

A History of Chinese Musical Instrument Education in Toronto

YAO CUI

Abstract

Whereas students in China can take Chinese instrument training in a variety of settings, Canada has no systematized structure of Chinese music education. Indeed, little scholarly attention has been paid to the development of Chinese instrumental music education in the Chinese diaspora within North America. Based on extensive fieldwork in Toronto, I address the following questions in this article: How do Chinese immigrants pass down their music? How and where do students take Chinese instrument training? How have the methods of transmission evolved? And how do Chinese instrument pedagogical techniques bridge Chinese and Canadian contexts?

摘要

多伦多作为一座拥有多元文化的国际大都市，不仅是北美洲首屈一指的华侨华人聚居地，而且有较为成熟的华人民族音乐氛围。自1949年新中国成立以来，尤其是改革开放后，中国的民族乐器教育已经逐步形成相对完善的体系。在中国，学生可以通过多种途径接触、学习中国民族乐器：从中小学义务教育到高等教育；从私人授课到音乐学院；从一对一课程到团体课程。与中国不同，加拿大的中国民族乐器教师并不多，也没有系统化的中国民族乐器教育体系。北美的中国民族乐器教学文献的关注对象主要是当地华人社区民族乐团/管弦乐团（例如 Qiu 2005; Chan 2015）以及大学的中国民族乐团（例如 Prescott et al. 2008; Wang 2013）。然而，学术界对北美地区中国民族乐器教育培训的历史和发展关注甚少，对多伦多更是鲜有提及。直到1969年，多伦多才成立了第一支华人民族乐团，从而开始为多伦多华人社区提供中国民族乐器培训。在此背景下，我研究了以下相关内容：多伦多华人以何种方式传承中国民乐？多伦多当地学生们如何接受中国民族乐器培训？传播方式是如何演变的？以及怎样在中国和加拿大的乐器教育体系和乐器教学法之间架起沟通的桥梁？本人通过在多伦多的多所大学、当地中国民族乐团/管弦乐团和私人培训中心实地考察，以及采访音乐教师和学生来研究这些问题。本文记录了加拿大多元文化发展背景下多伦多中国乐器教育的历史。

Yao Cui is a lecturer at the Sichuan University of Science and Engineering. Her research focuses on the history, repertoire, transnationalism, and globalization relating to Chinese music in the context of the Chinese diaspora, with particular interests to date in Chinese instrumental orchestras in the Greater Toronto Area in Canada.

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INTRODUCTION: TORONTO'S VIBRANT CHINESE MUSIC SCENE

Toronto, a multicultural metropolis, has one of the largest Chinese diasporic populations in North America and a well-developed Chinese music scene. There are about twenty Chinese music-related organizations in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) including Chinese orchestras, music ensembles, and operas. Accordingly, there are facilities for Chinese music training. The literature on Chinese instrument training in North America focuses primarily on music instruction within Chinese community music ensembles/orchestras (e.g., Qiu 2005; Chan 2015; Chan 2022) and in universities (e.g., Prescott et al. 2008; Wang 2013); however, there has been little scholarly attention paid to the history and development of Chinese instrumental music education in North America generally, and even less to that in Toronto specifically. In this article, I address the gaps in the literature through exploring the following general questions: How do Chinese immigrants pass down their instrumental musical expertise in Toronto? How and where do students take Chinese instrument training? How have the methods of transmission evolved? And how do Chinese instrument pedagogical techniques bridge Chinese and Canadian contexts? In pursuing specific answers to these questions, I have conducted fieldwork in universities, Chinese music ensembles/orchestras, and private studios, and interviewed music educators/teachers and students in Toronto.

In presenting my findings, I will begin by comparing the ways that students take Chinese instrument training in China and Canada, specifically in Toronto. Then, I will explore the history of Chinese instrument training in Toronto before the 1990s, when Chinese music instrument instruction in higher educational institutions and music stores began (Patty Chan, personal communication, 28 February 2021). I will introduce the four most common ways of learning to play a Chinese instrument in Toronto after the 1990s. I also discuss the impact of adopting the Chinese Music Proficiency Examination in Canada. In particular, I will examine how the “internal” transmissions within Chinese orchestras transform into community engagement. Finally, this article documents the trajectory of Chinese instrumental education in Toronto, contending that Chinese music education within the public education system follows a cyclic pattern of expansion and contraction, whereas private instruction in Chinese music has consistently expanded.

A COMPARISON OF CHINESE MUSIC EDUCATIONAL METHODS IN CHINA AND CANADA

Students in China are able to take Chinese instrument training in a variety of settings, from elementary schools to higher education institutions, private studios to conservatories, and private lessons to group lessons. Students in China, like music students everywhere, take music lessons from those already able to play the instruments well and therefore able to act as teachers. No formal accreditation is required, although qualifications from a respected conservatory or university are recognized.

Based on my interactions with music teachers in China and my personal experience, I've observed that students adopt diverse approaches to learning to play an instrument, resulting in a wide range of instructional methods. First, some schools (public and private) offer instrumental lessons as part of their curricula at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Second, higher institutions of learning—both public and private (colleges and universities)—have music departments and programs. Third, music conservatories and art institutions, such as the Central Conservatory of Music in China, offer courses as part of their degree programs. Fourth, publicly founded art facilities, including those for music, are available to interested individuals—youths or seniors—outside of formal degree programs. Fifth, individuals can arrange and pay for private one-on-one lessons or group lessons with expert musicians. A variation on this pattern of the private lesson is the group lesson and the one-on-one lesson offered by commercial music training schools or music stores (Le Gui, personal communication, 20 June 2021; Lixia Guo, personal communication, 21 June 2021).

In Canada, unlike in China, there is no systematized structure of Chinese music education, and fewer Chinese instrument teachers available. According to Patty Chan, it was not until 1969 that the first Chinese ensemble was founded by Ming Chan at the University of Toronto—the Chinese Instrumental Music Group of the University of Toronto (CIMGUT)—prompted by a group of University of Toronto students interested in making Chinese music together. This was also the first time that Chinese instrument training had been offered to Toronto's Chinese community.

Chinese music has not been offered as a degree program in higher education in Canada. In fact, in North America, there is only one higher education institute that has provided an undergraduate degree in Chinese instruments—Bard College Conservatory of Music in New York—since the fall of 2018. This program is mainly taught by faculty members from the Chinese Central Conservatory of Music. Bard offers a five-year double-degree program, a bachelor of music and a bachelor of arts in a liberal arts field, which allows students to work toward both degrees. In the fall of 2022, the college started to offer a master's degree—master of arts in Chinese music and culture (US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of Music. n.d).

Even in a diasporic context, general rules apply for teaching Chinese instruments. In the transfer of musical knowledge and skills from homeland to host country, there are continuities. According to Chinese orchestra leaders such as Patty Chan (the current music director of the Toronto Chinese Orchestra) and Amely Zhou (the current director of the Canadian Chinese Orchestra), currently in the GTA, students have various ways of learning to play an instrument (Patty Chan, personal communication, 19 December 2021; Amely Zhou, personal communication, 10 December 2021). First, individuals can arrange and pay for private lessons or group lessons with expert musicians. A variation on this pattern of private individual lessons is the private group lesson offered by music stores and commercial music training schools. Second, some community centers provide Chinese instrument lessons for interested youth or seniors. Third, some Chinese orchestras have started to partner with local music schools to provide group lessons and they have recently started to

provide Chinese instrument scholarships and seniors' music learning programs. Finally, some higher institutions of learning in the public system offer Chinese instrumental lessons or Chinese music studies as part of their curricula. For example, the Royal Conservatory of Music used to provide Chinese instrumental lessons. Although York University used to provide more private lessons in the past, it only has one in its recent program. It additionally offered Chinese ensemble courses. Furthermore, Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) continues to offer Chinese Music History course.

A HISTORY OF CHINESE MUSIC EDUCATION IN TORONTO BEFORE 1990

In the late nineteenth century, Chinese immigrant music took root and has since flourished in Canada. The first predominant Chinese music genres registered in Toronto were Cantonese folk song and Cantonese opera because most of the first Chinese immigrants to Canada were from the Taishan community, in the Cantonese region of China. In the 1870s, there were three Cantonese opera clubs established in Victoria, BC (Liang 2014) and by 1970, one hundred years later, Cantonese folk songs and Cantonese operas still made up the bulk of Canadian Chinese music (*idem*). According to Patty Chan (personal communication, 28 February 2021), before the 1970s, the Cantonese opera community played Cantonese music only. Many of them were restaurant workers, primarily from the Taishan community, and tended to be middle-aged or senior. These groups were not really involved much in teaching and in Chan's account, these activities were more "like a break from work. It was a social thing, and they wanted to keep the art alive" (Patty Chan, personal communication, 28 February 2021)

Meanwhile, another Chinese music genre, the Chinese instrument ensemble, appeared in Toronto in the late 1960s. According to Patty Chan (personal communication, 28 February 2021), the first Chinese instrument ensemble, CIMGUT, was founded by Ming Chan in 1969. As a student from Hong Kong studying at the University of Toronto, Chan was an amateur *erhu* player who gave lessons to classmates and students interested in learning Chinese instruments. In the 1970s, Chinese community members in Toronto asked Ming Chan to teach their children in either group or individual lessons. Around fifteen children, ages eight years old to teenagers, began learning different instruments. Patty Chan was one of those children and started to learn *erhu* in 1978. As described by Chan (personal communication, 19 December 2021), the Chinese music ensemble rehearsed every Friday, and the children would come at the same time for their lessons. They had different rooms and various musicians from the ensemble, who would take turns leaving the rehearsal to teach children. Every three months, they would have a concert, like a mini recital and distribute short pieces to children to prepare for the concert. If there were any students ready, they could audition and play in the concert. If they did well in the concert, they could perform for the community. It was a good experience for Chan because she was with other children in the ensemble and made friends too.

The first professional musician that Patty Chan knew of who was from mainland China came in the late 1970s. He came from Guangdong province, taught the *pipa* and was a professional *pipa* player. However, after arriving, he could not make a living through teaching Chinese music and could not speak English, he worked at a factory in a very low-paying job, he taught a little bit in the orchestra where Patty Chan was playing. He was never able to transition to a full-time career in Chinese music education.

MAIN APPROACHES OF CHINESE MUSICAL EDUCATION IN THE GTA

When it comes to Chinese instrument education in the diaspora, it is important to pay close attention to how Chinese immigrants pass down their music in the host country and how the music education system and pedagogy bridge Chinese and Canadian contexts. Chinese instrument education outside of China faces the challenges of passing on techniques and knowledge to the novice both within and beyond the Chinese community. Regarding where and how Chinese American music ensemble members receive musical training, Su Zheng enumerates “four alternatives: music groups, music schools, private teachers, and the media” (2010, 177). Unfortunately, a lack of skilled musicians hampers many Chinese music ensembles/orchestras in North America. The following sections will discuss the history and development of Chinese instrumental education in Greater Toronto Area, as well as the four main approaches for acquiring training.

PRIVATE LESSONS

The prevalent approach to receiving Chinese music training in Greater Toronto Area is through private lessons. Wendy Zhao, a Toronto-based *pipa* expert, confirms this pattern. According to her, 90 percent of students aiming to learn a Chinese instrument attend private lessons (Wendy Zhao, personal communication, 12 July 2022). Private Chinese instrument instruction has been available in the GTA since the 1970s. Individuals can arrange and pay for private one-on-one lessons or group lessons with expert musicians. Some variations on this pattern of the private lesson are the private group lessons or one-on-one lessons offered by music stores and commercial music training schools. Additionally, lessons are provided not only to members of Chinese communities but also to non-Chinese music enthusiasts. Naomi Norquay, a retired professor in the Faculty of Education at York University, was one such non-Chinese student who received Chinese instrument instruction. Born and raised in the province of Ontario, she is also a well-trained musician who plays the cello, banjo and other instruments. In 1978, while still an undergraduate doing research on how the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1911 officially marked dramatic changes in Chinese music, Norquay had an opportunity to interview Siu-Ming Ho, a student at the University of Toronto who taught the *erhu* for the Chinese Students' Association. Later on, she began to study the instrument from Ho (Naomi Norquay, personal communication, 3 March 2021).

The images Norquay provided show how Ho taught non-Chinese beginners to play *erhu*. Despite the low number of Chinese characters on the pages, they included teaching them to read *jianpu* (numeric musical notation) (see Figure 4) and providing music etudes/exercises (see Figure 1 to Figure 3). Figures 1 through 4 show that these music exercise scores and *jianpu* instructions were handwritten, due to the lack of textbooks for non-Chinese *erhu* players. Figure 1 shows two open-string exercises. Figure 2 depicts two scale exercises. The last two exercises in Figure 3 are song melodies arranged by Luobin Wang in 1939, the first one named “In That Distant Place” and the second one, “Half Moon Climbed Up.” At the top of Figure 4 is a diagram that explains the intervals between the two strings of the *erhu*, and the bottom consists of two diagrams, one to indicate *jianpu* solfège and one to explain different note durations in both *jianpu* and Western notation. In February 1979, Ho even invited Norquay to play cello with the Chinese music ensemble for a performance. Norquay’s *erhu* learning experience not only provides us with a valuable historical documentation of how Chinese musicians taught non-Chinese players during the 1970s, but also demonstrates that the Chinese diaspora welcomed non-Chinese people to learn their instruments and collaborate with them.

In the 1990s, as more Chinese immigrants arrived in Toronto, some music stores started to offer Chinese instrument lessons. In 1992, Harmony Music Inc., a Hong Kong music store branch, opened its doors in Toronto. The original owner, Hoi Lee, was from Hong Kong and was a professional *erhu* player of the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. He was also the *erhu* teacher of Peter Bok (the president of OCO) when they both lived in Hong Kong. After moving to Toronto, Lee opened Harmony Music Inc. This store did not only provide Chinese music enthusiasts in the Toronto area with a diverse and large choice of Western and Chinese instruments, but also offered Chinese instrument lessons, such as *erhu*, *guzheng*, *dizi*, and *ruan*. Lee was also one of the founders of the Toronto Chinese Music Association (former name of Toronto Chinese Orchestra). Due to a scarcity of rehearsal space, the store provided a rehearsal space for the Toronto Chinese Orchestra (TCO) for about ten years (Peter Bok, personal communication, 23 December 2020). Lee returned to Hong Kong in 1996 and handed over the store to his brother-in-law (Patty Chan, personal communication, 27 March 2022), and Harmony Music Inc. continued to operate for about twenty more years before being taken over by May Mei (an *erhu* player and cello player) and her husband Henry Zhao in 2014. And they named the store “Music of May.” Despite the fact that Music of May sells both Western and Chinese music instruments, Patty Chan stated that there are considerably fewer instruments on display than in the previous store, and that some instruments must be bought online. The store teaches Chinese musical instruments such as the *erhu*, *guzheng*, *guqin*, *yangqin*, *pipa*, *dizi*, *xiao*, and *hulusi*. Additionally, it provides support and registration to students preparing for the Chinese Music Proficiency Examination (CMPE). Like Music of May, the Toronto Chinese Music Centre, an online instrument store run by Pingxin Xu, a *yangqin* musician from mainland China, offers a range of Chinese instrument lessons and sells both Chinese and Western musical instruments.

Last but not least, the Toronto Chinese Music School is a school for the study of Chinese instruments founded by *pipa* musician Ms. Xiaomei He and *huqin* musician

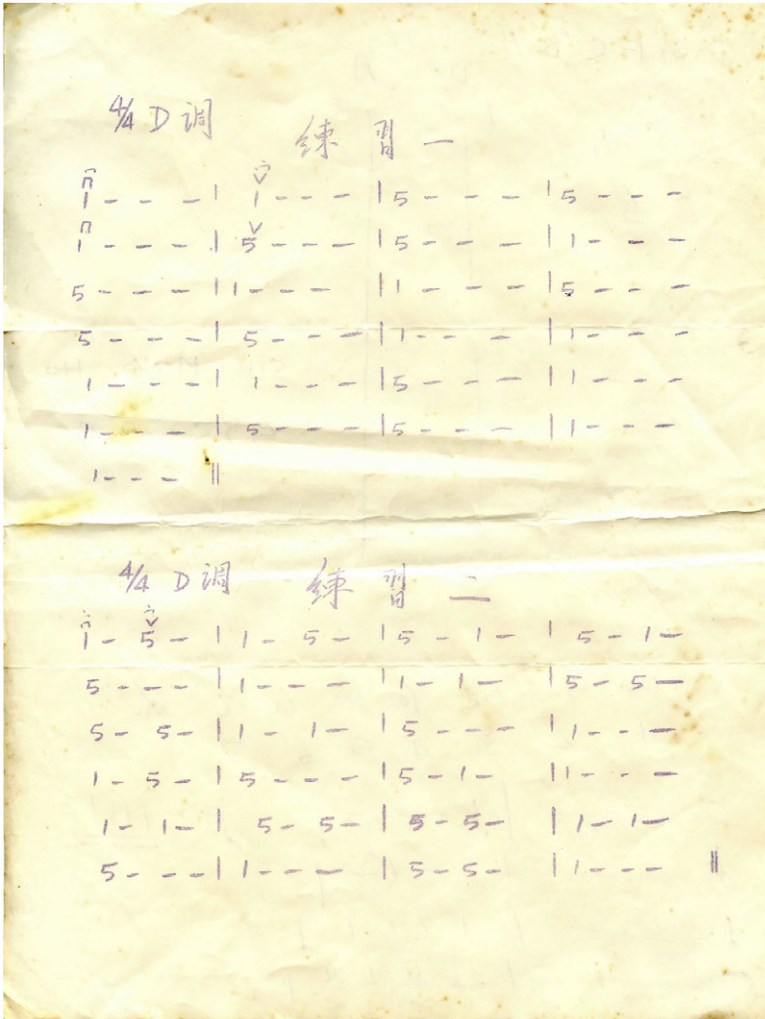


Figure 1. Erhu music etudes/exercises.

Mr. Guochan Chen Nian in 2007. The school employs teachers and performers from music schools and professional performing groups who have immigrated from mainland China and is the only music school in Toronto taught by professional teachers. The school was established to provide quality instruction to students in the Greater Toronto Area who are interested in Chinese music at all levels and in all formats, from beginner to advanced performance classes. The classes are offered in sizes ranging from one-on-one, small groups of two to four, and small groups of five to eight students, and offer lessons in *erhu*, *gaohu*, *pipa*, *guzheng*, *yangqin*, *hulusi*, flute, and so forth (London Chinese Music School 2014).

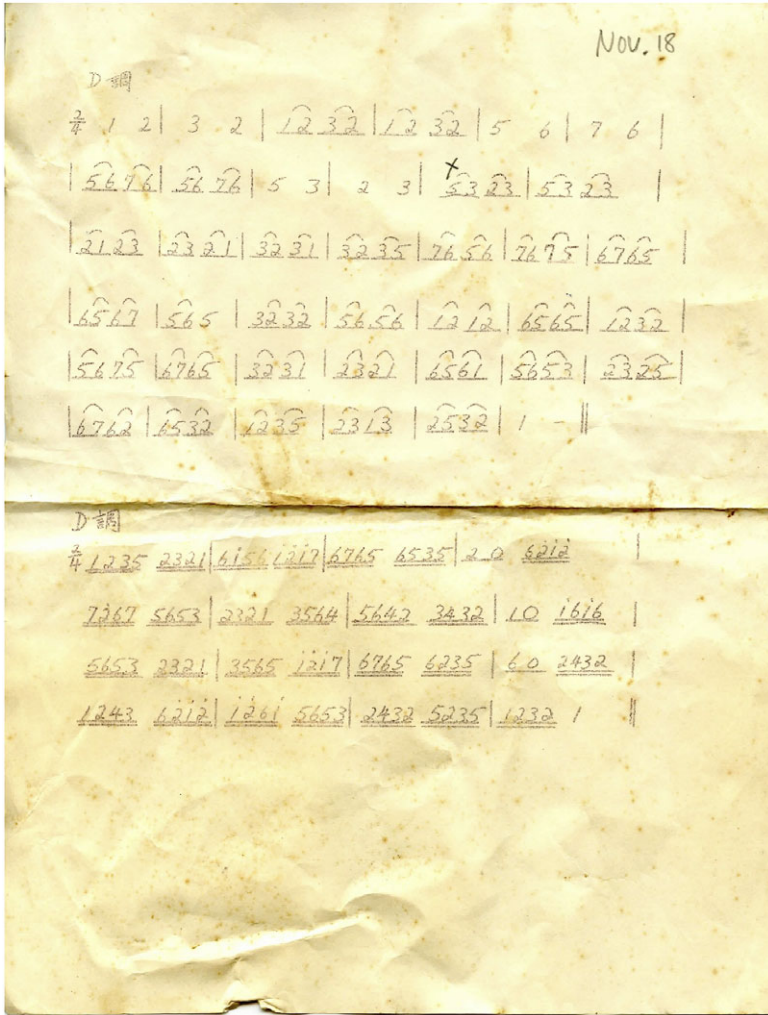


Figure 2. Erhu music etudes/exercises.

Besides offering instructions in a variety of Chinese instruments, these music stores and private music schools also offer alternative ways for people to learn Chinese instruments and provide Chinese instrument teachers with a source of income. I think the following factors contribute to the GTA's high prevalence of Chinese music private instruction: (1) students can take Chinese music lessons or courses without having to be admitted by a college, which makes private sessions more accessible than official instruction in Chinese music at higher education institutions; (2) whereas group lessons are a common format for the lessons offered by community centers, to receive advanced music instruction students must enroll in private lessons; and (3) individual classes offer

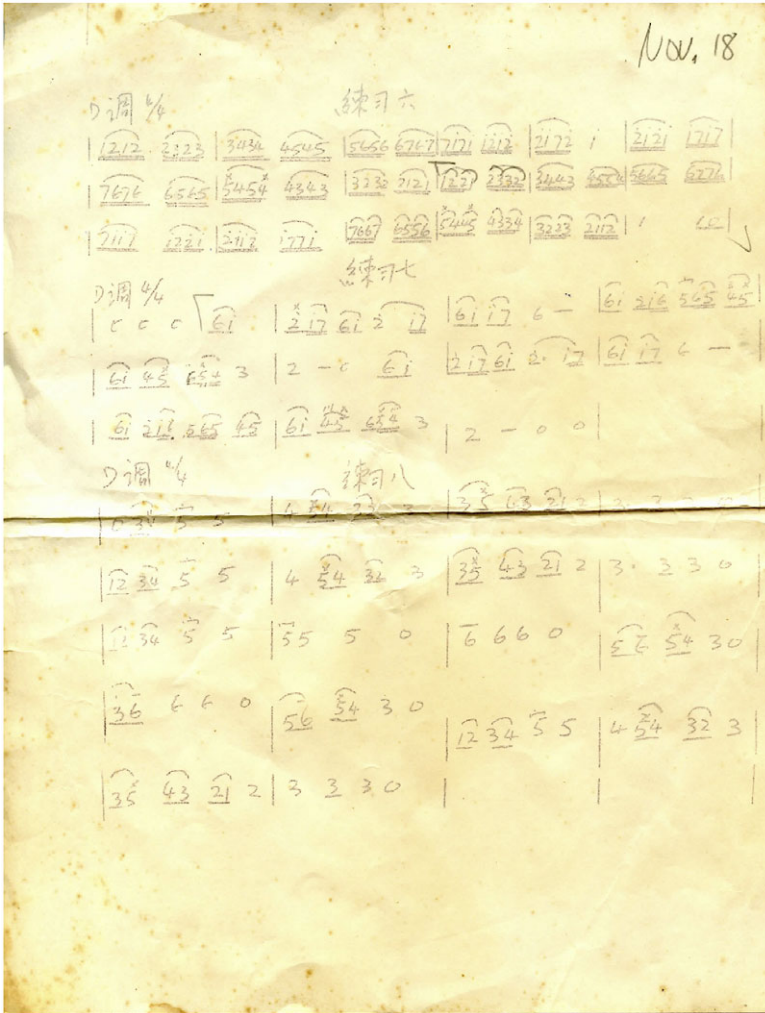


Figure 3. Erhu music etudes/exercises.

greater scheduling flexibility. Lessons with teachers can be scheduled at a time that is convenient for both parties; and (4) in contrast to both community centers and higher institutions, which have a restricted number of instructors, the most well-known Chinese instrumentalists offer private sessions—students can select the instructor they prefer.

COMMUNITY CENTERS AND CHURCHES/TEMPLES

A variety of community organizations have offered alternative forms of transmission of musical knowledge and expertise (Veblen and Olsson 2002), as confirmed by Patty Chan,

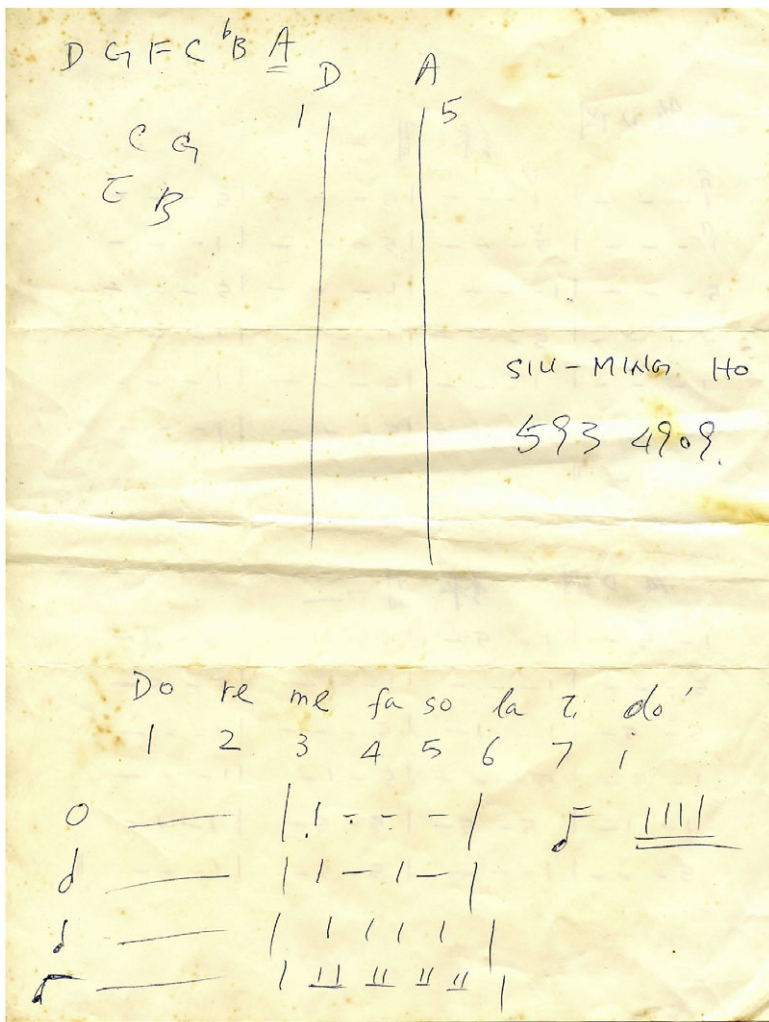


Figure 4. Jianpu notation instruction.

Chinese instrument instruction is commonly offered in Chinese community centers (Patty Chan, personal communication, 6 May 2022). In the 2000s, various Chinese community organizations, charities, nursing homes, and religious organizations began offering Chinese instrument training to people of all ages, including youths and seniors. Chan has taught at Richmond Hill Christian Community Church, Markham Wesley Community Center, and Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church as an *erhu* teacher. According to Amely Zhou, *erhu* courses have also been offered at the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, Yee Hong (senior care organization), Mon Sheong Foundation, and Fo Guang Shan Temple of Toronto. *Erhu* lessons are also available at the Shaolin

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Children age 6 - 14 are welcome!




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Bowed Strings



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Zheng
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Register Early!

Figure 5. 2022 Chinese Music Summer Program.

Temple Quanfa Institute (STQI) (martial arts school but including instrument classes as part of the Chinese cultural program). Furthermore, Canada One Family Network (COFN) provides classes in Chinese instruments and has a small group of seniors who perform together (e-mail exchange with author, 1 January 2022). As of April 30, 2022, according to its mission statement,

COFN aims to raise the standards of awareness and respectability of the performing arts (music, dancing, musical instruments, songs, recitals, opera, painting, carving, calligraphy, martial arts, health and wellness, tea culture) and artists of Chinese Traditional, Ancient and Cultural origins and their acceptance by the communities through exposure, exhibits, entertainment, magazine publication and education. (Canada One Family Network, n.d.)

The majority of these community organizations are located inside Chinese communities, such as Scarborough, Richmond Hill, Markham, and Toronto's Chinatown. Most of the centers offer group lessons, while private lessons are also available. Chinese instrument group classes not only provide entertainment, self-expression, a social gathering space, welfare, and a sense of belonging but they also improve societal acceptance of Chinese culture.

The work of many of these community centers reflect the theory and practice of Canadian multiculturalism. Veblen and Olsson state that "implicit in these [community music] programs is the recognition that participants' social and personal growth is as important as their musical growth. Often there is a belief in the value and use of music to foster intercultural and interpersonal acceptance and understanding" (Veblen and Olsson 2002:731).

CHINESE ORCHESTRAS

Su Zheng (2010), in summarizing where and how Chinese American music ensemble members receive musical training, states that many amateur musicians receive informal instruction from their own group members. For instance, they take lessons from the more skillful one in the group. This approach is also used by Chinese Canadian music orchestras and ensembles, of which there are more than ten in the Greater Toronto Area. Most of these orchestras and ensembles do not offer formal instrumental lessons; however, members informally assist one another in learning their instruments. For example, several members of the Millennium Orchestra, made up of around thirty senior amateur Chinese Canadian musicians, learn new instruments by instruction from other members of the orchestra. Heidi Chan, a Canadian ethnomusicologist and the daughter of a Millennium Orchestra member, reports that some members of this orchestra had been encouraged to learn new instruments to fill in gaps in the orchestra's instrumentation. To do so, members typically learn new instruments from other members (Chan 2015:10). In other words, experienced musicians teach inexperienced ones. This internal teaching and learning method in Chinese music ensembles and orchestras is common in diasporic contexts where there are fewer Chinese music education institutions or professional teachers.

In addition to this informal music training method, some Toronto-based Chinese orchestras have found some alternative ways to provide Chinese instrument lessons to enthusiastic youths and seniors beyond their orchestra. They have reached out to Chinese communities through Chinese music group lessons, summer camps, scholarships

and senior learning programs. For instance, Toronto Chinese Orchestra and Canadian Chinese Orchestra partnered with a local music school to provide both a Chinese music group and a summer camp. Yip's Canada is a private music school founded in 1990 by Dr. Wai Hong Yip, a music educator originally from Hong Kong. Yip's began working with TCO on an all-year Chinese music program in 2013, which included Chinese instrumental group lessons and a Chinese music ensemble. They normally rehearsed for around an hour and a half per week, with group lessons in the first half and ensemble rehearsing in the second half. Yip's and TCO also cohosted a summer camp—Chinese Music & Culture Camp—in the same year. The camp provided “a chance to learn more about the Chinese Culture as well as have a hands-on experience with one of the Chinese instruments” (Yip's Canada 2013). The weekly Chinese music program ended in 2016 due to the conductor's departure. However, the summer camp remained.

TCO and Yip's collaboration ended in 2017, and Yip's began working with Amely Zhou in 2018. Zhou was a member of TCO and taught *erhu* at the summer camp and music program. She was also the conductor of the Toronto Youth Chinese Orchestra from 2015 to 2017. In 2017, Zhou left TCO and founded Canadian Chinese Orchestra (CCO), her own orchestra. In 2018, Yip's reached out to Zhou and the summer camp was resumed. In 2021, Zhou's orchestra, the CCO began copresenting the summer camp with Yip's (see Figure 5). The Chinese music group and the summer camp that Yip's offered, together with TCO and CCO, provided students with an opportunity to learn about Chinese music and culture. This account of complex and shifting alliances demonstrates the Chinese orchestras' transition from internal music training methods to include community-based music education.

Among the Chinese orchestras in the GTA, the CCO is unique in its Chinese music education outreach since its community engagement is explicitly designed for youths and seniors. According to Amely Zhou, the orchestra director, the CCO is committed to promoting Chinese music and education. In recent years, the orchestra has provided Chinese instrument lessons to enthusiastic youths and seniors in Chinese communities through scholarship learning programs and a seniors' music learning program.

To encourage youths to learn about some lesser-known Chinese instruments, but also for the development of CCO, the orchestra launched two scholarship learning programs in 2018 for Chinese wind instruments, specifically *suona* and *sheng* (see Figures 6 and 7) (Canadian Chinese Orchestra, n.d.). It is the first scholarship offered by a Chinese orchestra in the GTA. These scholarships were offered to youths who were older than eight years old and were residents of the GTA. People who have previous musical training knowledge were given priority. Applicants ranging in age from eight years old to seventeen years old would automatically be rewarded the scholarship prized at \$1,000.00. Applicants born before 1 January 2002 would have to write a small paragraph and request the scholarship for the amount up to \$1,000.00, and the approved amount could be smaller than requested.

Since 2018, each instrument offered two scholarships to candidates ranging in age from teens to the mid-sixties. The scholarship offered forty-five-minute private lessons every week for the 2018–2020 season (September to June) by professional musicians,

A promotional poster for the Suona Scholarship Learning Program. The background is a dark red color. At the top left is the logo of the Canadian Chinese Orchestra (CCO), featuring a stylized white flower or flame shape above the Chinese characters '紅楓華樂團' and the English text 'Canadian Chinese Orchestra'. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'Thinking about which wind instrument to learn? Consider learning an ancient Chinese wind instrument!' in white. Below this, the title '遗失的民族乐器' (Lost National Instrument) and 'A Lost Musical Instrument' is written in white. The main title '唢呐 奖学金项目' (Suona Scholarship Program) and 'Suona Scholarship Learning Program' is prominently displayed in white. The text describes the suona as a double reeded Chinese horn with a sonorous sound, important in northern China. It lists benefits: 45 minutes of private lesson weekly, 40 one-on-one lessons, waived rental fees, and a \$1000 scholarship. It also mentions a program fee of \$1699 and a deadline of August 29th, 2018. The instructor, Huiming Li, is shown in a white traditional Chinese shirt, holding a suona. His name and title are listed on the right. Contact information is provided at the bottom left.

Thinking about which wind instrument to learn?
Consider learning an ancient Chinese wind instrument!

紅楓華樂團
Canadian Chinese Orchestra

遗失的民族乐器
A Lost Musical Instrument

唢呐 奖学金项目
Suona Scholarship Learning Program

The **SUONA** is a double reeded Chinese horn which has a sonorous sound and is a very important part of Chinese musical traditions. You can hear the sound of suona mainly in northern parts of China for festivals and rituals.

Receive **45 Minutes of Private Lesson Weekly** for 2018-2019 season (September to June).

Total of **40 One-on-One Lessons!**

Instrument Rental Fees Waived for 2018-2019 season (September to June).

Program Fee \$1699
The Scholarship Covers up to \$1000

Limited Scholarship Positions Available
Apply by August 29th, 2018

Instrument will be given out for free as part of the scholarship if successfully accepted as either a CYCO or CPCO member for 2019-2020 season.

For more information and Application Forms
Please visit: www.CanadianChineseOrchestra.com
Contact: (647)889-8042

唢呐导师：
Suona Instructor：
李惠明
Huiming Li

Figure 6. Suona Scholarship Learning Program.

Huiming Li and Yi Wang who are also the teachers at CCO. By the end of the program, the scholarship recipients would also potentially have opportunities to perform. The *sheng* scholarship ended in 2020 due to the instructor returning to China. The *suona* scholarship continued in the following years. From 2020 until present, the orchestra has offered a *yangqin* scholarship learning program in addition to the *suona* scholarship, because it is also a less-played instrument.

*Thinking about which wind instrument to learn?
Consider learning an ancient Chinese wind instrument!*

遗失的民族乐器
A Lost Musical Instrument

紅楓華樂團
Canadian Chinese Orchestra

笙 奖学金项目
Sheng Scholarship Learning Program

The **SHENG** is a free-reed wind instrument which dates back to 1000 years BC. It is the only polyphonic wind instrument in the family of Chinese wind instruments. The sheng has a meditative sound and is made by bamboo pipes.

Receive **45 Minutes of Private Lesson Weekly**
for 2018-2019 season (September to June).

笙导师：
Sheng Instructor：
王一
Yi Wang

Total of **40 One-on-One Lessons!**

Instrument Rental Fees Waived
for 2018-2019 season (September to June).

Program Fee \$1699
The Scholarship Covers up to \$1000

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member for 2019-2020 season.

For more information and Application Forms
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Contact:
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Figure 7. Sheng Scholarship Learning Program.

In addition, in December 2021, the CCO launched a senior music learning program. Because seniors could not go out and socialize normally during the pandemic, director Amely Zhou wanted to provide them with a way to socialize and build a sense of “imagined community” through exposure to music. She applied for a Seniors Community

Grant from the Ontario government to provide a fully funded senior music learning program offered by the CCO (see Figure 8) (Canadian Chinese Orchestra, n.d.). It is also the first fully funded senior music learning program offered by a Chinese orchestra in the GTA. According to the government website, the goal of the grant is to

help community organizations provide opportunities for greater social inclusion, volunteerism and community engagement for older adults, from the safety of their homes or other safe environments. With the health and safety of Ontario's older adults being more important than ever, the program aims to address social isolation and help older adults stay healthy, safe and engaged in their communities. (Government of Ontario 2023)

This learning program was free of charge and offered to seventy seniors who were over fifty-five years old and interested in Chinese music. The program was held virtually twice per week from December 2021 to February 2022, in small groups and was taught by professional musicians. Classes were offered for six instrument: *erhu*, *guzheng*, *pipa*, *zhongruan*, *yangqin*, and *hulusi*. In addition to beginning-level classes for these instruments, the learning program also provided advanced classes in *erhu* and *guzheng* for experienced players. Even though these seniors learned the instruments in such a short period, their hard work enabled them to learn the basic playing techniques on the instruments and a short piece of music.

On 26 February 2022, the CCO, the Millennium Orchestra, and the students and professional musicians from the Seniors Music Learning Program held a successful livestream concert called “The Epiphany” (see Figure 9) (Canadian Chinese Orchestra, n.d.). The director of the CCO is hoping that there will be another government-funding opportunity to enable further senior learning programs. This government-funded program is one examples of continuing government support for ethnic community initiatives in a general context of reduction of support. These community music activities often are “grassroots” rather than “publicly mandated” (Lee et al. 2016:142). Both efforts spear-headed by CCO, the scholarship program and the senior learning program, provide community engagement with Chinese music by promoting greater visibility of Chinese instruments and enabling children and seniors to learn Chinese music. Although we can discriminate between community music and mainstream music education, both practices are mutually invested in each other.

CHINESE MUSIC IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The most dramatic and consequential developments in Chinese music education in Toronto are in the public higher education system. The trajectory of Chinese musical education in Toronto follows a rise and fall pattern. It began in the 1990s, flourished in the 2000s, and declined at the end of 2010s. This pattern reflects the intersection of cultural policies of “multiculturalism” and one particular cultural group, the Chinese.

After the Chinese economic reform in 1979, increasing numbers of people from mainland China immigrated to Canada, which brought many professional Chinese

红枫华乐团
Canadian Chinese Orchestra

CANADIAN CHINESE ORCHESTRA PRESENTS

Seniors Music Learning Program

FROM DECEMBER 6 TH 2021 TO FEBRUARY 26TH 2022

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Available Instruments are
Erhu, Guzheng, Pipa, Zhongruan,
Yangqin, Hulusi

The instrument will be provided if you don't have one.
Applicant must be older than 55 years old.

Limited to 50 participants, registration will be closed once spots are filled.

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Figure 8. Senior Music Learning Program.

instrumentalists and Chinese music enthusiasts to this country. These musicians became involved in the Chinese community's musical activities through both teaching and performing. The earliest introduction of Chinese musical instrument courses in higher education institutions in Toronto began more than three decades ago. The most famous professional Chinese instrumentalist who immigrated to Toronto after the 1990s was

紅楓華樂團
Canadian Chinese Orchestra

The Epiphany
網絡音樂會

2022年2月26日 | 傍晚7:30

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千禧雅樂坊

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Figure 9. The Epiphany.

George Gao, a renowned *erhu* master, who graduated in 1989 from the Shanghai Conservatory with a major in *erhu* performance. After two years, he moved to Toronto and was admitted into the Royal Conservatory of Music and began studying piano and vocals. In 1993, he became the first *erhu* instructor at the Royal Conservatory of Music, established the first *erhu* syllabus, and organized the first major *erhu* concert in Canada (Huain 2001). Gao also gave private *erhu* lessons to music enthusiasts, including Patty Chan and Peter Bok (current president of the Ontario Chinese Orchestra).

In 2003, under its World Music Program, the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto offered a Chinese Music Program. Renowned Chinese instrumentalists from Toronto were recruited by the conservatory to teach for the program, including Wendy Zhao on the *pipa*, Mingqing Guo on the *yangqin*, Shange Fan on the *guzheng*, and George Gao on the *erhu*. However, only a few students applied for the program, despite the efforts of the Royal Conservatory of Music and the Chinese music teachers to promote it. Zhao, for instance, only had one student. Unfortunately, the program was only offered for two semesters (Wendy Zhao, personal communication, 12 July 2022). Zhao speculates that it is most likely because there were not many Chinese international students at the time. The largest issue, though, was the traveling required to participate in the courses. In fact, all the students had to go to downtown Toronto, where the Royal Conservatory of Music is situated, while the majority of Chinese immigrants were located in Toronto's east and northeast. The majority of students who wished to enroll in the courses found it challenging to commute to the city (Wendy Zhao, personal communication, 12 July 2022).

Although the program was short-lived, there was an increase in Chinese music teaching and learning in Toronto's higher education institutions in the 2000s. Since 2000, a few higher institutions of learning in the public system have offered Chinese instrumental lessons or Chinese music studies as part of their curricula. In 2000, Kim Chow-Morris, at the time a PhD student in ethnomusicology at York University, and now a professor at Toronto Metropolitan University, started teaching Chinese music courses at York University (Muecke and Zach 2007:274). Later, more Chinese instrumental teachers joined. The courses featured a Chinese music ensemble, which was open to both music majors and non-music majors, and private one-to-one lessons for Chinese instruments such as *erhu*, *dizi*, *xiao*, *guzheng*, and *yangqin* that were available only to music major students. Patty Chan was one of the music ensemble tutors at York University from 2003 to 2015.

The Chinese ensemble offerings were ended in 2019 due to funding issues at York. Nevertheless, private lessons are currently still being offered by the music department. Chow-Morris also started a Chinese music program at Toronto Metropolitan University soon after gaining her doctorate in 2004. The program consisted of courses in Chinese music ensemble and of Chinese music history, and Patty Chan was the graduate assistant of Chinese music ensemble from 2009 to 2010. She also taught Chinese music history in 2011 and 2018, a course that has been taken on by Heidi Chan in 2021. Chow-Morris also attempted to found a Chinese ensemble course for the University of Toronto in 2004, but the course ceased to be offered a year later. These efforts—spearheaded largely by these higher education institutions and Chinese instrumentalists—promoted greater visibility of Chinese music through formal course offerings. This helped to facilitate more appreciation of China's rich musical heritage by providing instruction and performance opportunities based on traditional Chinese music. These courses also increased musical and cultural diversity in the university and wider community. However, recently, Chinese music education is facing a predicament. Nowadays, only two universities continue to provide courses relating to Chinese music: Toronto Metropolitan University offers Chinese music history and York University offers Chinese

music private lessons (*erhu*). These cuts are part of a bigger issue of a lack of support for world music at York University. In 2019, York canceled not just the Chinese music ensemble but also the Korean drumming ensemble, the World Music Choral, and the Klezmer ensemble. Also unfortunately, the Balkan ensemble and Celtic ensemble were both discontinued in the fall of 2022.

The reductions in music departments at the university level—in faculty hirings, programs, and courses—form a part of a wider pattern of reductions in public funding for education programs and community arts programs, especially those related to multiculturalism. Music education in public schools in Toronto has been in crisis for at least a decade. In 2013, under pressures to balance their budget, the Toronto District School Board voted to sacrifice music programs and teachers. On 17 May 2017, CBC News reported “Number of music teachers at Ontario schools has fallen 7% in the last decade” (CBC News 2017).

The report, compiled by People for Education—a non-profit advocacy group that tracks education in the province and offers policy recommendations—found that 41 percent of elementary school in Ontario have a “specialist music teacher, down from 48 percent from a decade ago. The trend can be partly explained by two main factors: declining enrollment, which equates to less funding for schools with fewer students and, according to Kidder,” a sense that the priority is in different areas like math and science. (CBC News 2017)

Further, in May 2019, a headline of CUPE Canada reported Ford government’s education cuts will silence music in TDSB schools, stated,

A music instructor who has worked 24 years with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is seeing history repeat itself as the board once again proposes cuts to itinerant music programs in elementary schools—this time as a result of cuts to education funding by the Ford government. (CUPE 2019)

Cuts in music classes in the public school system, the reduction in provincial and federal funding for the arts and multicultural programming in community and civic organizations, the shrinking of world music course offerings and hirings in higher education are all working to limit opportunities for world music and in particular, Chinese music. In summary, given the current situation of Chinese music education in Toronto, it seems likely that in the future, private lessons will continue to be the main way to learn Chinese music. However, this trend to private lessons accompanied by severe reductions in public and government funding for multiculturalism programs in the arts comes with risks. As decolonizing is a prevalent topic in the academic world and Toronto is a multicultural city, higher education institutions in Toronto should be cautious of the possible negative consequences for multicultural and world music inclusivity. The long-term consequence is the loss of cultural heritage for significant portions of the Canadian population.

CHINESE MUSIC PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION

Apart from various ways of transmission of musical knowledge, a prominent continuity in the transfer from China to the Canadian context is the Chinese Music Proficiency Examination. This examination is the most authoritative overseas measure of Chinese instrument music proficiency issued by the Central Conservatory of Music of China (CCOM). The examination offers certification that indicates a standardized recognition of musical prowess and proficiency.

The CCOM is one of the most prestigious and important music and art institutions in China. Its External Music Proficiency Examinations Committee, aiming at popularizing music education, provides a professional and authoritative assessment and evaluation for overseas amateur students of Chinese music with a rigorous academic style and excellent tradition. The academic and recognition status of the school is undeniable in overseas countries and regions such as the United States, Canada, Germany, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan (Toronto Chinese Orchestra n.d.). The CCOM and the British Columbia Chinese Music Association have been cooperating to hold the Chinese Music Proficiency Examination (CMPE) in Canada since 2006, which includes the Technical Examination and the Music Theory Examination. The CCOM sends its teachers from Beijing to conduct and assess the examinations and issue the certificates for the external music level examinations. They also help to improve professional levels of Chinese music and promote the development of Chinese music in the region. The teaching materials are written by experts from the CCOM and are based on the principles of gradual progression and emphasis on basic skills training, so that if students follow the correct curriculum, they will steadily move forward in their development (ibid.).

In 2006, test centers were only set up in Vancouver, BC. In later years, these centers were set up in Toronto, and now they have also spread to Calgary, Montreal, and Ottawa. The CMPE's examination subjects include *erhu*, *pipa*, *yangqin*, *guzheng*, flute, *zhongruan*, *sheng*, and *suona*. As well, technical examinations begin at level 1 and go up to level 10. All Canadian residents and citizens are eligible to take these exams.

For levels 1–6, the overseas version of the CCOM textbook must be used, including the textbook required for the oral examination. From levels 7–10, the overseas edition of CCOM's domestic and international repertoire must be used. However, if more selection range is needed, candidates can select a piece not included in these editions. It is recommended that candidates choose one traditional and one modern piece of music to demonstrate a greater range in learning levels. The overseas version of the CCOM's examination textbooks not only has helped unify the teaching of Chinese instruments overseas but also has become an important musical tool for overseas music teachers. Inviting professors from mainland China to adjudicate in Canada not only provides authority but also unifies the grading criteria.

According to the 2019 Chinese Musical Instruments Technique Grade Exam in Canada Brochure, Toronto had thirty Chinese instrument teachers, while 167 examinees participated in the exam, including fifty-six examinees in *erhu*, six examinees in *yangqin*, five examinees in *dizi*, ten examinees in *pipa*, and ninety examinees in *guzheng* (Toronto

Chinese Orchestra n.d.). According to Patty Chan, most of the students who take the examination are first-generation immigrants from China (mainland China and Hong Kong). Some had previously learned the instruments in China and continued their studies after coming to Canada, while others are new to the instruments. There are also some second-generation Chinese and non-Chinese. The students range from elementary school students to seniors. The music books (repertoire) are in Chinese. There are language barriers for those who cannot read Chinese. They have to ask people who can read Chinese to translate for them. Usually, the instrument teachers recommend students to take the examination so that students will have a goal for learning the instruments to achieve the level they want. Few students become professional musicians (Patty Chan, personal communication, 12 June 2023).

Patty Chan also suggested that the Chinese Music Proficiency Examination has room for improvement. In comparison with the Royal Conservatory Examinations, the Chinese Music Proficiency Examination has fewer musicianship evaluations, such as for aural and sight reading/singing skills, and the music theory exam is optional. It also has fewer choices for repertoire pieces and etudes at each level: Each level of the Royal Conservatory Examination has five repertoire pieces and three etudes, while the Chinese Music Proficiency Examination has only two repertoire pieces and one or two etudes (Patty Chan, personal communication, 12 June 2023).

The Chinese Music Proficiency Examination establishes a Chinese music educational system, and thus a pedagogical bridge between mainland China and the Chinese diaspora, thereby meeting the requirement for a systematic Chinese instrument pedagogy overseas. Since the 2007–2008 school year, the British Columbia Ministry of Education has accepted the External Credential Program Courses and Examination from the Central Conservatory of Music in China for both high school graduation credit and university entrance. This reflects not only the formal recognition of Chinese musical instrument education by the province of British Columbia but also a societal awareness and acceptance of Chinese Music at large.

CONCLUSION

Sine 1969, when Ming Chan gave his first private Chinese musical instrument lesson, the Chinese musical instrument educational system in the Greater Toronto Area has gone through many stages: from a lack of textbooks and educational resources to uniform examination preparation materials, from private lessons to community-organized orchestral groups. Different waves of immigration to the GTA have created diverse Chinese communities with varying degrees of music proficiencies and teaching sources. This diversity has fostered a transnational musical exchange between Chinese music conservatories and Toronto's Chinese communities, leading to the establishment of a uniform pedagogical system with music textbooks and proficiency exams.

Chinese musical instrument education in the GTA, especially for youths and seniors, has not only promoted Chinese music through various teaching approaches but has also assisted Chinese immigrants with staying linked to their culture through the transmission of their heritage to successive generations and by providing individuals with a social outlet. As an example, Chinese immigrants were able to retain elements of their culture as well as engage with Chinese music as a social activity during the isolation of the recent pandemic. Chinese musical instrument education has undergone many changes over the past decades, particularly through the shift away from internal transmission of music knowledge and skills within ensembles and orchestras into a much broader community engagement. Community-based Chinese music education might serve as a model for creating and maintaining cultural connections within the Chinese diaspora in other parts of Canada and abroad.

Nonetheless, support from Canada's public higher education system has followed a pattern of marked decline since the peak of support between 1990 and 2010. This decline is a significant loss of Chinese-Canadian cultural heritage, one that demands attention. While the discourse on multiculturalism in Canadian higher education has evolved into the even more fundamental discourse on decolonization, course offerings continue to depend on funding, as the evidence from York University shows.

With regard to the risk of losing this valuable cultural resource altogether due to a lack of public funding, the question becomes whether cultural heritage can effectively shift from public funding into private hands. The hope is that by building upon existing discourse about the social and educational value of Chinese music, as well as Canada's enduring respect for cultural diversity, private benefactors from the community at large may initiate and support efforts to preserve and carry forward areas of cultural inheritance, including music.

Glossary

Dizi	Transverse bamboo flute
Erhu	Two-stringed bowed fiddle
Gaohu	High-pitched fiddle
Guqin	Seven-stringed zither
Guzheng	Twenty-one-stringed zither
Hulusi	Cucurbit flute with a free reed
Pipa	Four-stringed Chinese lute
Ruan/zhongruan	Moon-shaped Chinese lute/middle-sized moon-shaped Chinese lute
Sheng	Mouth organ
Suona	Double-reed horn
Xiao	Vertical bamboo flute
Yangqin	Hammered dulcimer

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