

A Comparative Study of Folk Music Education in Italy and China under the Background of Globalization — Inspired by Giorgio Nataletti's Philosophy

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of globalization and increasing international cultural exchange, Chinese folk music education faces significant opportunities and challenges. This paper examines folk music education in Italy and China. Through a comparative analysis of the concepts, inheritance mechanisms, and practical approaches of folk music education in these two countries, drawing on the educational philosophy of Giorgio Nataletti, a pioneer in Italian folk music education, this paper explores the developmental characteristics of folk music education within these different cultural contexts. The study finds that despite differences in historical traditions and educational systems, both China and Italy demonstrate a trend of integration and innovation in responding to the impact of globalization and promoting the sustainable development of folk music. Through this comparative perspective, the paper provides theoretical support and practical references for the localization and internationalization of Chinese folk music education, offering valuable insights for the development of Chinese music education.

Keywords: globalization, Italy, folk music, Chinese music education, cultural heritage

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of globalization, the spread and integration of cultures from different countries are becoming increasingly frequent. Globalization has accelerated the exchange of cultures among countries and promoted the standardization and convergence of educational systems and content.

China and Italy represent important ancient civilizations with profound Eastern and Western cultural traditions, respectively, and both have rich folk music traditions. China has long emphasized the combination of oral transmission and curriculum-based traditional music, while Italy has established a unique folk music education system[1]. This article intends to use Giorgio Nataletti's ideas as a starting point to compare and analyze the theoretical basis, institutional structure and practical path of folk music education in Italy and China, providing new perspectives and practical references for the development of Chinese folk music education.

2. The development and educational path of Italian folk music

2.1 An Overview of the Development of Italian Folk Music

Italy has a diverse folk music tradition, with a profound cultural heritage and regional differences, including folk horns from the northern Alps, religious rhythmic music from Sicily, and tarantella from the southwest. In the 20th century, the "Italian Traditional Music Collection Project" led by Giorgio Nataletti gradually brought folk music into the academic field, marking the beginning of modern Italian ethnomusicology and laying the foundation for the systematic compilation of Italian traditional music [2].

2.2 Nataletti's ideas and the foundation of national music education

Nataletti advocated that music education should be "culturally conscious" so that students can understand the cultural environment in which they live. He advocated "auditory ethnography" and participated in cultural inheritance by recording, listening, analyzing and reproducing music. He broke through the centralist framework of traditional Western classical music education and brought local music into the core of public education discussions. He also promoted the establishment of a national music archive for national radio stations, which became an important source of traditional music materials. The program "Suoni e voci dell'Italia" included hundreds of traditional music clips from all over Italy, and provided text materials and teaching suggestions[3].

2.3 Integration of National Music into School Curriculum and Practical Innovation

Since the 1970s, the Italian Ministry of Education has been promoting the inclusion of folk music in primary and secondary school classrooms, particularly in southern Italy and the islands. Curriculum reforms emphasize the value of “local knowledge,” encourage and promote teachers’ familiarity with local music, increase training courses, update teaching materials, and promote “digital audio education.” Using digital platforms like RAI and YouTube, students can readily access and analyze traditional music recordings, fostering a sense of engagement.

During the 2020 pandemic, a middle school in Nuoro, Sardinia, implemented the “Musiche della memoria” project online. Students interviewed their ancestors remotely, recorded ancient wedding songs, and transcribed them into digital music using an app. The project received support from the regional cultural fund and was recommended by the Education Bureau as an innovative teaching case[4].

3. The Development Path and Practice of Chinese National Music Education

3.1 The historical inheritance and modernization of Chinese folk music

Chinese folk music has a long history and covers a variety of vocal music, instrumental music, opera, and folk song and dance forms. It is mainly taught through “master-apprentice teaching”, “family generation” and “festival practice”. After the reform and opening up, the country gradually incorporated folk music into the curriculum system of primary and secondary schools and colleges and universities. Against this background, Chinese folk music has gradually completed the role transformation from “traditional folk culture” to “educational curriculum resource”, and began to be integrated with the construction of national cultural identity and modern citizen education[5].

3.2 The promotion of national music education by colleges and professional institutions

Higher music colleges play a core role in the national music education system. Various music colleges have opened majors such as “ethnomusicology, vocal music, and instrumental music” to cultivate systematic teaching and research talents. In 2002, the China Conservatory of Music established the “Intangible Cultural Heritage Music Project Course” and invited national-level inheritors to teach, enhancing the first-hand experience and research capabilities of national music[6]. In addition, institutions such as the National Library of China are also organizing and digitizing a large number of national music archives to provide a material library for the development of primary and secondary schools[7].

3.3 The Development and Innovation of National Music in Primary and Secondary Schools

In response to the fact that music education courses are overly formalistic and instrumental, local education departments have actively promoted local educational innovation, enriching classroom content through “Art into Campus” and intangible cultural heritage inheritance activities, and technical means such as AR/VR experience and online teaching platforms are constantly being introduced into the classroom.

The “Dong Nationality Songs in the Classroom” project was implemented in Taijiang County Middle School in Qian-dongnan Prefecture, Guizhou Province. Local Dong nationality singers were invited to work with teachers to conduct bilingual teaching, allowing students to understand the ethnic culture behind the lyrics[8]. These projects embody the concept of “curriculum-based, localized, and student-based” local music, making ethnic music a carrier of cultural identity education for students.

4. Comparison and reflection on Chinese and Italian folk music education

4.1 Comparison of Educational Concepts and Methods

In the early days, Chinese traditional music education placed more emphasis on the “apprenticeship system” and “model learning”. Because of the long-term emphasis on theoretical teaching, there is still a lack of attention to field practice. In contrast, under the promotion of Giorgio Nataletti, Italy emphasizes field recording and cultural on-site experience. Students not only learn music, but also go deep into the community, observe performances, and understand the language and life-style[9]. This method helps students truly feel the cultural vitality of national music.

4.2 Comparison of course content and textbook writing

Chinese textbooks often focus on representative regional traditional music repertoires, covering a wide range of ethnic instruments and vocal genres. The compilation process involves joint participation from university professors and government agencies to ensure standardization and alignment with national cultural strategies. Italian folk music textbooks are deeply influenced by Nataletti’s “Archivio di Etnomusicologia.” They place greater emphasis on cultural narratives and

musical context, integrating music studies with sociology, linguistics, and other disciplines through an interdisciplinary approach. This allows students to understand the social function and cultural significance of melodies while also learning about them.

4.3 Comparison of policy support and inheritance mechanisms

The Chinese government prioritizes the preservation of ethnic culture and promotes the “Intangible Cultural Heritage in Schools” initiative. Local governments are also actively organizing ethnic music performances and heritage events. However, the overall operational model is government-led and professionally implemented, with relatively limited public participation. This also creates a conflict between “standardization” and “local” in intelligent education. Italian ethnic music education emphasizes multi-stakeholder participation. Through Giorgio Nataletti’s research, Italian folk music education fosters a “bottom-up” model of inheritance, linking education, culture, community organizations, religious institutions, and local museums. Italian folk music education has also achieved success in the digitization of archives and the development of sound databases, making traditional recordings accessible to academia and the public through platforms.

5. The Enlightenment of Nataletti’s Concept on Chinese Folk Music Education

5.1 Emphasis on “local recording” and authentic cultural presentation

5.1.1 Promoting field work into the classroom

Giorgio Nataletti advocates the “original ecological reproduction” of music culture. Chinese university music education can learn from this and encourage students to go beyond the classroom and conduct field research, recording, and analysis in ethnic minority areas. In the “Guizhou Multicultural Music Education Sustainable Project,” students participated in village festivals and recorded songs and dances, incorporating field materials directly into classroom teaching. This participatory teaching method enhances students’ respect and understanding of non-mainstream cultural forms[10].

5.1.2 Learn from the experience of building “sound archives”

Nataletti founded the Italian National Sound Archive, which inspired China to build a digital database of folk music. A collaborative project was carried out between Beijing Normal University and Guizhou University for Nationalities to establish a digital resource platform based on live recordings of folk music. This platform not only preserves local music styles but is also used for teaching and sharing, effectively promoting the educational dissemination and knowledge inheritance of traditional music[11].

5.2 Establish a linkage mechanism among education, media and cultural systems

5.2.1 Break down departmental barriers and form a collaborative inheritance system

Nataletti built a linkage system between radio stations, museums, and schools. China can also promote the establishment of a national music dissemination ecosystem by breaking down the “barriers” between education, culture, and media. In Hunan Province, the three-way dissemination system of “classroom-community-public” has been tried and implemented, effectively enhancing the practical influence of national music teaching[12].

5.2.2 Strengthen the recording and teaching of ethnic minority music culture

In schools in ethnic minority areas, the idea of building a “sound archive” can be imitated, and music from cultural venues such as festivals, weddings, and sacrifices can be recorded through images and recordings, and then converted into course resources. In the ethnic music curriculum system of colleges and universities, this combination of “live recording” and “teaching transformation” is an effective extension of Nataletti’s ideas in contemporary expression[13].

5.3 Identity Education in the Metacultural Context

5.3.1 Building cultural identity and respect through music education

Nataletti believes that folk music education is a process of cultural cognition and identity building. In the multi-ethnic and multilingual context of China, educators need to guide students through music to understand the cultural boundaries between “self” and “other.” At a middle school in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, incorporating traditional Yi gourd sheng music into the daily music curriculum helps Yi students find cultural belonging and Han students develop cross-cultural understanding.

5.3.2 Resisting the cultural impact of globalization and homogenization

Nataletti emphasized the importance of enhancing the public’s resistance to national culture through education. The Chinese education system should also establish a curriculum system with a mechanism for protecting local culture. At the Wenzhou University Conservatory of Music in Zhejiang Province, an experimental course introduced a comparative teaching of Wenzhou drum lyrics and Western pop music, guiding students to analyze cultural differences from multiple

perspectives[14].

6. Conclusion

This study compares and analyzes the national music education in China and Italy from multiple dimensions, including teaching philosophy, curriculum content, and policy support. In the context of globalization, Giorgio Nataletti of Italy has provided important inspiration for Chinese national music education[15]. Trials carried out in Hunan, Guizhou and other places in China have shown good results. In the future, we should strengthen the “field ability” and cultural sensitivity of music teachers, learn from Nataletti’s “sound archive” concept, and promote the construction of a multi-language and multi-format national music database. Encourage teacher exchanges and class visits between China and Italy at the music school level. Integrating teaching methods from different cultural backgrounds will help improve students’ cultural understanding and aesthetic perception.

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