



# Reform and Progress: A New Angle for Chinese Public Art Education

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## Abstract

With the deficiency of social art education which is created by public schools in China, private art institutions take the charge of social art education. Yet the private art institutions have their issues, for example: the economic based operation strategy, the unstable sources of students, and the vicious competition between institutions. Under the context of implementing the policy named “Double Reduction”, social art education in China needs to be upgraded. To achieve this goal, the form in America called “Preparatory” is added into the consideration by the writer, the Preparatory of Peabody Institute is introduced as an example in this paper. Ideally thinking, the form of preparatory is the new angle for Chinese social art education. Yet when trying to make the form of preparatory Chinese, issues like the pricing for private lessons, and the usage of campus should always be considered during the discussion.

## Keywords

Art Education, Music Education, Preparatory, Social Art Education

## 1. Public Art Education in China

The ultimate goal for this paper is attempting to find a system which can help the children in China to have more and better opportunities to be educated in art. Being educated in art does not just mean that children can sing a song, dance, or play an instrument, but it should also mean that the children can be allowed the chance to cultivate an interest in art, which permits them to not only acquire an appreciation for art, but discover new ways to express themselves. From my own experience, public art education in China does not take proper advantage of the arts which creates a deficiency in this way. There are many causes for this problem in China, and on top of that, the majority of schools are not even designed to serve the function of broadening the vision of art for students. However, there are private art education institutions in China which effectively introduce the arts to children, but they also experience difficulties of their own, which will be spoken of later in this document. Unlike the institutions which are founded by individuals (i.e., private institutions), Youth Palaces are supported by the local governments and are the products which emerged under the special national conditions of China. The Youth Palaces were to oversee the art education in China, however they are gradually disappearing as the private art institutions are developing rapidly. The Youth Palace will be introduced shortly. The last thing which will be spoken of in this paper is the system from the Art Education Center from Tsinghua University, under that the engineering students in Tsinghua University can be offered several chances to take part in arts and cultivate their interests in arts. I believe this system is the most effective way to help achieve better art education.

In addition to the real situation of art education in China, the other reason which issued my focus on public art education is the proposal of the new policy which is named “Double Reduction”. With this new policy, students under the K-12 system in China can reduce the huge stress of academic studying both from inside the schools and outside the schools. As a result, they can transfer their attention from academic studies to other subjects, for example: music. Ac-

According to the real situation of school art education in China, the “Double Reduction” policy also promoted the upgrade of aesthetic education, which means that the school art education shouldn’t only have music and fine art. The teaching method should not be only just singing or painting, but should also contain more subjects in art, contain more content, contain new methods to teach the students, and it should pursue more goals than just teaching students to sing. This offers an excellent opportunity for those private art institutions to help the schools in China to fulfill their missions in art education, additionally the private art education will be in the same status as public art education, which will assist to establish the new national system and standard in art education. Under the new policy, the role of the private art institutions changed to the assist school art education. To serve that function they also need to broaden their ideas and provide services with higher quality (Liu & Onokawa, 2021).

This doesn’t mean that the private art institutions don’t have their own issues. For me, the art education in China is a mystery. Every time I think it is in a difficult situation, its rapid development displays success, and every time I think it is doing well it displays its problems immediately. The main issues of the private art institutions can be classified into these aspects: policy, management, and concept. For years, the unclear policy toward social art institutions makes the inclusion into art education system unclear. Sometimes it can be the threat toward school art education and sometimes it can be the source of the students’ and parents’ stress (Han, 2019). The unclear policy in this area also triggers the chaos in the founding of the art training institutions, they violated the rules and policies and charged tuition fees casually. Sometimes it is difficult for those institutions to get the paperwork completed, and the supervision from the related departments is inadequate. Because of the chaos triggered by the lack of relative policies, the management of those institutions is also in disarray. The malicious competition between institutions is like poison in this area, the management systems of those institutions are vulnerable, the market-oriented management is a hidden difficulty which can deepen the unbalance in art education, the unstable resources of students would be another bomb which can be exploded because of the market-oriented management idea, and the focus on the economic profits which causes those institutions start to deviate the original goal of art education (Zhang, 2020). The excessive pursuit of economic profits drives the institutions to host multiple competitions or performance degree examinations, these events can help the spread of art like music; however these events, in another way, can cause unnecessary pressure on students and parents, who are learning music for interests instead of winning competitions or gaining a better grade (Wang, 2017). The original goal of those institutions has been questioned by the people because of the excessive development of this area, and this will harm the establishment of the art education system of China (Zhang, 2020).

Solutions are suggested to those institutions, related departments of governments, and parents and students. For the institutions: 1) they need to pay more attentions as to how to improve their daily operations; 2) they need to control the quality of their service from beginning to end; 3) they should try to earn the support from other fields outside arts (Zhang, 2020); 4) they need to set up a more scientific curriculum plan for the students; and 5) teacher resources to the educational devices should be upgraded (Wang, 2017). For the governments: 1) the importance of formulating the relative policies, laws, and standards is significant, these are the items which can help supervise the institutions, with those “weapons” it should be easier for them to 2) supervise the institutions. 3) The private art institutions should be added to the same art education system as the school art education (Han, 2019). And finally, 4) combine public art education and school art education, in that way the original goal of art education can be revalued. For students and parents, they only to do one thing but the most important thing: always keep their original mind of why starting to learn music and art. I believe with this kind of mindset; art will never be a stress to those who really love it (Wang, 2017).

When talking about the public art education in China, one special institution named the Youth Palace cannot be ignored. Transformed from the tradition of Former Soviet Union, Youth Palaces in China were founded by the local governments and their main function was to help cultivate the interests in arts mainly for students that are K-12, hosting competitions, and displaying musical performances. In the past, because of the support from the government, the Youth Palace might be the most authoritative art training institution, however with the rise of art training institutions which were founded by individuals, Youth Palaces started to fade out of the art education system. Also, when the universities in China started to establish art conservatories, the center of musical performances and competitions was moved to art conservatories, which was another impact towards the Youth Palace. Though Youth Palaces in China have lost their past reputations, they still are the important part of the public art education system in China, so the solutions which can help Youth Palaces are: 1) by improving the resources of music educators and learning from the experience of other art training institutions in China, to build their own brands of art training, and 2) long-term operation plans are required. For example, establishing the cooperative relationship with the local art conservatories or focusing more on the establishment of choruses and orchestras (Qiu, 2020).

The other type of system in art education which can help to establish the public art education is the organizational model of the art education center from the Tsinghua University. Art education has a quite long history in Tsinghua

University, at least one hundred years. As one of the best engineering universities in China, the philosophy of its art education also agrees with their image: from practices to theories. With this kind of philosophy, nearly all the students in Tsinghua University can have the chance to be a part of art, and they also can have the chance to produce the theories they learn into practice (Lu, 2012). Unlike the orthodox class settings in China, the art education center doesn't have the concept of "class", students can choose the art courses they are interested in. The courses of the art education center are the products of the cooperation between Tsinghua University and other art conservatories in China, so that students can get the knowledge of art under a higher quality and gather more various concepts in art. The other feature of the curriculum of the art education center is that the courses are ordered according to different degree of difficulty, again all the students in Tsinghua University can get the chance to participate in arts and be a part of arts. With this kind of model, art education center becomes a place which main function is providing assistance for the students to practice their own arts, teachers' roles also change from only teaching to a role which contains more management work, this is an advantage for the students but a disadvantage for the teachers. The bond between teachers and students is weakened by this model and for the teachers who want to make academic achievements through their daily teaching, the over-flexible student resources can harm for their academic pursuit (Zhou, 2019). Additionally, the curriculum settings that mainly focus on practice cannot really improve students' tastes in arts and this kind of philosophy will also let the other thought, which may not be less practical, down. However, the benefit of this mode is significant, there are dozens of students' art clubs in Tsinghua University, plenty of musical festivals and art activities also help to spread art into the daily life of the students (Lu, 2012).

Private art education institutions, the Youth Palaces, and the art education center of Tsinghua University, are the methods or systems which can achieve the goal of establishing the public art education for the children in China, which can bring more chances and a better quality of art education. The importance of establishing public art education system for children in China is related to several aspects: 1) the ability of aesthetic judgment, 2) cultivating the next generation with more diversified quality, 3) the public art education can also be the force which can enhance the communication between different cultures, and 4) public art education can help to develop the economy. So how is the real situation of public art education in China? Inside the schools, they are in the process of transforming to a more comprehensive and better education. Outside the schools, public art education presents the trend of marketization and diversification. This looks fine on the surface; however, issues are also displayed, the lack of relative policies, the lack of public educational theories, the lack of carriers for public art education, the mindset of the crowd is presenting a questioning attitude, and the carriers of public art education have their own problems which were discussed above (Zhang, 2020).

Public art education in China is just at the beginning, the demands from students and parents surely give numerous of opportunities to those institutions but they also cover up the superficial and internal problems. From my perspective, even though there is no such thing as "absolute fairness", I still want to find a way for students who really love art and music, who really want to be the part of art and music, who really believe that art and music can bring them joy, and who really love art and music but are struggling with poverty to be able to participate in the arts. To give them a kind of art education with more content, more chances, and fair quality, is my goal for this paper and the goal for my future.

## 2. Several Models of Public Art Education in Western World

When talking about the public art education in western countries especially America, educators are mainly discussing the word "community-based art education". Besides, unlike the situation in China, which was mentioned above, art education in western countries usually just contains subjects from fine arts, for example: painting and sculpture, music seems to not be a part of public art education. However, the thought of community-based art education can be the sample for the progress of Chinese public art education, so I decided to consult some articles which were focused on community-based art education from western educators, especially from America, also about the school art education of United Kingdom and Japan. Following is a summary of these articles.

In the "Three Initiatives for Community-Based Art Education Practices", Maria Lim, Eunjung Chang, and Borim Song used three community art events to explain and illustrate the importance of community-based art education and how community-based art education can be the method to connect the art knowledge from classrooms and the real world outside the school. Also, they wanted to figure out how these community-based art event can affect the preservice art teachers from four different perspectives which are: 1) the ways that art events effect preservice teachers, 2) the methods of how the preservice teachers prepare for the art events, 3) how the preservice teachers can be improved by joining into community art events, and 4) how these community art events can combine with the cultivation for art teachers in the high level education. The three community art events were: 1) mural painting for school library, 2) the renewal activity of downtown area in a city, and 3) youth art festival. From these three community art events, the educators discovered the impacts from community art events for both preservice teachers and students in schools were invisible and

continuous, which means that even the effects cannot be observed immediately, but the mindsets for both students and the preservice teachers were changed, and they would remember the experience in the future. Besides, the prosperity of those community art events was built from the collaboration from the preservice teachers and the staffs from the events' faculties, so not only the abilities of the preservice teachers can be improved but there would also be more opportunities for the students and the preservice teachers to engage in community art events which can help them to link knowledge and the real world. And finally, these community art events can raise the senses of social responsibilities of those preservice art teachers, and lead the attitudes towards art education of the public to a more positive trend (Lim, Chang, & Song, 2013).

In J. Ulbricht's "What is Community-Based Art Education?", community-based art education was analyzed from several different perspectives, which were: 1) informal teaching, 2) organized community teaching, 3) outreach, 4) ethnography, 5) public art, and 6) implications. With these perspectives, community-based art education can discover whether students in schools or the masses have enough chances to reach out to art, especially visual art. These features of community-based art education make this educational form beyond education itself by creating art environment and creating the local culture for an area. Community-based art education also issues challenges for the art teachers in K-12 schools because they shouldn't only pay their attention to the knowledge in the classrooms but also to the knowledge beyond textbooks and schools. These students can be art educated formally and informally through community-based art education, and they might have more in mind than the teachers think they may have. In conclusion, community-based art education gives the art teachers chances and challenges. Which means, if they can catch the trend of community-based art education they will have the chance to improve their variety of abilities, and community-based art education also challenges the art teachers whether they can design more meaningful art programs for their students (Ulbricht, 2005).

What can community-based art education bring to the students? The article from Gaye Green called "New Genre Public Art Education" can provide some suggestions. Community-based art education, from the researcher's view, brought several abilities to the students, which were: 1) the ability to create their own arts by using different kinds of medias, 2) the ability of joining into the transformation of the society or even leading the transformation of the society by using their arts, and 3) the process of creating their own arts will be the opportunity for the students to cultivate their dialectical thinking. From Gaye, the community-based art education mainly follows two standards: 1) investigation and 2) finding the intersection between art metaphors and the social issues. At last, according to Gaye, community-based art education is that kind of educational method can make knowledge in arts beyond arts and lead arts to a world in a deeper depth (Green, 1999).

Similar with the first article which was introduced, in Shengkuan Chung and Christy Ortiz's article "Art Education in Action on the Street" they also allowed the students from K-12 schools to use their art knowledge outside classrooms and took that knowledge to streets, or, to the community environment. From the educators, no matter which level of art the students were in, they could still have the chance to show their senses of art through this kind of community art activity. Besides, this kind of community art activity could help the students to cultivate their sense of social responsibility, especially to the communities they were in, not only in the present but also in the future. Also, like the other articles mentioned above, the researchers in this article mentioned that this community-based art activity offered teachers a new way to think about their settings for curricula. Through this kind of community art activity, the relationship between classrooms and the real community environment was built by using visual arts such as painting. On the other hand, not only the students benefited from community art activity, but also the people in the community could be influenced, they can be the part of the art, which was created by the students, so that the whole atmosphere of that community can be shifted mainly by the students and with the appreciation and support from the people in the community (Chung & Ortiz, 2011).

Additionally, there was one article which discussed a little bit about the school art education in the United Kingdom and Japan. In some ways, the school art education in Japan was slightly similar with China, so I decided to introduce this "Art Education in Lower Secondary Schools in Japan and the United Kingdom" from Toshio Naoe. Since 1969, art education in Japanese schools was led by the national curricula standard, and it included five subjects in art: 1) painting, 2) sculpture, 3) design, 4) craft, and 5) art appreciation. Although the class hours in Japan were required by the national standard, the number of class hours had been on a decreasing trend. However, in the United Kingdom, subjects in arts were not divided as Japan, and there was not an idea called "national standard" in the United Kingdom, however, the examination board syllabus was the key who influenced school art education in the United Kingdom. The situation in Japan caused two issues, the first one was that teachers in Japan started to question their beliefs in teaching because of the real situation in the subject settings, which was conflict between subjects triggered unfair treatment between the subjects. After the United Kingdom first introduced their National Curriculum in 1994, teachers and schools were satis-

fied by the guidance from the National Curriculum (Naoe, 2003).

From the western experience, community-based art education gives both students and teachers in schools plenty of chances to link the knowledge from textbooks and theories and the real world around them. Personally speaking, the form of community-based art education can lead the trend and update of Chinese public art education. Just like America, cities in China are formed with communities, and every community in China has its own situation and background, when arts like visual arts and music goes into these communities, cities in China will present different types of art education. Students, teachers, schools, and institutions can all be the part of the community-based art education. The benefits which can be brought to teachers and students were mentioned above, and for schools and institutions, the advantages are countless. The most important benefit for both schools and institutions are that they can create their images of carrying social responsibilities, so that they can gain the better reputations from the public, especially for the private art education institutions. When music and the other arts becomes the important part of people's daily lives, this will attract more and more children to fall in love with arts, including music or other subjects in the arts. In addition, the creativity, imagination, sense of social responsibility, and the observation of children can be improved during this process. Not only for the children in the urban areas, children in the rural areas can also be affected by art. So, the reason why I wanted to learn about public art education is more clear than ever, I want children, in no matter which part of China, to have chances to experience music or any other kinds of arts in this world, and to learn, to feel, to observe the world around them from a more different and more variety point of view.

### 3. The Model of Preparatory

When talking about the western formula of art education, the preparatory schools, which are established by the music schools and conservatories in America, must be considered in this discussion. To learn more about how preparatory schools work in America, the preparatory of Peabody was utilized as an example and with an interview with the director and conductor of Peabody Preparatory Wind Orchestra, Elijah Wirth. The content of this interview will be attached as appendix to this paper.

Overall, as Elijah mentioned, the preparatory is the type of community school which can offer those people who love music, independent of whether they want to make music their future career, and independent of whether they are older or only two-month-old children. Yes, the age range of preparatory is shocking, Elijah mentioned that the preparatory can provide courses for babies as young as two months and the students "as old as I want." The Preparatory is more like a mini-Peabody, you can find nearly everything the Peabody Conservatory has in preparatory, including the dance department. Additionally, during pandemic times, the preparatory also had the online courses named "Minimesters". As was mentioned above, the preparatory can provide courses for music lovers, that program is named "Peabody Plus", which is offered to those adults who do not live in musical world but really love music. For the adults whose career is music-based, for example the music teachers in elementary schools, the preparatory can also help them to improve their teaching skills and their abilities of their profession, and the name of this program is quite appropriate, the "Peabody Pro". With the broad age range and comprehensive curriculum settings, the preparatory offers the whole society enough chances to participate in music. Without auditions, tests, and exams, the only access standard is whether the student enjoys music or not.

The preparatory has a clear guideline, or a clear framework, for students. When the two-to twenty-three-month-old babies are in the preparatory, they are offered the courses teaching them how to move their bodies along with the music, and when they are older, they will be offered courses which are based on ear training. Elijah said that his daughter was in that program when she was young, and it amazed him when his six-year-old daughter could name the Lydian scale, this program is helping the young girl to establish her absolute pitch. When the children are old enough, they will have the chance to pick up instruments. The preparatory has a clear framework for this, a chart is also in an appendix to this paper. However, Elijah said that the guideline can be adjusted to the special situation of the individual student, but they will basically work according to it, because "you can't let a four-year old student play tuba". When the students are eight to nine years old, they will begin to play in the orchestras, and this is when the auditions begin. In the preparatory, students will take audition for two specific reasons: 1) choose the ensemble they will be in, and 2) choose the studio which is more proper for the students. Elijah mentioned that the ensembles in the preparatory have three different levels, at the beginning students will be in the String Ensemble, and the Preparatory Concert Band, they will learn in those ensembles for about two years, and then they will move into the second level, where has the Young Artists Orchestra and the Preparatory Wind Band. When the students are at the age of going to high school, they will move into Wind Orchestra, and the Youth Orchestra. The teachers in the preparatory are arranged according to the level of the students, so that it is important to allow the students to learn with the teacher, which is more suitable, especially for the instruments which have lots of students. For example, there are 300-400 piano students and 400 students learning violin, therefore,



the preparatory sets up a placement day to allow the teachers know the level of the students so that the teachers can make the clear decision as to where to place the students. Students who are playing string instruments in the preparatory and who are also playing in the Youth Orchestra have displayed a high range of possibility to continue the study of music when they are going to college, whereas the students in Wind Orchestra have displayed about half possibility to learn music in college.

All those ensembles rehearse on Saturday at Peabody, and I was able to observe a rehearsal. They were preparing the concerts for the winner of the concerto competition, which was a young tuba player. Mr. Wirth mentioned that the Wind Orchestra and the Youth Orchestra will both hold the concerto competition every year, and the winner will have the opportunity to be accompanied by the ensembles. While I graduated from one of the best music conservatories in China, we did not have our first concerto competition until I was at the third year. What I'm trying to say is that the form of preparatory not only can give the students enough chances to be close to music or just cultivate a hobby, but this can also help to increase their self-confidence which becomes more and more important during this stage of development. Plus, the students in the preparatory can be familiar with the life in music conservatories, they will have music theory courses, chamber music courses, and private lessons during the weekdays. For the music theory courses, Elijah said that the preparatory is trying to establish a computer-based system, meaning that the students will have the classes and upload their work through computers and the internet. Maybe this is a kind of harsh reality, but the influence from COVID-19 is continuing, and allowing the students to get familiar with online course is a trend which we must follow. Institutions and teachers also need to get familiar of this kind of method of teaching as that may become more "standard" to have courses remotely. Speaking of teachers, Elijah told me that the teachers are basically from Baltimore, yet they will also hire teachers nationally, most of them are alumni the of Peabody Institute, just like Elijah himself.

As mentioned above, the preparatory is the "community" school which can give the people chances to learn music. The preparatory will hold performances for the community, those performances will be displayed to everybody by the advertisements in the newspapers, they will also learn the related information through the local radios. Also, the preparatory will invite students to visit the Peabody campus. Besides community art activities, the preparatory also has its own way to support and gain feedback from the community. Elijah mentioned that the preparatory has one special project named "Tuned In" program. This program is designed to help the children in Baltimore city who wants to learn music but with economic issues in their families, he said that this program is more like the scholarship from the preparatory, because nearly every student's families in the community which the preparatory provides the courses to have varying degrees of economic hardship. After learning this, I went to the website of the preparatory to find more information. Taking string classes as an example, the program which is prepared for string students in six to thirteen years old named "Allegro" will charge 645 dollars for a five-day course. From my own perspective, it is kind of hard to judge whether this pricing is costly or inexpensive, but one thing I can identify is that this kind of pricing is not that affordable. So, the establishment of the "Tuned In" program is essential for those who really love music but can't afford the tuition fee. From Elijah, this program helps at least 1,500 students to achieve their pursuits in music and for each students the program will be able to provide 5,000 to 7,000 dollars of aid. Surprisingly, the evaluation criteria of the "Tuned In" program is not particularly stringent. Elijah told me that the basic criterion of the program is the attendance of the students, and reason for this is that the transportation conditions in Baltimore is not good, so the attendance will represent the participation of the families. If the student's absences are reaching a certain number, then that student will not be eligible for the "Tuned In" program anymore.

From my own perspective, the method of preparatory can provide high quality music and art education to the whole public. With this kind of method, music can be spread to all classes of society, those who love music and want to take music as their future careers, those who just have the pure interests in music, and those who want to improve themselves in the world of music, they can all meet their needs in this institution. Detailed and systematic syllabi, teachers from Peabody and the alumni from Peabody can provide scientific, comprehensive, and high-quality daily education. With nearly every teaching activity based on the Peabody campus, students can become more familiar with the atmosphere of a music conservatory. Social activities and the "Tuned In" scholarship program are the ways that the preparatory can give back to the community. They can also help the preparatory becomes the ideal community school which can serve the variable artistic needs of the community. Besides, the accessibility of music also can be improved through the activities and the scholarship program. Most importantly, in a city like Baltimore, a community school like the Peabody Preparatory can be viewed as a method to prevent the young generation from crime, especially the students who come from low-income families. Plus, when the black, white, brown, and yellow children from the community are sitting there and rehearsing, music can function as just one of the representations of art. While the conflicts of races are still intense in America, the preparatory also can be the educational method of teaching children how to respect and work with the children from other races. In addition, the awareness of races can be enhanced during this process. How-

ever, everything has advantages and disadvantages. From my own perspective, I think the weakness of the preparatory is the high pricing of courses, and the solution to this is the scholarship project with a slightly vague evaluation criteria. Personally speaking, only evaluate whether the student is eligible for a scholarship which can provide 5,000 to 7,000 dollars aid is suitable when the student is just beginning their studies in the preparatory. When the time of studying and the performance level increases, how well the student can perform should also be considered for the scholarship.

When we observe this form historically, the preparatory idea as a method of social music and art education in America has a hundred-year history. The preparatory of Peabody Institute was established during 1890s. At the beginning, the Europeans who came to the new land wanted to spread their culture, so at the very beginning the majority courses in the Peabody preparatory were private lessons. Starting 40 to 50 years ago, the Peabody preparatory began to establish the orchestras, and ten years ago the Peabody preparatory established its wind bands. When it came to the dance department, Elijah mentioned that they just celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. Everything I mentioned above, are the results from a hundred-year of experience. The rich historical tradition means the idea of preparatory may not be fully reproduced in a country or area which may have a different situation, yet the advantage of this form makes it can be a new angle of updating or improving the social music and art education in a country or area which does not have this kind of tradition. So, in the coming section, I will discuss whether the idea of the preparatory can be made to fit in China.

As I mentioned in the previous section, private art education institutions occupy the majority part of Chinese public art education, and some of Youth Palaces in China are still functioning but have lost their reputations. Considering my home city, the Youth Palace in Changchun as an example, the students there are basically coming from low-income families, and they just want to study music to pass the time and have fun with music. However, when the discussion comes to make preparatory meet the needs of public art education in China, the experience of the Youth Palace should be considered. The advantages of private art education institutions were discussed in the above sections, they can offer more private, more personal, and more variable courses to students which can make up for the deficiency of school art education. Yet, the increasing pressure from vicious competition between institutions, the vague supervision standards from related departments, the management which is based on economic benefit orientation makes art education deviate from the original intention of education. During the interview I had with a principle of a private art education institution from my hometown, the word that comes up the most is “economic benefit”, which I think it is understandable, but “economic benefit” shouldn’t be the only impulse of private art education. When everything goes to market, goes to “money”, you just can’t turn your head and pretend that it is not noticed, no matter which part of public art education you are in. So, the first thing I want to talk about in this section, is the pricing of the Chinese style preparatory.

During my undergraduate, I was giving cello private lesson at that time, the average pricing of private lesson was 50 dollars per hour, this kind of pricing was the potential criteria. For the teachers, if the lesson fee is higher than 50 dollars, that would be better, yet for the parents they just want it as low as it can be. So, the crazy thing happens, can you imagine 20 children standing in a living room and playing violins all together? Can you imagine a fifty-year-old man who just learned violin by himself for three years name himself master in violin and taught hundreds of students? Can you imagine the most important factor when parents are picking teachers for their children is the price of the lesson fee? They don’t want the better, they just want the cheaper. I can’t forget when that mother was negotiating with me for the lesson fee under 50 dollars, this is the real situation of private lesson. When it comes to art education institutions, things are kind of the same. Most of the private art institutions learn this kind of the thoughts of parents, and so that they open as many as public courses to families who want to learn art, and this becomes their main method to gain the economic benefits. Public courses can provide institutions enough benefits, yet the efficiency of this method in an instrument playing course is doubtful. But one thing is certain, that this kind of method can satisfy the needs of the most of the parents, they want to spend the least and earn the most. One of the most obvious advantages of preparatory is that the teachers are basically from the conservatory, so the little bit higher pricing for courses is understandable. Yet in China, teachers in conservatories have more things to do than just teaching in schools, so it is difficult to invite them to take charge of the daily teachings of the preparatory. If the economic benefits the preparatory offers to teachers are not appropriate this will increase the difficulties to invite the teachers from conservatories. Problems in China need to be solved in the Chinese way. When a conservatory has a project like a preparatory, they can apply the education fund from the Ministry of Education in China. A good example of this is the Guangzhou Symphony Youth Orchestra. Its goal is to cultivate the amateur in a more professional way. Students in that orchestra are coming from elementary, middle, and high schools in Guangzhou, and they are just students who love music. With that kind of training philosophy, the performance ability of that Youth Orchestra can be the representation of the level of art education of Guangzhou, which is the government willing to observe, and of course the government is willing to accept the application of

education funds from the orchestra. With the education fund from the government, the Youth Orchestra can secure the best conductors and soloists to work with the orchestra. Besides, the education fund can support the orchestra to perform abroad. When the Youth Orchestra is managed under the professional orchestra management philosophy, it will have the music season as the profit model, schools and students in Guangzhou will also be attracted by the charm of music. So, the Youth Orchestra can establish its own circulation in the resources of students and the economical profits. The model of GSYO can be an example of a Chinese preparatory after the preparatory has the enough students to establish its orchestra, at the very beginning of the preparatory private lessons are still the main type of teaching. How the problem of teacher resources and the pricing can be solved is still a hard problem. Chinese Conservatory of Music, where I had my undergraduate, has its own orchestra, musicians there are signed as the musicians in orchestra and teachers in the conservatory. So that the teachers of preparatory can be from the orchestra, this not only can help the preparatory keep its advantage but also the pricing problem can be eased. Another benefit of this is that it can help to avoid wasting teaching resources in the conservatory. When the students and children are coming to preparatory, they are not the amateur players with knowledge in how to play an instrument, they are just kids who know little about music. The teachers in conservatories who are used to teaching the best music learners in this country are teaching kids who have little knowledge about music, that can be a waste. Kids cannot understand the teachers and the teachers will waste their time in teaching basic knowledge in music. If the professional musicians in the conservatory owned orchestra can take charge of teaching activities of the preparatory, this can be more proper for the young students and can also be an effective method for the preparatory. From my own experience when I was undergraduate, musicians in that orchestra were young and full of energy, and they were also the best musicians in their own fields, if children can be taught by them this can help the students cultivate their interests in music, with higher interests they will be more consistent to music, so that the virtuous cycle is established. This is for the field of instrumental music, when it comes to vocal music, I think it is better to learn from the American version of preparatory, which hire the conservatory alumni and others from around the country. This can make sure the teaching quality of the preparatory is consistent and then the pressure from how to price the lesson fees can also be eased. All in all, pricing should not be the strength or weakness of an art education institution, it is just a real situation which will confuse nearly all the education institutions, it is also the representation of the aiming of the institutions. But I believe in one thing, it can't make it till the end if it only cares about the economic benefits.

In China, most of the music conservatories have their own attached middle and high schools, and they will provide the students who want to take music as their future careers more scientific and systematic musical training. However, the dark side of those schools is that the competition between students can be intense, and because they already put themselves to music learning, their academic learning will be neglected which is not a good situation for a student who wants to be a musician with more comprehensive scope of knowledge, for example the ability of getting better score in the TOEFL test. When comparing with these two schools, the preparatory has its advantage of keeping the students' interests in music and do not let their academic studies fall behind, they can also be systematically musical trained by the teachers in the preparatory. Someone would say that the private art institution can do the same thing, they can also train their students with their teaching framework, the owner of a private art education institution I interviewed told me that he will show the guideline to the parents at the very first time to let them know how their children will be educated, what the advantage is when comparing with schools. From my own perspective, as part of the teaching faculty of a music conservatory, the preparatory can have some interactions with the attached middle and high schools. Students who are considered "talented" by the teachers, students themselves and their families are also deciding to take music as their future careers, can have the chances to study in the attached schools. Yet, everything in this model has advantages and disadvantages. Even if the student is considered have talents in music learning, the environment of those attached schools is different than the preparatory, the more intense competition between students, and the pressure of music learning might threaten the students from music learning, and at last the students' academic learning might be pulled behind. In some way, this kind of interaction between preparatory and attached schools really can provide enough opportunities to those children and students who want to be in the musical world in the future and more systematic musical education. The dark side of this interaction is whether the students have the ability to get familiar with the new environment and the upcoming pressures from those attached schools.

The daily teaching activities of the Peabody preparatory are based in the campus of Peabody, and as mentioned above, the Peabody campus is also the main place for community art activities. This can help the students of preparatory get familiar with the environment of conservatory and with time goes by their interests towards music can be increased. For those who really love music, going to the Peabody campus for their courses might be their most anticipated event during the weekdays. The advantages of providing courses on the campus are obvious, yet can we have it also in China? From my own perspective, yes and no. Just take China Conservatory of Music one of the best conservatories which is



located at Beijing as an example. Unlike America, undergraduate and master students in China are all living in the campus, the campus is not only a place to learn, but also a place to live so it is important to help them keep this environment comfortable for them to live. However, when the children of preparatory are in the campus they might be out of control and become the  $x$  factor of keeping the peace environment for the students in the campus. This is the dark side of having the teaching activities in campus. But the bright side of this can't be evaluated only by simple words like yes or no, a better environment has huge influence when the children are growing up. Personally speaking, I think the way that both can help keep the peaceful campus for students and help the children in preparatory still be educated is to have the clear plan for the usage of the classrooms for preparatory and a clear schedule for teaching activities of preparatory. In Peabody, students will have their rehearsals at the main concert hall, so that other rehearsals should give way to them. Yet, for students in preparatory they might not need the best concert hall for their rehearsals, they can use rehearsal halls which are not that good. It does not mean that the students in preparatory cannot have chances to have rehearsals in the main concert hall in the conservatory, the conservatory can arrange some "open days" for the students to experience the feeling of having rehearsal in the best concert hall and observe the rehearsals from the students in conservatory. The most important advantage of preparatory from my perspective, is the chance which offers to the students to have the chances to get familiar with the environment of music conservatory and influence the students imperceptibly, yet the lives of the students who are living in the conservatory should also be considered, they are the main body of the conservatory. The other solution of this is trying to have music theory courses remotely or changing those courses to 100 percent online courses.

When I was interviewing that social music education institution owner, he told me that he was willing to hold art activities for the community, and he did. He held the hundred-student piano performance and instrument performance in a local theater, yet he is considering the frequency and the method of holding these kinds of activities. As a private music education institution, economic benefits always come to the first, so that the cost of holding community art activities and how much can the institution earns from those activities are always causing a problem. His story is just a miniature of thousands of institutions in China, and this the obvious limitation of private art education institutions. When it comes to a preparatory, things will be different. As mentioned before, the preparatory school has the possibility of applying for education fund from the local education department, so that the preparatory won't need to pay lots of attention to economic issues. Also, when the preparatory has its own orchestras and bands, they can set their own music seasons like the professional symphony orchestras, and this can also provide economical profits to the preparatory. The opening day also can be a method of social art activity which the preparatory can take charge in. One thing I learned from that owner makes me think that can be the organizing form for the preparatory in China. Back to the time when Youth Palace oversaw the public art education in China, they would hold an art activity which involved Youth Palaces from more than five provinces, it was like the Olympic games in music which was held every two years, and teachers and students who had best performances would be awarded. There are nine music conservatories in China, and nearly 30 colleges have music program and School of Music, they are at the different parts of China. When those who have the ability to own a preparatory, they can also hold art activities like the Youth Palace used to do, and that will be a spectacular event of Chinese music education. Besides concerts and performances, there also can be music education seminars which can help the communication in this field nationwide.

One thing which I'm not sure about with this kind of activity is that whether it can motivate the interest in music learning of those low-income areas in China. The original intention of this project is to find a way which can help students and children all around China to have chances to reach out to music and get familiar with it, yet some subjects in music can be kind of expensive for those low-income families and areas, even though Youth Palaces can give those families helps, yet the teaching qualities of Youth Palaces are doubted, or what if some low-income areas don't have Youth Palaces. Even if the preparatory or some other art education institutions can give courses to schools in those areas, that is only a drop in bucket. How to help those people in the low-income areas and families is a kind of complex problem, but I really want to determine a method of what music education can do to help them out. Maybe I cannot get answer this in this project, but I believe there will be something can inspire me with it. When the conservatories are the main bodies of this activity, students in conservatories can also be in part of it. Some of the conservatories have Arts Management major, they can be in the activities as volunteers and they can have chances to use the knowledge they learned in schools, this can be a better practice opportunity for them. To encourage the students to be part of the activity of the preparatory, conservatories can relate the students' credit to the degree of participation. Art activities from the preparatory can have different forms, the concerts which are given by the preparatory orchestras, inviting the local students to the campus of the conservatory, and the nationwide activity. These activities can give back to the community, stimulate the interests of music learning, and promote the communication of music education nationwide. Students who are in management major in the conservatories can also get the opportunities for development.

## 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the idea of preparatory can give a new angle of public music education and the education works of other subjects in art. When we are discussing whether this kind of form can be developed in China, we need to take the real situation in public art education in China into consideration. Yet the situation in China is complicated and some of the problems need more work and a longer time to improve and adjust. Even though in this project everything seems like it makes sense, and the advantages of this form are also predictable but the difficulties and problems in the process of founding the preparatory are tough, unpredictable, and unsolvable. Whether this form of public art education can help to improve the real situation in China is also unknown, it not because this form hasn't been tested yet, it is because the result of this form needs enough time to be testified. The orchestras, the early education programs, the community art activities, and the scholarship program, these are all established based on time, experiment, and patience. Yet in China, patience is a rare "resource", conservatories, parents, and students are all anxious for success, they don't have hundred years for this. Education is never a "quick money", everyone knows that but not everyone can keep this in mind. I hope the public art education in China can have a form that really can help it improve and be better, and I will continue my search on it.

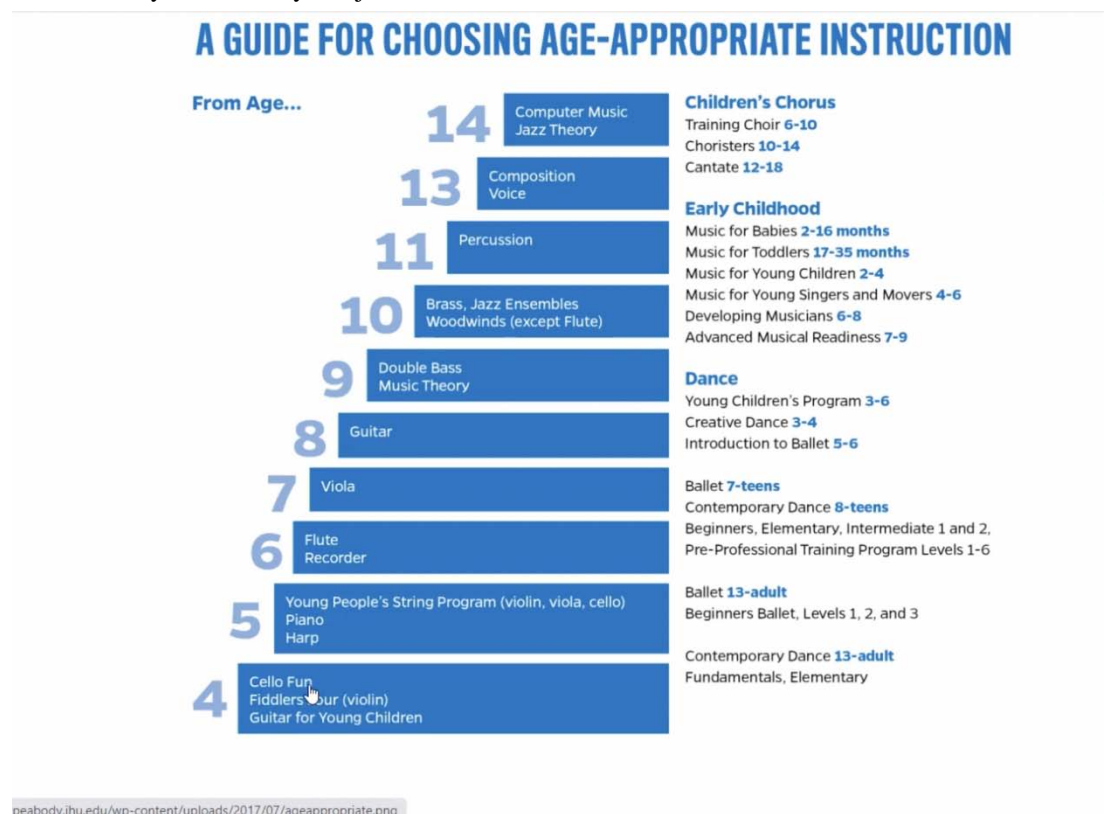
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## A: Interview with Elijah Wirth, the Director and Conductor of the Peabody Preparatory

Elijah Wirth, the conductor of Peabody preparatory wind orchestra, and has worked in Peabody preparatory for ten years. The interview was mainly about how the Peabody preparatory works, the framework of this institute, how the preparatory feeds back to the community and how the preparatory influences and helps the children, students in the community where preparatory at, the Baltimore city. Below is a kind of like the summary of this interview, and this really gives me a great overview of preparatory.

First, the age range of the preparatory is shocking, from the babies from two-months old to, like Elijah told me, “As old as you want.” The subjects that preparatory can offer to the students really make me shocked me, it’s just like a mini-Peabody Institute. Everything which Peabody has, you can just find it in the preparatory, and dance courses, and there is something more in preparatory. During the pandemic times, the preparatory had a course named Minimesters, this is the online program. For those who are not in the musical world but really wants to be in it, the preparatory has Peabody Plus, and for those whose profession is music and wants to improve themselves in teaching methods and improvements in their careers, for example the music teachers, the preparatory has the Peabody Pro for them. So, as you can see, the Peabody preparatory is open to the whole public. Before I had this interview with Elijah, I thought preparatory is just for young children and students, the preparatory has course for “young” children indeed, but for two months old kids? As we are talking about course for young kids, Elijah introduced how the course like to me, for those young kids, the course are kind of “easy”, they just need to listen to the music and move their body, and with their increasing of ages, they will slightly get in touch with ear training classes, and when the children are old enough, they can pick up the instrument for their future studies. The preparatory has an entire framework for this and the chart can be found on their website, which is attached it below. Basically, the educational works in the preparatory is based on this chart, but it can be adjusted to fit the special situation of the individual student. According to this chart, Elijah told me that when students are at 8 to 9 years old, they can join the ensembles.



As I mentioned previously, the Peabody preparatory is open to the public and the students don't need to take auditions for it. But things are different with the ensembles and some of the private course for some instruments. From Elijah, students who are going to join into the large ensembles should take the auditions. Besides, for some instruments like piano and strings, students need to take the auditions to allow the teachers to assess which are more appropriate for

the students, Elijah also mentioned that this kind of auditions called “placement day”. The reason why the placement day is only for strings and piano is that there many students who are playing these instruments, and there are lots of teachers teaching these instruments in the preparatory, for “many students” there are 300-400 piano students and 400 string students. Elijah told me that there is only one bassoon teacher so all the students who play bassoon will be sent to that teacher.

When talking about ensembles in preparatory, Elijah said that there are three levels for both string and wind ensembles. Students will first join into Peabody String Ensemble and Preparatory Concert Band when they are 8-9 years old, when they are getting older, for example 10-13 years old, and better the playing instruments they will be in Young Artists Orchestra and Preparatory Wind Band. When the students are at the age of high school, they will be into Wind Orchestra and Youth Orchestra. When the students are at this stage, they will probably continue their study in music learning in college, and from Elijah’s experience, students who are in the Youth Orchestra more will likely continue their music learning, because they usually have been playing their instruments for at least seven to eight years, however situation in wind orchestra is kind of different, students in there have 50% possibility of continuing music learning when they are going to college. For all these three ensembles they will have their rehearsals at Peabody on Saturday, so during the weekdays these students will have their private lessons, chamber music courses, and music theory courses. When discussing the music theory course, Elijah said that all the theory courses are online classes, and the preparatory is creating computer-based classes, meaning students will accomplish their works and upload them through internet and computers. When asked Elijah how the preparatory recruits teachers, Elijah said that the teachers in preparatory are basically from Peabody, but they will also send advertisements to gather the teachers from the county and nationwide, and basically these teachers are Peabody alumni, just like Elijah himself.

For last section of the interview, some questions were asked based on community-based art education. Elijah said that the preparatory will hold some community art activities, and the preparatory will invite the students in the community to school to attend to the art activities, the preparatory will advertise the activities through radios and newspapers. Besides the art activities, there are also other methods that preparatory feeds back to the community. Elijah showed me one project which mainly focused on the students who can’t afford the tuition fee for the courses of preparatory, which is called “Tuned In” project this is kind of like the scholarship program for kids who may not have opportunity because of financial issues and come to Peabody for lessons and courses. From Elijah, the courses from preparatory are expensive and nearly all the students in the Baltimore city need financial aid to continue or start their study of music in preparatory. Teachers in the preparatory will go to public schools to give them private lessons and the chance to be in an ensemble. Elijah told me about 1500 students benefited because of this project, and this “Tuned In” project can offer the students \$5000-7000 financial aid per individual. The standard that the preparatory uses to evaluate whether the student fits the program is simple, Elijah told me that they will evaluate the students by their attendance rate, as they have the clear requirement for attendance. Whether the students can play the instrument well is not that important, whether they show up in the classes is the important standard for the preparatory to assess their eligibility for the “Tuned In” program. At the end of the interview, Elijah said that the goal of preparatory is teaching the kids who wants to be in music major and provide the enough chances for those people who just love music, also that preparatory is the ideal community school that can serve those two goals above, and the preparatory can meet the variable needs for music of the whole community. The form of preparatory in America has a long history. For Peabody, the music department of preparatory formed at 1890s, and the dance department just celebrated its 100-year anniversary. Even the orchestra of preparatory was formed only 40-50 years ago, and the wind bands were just formed ten years ago, still the preparatory system has its long history and long tradition.

## **B. Interview with Quanyiao Zhu, teacher of a Private Dance School in China**

The second interviewee is the friend of mine, named Quanyiao Zhu, who is working now as the dance teacher in a private art education institution in China. As a 22-year-old girl, she has worked and educated students for four years. For Zhu, being a dance teacher is the representation of her own enthusiasm for dancing and teaching, she also she believes that the teacher’s job is not only teaching the students how to dance but also helping them in their daily lives, so that the students can realize what they are learning and improve themselves. During the four years of her teaching, Zhu thinks that the primary difficulties come from how to communicate with the parents and how to teach. For most of the parents, what they want is simple, just the progress of their children but without enough work and practice. This kind of thought is the opposite of the development of art education. She gives me an example of this, when children are three years old, it is the time for them to build the foundation of dancing, yet the parents want their children dance like real dancers, which doesn’t make any sense for either teachers or the students. To let the parents know how dancing really looks like, Zhu held a special activity, she let the students be the teachers and the parents were students. Parents expe-



rienced some basic movements in Chinese traditional dance, and when they realized what their children had been doing in their dance learning, they started to understand their children and they learned the terminologies in dance. When discussing about whether she will take her students to attend to community or social art activities, Zhu told me that she absolutely does that if she has opportunities. In her thoughts, social and community art activities such as taking part in the process of recording programs at a TV station can give the students a stage which is large enough for the students to dance on. They can also have the chance to enhance their senses of confidence, and these can't be given to the students only in classrooms. Also, when the students are attending some competitions, the consciousness of competition inside them can be stimulated, so that the students will have the strong wish to be better and want to learn more about dancing. For the teachers, Zhu said that these kinds of activities can also be treated as tests between teachers, they can take these opportunities to rethink their teaching methods and skills, and they can also communicate with the other teachers to broaden their thoughts and teaching styles. Zhu told me that education can be viewed as a process which is always moving forward and improving, so as a teacher it is always important to learn something new, and this what Zhu learns from being part of community and social art activities. Finally, Zhu shared some of her teaching philosophy to me: she mentioned that there is an old saying in China "Be a good man before you be an artist." When the teachers are cultivating students, they need to use their true love, because the teachers can be the biggest influence in students' lives.

### **C. Interview with Zheshou Jiang, Principle of a Private Art Institution in Changchun**

Zheshou Jiang, the owner of a social music education institution with 36-year education experience, talked about his own story and what the real situation of social music education institutions are like in China. After graduating from Jilin University of Arts, Jiang worked in some music performance groups in Jilin Province for several years, and then he went to the Youth Palace in Changchun as a music teacher in 1986. As I mentioned in my proposal, the Youth Palace in China was the most important stage for art education for about 40-50 years, and it can be viewed as one of the most important performance groups in China. From Jiang's story, students in China were not under the huge pressure from academical study like the students nowadays, they had plenty of spare time so that students, parents, and all elementary schools in the city were happy and honored to be a part of the Youth Palace. Teachers from the Youth Palace would go to many elementary schools in the city to find students, they just had two questions for them, the first was "Do you like music?" and the second was "Do you want to learn music?" This is reminiscent of what Elijah told me about the preparatory, the courses in Youth Palace were all free, students didn't need to worry about tuition fee, they just went to the Palace and enjoyed the music. The Palace would provide all the things they need for music, instruments, teachers, courses, and the practicing area. During the prime time of Youth Palace, there were 400-500 students in the dance department and there were so many students in singing department that there was a waitlist for available seats for courses. Jiang told me that the Youth Palace had four departments, art departments: science and technology department, fine art, and sports.

The Children's Day every year is a big day for the Youth Palace, there would be giant performance. Besides, there was one huge art activity which gains the attention of the governments, students, Youth Palaces, and the parents. In this activity, Youth Palaces from the northeastern, northwestern, and the northern China would all be mobilized, there would be performances from each and awards would be given to students and teachers. It was like the Olympics for Youth Palaces but two years in a row. In addition to these huge events, Youth Palaces in Jilin Province would also hold their own activities. However, all those were just like a summer night fantasy for Youth Palaces. During the 90s, private art education institutions started to emerge in Changchun, even though there were three of them, they still became the huge threat to Youth Palaces. Jiang considered that the reason why he had his own institution was related to the fall of the Youth Palace, and the economic interest was the main reason of this. As mentioned above, the courses in Youth Palace were all free at the first time, however since 1988 tuition fee started to charge, five yuan for five months, from Jiang's memory at that time the Youth Palace in Changchun can make one million profits for the whole year. Jiang was the only music teacher in the Youth Palace, and he also was the conductor of the ensemble. Additionally, he was also the director and composer for the art activities. Hard-working teachers got the same salary as those who did not work so hard, so here came the conflicts, Jiang decided to leave the team and started out alone. Other teachers like Jiang were doing the same thing, which made the Youth Palace become weak and lose its own glory. At the first time, parents' requirements towards teachers were low, they didn't care about who is teacher and whether they were good enough, they just wanted their children to have a place to have fun. As time went by, good teachers like Jiang started to leave the Youth Palace, parents started to question whether the teachers in palace were eligible to teach, and the palace started to lose students and was on the verge of disbanding. To take the palace back to the old day glory, it competed again with free courses as an advantage, however parents didn't but it the palace started to provide free course again because the level of the Palace went down. After experiencing all those difficulties, the Youth Palace changed their targets to those

students who come from low-income families, they still charge tuition fees for courses but much lower than those social institutions like Jiang's, it is more like a charity but not an art education institution.

I asked whether the Youth Palace can serve the function of finding children with talents in music, he mentioned that the Youth Palace had huge influence in this process, however it is now taken over by the social music education institutions. In the Youth Palace, the palace itself would provide places, teachers, and instruments. Also, the art activities gave the students places to show off their talents and got the huge improvements in self-confidence. With this kind of advantage, Youth Palace cultivated a considerable amount of musically talented individuals who are now working in universities and music performance groups. When this function is transformed to social music education institutions, everything becomes more easier than that in the Youth Palace, with the help from Jiang, more than 40 students became students of the best conservatories in China.

As the preparatory from Peabody, Jiang's institution also has its guidelines of teaching, his institution offers primarily a composing major, so that the students can learn how to compose, from how to play piano, and the other composing technologies like harmonies. This kind of guideline or framework can give the institution enough guidance in daily teaching, it can also give the parents a clear blueprint of what their children learn in this institution. Jiang used to introduce composition teachers from conservatories to teach the students. Yet the students didn't learn any better, they even couldn't compose after learning those composing theories, so that Jiang started to encourage his students to compose from their original thoughts. If the students want to continue their studies in the future, they can still have the chance to learn more about composing. According to Jiang, the first difficulty for social institution is how to manage the teachers, he has three standards when hiring teachers: their professional abilities, their ages, and their characters, and the other difficulty is whether should the institution extend. The last and toughest difficult process is working with the directing departments from the government. When Jiang first registered his institution there were only four departments and every year a new department is added to manage the social institutions. The last difficulty from Jiang is the mindset of the parents, they will always choose academical studies when music has conflict with it.

At the end of the interview, we talked about the social art activities. Jiang told me that he held a hundred piano ensemble, he went to some theaters to set the stage for his students to have chances to perform, and they also went to TV stations and radio stations to attend to some art activities. After the promulgation of the "Double Reduction" policy, the government also encouraged the social music education institutions to engage more into social art activities and even help the schools with teachers and lessons. However, schools do not want social institutions to help them, they have their own thoughts and goals. Also, these types of activities are related to the distribution of economic benefits, institutions and schools all want economic benefit, so social institutions never have the chance to work with schools. But Jiang said that if this kind of activity can be held, the institution can increase its awareness and of course, the increase economic benefits. Besides, as mentioned above, these types of activities can give the students enough space to perform and increase their self-confidence, at last students maybe can take this chance to observe themselves and they might will continue their studies of music.

These are the three interviews I took these days; I think these interviews gave a clear overview of preparatory and the real situation of social music education institutions in China in a more detailed angle.