

# *Discussion on the Role of Basic Music Education in Cultivating Aesthetic Personality*

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**Abstract:** Human beings are eternal in their pursuit of beauty. Aesthetic education is indispensable at every stage of human growth. The Chinese people's pursuit of "truth, goodness and beauty" is a dialectical and unified aesthetic pursuit. Universal basic music education plays a vital role in the early development and shaping of the aesthetic personality. Aesthetic education is realm education not bottom line education. Basic music education is the starting point, not the end point, of training highly qualified people. A person's aesthetic standards are ultimately reflected in his or her cultivation as a person. If knowledge is emphasized over aesthetic education, society will be "illiterate, but aesthetically illiterate". People's moral thinking will increasingly degenerate into bottom-line thinking, and the pursuit of a better life will stagnate and lack momentum, or even lose its direction. It is the duty of the society to cultivate aesthetic personality in basic music education from the "children". Victor Hugo once said that music, writing, and mathematics are the three keys to human intelligence, of which music education plays the most intuitive and enlightening role. It is necessary to return to the nurturing nature of basic music education by adopting the approach of teaching and learning with fun. By summarizing the development rules of classical music education in music history, using interdisciplinary knowledge integration and introducing music technology and other factors, enhancing the ability to use aesthetics, comprehending music philosophy and connotation, continuously guiding students to recognize beauty, discover beauty, comprehend beauty and pursue beauty, nurturing "beautiful hearts" and inspiring "intelligent minds", so as to better play the long-term role of basic music education in cultivating aesthetic personality and serving the development of the information technology era and make the world a better and more splendid place.

## 1. Introduction

Aesthetic values are an important part of social perceptions, and implicitly influence the development of ideology, politics, philosophy, morality, religion, art, culture and other social construction. The heritage and development of music comes to a large extent from the soil cultivation and prior nurturing of basic music education. The advent of music before language has made basic music education present in every known construction of civilization in the development of human society. The modern medical profession believes that the fetus forms hearing in the mother's body and is able to distinguish various sounds at 5-7 months, when receiving good music fetal education has become the basis for laying the foundation of early life aesthetics. Education in

early childhood and adolescence often establishes the ideological foundation, aesthetic values and standards of a person's life, so the influence of basic education is an indispensable condition for shaping a normal life, and the role of long-term mechanisms is very obvious. Just like a small sapling grows up after watering, fertilizing, pruning and cutting leaves, choosing light and growing, it grows day by day under the nourishment of sunshine and rain, and finally becomes a big tree, these growing nutrients are the "photosynthesis" of basic education. It can be said that in ancient times or in modern times and in the future, in different times and places, basic music education has constantly shaped, influenced and contributed to great changes in the aesthetic values of society, including the development of the music industry, the taste of audiences in choosing stage arts and the rise and fall of popular factors in society.

The laws of music history tell us that the artistic sensitivity of musicians has always put them at the forefront of the development of the aesthetic consciousness of society, and that the musical works thus composed have been continuously analyzed and adopted and emphasized in subsequent music education to reflect the role and significance of their aesthetic values. The traditional tonal system has reached its peak in the classical and romantic periods, from Bach, Mozart and Beethoven to Brahms and Wagner, who created a "musical miracle" that has been difficult for future generations to build upon. The innovations that originated in the Schoenberg era led to a revolutionary change in musical style in the twentieth century. Different styles coexisted during the same period, with Debussy's Impressionism, Schoenberg's Expressionism, Hindemith's Neo-Classicism, and Bartók's Neo-Nationalism each occupying a place. Different genres, new techniques and compositional methods, producing tuneless music; new forms of music such as sequential music, electronic music, incidental music, concrete music, noise music, jazz music, microtonal music etc are like springing up and showing up one by one, [1] The diversified development of society has promoted and expanded the infinite extension of musical contents, while influencing people's aesthetic tastes and choices. With the development and progress of social civilization, basic music education has become more and more free from the shackles of class and has become a generally accepted teaching of aesthetic education, and has become a necessary backbone for the construction of the aesthetic system of society. The author believes that it is appropriate to compare the function of music education to that of the natural substance "water", and that music education plays an irreplaceable role in the same way as "water", with the same qualities. Just like water with coffee, tea and juice, it can be made into different flavored drinks to provide material requirements and nutrients. The function of music education can create social music environment of different periods and styles, and use different genres of artistic expression in various occasions to directly or indirectly show and infect people's emotions and ideological stance, thus promoting the development and progress of social civilization. The impact of music education is profoundly reflected in the persistent awareness and constant pursuit of beauty in human beings. In particular, the rapid development of the information age, the rapid change of various channels for acquiring music, the obvious trend of computer music mass, the speed of media dissemination, the increase of information and the explosion of knowledge make it more and more challenging, more and more arduous and time-critical for basic music education to carry out the early construction, nourishment and penetration of the aesthetic field when children are still young. How basic music education can occupy the aesthetic value orientation with absolute superiority and promote the development and progress of social civilization is a subject of the development of the times. The following author focuses on the systematic elaboration of basic music education in shaping aesthetic personality and playing the role of aesthetic education.

China is currently undergoing rapid economic and social development, a huge population and the world's largest "economic engine" that not only creates economic value but also continues to generate a busy and fast-paced lifestyle. Today, some people's pursuit and desire for materiality is

much greater than the pursuit of spirituality. For many years, basic music education in China has been profoundly challenged by examination-based education, and due to the intensification of social competition, the vanity of many people who blindly pursue utilitarian education is far greater than their adherence to aesthetic education. The whole society does not have enough investment in and awareness of aesthetic education for long-term development, which is a problem that needs to be solved. The reasons for this boil down to three things:

First, in terms of educational specialization, overall Chinese music education ideas in primary and secondary schools are deeply influenced by professional colleges and universities. The content of the music syllabus in multiple editions of music textbooks pursues specialization that is comprehensive, systematic and highly challenging. There is a serious tendency to "specialize" education, without taking into account the age and preferences of students, as well as their level of acceptance and social development. Aesthetic education based on "emotional involvement" has been replaced by purely memorized teaching. Students are exposed to isolated, fragmented professional knowledge and an almost adult-oriented educational model, with a lack of systematic, longitudinally and horizontally ordered supporting links between knowledge systems. The boring, professional-style training and course lectures go beyond the normal experience that students should be able to handle at their mental age. Some parents do not reject or even relish the idea of "specialized" basic music education, hoping that by deepening the difficulty of the specialized curriculum, they will be able to tap into their child's talent or expect to develop into a genius. Schools also arrange the training content of specialized courses directly in order to catch up with the teaching schedule, and children do not have enough time to digest and appreciate the beauty of music. This approach to education ignores the professional involvement of child psychologists to a certain extent. The thinking of music educators is that they want the community and parents to see more short-term educational results. For example, in New Year's concerts and competitions held by schools or training institutions, the judges' criteria are more concerned with the technically proficient handling of the professional performance or singing of the repertoire, which is the main criterion for assessment and testing, and the criterion is weakened as to whether the emotional expression of the musical works performed is full and correct. It is widely believed that children are too young to understand the works, and there is no need to ask too much for the expression of the deeper beauty of the works. Unbeknownst to students, the very idea of teaching music during their education neglects to make adequate arrangements and focus on the cultivation of aesthetic education. It is undeniable that education for the enlightenment of beauty requires energy and time, and is a fundamental project that requires long-term persistence. The omission of appreciation education in the long run is not conducive to stimulating students' potential enthusiasm for learning and gaining aesthetic experience of music.

Secondly, the educational management institutions do not highlight the "human-centered" ideology in designing music teaching. The author recently conducted a quiz on "My Favorite Music" with 109 elementary school students in grades 4-6 in a Beijing elementary school, reflecting that nearly 70% of the elementary school students said they loved pop music, which is only a case of the elementary school level to middle school and high school level, the survey shows that the range of pop music is even wider. Most of the songs that the children hum at any time are socially popular and not part of the music lessons they are learning. This phenomenon shows that the influence of socialized music is clearly greater than the influence of school music instruction. Music education suffers from a certain degree of dislocation of educational guidance in the classroom. The aesthetic function of basic music education has not been fully reflected in the process of nurturing people. In China, society, schools, and parents generally worship test-based education, and basic music education has become what most people consider a "secondary subject," and what is even more worrying is that a significant number of educators involved in music believe the same thing.

Even though Chinese education authorities have realized the importance of teaching aesthetic education for the long-term advancement of social and civilizational progress, they often use test-based means to attach to school, student and parental acceptance because it is the efficient, convenient and direct method. Is the content of the music curriculum up to date? Is it what the children like and expect in their hearts? It is as if these are not the main points to consider.

Third, music teachers possess the teaching vision, professional vision and cultural strength to be improved. Basic music education teachers have been used to the old-fashioned, unchanging teaching mode, with little sense of innovation. The first aspect is that there is a widespread mentality that teaching does not dare to break through the educational syllabus, and there is a concern that the management and parents will not understand innovative teaching. The second aspect is that there are few channels for teachers to pursue further education, and the accumulation of knowledge on music teaching is not supplemented in a timely and effective manner. Regions do not pay enough attention to the obvious shortage of teachers in the basic music subject. The overly heavy teaching tasks and other work arranged make it difficult for in-service teachers to have a lot of time and energy to concentrate on researching educational methods and improving music teaching.

In view of this, to bring into play the role of basic music education in cultivating students' aesthetic personality, it is imperative: first, to change the direction of professional skill-based training in music curriculum; second, to change the way of learning knowledge and skills, and to return to the essence of basic education by adopting the methods of teaching with fun and learning with interest; third, at the policy level, more advocacy should be made to promote the teaching of aesthetic education, and to continuously improve the professional status, professional treatment and social recognition of basic music teachers. The author believes that the role of basic music education in cultivating aesthetics should be further exploited in the following three aspects.

## **2. A basic music education should establish the concept of aesthetic personality-based education**

Music education creates aesthetic values to pursue. Music, as a carrier of artistic beauty, always sensually embodies the ideal of beauty. A person's life is a life of choice, and the pursuit of beauty is an eternal topic in life. Only when a person has the ability to recognize and identify "beauty" can he or she better choose "beauty". So what is aesthetic education? Simply put, it is the use of art instruction to teach people subliminal emotions. Its purpose is to improve people's moral state, cultivate sentiment and beautify personality. With the progress of social civilization, the level of aesthetics has become an important symbol of personality quality. Any action people take, any matter they decide, the ultimate motive will reflect their own deep aesthetic foundation and ideological connotation. Aesthetic education is the expression of the self-consciousness of beauty, which the Chinese call the pursuit of "truth, goodness and beauty." It is often seen in life that different aesthetic standards dictate different choices due to individual differences in people. The influence of deep aesthetic values is even more prominent when it comes to making major life decisions. For example, in the workplace, even though there are criteria for selecting and employing people based on "virtue and talent," the actual results of selecting and using talent can vary due to potential differences in the aesthetic values of leaders or supervisors. The choice of life partner is a concrete manifestation of aesthetics, for the ideal spouse's appearance, temperament, character, culture, occupation and family background and other comparisons, reflecting the aesthetic tendencies of each person, these conditions will be the key to family happiness. If a person lacks artistic and aesthetic education from an early age, he or she will not develop a perfect combination of rational and emotional values. Despite the efforts of some people in the social process to modify

and cover up the lack of aesthetic education received in early life, it will reveal unconsciously with time and the choices they make and the actions they implement, the defects of personality and character caused by the lack of aesthetic education, and this loss is irreparable and irrevocable for life! Mr. MuXin, a contemporary Chinese writer and painter, said, "The absence of aesthetic power is a terminal disease, and knowledge cannot save it". The dual construction of human sensual life requirements and rational morality endows sound personality and human cultivation. Promoting aesthetic education and arts activities is the solution. Basic music education, as a fundamental part of broad music education, has its own specific meaning and definition. This is demonstrated first and foremost by the fact that it reflects the essence of music education more than any other form of music education. [2] It aims firmly at shaping people, and "nurturing people" rather than "nurturing talent" is its most distinctive feature, which is also an important difference from other music education. [3] For basic music education, nurturing students with a rich love and aesthetic is more important than developing technical talent, because receiving an early aesthetic education in the arts establishes a student's character and benefits him or her for life. Yi Zhongtian, a famous Chinese scholar, once said that the bottom line is more important than the realm. Because a person without a bottom line can do anything, a society without a bottom line anything can happen. Then, the relationship between the bottom line and the realm is like the relationship between law and morality, law is the written morality, morality is the law of the heart. The law constrains the bottom line of being a human being, and morality reflects the realm of being a human being. In the family, parents usually warn their children what they can do and what not to do, which is the bottom line education, while aesthetic education is the realm of education, is to shape the aesthetic and noble state of mind. Aesthetic education is realm education not bottom line education. Basic music education is the starting point, not the end point, of training highly qualified people. The progress of society can never rely on bottom-line education but lies in the constant pursuit of reverential education of human beauty, which is where the social responsibility of teaching aesthetic education in basic music education lies.

### **3. Basic music education should focus on cultivating the ability to appreciate the use of aesthetics**

As an important expression of artistic and aesthetic education and artistic activities, basic music education is a great guide and inspiration for life. It is important to start with the early music education of children and use this tool to cultivate a virtuous cycle of social music environment. The focus is on developing the ability to appreciate the "sense of music" and to build the heart that understands the soul of music. The "technical teaching" is changed into "artistic teaching", which truly reflects the aesthetic value of basic music education. "Musicianship" refers to the sense of musical beauty or musical position that people develop through hearing. This sensory ability is an important ingredient that constitutes a person's musicality and is an important test of how well his or her artistic qualities are. Marx once said, "For a man to appreciate music, he must have an ear for music." Otherwise, even the best music is meaningless to him, and does not become an aesthetic object. For example, people often say that someone lacks "musical cells", which is all about a person's musical ability. [4] It is the wisdom and power of basic music education to enhance the aesthetic ability of music from the perspective of music appreciation education, and to promote the character building of young children and adolescents during their growth opportunities. For premature one-sided vigorously cultivate vocal skills, resonance position, playing techniques, etc, without paying attention to the perfection of the foundation of aesthetic appreciation, only to dwell on the differences of pitch, beat, breath change, easy to make the pursuit of art sprouted narrow "utilitarian" heart, even if the training of the self-expression of high-pitched voice and skilled

performance techniques, but the lack of deep-seated understanding of the lack of understanding and aesthetic connotation of the music will reflect the lack of artistic cultivation. When one is in good times, aesthetic cultivation is the stage to build; when one is in bad times, aesthetic cultivation is the ladder to move up. Especially as public figures, they should have the right aesthetic values, and as their social popularity continues to rise, they should behave in a manner that is exemplary of public figures and be responsible for it. Usually, musicians who lack a complete aesthetic education and the ability to use aesthetics can cause artistic misalignment, leading to intoxication in the world of the self and unable to extricate them, interpreting performing music as expressing the self and distorting the true nature of musical artistic expression.

Basic music education should not only promote "beauty" but also protect "beauty". The skill development of musical talents should be built on the basis of having the appropriate age group and musical aesthetic education to improve and enhance. The "aesthetics" of music is the only way to produce excellent musicians with a strong sense of social responsibility and mission, rather than producing singing "machines" and performing "craftsmen" who are detached from aesthetic values. Even if a person does not pursue a professional career in music, he or she should become a modern person with ambitious ideals, a sound personality and high morals through the aesthetic stance of basic music education penetrated from an early age. When former Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao recalled his alma mater Nankai Middle School, he was most impressed by the beautiful and resonant melody of the famous piano piece "Turkish March" played by the teacher before each music class when he was a student, which has always lingered in his heart and become the scale of Premier Wen Jiabao's life and the temperature of his life. The subtle influence of music education, just like the spring rain, infects and shapes the personality of "beauty". Many successful people do not stop for a moment and stay with the pursuit of beauty for a lifetime. The author believes that such great musicians as Beethoven and Mozart, who deeply influenced human understanding of nature and life through the musical works they created, were also outstanding music educators and aesthetic educators, and these musicians expressed their respect for life, their indomitable struggle and their firm desire for a better life through the language of music!

#### **4. Basic music education should constantly enrich and interpret the philosophical connotation of aesthetics**

The process of aesthetic activity is actually a process of caring for human beings, loving nature and loving life. Among the musical philosophies of the ancient Greek period, Plato considered music to have an educational function, and Aristotle considered music to be part of the good life. Aristotle, like Plato, recognized the shaping of human temperament by music. According to Hegel, art is the first manifestation of the absolute spirit, the interpretation of truth. The development of music is based more on its own formal changes and is imitated and expressed with a more spiritual content. In the 18th and 19th centuries, music developed into the classical period, with masters such as Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart creating the characteristics of classical period music, and the form of music shifted from vocal music to more instrumental performances. Meanwhile in the field of philosophy, idealism, represented by Kant and Hegel, has had a great impact on society. Music, through the result of its own historical development, was influenced by the social context and elevated in its theoretical status at the time by its abstract character. The Romantic period saw the emergence of a large number of outstanding musical figures, but not all with a reserve of philosophical ideas. Instrumental music is the highest level of musical expression. Beethoven's symphonies and Mozart's sonatas began to receive the highest appreciation in music. [5] Beethoven considered music as a thought comprehension above wisdom and philosophy. Schopenhauer considered music to be the highest form of expression of the intention of thought in art. Music

reveals the deepest secrets of the human soul in a unique way. In tradition of the development of music history, contemporary basic music education then continues to make adjustments and exert influence on the relationship between nature, society, morality, thought and emotion, and other external things. The aesthetic paradigm of music education was conceived in the 1950s and 1960s, established and flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, and was interrogated in the 1990s. It has been the dominant belief in the field of music education for half a century, providing the theoretical foundation and problem-solving framework for music education and setting the direction for the development of the music curriculum and the unfolding of the music teaching process. Reimer's publication *Philosophy of Music Education* (1970) was the first systematic treatment of the philosophy of music education in the history of education. American music education, which was lagging behind Europe before and after World War II, has flourished and led the world in this half century, for which the theoretical precursors of aesthetic music education are crucial. [6] It should be said that it has become the trend of the times to look at music culture and music education from a pluralistic and practical perspective. The equity, inclusiveness, and openness of basic music education have the advantage of early popularization and intervention in shaping students' aesthetic personality. Basic music education is not simply the education of musicians, but the education of human beings. The author believes that philosophical truth is the acquisition of higher level aesthetic experience. The goal of basic music education is to nurture people, to improve the state of mind and to help students acquire noble life values and thus understand the meaning of life and the philosophy of life through aesthetic education and music aesthetic experience.

The history of music is also the history of music education. The philosophy of music is a testament to the world's development and has shone with the advancement of human civilization and technology and the legacy of education. The philosophies and connotations of different subject knowledge itself are expressed through different forms. Numbers, photoelectric, temperature, and plants all have their own changing rhythms that can be tried to be expressed through music, and the process of teachers helping students express themselves through music is the process of enhancing students' cognition and memory. Basic music education should increase interdisciplinary teaching integration and practice to improve "photosynthesis". Firstly, the scientific musicalization and sharing of knowledge results in each discipline system; secondly, the exploration and application of teaching methods of electronic music should be highlighted in conjunction with the development of the information age. Both the content of basic music aesthetic education and the form of aesthetic education teaching should be in line with the pace of development of the times and the progress of people's minds. To use the intervention of technological means to continuously improve the leading, radiating and leading power of the front end of music aesthetic cultivation. Basic music education cannot lag behind the development of technology, especially the process of self-education through cell phones, computers, the Internet and other information technology means that students use their leisure time. Basic music education helps children to improve their imagination and understanding of knowledge in various subjects, facilitates the formation of self-innovation and divergent thinking, and experiences the philosophy and beauty of scientific knowledge. Rational interdisciplinary configuration and integration with literature, poetry, painting, history, nature, technology and other fields of knowledge requires music curriculum designers and music teachers to further strengthen the connections between the knowledge systems of the disciplines and propose innovative design strategies for the curriculum, based on the inheritance and development of the original refined teaching. The author hopes that the music curriculum design will fully incorporate the opinions and suggestions of curriculum experts and teachers in each subject, and that there should also be music experts and suggestions for the integration of music knowledge in the development of the curriculum design of each subject, so that students can form a more complete understanding of the philosophy of knowledge and try to grasp the laws. Creating educational conditions that expand the

field of knowledge from a multidimensional perspective is the role of basic music education to inspire and recognize the aesthetic connotations of things. The author believes that exploring the truth of life is always the ultimate pursuit of philosophical thought.

Every life that comes into the world has its own unique value. Anything beautiful in the world has the essence of beauty. It is often said that what makes the classics unsurpassed is the significance of the classics. Any classic work of art that has survived to this day must have a philosophy of life and value that is worthy of being passed down to the next generation and cannot be surpassed! Enhancing the appreciation and popularization of classical music for students of all ages is a shortcut to aesthetic education. Music teachers should guide students to learn the classics, understand them and use them in the ocean of knowledge, focusing on understanding the art of expression and following the law of development of all things for people. From a higher standpoint, students learn to interpret the deeper realm of musical works in the context of the country, nation, history, culture and life, to interpret the background and environment in which the works were created and to search for the philosophical connotations of the works, and help students to understand the starting point of life and life values. Children will benefit as much from literary masterpieces, classic fables and fairy tales as they do from a boundless love and deep affection for exploring the philosophy of the art of music. Teachers should conduct classroom music training in a gradual but in-depth manner, helping children understand the untouchable inner truths of language by interpreting, inspiring and combining teaching experiences with the lyrics, tunes and melodies of the music. We combine storytelling, poetry recitation, games, film viewing, and drawing to guide, mobilize, and explore students' spiritual perceptions, so that they can gain rational thinking, strengthen their cognition, improve their emotions, and raise their awareness through experience. The author believes that how basic music education can be better dedicated to enlighten and interpret the philosophical connotation of classical music, provide distinctive navigation for children's life development, and give greater play to the effectiveness of serving the construction of social civilization is an issue of the times worthy of in-depth discussion by basic music educators today.

## 5. Conclusion

In short, human beings are eternal in their pursuit of beauty. Aesthetic education is indispensable at every stage of human growth. It is the duty of the society to cultivate aesthetic personality in basic music education from the "children". Victor Hugo once said that music, writing, and mathematics are the three keys to human intelligence, of which music education plays the most intuitive and enlightening role. It is necessary to return to the nurturing nature of basic music education by adopting the approach of teaching and learning with fun. By summarizing the development law of classical music education in music history, applying interdisciplinary knowledge integration and introducing music technology, it is of great significance to enhance the ability of applied aesthetics, understand the philosophy and connotation of music, and continuously guide students to pursue beauty.

The essence of basic music education should be truly reflected in the shaping and cultivation of aesthetic personality. The distinction between "education" and "professionalism" should be clearly identified, and the cultivation of the aesthetic personality of primary and secondary school students should be an important teaching task. Basic music education teachers must continue to expand their professional horizons, improve their teaching methods and professional skills to enhance modern education. The education administration should continue to improve its ability to design and develop music curriculum, introduce music technology components, expand interdisciplinary field cooperation as well as strengthen the professional training of teachers to provide a favorable



teaching environment, constantly strengthening social propaganda of aesthetic education teaching and improving the importance of aesthetic education for all. To create a space for students to know beauty, discover beauty, comprehend beauty and create beauty, in order to inspire them to love beauty, spread beauty and cherish beauty, they can get spiritual baptism, understand the philosophy of life and the meaning of life, help explore the development of the scientific spirit, and lay a solid foundation for life to cultivate excellent social talents in the future. This is the mission and historical responsibility of basic music education.

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