancements. Advancing music standards requires active participation in the formulation and promotion of international music standards, as well as collaboration with international music institutions to facilitate the standardization and normalization of Chinese music in global contexts. Integrating unique Chinese musical elements and forms of expression into international standards can further enhance recognition and influence on the global stage. Strengthening music criticism and evaluation is vital for elevating the quality and standard of Chinese music works through the development of professional music criticism and evaluation, with scholarly critiques and expert opinions playing a pivotal role in improving the overall caliber of Chinese musical compositions.

Cultivating cross-cultural competence in music talent for civilizational exchange and mutual learning requires a multifaceted approach. This includes deepening international exchanges and collaboration, strengthening local music education and innovation, telling compelling stories about Chinese music, constructing a Chinese music discourse system, and fostering internationally-oriented music professionals. These efforts collectively support the dissemination and development of Chinese music on the global stage, providing the world with a



more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of Chinese music and its cultural heritage.

For music learners and communicators, maintaining a firm grounding in Chinese cultural identity and deeply understanding China's history and cultural traditions is essential. Only with this foundation can they develop accurate and comprehensive perspectives on global musical cultures based on Chinese theories and knowledge systems. This enables them to draw on the strengths of foreign musical cultures, adopt a critical and inclusive approach, and use music as a tool for research and exchange. In doing so, they can contribute to the construction of China's global music discourse system, presenting Chinese civilization in accessible and comprehensible ways, amplifying China's voice, and articulating the nation's role and relationship with the world.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In the face of an era characterized by unprecedented changes, despite peace and development being the overarching themes of our time, conflicts, diseases, and poverty continue to threaten global security. As a developing major power, China remains committed to keeping its doors open to reform and international engagement, further expanding these avenues. Music, as a medium for communication with the world, serves as a bridge to connect hearts and foster mutual understanding. Enabling the world to hear China's voice and comprehend its language and melodies is the mission of contemporary musicians and reflects the value of studying and researching music today. Cultivating cross-cultural competence in music talent for civilizational exchange and mutual learning is a crucial force in a nation's diplomatic engagement and a key medium for promoting and preserving its culture.

This endeavor must be rooted in a distinctly Chinese perspective, grounded in the nation's heritage. It requires music talent to possess both technical proficiency and interdisciplinary communication skills, comprehensive knowledge of Eastern and Western musical cultures, solid academic expertise in music, and a sharp innovative spirit. Additionally, it demands an expansive international outlook and a profound sense of national pride and cultural confidence.

China, with its five millennia of brilliant civilizational history, has ample reason to uphold its cultural confidence. By utilizing the enchanting language of music and the insights derived from related research, China can articulate the contemporary value of its traditional musical culture, explore shared human values, and present the enduring history and humanistic depth of Chinese civilization to the international community. This fosters deeper global understanding of contemporary Chinese music culture and supports sustained exchanges and mutual learning among the cultures of China and the world (Su, 2022).

## Funding Projects

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