

**Marye Moran**

In her new book, Wai-chung Ho takes on the circular cause and effect conundrum of education and society. While societal circumstances shape school curriculums, what is taught also changes society. This correlation between school education and social change is approached with a focus on music education in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The author received her Ph.D in Music Education from the University of London's Institute of Education, and this book stems from her thesis work done there. Following her schooling, she continued to research and publish extensively on music education, especially in China. As both a scholar on education and a teacher herself, Ho uses an interdisciplinary approach to spark thought about the connection between music education and state development. Aside from raising awareness of this topic, she aimed to influence the education system by providing policy-makers with thought-provoking insights.

The book explores the relationship between music education and changing society in the face of nationalism, globalization, and Sinification. Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are each evaluated individually, and later analyzed comparatively. For each location, the author demonstrates how great shifts in society and identity have occurred, causing corresponding changes in music education.

In mainland China, with the rise of Mao and the Cultural Revolution, music education dropped its emphasis on the traditional and instead was intended to promote patriotism. Now, however, the curriculum is broadening to include popular and global music, in addition to the return of traditional Chinese. Mainland China, according to the author, must lose its fear that expanding the styles taught will threaten national identity; it has shown progress toward this and should continue along this path.

Hong Kong's transition from British colonialism to Chinese Special Administrative Region status is described, along with its impact on music education. While teaching was once very Anglo centric, traditional Chinese music has been worked into the classroom, although in many minds, Chinese music still holds an inferior position. As Hong Kong seeks to foster a national identity in the midst of its unique political status, it still needs to find a balance between East and West in the teaching of music.

Taiwan, which has its own history of colonization and rapid political transformation, has taught both traditional Chinese and Western musical genres, but has been emphasizing local Taiwanese music in an attempt to create a uniquely Taiwanese national identity. As is the case with the other two locations, the author calls for a prioritization of music above political agendas when it comes to music education, and urges that local, traditional Chinese, Western, and global music all gain and keep their places in the curriculums.

To support her conclusions with quantitative data, the author analyzes Shanghai, Hong Kong and Taipei, using information from surveys and interviews. She discovers that, even when multi-cultural music curriculums are in place, the education leans toward Western classical music, and students say that they are not taught a balanced mix of local, national, and global music. Although these students report low levels of interest in studying folk and popular music, these are also the subjects given the least attention by instructors, and the lack of exposure could be the cause of the apathy. To face these problems, schools need to utilize technology, train teachers, and keep an open mind, presenting music for its intrinsic value while also keeping social context in mind.

No specific ideal curriculum is laid out, but it is clear that the author supports an education encompassing all global musical types, with respect given to the site's local and national culture. Though the author mentions successful strategies using music education for political ends, citing the Japanese westernizing their culture by emphasizing foreign music, she believes that schools should take politics out of the matter. Students should be exposed to music for its cultural value, not as propaganda.

Ho provides an interesting analysis of a subject that has been shown little attention on such a large scale. While there is extensive sociological research that compares mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, this is one of the few works that does so on the specific topic of school music education and social change. Manny Brand's 2006 book, *The Teaching of Music in Nine Asian Countries: Comparing Approaches to Music Education*, is the only scholarly writing comparable in depth and scope, but provides more anecdotal than analytical information, and is thus no substitute for Ho's work.

The locations of mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are included because of their common historical culture but varying modern cultures, both politically and socially. Though the majority of citizens of these three areas are all Han Chinese, they live under starkly different political systems and social contexts. Therefore, comparing their musical education systems shows differences brought about by these points of comparison.

Music was long valued in Chinese society, going back to Confucian thought, and is still a high priority in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Though Ho identifies conflicts in their musical education systems, it is both her hope and prediction that as politics and society stabilize, music education will be more cohesive and effective. And just as the chicken and the egg parable goes, so an effort to make music education more cohesive and effective will help in the stabilization of politics and society.

**Marye Moran** is the youngest book reviewer to have contributed to the *Chinese Cross Currents*. She is an undergraduate at Boston College, Class of 2014, in the Arts and Sciences Honours Program, with a major in English in which she obviously excels. As one of the top 12 students in her class, she is taking part in the Presidential Scholars Program. She is studying the Chinese language as well as the Western Cultural Tradition and Psychology. Her writing experience includes contributing to *The Heights* newspaper and working on the staff for the literary magazine *Stylus*. In spite of her youth she already has an impressive record in volunteer work, including service trips to Appalachia and Lourdes, France. In addition, she participated in the Presidential Scholars Service Learning Program, where she was a volunteer intern at the St. Francis House homeless shelter and The Italian Home School for at-risk children. She developed her interest in writing and Chinese before coming to Boston College, as editor-in-chief of her high school yearbook, a staff member and contributor to the literary magazine *Perspectives*, and as a participant on a month-long cultural immersion program in Shanghai.