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#### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The Role of Chinese Music in Shaping Students' Creative Thinking

Jing Qi 

#### ABSTRACT

**Background/purpose** – The process of shaping students' creative thinking in modern society takes on a new, deeper, and broader dimension. Therefore, studying the role of Chinese music in developing the creativity of primary, secondary, and tertiary education students is deemed relevant. The purpose of this study was to comprehend ways of forming creative thinking of students through the study of Chinese music.

**Materials/methods** – The research problem was addressed through searching for and collecting data, analyzing and compiling the information obtained, identifying and deducing categories of the collected data, and through compiling tables and figures to demonstrate the research problem as an integral, multi-component system.

**Results** – The role of Chinese music in developing creative thinking among students is multifaceted, and includes teaching methods and material support. This system is essential to achieving global education goals, introducing students to other cultures, creating a multicultural learning environment, and promoting emotional responsiveness to Chinese music.

**Conclusion** – The relevance of the research problem, its responsiveness to the demands of the time and flexibility determines the promise of study in the area under consideration and determines its value from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

**Keywords** – creativity, melodies of China, rhythms of Chinese music, Chinese national musical instruments, educational program

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The current study focuses on revealing the role of Chinese music in shaping students' creative thinking. As a phenomenon, creativity has become more and more sought after and as such has expanded its sphere of realization, both in the context of mastering arts-related disciplines and in all other areas of human life (*Development of creative...*, 2022). For the effective implementation of socioeconomic transformation, solving extremely complex and unique tasks that confront individuals not only today but also that relate directly to the future, it is essential to master the skills of creative approach (tactics, strategies, tools) to assimilate not only the professional sphere but also the everyday reality (Atzil & Abramson, 2021; Rakhimberdinova et al., 2022; Yunwenting, 2020). The development of intellectual activity is stimulated and expressed through the gradual expansion and complexity of an individual's thoughts (Schiavio et al., 2019; Zhuang & Pan, 2022).

Thinking activity is manifested, realized, and renewed throughout a person's life through their activities. However, at each life stage, thinking takes on a certain set of characteristics (Robertson et al., 2022; Jääskeläinen et al., 2020; Yang, 2022). This has led specialists to investigate the formation of creativity in students, on the one hand, and the influence of Chinese music on this phenomenon, on the other. The noted phenomena therefore determined the relevance, novelty, and significance of the current study. On the one hand, it gathers, analyses and compiles information from musicology, pedagogy, and ethnology, while on the other it provides an opportunity to put the results of the investigation into practice. In particular, its materials, methods, and findings can be widely and comprehensively applied to the activities of music teachers, in particular, where Chinese music is studied.

Scientists have addressed numerous issues directly related to the process of generating creative thinking. In-depth, voluminous conclusions have been drawn about the complexity, importance, and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon. In particular, experts have argued that creativity (including that resulting from studying Chinese music) contributes to the development of a certain approach to the acquisition of knowledge, among which the creative method is considered one of the most effective. It is known to highlight the importance not so much through the amount of valuable information a student receives, but rather of the ability to acquire and discover new sources of information and to make use of them in certain situations (Davy et al., 2021; Kukalets et al., 2021; Olson et al., 2021). Another, equally important finding from analysis of this issue is the notion that creativity (including its development through the study of Chinese music) results in the development of new materials and spiritual values.

It presupposes the presence of motives, knowledge, and skills in the life of an individual, through which a product characterized by novelty, originality, and uniqueness may be created (Liu et al., 2021; Zhang, 2022). The American psychologist P. Edwards concluded that creative thinking is the ability to find non-standard solutions to a problem to discover new ways of expression, bringing revelations about the surrounding world into the life of an individual (Chang & Zhou, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021; Zhou, 2021). However, the role of Chinese music in shaping the creative approach to the profession and reality in general, on the part of students, as a holistic system and phenomenon in music pedagogy still requires detailed and in-depth study. The novelty of the current study lies in its thorough investigation of Chinese music's contribution to the growth of creative thinking in students.

In order to achieve the goals of global education, foster a multicultural learning environment, and encourage emotional receptivity to Chinese music, the current study offers

a multifaceted approach that incorporates instructional strategies and material assistance. The study also emphasizes the value of learning Chinese music for maintaining cultural heritage and fostering international civilizational exchange. The study's worth is found in its potential for real-world application by music educators, as well as contributing to the development of civilizational discussion and advancement in a number of societal spheres.

The hypothesis of the current study is that studying Chinese music can play an important role in the development of students' creative thinking, and that this process involves a multifaceted system that includes both teaching methods and material support. The current study aims to comprehend ways of forming creative thinking in students studying Chinese music.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The current study utilizes sources that highlight the formation of creative thinking in students, and in particular through the use of Chinese music disciplines. Thus, the materials that formed the basis of the study were data obtained from analyzing the activities of secondary school music teachers, as well as instructors at colleges and higher educational institutions. Likewise, information relating to the study of Chinese music as a subject of sociology and history played an important role. Data on the psychological context of musical disciplines, particularly studies of Chinese music, and the role of the creative approach to classes where teachers encourage their students to create their own music, and thereby encourage mastery of compositional techniques, were also adopted.

Among the sources that served as the basis for this article are the results of observations on the quality of acquisition of educational programs in music and Chinese musical culture, in particular, using modern teaching methods, learning environments enriched with information and communication technologies, and the introduction of interactive forms of knowledge presentation. Another valuable information platform included data on the process of developing critical thinking in students through contact with music in general and Chinese music in particular, and on the effectiveness of problem-based learning in providing education for people in need of rehabilitation. The study was supported by material highlighting specific factors in learning processes such as the profile of students' creative abilities and the imagination of their teacher.

The methods used in the current study include searching and collecting sources, analyzing available information compiling data, defining categories of the problem and their content, compiling tables, and summarizing the facts and presenting the problem as a coherent system (i.e., in flowchart form). The method of searching and collecting sources provided data that, on the one hand, contributes to understanding the role of Chinese music in shaping the creative thinking of students as a phenomenon in world pedagogical practice, and, on the other hand, as a complex phenomenon consisting of multiple components that favor implementation in the activities of primary, secondary, and higher educational institutions. Analyzing data obtained through searching and collection paves the way to identifying elements that form the influence of Chinese music on the successful development of students' creativity into a coherent system. The given method is the ground for visual demonstration, revealing the content and function of all its components.

The collection of data concerning the role and significance of Chinese musical culture in the education of students contributes to the establishment of clear relationships between all components of the problem under study. Defining the categories and their characteristics

provide insight into the complex and profound content of the role of Chinese music in educational activities, which also concerns the development of creative thinking. The tabulation method makes the results of a problem study clear and visible, contributing to the formation of a coherent system. Summarizing the facts resulting from the analysis of all the available information reinforces the perception of the issue as a holistic, multi-component, and complex system, whose elements bear certain functions essential to the whole system, yet are inextricably linked to each other. In the process of studying the role of Chinese music as a factor in the formation of students' creative thinking, all of these methods act both individually and in deep synthesis.

The current study was divided into several stages:

1. Identifying the relevance of studying the role of Chinese music in the development of students' creative thinking.
2. Collection of sources and analysis of information on the topic of research.
3. Using tables and charts to demonstrate the research problem as a holistic, multi-component system.
4. Describing the methods and features of teaching Chinese music to develop students' creative thinking.
5. Illustrating the role of Chinese music in the formation of students' creative thinking as a three-dimensional holistic system.
6. Discussing the relationship between the pedagogical system and the development of students' creative initiative.
7. Emphasizing the importance of mastering Chinese music for the preservation of cultural heritage and the development of civilizational dialogue between peoples.
8. Revealing the complexity and scope of the topic and the need to study the musical culture of mankind.

### 3. RESULTS

As the studied material showed, the role of Chinese music in shaping students' creative thinking requires a base of methods that promote students' creative approach to mastering the discipline and, at the same time, sources that translate the national art of China. Table 1 lists the techniques for developing students' creativity and their characteristics.

**Table 1.** Methods of formation of creative thinking and their description

| Method  | Description   |
|---|---|
| Using multiple options to present and study the learning material | Using oral, written, and play-based activities during classes.  |
| Using different activities which are fundamentally distinct       | Combination of presentation elements with extensive individual internal content, contributing to the effective acquisition of knowledge from an educational program in the discipline "Music of China." |

| Method   | Description  |
|--|--|
| Engaging educational equipment of the sphere being mastered by students  | Presence of examples of Chinese national musical instruments and the participation of representatives of Chinese musical culture in the educational process, providing visual illustrations of examples of Chinese music, through performances of both folk pieces and compositions created in the academic sphere.  |
| Providing an information and communication base to obtain data about the discipline being studied from various sources | Use of a wide range of Internet resources and information sources that allow students to become acquainted with authentic culture, and music in particular, its outstanding representatives of the past and present, and the modernization of the musical life of China in real time.  |
| Testing creative subject knowledge   | Method proposes the introduction of testing knowledge of the materials covered in the “Music of China” course as live performances, including playing Chinese musical instruments, creating original pieces of music that convey the style and identity of Chinese music-making, and collaboration with musicians from China, involving an exchange of ideas in the realm of academic musicological thought. |

The multiplicity of options for presenting and mastering the material is a solid foundation for the successful assimilation of “Music of China” as the subject of study. In particular, this method contributes to a prominent display of the key components of the discipline, facilitating the depth of the experience and a high level of information retention by the student. It is the fundamental distinction between the types of classroom activity that implements the method described. Using the educational equipment available helps students to master the material basis (foundation) upon which a voluminous and profound understanding of culture, in particular as related to Chinese musical art, is based, providing students with the opportunity to interact with the authentic musical world of a certain culture (in this case, the culture of China).

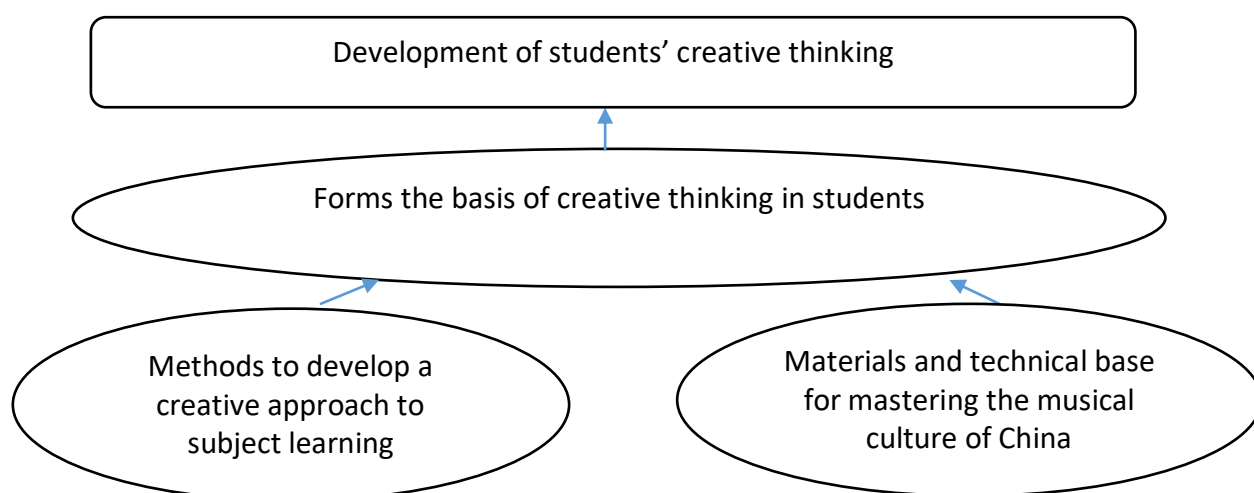
Providing an information and communication base that facilitates the acquisition of information about the discipline from a variety of sources features a virtual library that provides a visual representation of the development and existence of Chinese music, as well as a source of knowledge about it. Creative testing for subject knowledge encourages the creation of students’ artistic expressions of musical art, in particular on the culture of China, and at the same time reinforces the knowledge base acquired. Table 2 provides information on sources that convey the national identity and uniqueness of Chinese music.

**Table 2.** Materials used in the study of Chinese music

| Material                      | Description   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Audio and video illustrations | Material presented in several ways using audio/video of Chinese music-making processes, or by inviting musicians from Chinese music culture to schools where it is being studied.                         |
| National instruments          | Implementation of the “Music of China” educational program using Chinese musical instruments as visual teaching aids that convey the richness of national timbres and specific interpretative techniques. |

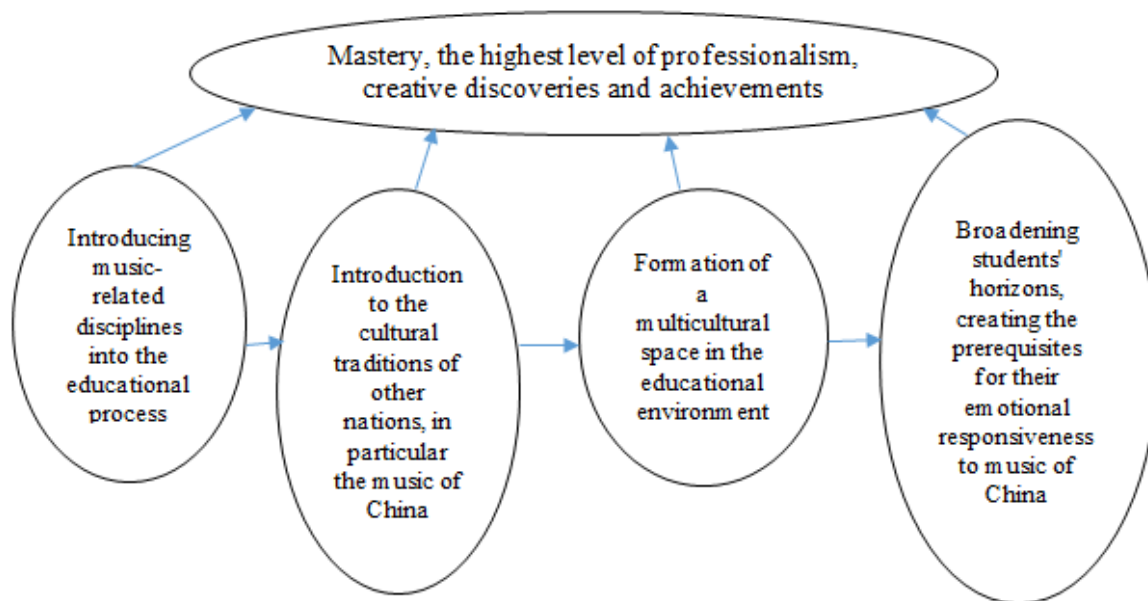
| Material  | Description   |
|---|---|
| Performing Chinese music  | Deep understanding of Chinese musical culture involves the learning to play Chinese folk musical instruments and traditional Chinese singing.   |
| Practice of creating works incorporating the intonations and rhythms of Chinese music | The most effective method of mastering musical culture, particularly Chinese, is based on developing students' skills in independently and creatively perceiving the basics of the studied subject, as well as forming an independent individual vision of its basic, leading components and striving to master them through the prism of their own creativity. |

Figure 1 illustrates the role of Chinese music in the formation of students' creative thinking as a three-dimensional integral system that combines components of various scales, content and functions. Acting as a single phenomenon, they contribute to the disclosure of the facets of thinking, both as an individual and humanity as a whole, and thereby contribute to its progress.



**Figure 1.** Role of Chinese music in forming students' creative thinking as a single coherent system

Pedagogical practice shows that active engagement with music in general, and Chinese music in particular, contributes to the development of students' creative thinking, broadens their horizons and, in certain cases, serves as a therapy with a positive effect on their health. In the case where Chinese musical culture is foreign to the students, a unique experience of exposure to the art of another nation is gained, which in turn stimulates the preservation of the highest humanistic values of universal creativity as well as the flourishing of the environment that comprehends foreign artistic traditions. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the progressive pedagogical system in educational institutions of various levels and the significant positive results of students developing creative initiative.



**Figure 2.** Panorama of formation and development of creative thinking and artistic skill

Thus, the role of Chinese music in the formation of students' creative thinking appears as a holistic, multi-component phenomenon with an extensive base and certain prerequisites. First and foremost, these include mastering the educational programs offered under the "Music of China" specialization, the process of creating a multicultural environment and, as a result, the transition to a modernized, expanded, progressive pedagogical system conducive to unlocking the creative potential that the individual and society at large have at their disposal. Mastering the music of China in educational institutions contributes to the disclosure of the inexhaustible national cultural fund while also promoting it. This, in turn, helps to preserve the achievements of Chinese musical culture for future generations and world humanist thought.

The study of this discipline in other countries is considered as a means through which the higher mission of music as art can be realized, since it creates the ground for civilizational dialogue between different countries and a cultural bridge enabling constructive and productive communication between nations in matters of sociology, economics, education, science, and diplomacy (Bikenov et al., 2016). It is the ultimate factor in preserving peace and the basis for the continued prosperity of humanity. This reveals the significance of the current study's problem, the solution, and the comprehensive overview which provides an opportunity to assess the prospects for mastering this discipline in various parts of the world.

At the same time, the complexity and scope of the topic under study are revealed. This helps to establish the importance and significance of each of the links that make up the integral process of forming creative thinking in students, through the introduction of the discipline "Music of China." Moreover, it substantiates the necessity of studying the centuries-old musical culture of mankind, as it contains the most profound and valuable sources of information about various spheres of society, and at certain periods of its history.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The importance of Chinese music in shaping the creative thinking of students has been addressed by specialists from various countries and cultures. Thus, the method of describing classes dedicated to mastering the discipline of music, along with recommendations for the



development of music education in general, is provided by Chinese specialists (Yunwenting, 2020). Deciphering the gene of musical abilities as an embodiment of the deep social connections of their consciousness with the environment, the society in which one was born and lives has become a topic of research by today's scientists. In particular, they emphasize the role of evolutionary mechanisms in the process of personal adaptation to the dynamics of a transforming reality (Atzil & Abramson, 2021). Biographies of composers and performers in Chinese musical culture, along with the study of genres, forms, and the history of Chinese music, have attracted considerable research attention.

Researchers have sought to awaken a deeper understanding of national musical creativity, while also exploring the context (rural, urban, foreign) in which it exists (Zhuang & Pan, 2022). The role and significance of the principle of grouping students in the development of educational disciplines is therefore considered, and which includes the "Music of China." The process of interaction, according to specialists, contributes to the discovery and fuller realization of human qualities such as empathy and social engagement. This, in turn, contributes to improved performance of both teachers and students (Berkimbaev et al., 2013; Schiavio et al., 2019). Scholars have also analyzed the introduction of creativity into the practice of teaching music disciplines, particularly those devoted to China's culture. This approach consists of providing students with opportunities to search and compose their own musical images through the creation and performing of music, where, at the same time, the development of such categories as timbre, rhythm, pitch, volume, and style of performance takes place (Robertson et al., 2022).

As evidenced by the developments of experts in music pedagogy, including those implementing educational programs such as "Music of China," the principle of differentiating the spheres of sound art and their synthesis in the form of a coherent, multidirectional system at a higher level, serves as an effective strategy for optimizing learning in primary and secondary schools as well as in more advanced academic settings (Sydoruk et al., 2020; Yang, 2022). Studying music in the neoliberal culture of today's higher education institutions is also becoming a problem in musicology and pedagogy (Jääskeläinen et al., 2020). Scientists also highlight that the development of creativity, including through the study of Chinese music, awakens in a person the possibility of generating very diverse, sometimes far-fetched ideas (Olson et al., 2021).

The use of innovative technologies is being monitored, in particular, the mobile music application MuYu, which facilitates the learning process of a form of folk singing adopted in Hong Kong (Shubailan) online, which also provides pre-created recordings of teachers' face-to-face sessions with students (Davy et al., 2021). Researchers aim to study the dynamics of critical and creative thinking of music students in static or mobile interactive learning environments (Zhang, 2022). The analysis of student's perceptions of the materials of musical disciplines, including those devoted to Chinese culture, is also becoming a relevant and current area of investigation. Thus, several teaching strategies are considered: Teaching management and learning design using mobile technologies; the development of appropriate music education resources for different levels of education; and mobile technologies promoting motivation for music education (Liu et al., 2021).

Observations on the extent to which different styles of music influence indicators of creativity, critical thinking, or the psychological state of students, has shown promise for the study of music pedagogy and, in particular, of the Chinese culture. This principle contributes to establishing that classical music samples, including Chinese music, are effective in



influencing the quality of students' mental activity. It is considered that the genres of hip-hop and heavy metal, when compared to the best examples of folk and academic music tradition, do not produce equivalent high rates of student concentration in the learning process (Chang & Zhou, 2021). The problem of creating interactive online learning groups for young musicians to broaden and improve their knowledge of music theory, including that of Chinese music, is a matter of concern to contemporary scholars. It is their contention that this path opens up the possibility of implementing students' creative thinking as a reflection of reality formed through creative practice (Maltabarova et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021).

The question of modernizing the methods of teaching musical culture in general, and Chinese music in particular, is acquiring great relevance at present. Thus, along with traditional systems of educational activity, problem-based learning becomes in demand and valuable, stimulating discoveries in an individualized approach to the transfer of knowledge to the learner and unlocking their creative potential (Khamchiyev et al., 2020; Zhou, 2021). A predictive model of the pedagogical approach to the transmission of knowledge in music, including Chinese music, which is based on realizing the creative imagination of the teacher and school leadership as a whole, is being developed alongside the phenomena discussed here (Chen & Yuan, 2021).

The discovery of new avenues in the teaching of creative disciplines, in particular Chinese music, is made possible through online survey questionnaires applied in the university context. They contribute to an understanding of young people's preferences for mastering certain disciplines and the laws that shape their motivation to learn (Gong et al., 2021; Vykhreshch et al., 2020). A valuable result of the study in music pedagogy is the thesis that the implementation of socio-pedagogical design as a means of shaping the creative thinking of younger students should be based on the integration of a project, research, or play-based activities carried out at the secondary school level under the guidance of a teacher (Bekoeva & Dudieva, 2021). The method of optimizing students' creativity, through questionnaires, tests, and worksheets that reflect the intelligence system as a holistic phenomenon, also contributes to discovering effective ways of teaching music disciplines, including those devoted to the music of China. This methodology is actively used in primary school education in Islamic states (Gao, 2021).

Classical and experimental research methods dedicated to identifying and describing a student's creative ability profile reveal a chain of factors that stimulate the development of creative thinking in the process of students mastering educational programs (Berdykulova et al., 2020; Subali et al., 2020). There have also been developments in the application of information and communication technologies to the teaching of music. Thus, experts have concluded that the development of creative thinking skills produces greater responsiveness and sensitivity of the perceptual organs; clarity and fluency in both written and spoken language (performance). Immersion in virtual reality contributes to this with significant influence and efficiency. The quality of the educational environment is also important in the process of developing students' creative abilities (Sarsekeyeva et al., 2019). In particular, the specifics of the creativity of future music teachers, including Chinese music, are analyzed.

There are a number of limitations to the current study that need to be noted. First, the study ignores potential influences on students' creative development in favor of concentrating solely on the contribution of Chinese music to the development of creative thinking in students. Second, the study's claims are not supported by empirical evidence or quantitative analysis. Third, the study does not take into account other environments or

methods for the teaching of music, and only looks at the context of teaching Chinese music within educational institutions. Finally, because the current study only covered a single period of time, its conclusions might not generalize to other situations or times.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The role of Chinese music in the formation of students' creative thinking is an integral, voluminous, and multi-component system. Each of its elements differs in scope, internal content, and the function it realizes in its context. For example, the acquisition of the course on "Music of China" is structured around two major blocks. These are methods of developing a creative approach to disciplinary learning and the facilities for studying Chinese musical culture. The first block, Chinese music teaching methods, is based on multiple options for presenting and mastering learning material, a fundamental distinction between types of work in the classroom, the use of educational equipment for the area being studied, the provision of information and communication as a base that facilitates learning about the discipline from a variety of sources, and creative testing of the knowledge of the discipline. The second block, providing material and technical support for students, includes audio and video illustrations, national instrumentation, the practice of performing Chinese music, and the creating works that develop the melodic structure and rhythms of Chinese music.

These two blocks and their composite elements are positioned to address the global goals facing not only the education system but also humanity as a whole. These involve introducing students to the cultural traditions of other peoples, particularly Chinese music; creating a multicultural space in the learning environment; broadening students' horizons in general; and creating the prerequisites for their emotional responsiveness to the music of China. These phenomena have determined both the theoretical and practical significance of the current study. The value of the first one lies in collecting, analyzing, and compiling data accumulated by the musicological, pedagogical, and ethnological sciences.

The practical relevance of the current study lies in the fact that its materials, research methods, and conclusions can be multifacetedly applied to the activities of music teachers, and to Chinese music in particular. The realization of these facets serves the mission of the musical arts and pedagogy to promote excellence, the highest level of professionalism conducive to creative discoveries and achievements, and the establishment and consolidation of a civilizational dialogue and bridge that drives progress in all areas of society, including the sociological, economic, and scientific spheres, as well as a range of others.

## 6. SUGGESTIONS

Future research may deepen our understanding of the potential benefits of Chinese music's impact on the development of students' creative thinking and help develop educational practices that foster creativity and innovation. The author suggests conducting longitudinal studies to track the effects of Chinese music exposure on students' creative thinking over time. This could include assessing changes in creativity scores before and after the implementation of the "Music of China" course, as well as at various intervals following completion of the course.

## DECLARATIONS

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**Ethical Approval:** Not Applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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