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### The Status of Music Teaching and Learning in Taiwan

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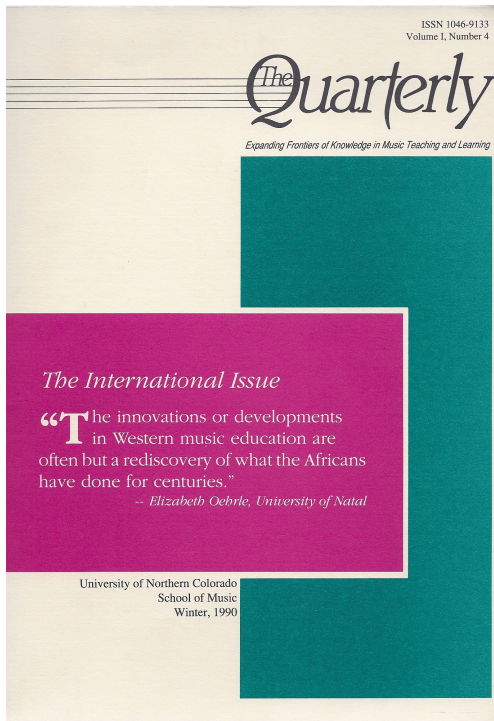
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*It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.*

# The Status of Music Teaching and Learning in Taiwan

By Yuan-Mei Hsieh

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**Abstract:** In this article, the author approaches the status of music teaching and learning in Taiwan by discussing music education in the four levels of education: elementary, junior and senior high school, professional training, and teacher training. In addition, music offerings for gifted and talented students and the role of private music education are addressed. The author notes that Taiwan is experiencing a growing interest in music education and in the preservation of native Taiwanese musical forms.

The modern school system in China began in 1902 with the promulgation of the school law by the government of the Ching Dynasty. Gradually, with a number of successive modifications, our present school system has developed.

Students in Taiwan may attend kindergarten for two years. All are required to attend elementary school for six years and junior high school for three years.

Students who continue their education then study for three years either in a senior high school or a senior vocational school. The junior colleges also admit junior high school graduates, who study for five years (or six if specializing in pharmacy).

Graduates of the senior-level schools may enter the university or the junior college. Those who have graduated from the senior vocational schools may study for an additional two years in a junior college; as a general rule, students who attend a university college do so for four years, although preparation for the teaching profession requires five years of study. Students entering the health professions study for six or seven years. A minimum of two years of

graduate work is required for the Master's program, and two or more years of additional study lead to the doctoral degree. At all levels of higher education, work experience is an important part of the program of study (see Figure 1).

Music is not taught in all schools, and the type of music instruction offered at various schools differs. Four main categories of instruction are available, however, in the Chinese school system: general music, instruction for gifted and talented students, professional music training, and teacher training. The policies, goals, periods, and content of music teaching and learning at every educational level is determined by the Ministry of Education. These details are published and distributed as the curriculum standards of schools (e.g., *Curriculum Standards of the Elementary Schools*).

## General Music Programs

General music programs are implemented in the kindergartens, elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools. Senior vocational schools and five-year junior colleges may offer general music as an elective course. Some universities also offer music study for students who are not majoring in the subject.

The stated goals of music teaching and learning at these schools are similar to those stated in the Curriculum Standards of Elementary Schools. These goals are:

1. to develop children's interest and ability in listening to, learning about, and enjoying music;
2. to develop children's interest and skills in singing and playing instruments;
3. to guide children to know, appreciate, and learn native and folk music;
4. to inspire children's intelligence, shape children's spirits, and to cultivate happy, lively, optimistic, and aggressive character;
5. to enhance children's love of home and

Hsieh: The Status of Music

# The Current School System

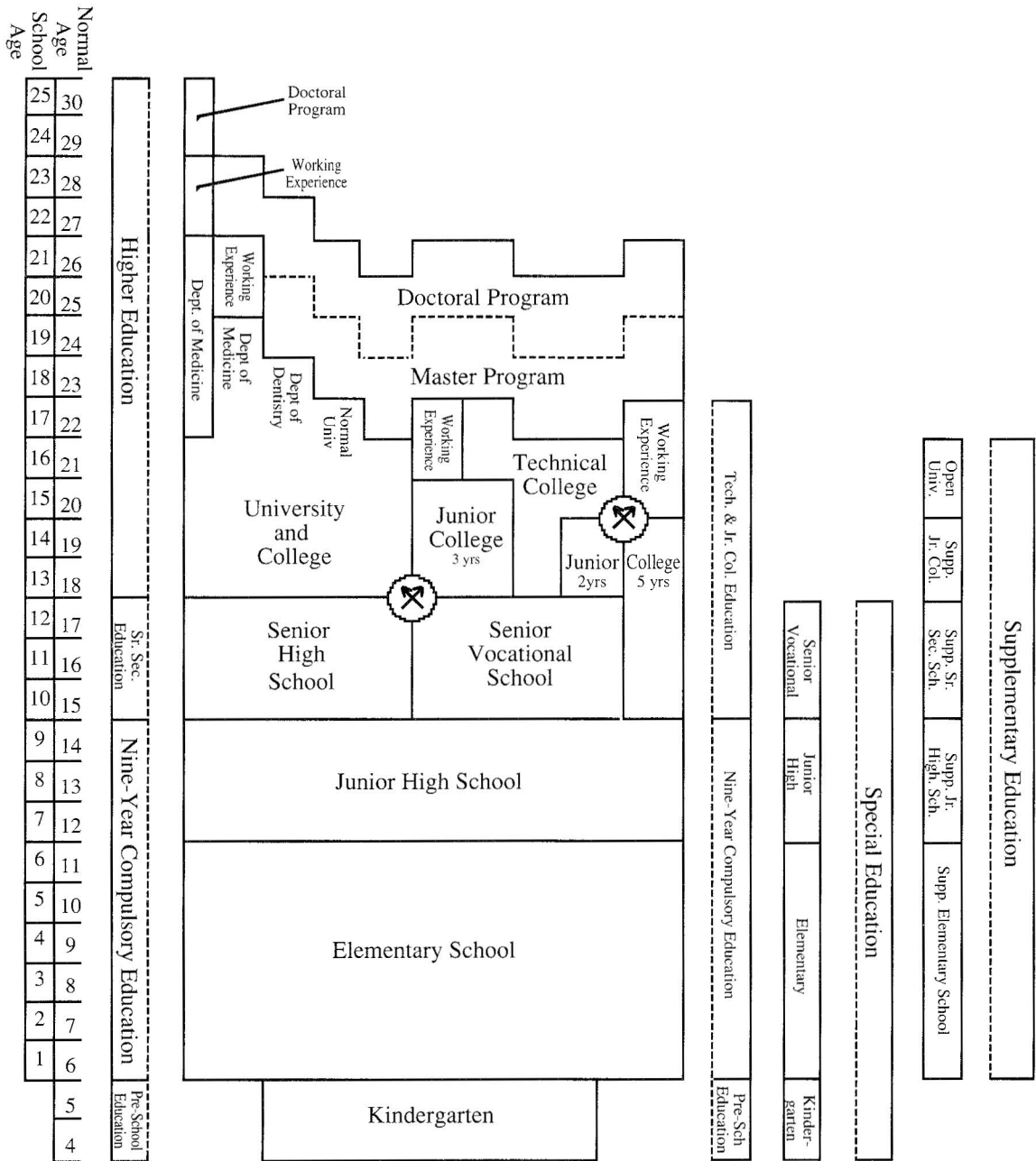


Figure 1. The current school system in Taiwan, adapted from *Educational Statistics of the Republic of China* (1989), published by the Ministry of Education in Taipei.

country and their ability to cooperate with others and to serve the society.

The time devoted to music study varies according to the level of schooling, as summarized in Figure 2. As students reach higher levels of education, they are generally given less time for the study of music.

### Elementary School

In the general music classes offered from third grade to sixth grade, children study music twice a week, 40 minutes per time. Music lessons are divided into three categories: basics, performing, and appreciation. The categories and items of teaching and learning at every grade are stated in the curriculum standards. The curriculum details of the third grade are given as an example in Figure 3.

The idea that “music study consists of the singing of songs” is a misunderstanding that has persisted for quite a long time and indicates that singing has long been the main activity in the music classroom. Because the recorder has been introduced recently to music classrooms, the situation has changed somewhat.

The textbooks for the music classes are published and supplied by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation (NICT). Current textbooks were published in 1977, but most teachers complain that it is impossible to cover all the text materials during the regular music classes. Due to suggestions from professors at teachers colleges, revisions of music textbooks have taken place since 1985 (Jang, 1987).

Since some elementary teachers have

joined the committee in charge of editing and examining textbooks, the materials in the books have become more suitable for children. Materials about native music have been included, creative activities have been emphasized, and performing materials are more practical.

Music classes at most elementary schools are taught by classroom teachers who hold degrees from teachers’ colleges. There are few specially trained music teachers in the elementary schools; Chao (1989), for example, reported that only 25 percent of elementary schools’ music classes are taught by music teachers.

In the first and second grades, a course called *Chabng-Your* (singing and playing) is offered four times a week, 40 minutes per time. It combines music with physical education and is divided into nine categories:

- sound discrimination (5%),
- sound making (5%),
- song singing (15%),
- music appreciation (5%),
- performing and rhythmic activities (20%),
- games (20%),
- gymnastics (10%),
- track and field events (10%), and
- ball games (10%).

Because so many activities are required in the class, many teachers experience difficulty in handling them all. Lin (1990) indicated that many experts have suggested that music and physical education be separated, but that teachers at the elementary school disagree. Discussion about the possibility of change continues.

Beyond the classroom, choruses and children’s ensembles are widespread and

**Figure 2. Time devoted to general music classes in schools in Taiwan.**

School Level	Minutes/Class	Times/Week	Semesters
Elementary school	40	2	8
Junior high schools	50	1	6
Senior high schools	50	1	4
Senior vocational school	50	1	2, 1, or none*
5-year junior college	50	1	2, 1, or none*

\* Music class is not offered to students who major in technology, commerce, etc.

**Figure 3. The components of third-grade music courses  
(adapted from the Curriculum Standards of the Elementary Schools)**

**Basics**

**1. Intonation and pronunciation**

Breathing exercises

Basic intonation exercises

Practice and pronunciation of scales (vowels and *do, re, mi*, etc.)

**2. Ear Training**

Discriminate long and short, high and low, soft and strong, and volume of sound

Listen, imitate, and sing short scales and melodies

Listen, sing, or perform with body of single tone, third and fourth harmony intervals

**3. Score recognition**

Know and practice the duration of notes and rests (whole note, half note, quarter note, eighth note, dotted half note, dotted quarter note, and rests with equal duration)

Know and practice staff, G-cleff, and singing name

Know and practice meters (2/4, 3/4, 4/4)

**4. Beat and conduct**

Materials are related to score recognition

**Performing**

**1. Singing**

Proceed gradually from imitation in singing to score-reading

Teaching and learning simple music

Learn to sing in unison

Discuss and practice basic singing skills (meter, intervals, tempo, breathing, etc.)

**2. Playing instruments**

Learn to play rhythmic instruments (wooden fish, triangle, castanet, tambourine, side drum, bass drum)

Participate in ensemble of rhythmic instruments

**3. Creating**

Imitate animals' and other sounds, discriminate high and low, long and short, strong and soft, quick and slow

Learn to sing and imitate easy melody and change the rhythm

Play creative games

**Appreciation**

**1. Vocal music and instrumental music**

Listening attitudes and habits

Basic knowledge of kinds of music and performing

Basic knowledge of classification of instrument (keyboard instruments, strings, woodwinds and brasses)

Appreciation of pieces related to the two items above

**2. Music stories**

Stories about musicians in the western classical periods

Music stories of the ancient Chinese

popular activities. Competitions are held each year in every city and county. Melodic instruments such as recorders, harmonicas, melodeons, accordions, organs, pianos, xylophones, and glockenspiels are frequently used in children's ensembles. Every elementary school is equipped with musical instruments such as triangles, tambourines, castanets, side drums, and bass drums.

### Junior High Schools

Junior high school students take music classes once a week, 50 minutes per class. The goals at this level are similar to those stated for the elementary schools. The textbooks are also published and supplied by NICT. The textbook committee is composed of 17 members, and three of them serve as an editing team. These members have produced three volumes, one for each level of the junior high schools.

The current curriculum standards for the junior high schools were developed in 1983. They state that music classes are to be composed of music theory, basic practices, singing, playing instruments, creative activities, and music appreciation.

The curriculum standards also describe elective music programs that include music theory and appreciation; chorus; percussion, band, and string ensembles; Chinese instrument ensembles; and piano study. No school, however, actually offers elective music programs, for these standards remain abstract goals that are now being studied for implementation in the schools (Fan, 1987).

Compared to elementary schools, the duration of music classes in junior high is shorter, but the variety of activities included is increased. One special feature is that, according to the published standards, students must learn three instruments: recorder in seventh grade, guitar in eighth grade, and Chinese violin (*Ebl-Hu*) in ninth grade. These requirements are difficult for many teachers. Fan (1987), a member of the textbook editing team, however, emphasizes in the official teachers' manual that teachers can adjust their use of the textbook to accommodate different areas and situations. Another special feature of the textbooks is that they contain many new songs by

contemporary composers in Taiwan.

At junior high schools, every subject is taught by a specialized teacher. Qualified music teachers are those graduated from the music department of the National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU), and each teaches 22 to 24 hours per week. Only 30 to 60 students are graduated from the NTNU music department each year, and not all of them teach at junior high level. Therefore, small schools or schools that are located far from cities always lack qualified music teachers. In these areas, music classes are often taught by teachers of other subjects such as art or physical education.

Another factor that makes the learning and teaching of music difficult is that students must face the entrance examinations for senior high school, senior vocational school, or five-year junior college when they graduate from the junior high level. Music is not included in these examinations, so the time scheduled for music classes is often used by teachers to help students prepare for the exams in subjects such as English, mathematics, and chemistry.

### Senior High Schools

Senior high school students take music classes once a week, 50 minutes per class, for their first two years. The lessons focus on singing, music appreciation, and some music theory. The content is similar to that of junior high school music, but textbooks approved by NICT are not the only sources of teaching material. Many companies publish music textbooks containing songs, music history and theory, and other information. Hsieh's survey pointed out that there were at least 26 different music text publications available in 1986. The songs in textbooks written for the senior high level are more difficult and complicated than those for lower levels.

Music is treated differently at different schools. Some schools treat music as a very important traditional subject. Some schools don't. Under the pressure of entrance examinations of universities and colleges, music is gradually being treated more often as a subordinate course of second-rate importance. The equipment and facilities for

music learning and teaching are not adequate at many schools (Lu, 1987).

In the senior vocational schools and five-year junior colleges, music and art are combined into a single, one-year class. Some schools hold music classes for a whole year, and some teach art instead. Some have one semester of music and one semester of art. At these schools, both music and art are presented superficially and often neglected.

### Gifted and Talented

Musically gifted and talented students can enter special music classes offered in many elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. The first such music class was founded in a private elementary school in Taipei in 1963. In 1973, a public elementary school in Taichung started a similar music class. Since then, more and more music classes for especially talented students have been established.

Most elementary schools begin to recruit gifted and talented students in third grade. Some provide preparatory classes as early as first grade.

The entrance examination for the gifted and talented classes is open to all school children. Parents who think their children are musically gifted and talented can register their children for the examination. The methods of identifying qualified children encompass a series of tests, including IQ tests and music aptitude tests. Achievement tests in Chinese and mathematics are also included at some schools. Among the qualified children, test scores of basic music skills and instrument-playing auditions are compared to determine who can enter the special music class.

In those elementary schools that offer music classes for musically talented children, there is one music class in each grade from grades three to six, and every class has 30 children. In addition to their general courses, students take specialized music lessons addressing such topics as their major and minor instruments as well as training in music fundamentals, chorus, ensemble, and harmony.

Performance training is the main focus of the special music classes. Students receive

individual instruction from teachers as they learn their major and minor instruments. Each week, every child studies for one hour with a major teacher and for half an hour with the teacher of the minor instrument. Students study other subjects together.

Before September, 1989, there was no curriculum guide for music instruction for gifted and talented students. Now there is an experimental guide for music classes at the elementary school level.

### Additional Courses

When these children finish their elementary music program, they can choose either to go back to common classes or to take the test to enter music classes at the junior high level. The graduates of music classes at junior high schools must pass the entrance examinations in order to enter the senior high schools, five-year junior colleges, or senior vocational schools. A student who wants to be accepted to a music college, or to the music section of a junior college, must pass an additional music test. This test includes performance auditions with major and minor instruments and tests the student's knowledge of music theory, sight singing, and listening. It is, to some extent, similar to the entrance examinations offered by music departments in universities and colleges.

Music classes at junior high schools include similar specialized courses, but they can also offer additional theory courses. Some schools provide instruction in harmony, texture, and form, and some offer introduction to music or composition. Music classes at the senior high school level are continuations of most courses that are taken at elementary and junior high schools. Courses such as counterpoint, chamber music, and music analysis are added to the curriculum of most senior high music classes (Tsai, 1987).

Music classes for gifted and talented students at the upper levels have their own special budget from the government. These students have their own classrooms for studying, and sometimes even a separate building on the campus. Even so, the parents of these students must support the special programs financially. Parents also

supply instruments and pay fees for their children's private lessons during summer and winter vacations. The number of music classes at every level is increasing.

Because major and minor instrument courses are offered to individual students, the music classes need many teachers. The number of officially assigned full-time teachers is too low to satisfy the need, and the shortage of teachers is very serious. To solve this problem, every school hires many teachers who teach more than one subject, and perhaps at more than one school. Some teachers teach different music classes at different levels, from elementary to senior high school, or even at university music departments. Most of these teachers are experienced instrument teachers, but not necessarily experts in the musical education of gifted and talented students. Because the administration and staffing of music classes for gifted and talented students are incomplete and need improvement, this problem may continue for some time.

### **Professional Training in Music**

Professional music training takes place in the music departments of universities and colleges, or in music sections at three-year or five-year junior colleges. Students of the five-year junior colleges come from junior high schools, but students of other institutions are graduated from senior high schools or senior vocational schools.

In Taiwan, there are eight universities that have music departments. Two of these have graduate institutes which offer Master's programs. One three-year junior college and two five-year junior colleges also have music sections.

College Entrance Examinations (CEE) take place annually. In addition to passing this exam, students who want to enter music departments must also pass additional specialized music tests. These exams, and the percentage contributed by each to the student's final score are:

- major instrument (50 percent),
- minor instrument (20 percent),
- music theory (10 percent),
- sight singing (10 percent), and
- listening (10 percent).

In determining the students' entrance to

the music department, the scores on the specialized music tests count 60 percent, and the scores on the College Entrance Exams count 40 percent.

The required and elective professional courses of music department are presented in Figure 4. Schools can consider their own practical situation in deciding when to offer the courses. Most of the content in professional courses is comparable to that of Western music schools. In addition to professional music courses, students study the Chinese and English languages, the history of China, the history of modern China, the thought of Sun Yat-sen, physical education, and military training.

The founding of the National Institute of the Arts (NIA) has had a significant impact on higher music education. Western music has long been the main feature of music departments in Taiwan, and performance training is the focus of music education. Students at the NIA can select majors in theory and composing, conducting, keyboards, vocal music, woodwinds and brasses, strings, percussion, or Chinese instruments. Music professional courses are divided into different levels; so the student who passes the test at one level can immediately begin study at an upper level. Thus there are few limitations concerning classes and grade levels. In addition to this flexibility, the NIA also offers some traditional Chinese music courses such as Chinese intonation, tunes of theatrical plays, Chinese opera, and Chinese percussion ensemble.

Students of this college must study five years. During their final year, their main task is a subject named "graduate production." This can be the preparation and performance of a solo recital, or the student may elect to make a presentation that also includes other artistic media such as dance or visual arts.

### **Teacher Training**

In Taiwan, teacher training is supported by the government. The music department of the National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) bears the responsibility of training high school music teachers. The music education departments of two Taipei teachers' colleges train elementary music teachers.

**Figure 4. Professional courses offered in the music department of Ton-Wu University for piano, vocal, and instrumental majors.**

Course Name	Credits	Semesters	Required/Elective
Major	2	8	R
Minor	8	4	R
Sight singing & ear training	6	6	R
Harmony	8	4	R
Chorus or ensemble	8	8	R
Counterpoint	4	2	R
Form	4	2	R
Music history	6	3	R
Music analysis	4	2	R
Introduction to Chinese music	4	2	R
Study of tones	2	1	E
Writing practice	2	1	E
Music appreciation	2	2	E
Research on chorus	8	8	E
Chamber music	6	6	E
Chinese instruments	4	4	E
Musical instruments	4	4	E
Instrumentation	2	2	E
Conducting	4	2	E
Piano pedagogy	4	2	E
Piano accompaniment	2	2	E
Keyboard harmony	2	2	E
Opera	2	2	E
Vocal music	2	2	E
Introduction to musicology	4	2	E
Stage performance of opera	2	2	E
Research on string works	4	2	E
Research on woodwind and brass works	4	2	E
Research on orchestra music	4	2	E
Research on piano works	4	2	E
Research on Chinese music	2	2	E
German	6	2	E
Italian	4	2	E

Students of these schools do not pay any fees for their study, but instead receive monthly allowances from the government. During their first four years of teacher training, the students study on campus; then, in the fifth year, they are assigned to elementary or high schools for teaching practice.

The curriculum of teacher training is composed of three categories: normal academic courses, professional teaching subjects, and specialized courses in music.

The professional teaching subjects are almost the same as those offered in other departments of the teachers' colleges or of NTNU. In the department of music education, the subjects taught include elementary education, philosophy of education, psychology of education, sociology of education, methods of educational research (including educational statistics), child development, theory and practice of counseling, curriculum and teaching, educational media, evaluation of education, school administration, the study of language and sociology teaching, mathematics and nature, and art (including music,

art, physical education and *Chabng-Your*). Students also take classes in educational practice, orchestral music, and visual arts. The credits of the above subjects total 44, and all courses are compulsory.

The specialized music courses are listed in Figure 5. These courses are similar to those of the music department of the university, but the credit of every course is different.

Because the graduates of music teacher training institutes are relatively few (30-60 annually from NTNU, and about the same number from the two Taipei teacher colleges every year), there has been, and continues to be, a shortage of music teachers for elementary and high schools. Due to this shortage, students of other departments in the nine teacher colleges must study general music pedagogy, basic keyboard skills, and music lessons in order to be competent in teaching music in their future work as classroom teachers. In general, the music background of these teachers is limited and affects the quality of elementary music classes. It is hoped that as more graduates of music

**Figure 5. The specialized music courses of the music education department.**

Course name	Credits	Semesters	Required/Elective
Major	8	8	R
Minor	4	8	R
Fundamental music training	4	4	R
Harmony	2	2	R
Chorus	6	6	R
Counterpoint	2	2	R
Music history	2	2	R
Conducting	2	2	R
Texture and composing	2	2	R
Music appreciation	2	2	E*
Ear-training	2	2	E
Advanced harmony	2	2	E
Music analysis	2	1	E
Chamber music	2	2	E
Chinese instruments	2	2	E
Musical instruments	2	2	E
Instrumentation	2	2	E
Germany	2	2	E
Italian	2	2	E
French	2	2	E
Children's ensemble	2	1	E
Composing children's songs	2	1	E
Conducting ensembles	2	2	E
Elementary music education			
in other countries	2	1	E
Acoustics	2	1	E
Application of computers in music education	2	1	E
Research in special programs	2	1	E

\* Students should earn at least 16 credits of elective subjects.

teacher training enter the school system, children will have better opportunities to learn and enjoy music.

### Trends in Music Education

People who visit Taiwan are always surprised at the prosperous status of private music teaching and learning. Piano and violin are the favorite instruments being studied in this way. As the economy of Taiwan grows and the country increasingly participates in the worldwide exchange of information, the people of Taiwan more deeply appreciate and value music, and are even emphasizing the native, traditional music of Taiwan. Moreover, parents pay more and more attention to their children's music experiences, and many private music classes are funded.

Famous pedagogies and principles have been introduced to Taiwan during these past few years, including Orff, Kodály, Suzuki, Pace, and Yamaha. The status of teaching and learning in Taiwan is becoming more multifaceted, although it sometimes seems we are following the steps of the trend. I sincerely hope the next generation will have a better and richer musical life.

### Notes

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## Call for Manuscripts

*The Quarterly*, the music journal for all who are concerned with music learning and teaching, invites the submission of scholarly manuscripts for review by the National Board of Editors and possible publication in future issues. For upcoming themes and guidelines to authors, see page 66.