

Musical Composition Literacy and Arrangement Techniques in Chinese Pop Music

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music. The research investigates how traditional Chinese musical elements and modern global influences are synthesized in contemporary Chinese pop music. The objective is to investigate and analyze the musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music, specifically focusing on the song “Qi Mei Di” by Guo Ding. The study was conducted through a qualitative research design involving an instrumental case study, which focused on a detailed examination of a single song and involved semi-structured interviews with three key informants: a composer, a music producer, and an arranger directly involved in the Chinese pop music industry. The data analysis includes thematic coding of interview transcripts and content analysis of the song “Qi Mei Di,” examining its musical structure and arrangement techniques. The results reveal that Guo Ding’s work exemplifies the integration of traditional Chinese music with modern pop sensibilities, highlighting emerging trends in Chinese pop music towards greater complexity and sophistication. This research contributes to understanding how musical literacy is developed and applied in Chinese pop music. It suggests that future studies should explore the impact of digital technology and music education on these practices. The findings have implications for educators and practitioners in music composition and arrangement, particularly in non-Western music traditions.

Key words: Chinese pop music, Musical Literacy, Composition, Arrangement Techniques, Cultural Hybridity

INTRODUCTION

Significant transformations in musical composition and arrangement techniques have marked the evolution of Chinese pop music over the past few decades. As the genre grows in popularity, there is an increasing need to explore and understand the literacy practices contributing to music creation within this cultural context. Musical composition literacy, which refers to the knowledge and skills required to compose music, and arrangement techniques, which involve structuring and orchestrating a piece of music, play crucial roles in shaping the sound and appeal of Chinese pop music (Cook, 2021; Jones, 2020; Loh & Sing, 2020; Zager, 2021). This study focuses on these aspects by examining the song “Qi Mei Di” by Guo Ding. This piece exemplifies the intricate and sophisticated practices involved in modern Chinese pop music creation.

The research problem arises from the observed gap in scholarly literature concerning the specific practices and techniques used in Chinese pop music composition and arrangement (Vasil, 2019; Wang et al., 2017). While there is considerable research on Western pop music and its influence on global music trends, Chinese pop music’s unique characteristics and contributions have yet to be as

thoroughly examined. This lack of comprehensive analysis limits understanding of how musical literacy is developed and applied within the Chinese pop music industry (He & Sornyai, 2023; Law & Ho, 2015; Li & Choatchamrat, 2024; Wu & Chuangprakhon, 2024). “Qi Mei Di,” a song that has garnered widespread acclaim and popularity, offers an excellent case study to investigate these practices and their implications for the broader genre.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to the field of music education and literacy studies by providing insights into the specific techniques and literacy practices that underpin Chinese pop music composition (Carroll, 2019; Yang & Welch, 2023). By focusing on a detailed case study of “Qi Mei Di,” this study aims to uncover the methods and strategies used by contemporary Chinese composers and arrangers. This analysis enhances understanding of Chinese pop music and provides valuable information for educators and practitioners involved in music composition and arrangement. Furthermore, this research can inform the development of educational programs that aim to cultivate musical literacy among students and aspiring musicians, particularly in non-Western music traditions (Ho, 2019; Ho, 2023; Zhang & Negus, 2020).

The primary objective of this study is to explore how musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques are utilized in Chinese pop music through the case study of “Qi Mei Di.” Specifically, this research investigates how these practices reflect broader trends in Chinese pop music and contribute to the genre’s evolution. This study seeks to provide insights into the creative processes that shape Chinese pop music and offer practical implications for music educators and industry practitioners by addressing these objectives.

Research Question

- How do the musical composition literacy practices and arrangement techniques in the song “Qi Mei Di” reflect broader trends in Chinese pop music?
- What can these practices reveal about the genre’s composition literacy development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding the musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music requires a deep dive into the theoretical frameworks that inform these practices. This literature review explores the relevant theories that provide insight into the creation and structuring of music within this genre, focusing on the intersection of literacy practices, compositional theory, and arrangement techniques. By examining these elements, the review aims to establish a foundation for analyzing the case study of Guo Ding’s “Qi Mei Di,” linking broader trends in Chinese pop music to the development of musical composition literacy.

Compositional Theory in Popular Music

Compositional theory in popular music often diverges from traditional classical approaches, focusing on accessibility, repetition, and emotional resonance rather than strict adherence to classical forms (Li, 2024; Prats-Arolas, 2024). In the context of Chinese pop music, compositional literacy involves understanding the balance between maintaining cultural authenticity and integrating global pop influences. This theory emphasizes the importance of melodic development, thematic consistency, and the role of lyrics in conveying emotion and narrative. The ability to create a compelling melody that aligns with a song’s rhythmic and harmonic structures is central to compositional literacy in this genre. Theories of melodic contour, motivic development, and tonal ambiguity are particularly relevant, as they explain how composers like Guo Ding craft melodies that resonate with the Chinese audience’s traditional and contemporary sensibilities (Carl, 2020; Swindali, 2020; Wang, 2023).

Arrangement Techniques and Their Impact

Arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music are equally crucial in determining a song’s final sound and texture. The arrangement theory involves orchestrating various musical elements—such as harmony, rhythm, and

instrumentation—into a cohesive whole (Dai et al., 2024; De Clercq, 2024). In Chinese pop music, arrangement techniques often blend traditional Chinese instruments and scales with Western pop elements, creating a hybrid sound that appeals to a broad audience. The literacy required in arrangement goes beyond technical knowledge; it involves an intuitive understanding of how different sounds interact and how to balance them to enhance the overall impact of the music. This includes using syncopation, counterpoint, and layering to create dynamic and engaging compositions. Theories related to texture and form play a significant role in understanding how arrangers structure a piece to maintain listener interest and evoke the desired emotional response (Bei & Jian, 2024; Jones, 2020).

Literacy Practices in Musical Composition

Literacy practices in musical composition refer to the skills and knowledge that composers draw upon when creating music. In Chinese pop music, these practices are shaped by both cultural traditions and the global music industry (Bombardieri, 2024; Wei & Thotham, 2024). The literacy involved in composing pop music includes an understanding of harmonic progressions, the use of digital audio workstations, and the ability to write lyrics that resonate with contemporary audiences. Additionally, it involves adapting to changing musical trends while maintaining a unique artistic voice. Theories of cultural hybridity and globalization are pertinent here, as they provide a framework for understanding how Chinese pop composers navigate the tensions between preserving traditional musical elements and embracing modern pop aesthetics. Composing within this genre requires technical proficiency and a deep cultural literacy that informs the choices made during the composition process (Cayari, 2021; Chen, 2022; Tobias, 2015; Wei & Thotham, 2024).

In summary, the literature directly informs this research by highlighting key theoretical principles that frame the analysis of musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music. By examining compositional theory, arrangement techniques, and literacy practices, we can better understand how songs like “Qi Mei Di” are crafted and how they reflect broader trends within the genre. These theoretical insights shape the methodological approach and guide the subsequent analysis of Guo Ding’s work, offering a clearer understanding of the intricate processes behind the creation of Chinese pop music and its role in developing musical literacy within the genre.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the intricacies of musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music, focusing on the song “Qi Mei Di” by Guo Ding. Qualitative methods are well-suited for this research because they allow for a deep, contextual exploration of creative processes and literacy practices, providing rich, detailed insights that would be difficult to capture through quantitative means. Using interviews and content analysis, the research aims to uncover the nuances

of musical literacy that contribute to the development of this genre. The study focuses on key informants directly involved in creating and producing Chinese pop music.

Research Design

The research design for this study involves a combination of in-depth interviews and content analysis. The primary data collection method is semi-structured interviews with key informants with extensive experience in the Chinese pop music industry. These interviews are complemented by a detailed content analysis of the musical elements in “Qi Mei Di,” examining melody, harmony, rhythm, and arrangement techniques, as shown in Table 1.

Key Informants

The study involves three key informants, each of whom plays a critical role in creating and arranging Chinese pop music. These informants were selected based on their expertise and experience in the industry, particularly in areas related to composition and arrangement. The informants include a composer, a music producer, and an arranger, each providing unique insights into the literacy practices and techniques used to create “Qi Mei Di,” as shown in Table 2.

Data Collection Steps

The data collection process for this study is structured to systematically gather and analyze qualitative data on musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music. This process involves multiple stages, each designed to understand the research objective comprehensively. Table 3 outlines the steps taken during the data collection phase, including the preparation, execution, and analysis of interviews and the content analysis of the song “Qi Mei Di.”

Data Analysis

The data analysis involves a two-step process. First, the interview data is analyzed using thematic coding to identify key themes related to musical composition literacy and

arrangement techniques. The themes are then compared with the findings from the content analysis of “Qi Mei Di.” This comparative analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of how this song’s literacy practices and techniques reflect broader trends in Chinese pop music.

RESULTS

Guo Ding is a prominent figure in the Chinese pop music industry, and he is known for his exceptional musical composition and arrangement literacy. Born in Huaihua City, Hunan Province, and educated at Beijing Modern Music School, Guo Ding has developed a unique and innovative style that blends various musical genres, including lyrical pop, blues, light rock, and R&B. His ability to create music that resonates with diverse audiences demonstrates his deep understanding of musical composition literacy. Over the years, Guo Ding has released several successful albums, such as *Guo Ding D. Kook.*, *Slightly*, and *The Execution Cycle of the Flying Machine*, which showcases his mastery of melody, harmony, and rhythm. His work has earned him numerous accolades, including Best Producer of the Year at the 2015 MusicRadio China TOP Music Festival, highlighting his profound literacy in music creation’s technical and thematic aspects.

Guo Ding’s peers highlighted his innovative approach to blending genres in the interviews. One of the interviewees remarked, “Guo Ding’s music captures the essence of traditional Chinese sounds, but he always manages to bring something fresh and contemporary.” This ability to seamlessly integrate various musical elements into his compositions while maintaining a deep connection with cultural and ideological themes sets him apart as a versatile and innovative music creator. His success at prestigious platforms, such as the China Golden Melody Awards, further underscores his expertise in musical composition literacy and his capacity to apply this literacy across different aspects of music production. Guo Ding’s works captivate listeners with their beautiful melodies and engage them deeper, reflecting his comprehensive understanding of musical literacy in the Chinese pop music landscape.

Composition Literacy

Analysis of melodic development and literacy practices

The song “Qi Mei Di” by Guo Ding exemplifies advanced melodic literacy within the context of Chinese pop music. Guo Ding’s approach to melody is deeply rooted in the principles of musical literacy, where each note and phrase is meticulously crafted to convey emotional depth and narrative coherence. One key informant emphasized, “Guo has a way of crafting melodies that speak directly to the listener.

Table 1. Research design overview

Component	Details
Research Method	Qualitative
Data Collection	Semi-structured interviews, Content analysis
Participants	3 Key informants
Focus Area	Musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music

Table 2. Key informants

Informant Role	Area of Expertise	Contribution to Study
Composer	Musical composition, Melodic development	Insights into composition literacy practices
Music Producer	Production, Sound engineering	Perspectives on arrangement techniques and production
Arranger	Orchestration, Instrumentation	Detailed understanding of arrangement literacy practices

It's not just about technical skill but about understanding the emotional weight behind each note." The melodic development in "Qi Mei Di" reflects a sophisticated understanding of how to use melody as a primary vehicle for storytelling in music. The use of the pentatonic scale, particularly the F yü mode, clearly demonstrates Guo Ding's ability to integrate traditional Chinese melodic structures into a contemporary pop framework, thereby enhancing the cultural resonance of the piece. This practice is evident in the verse section, as shown in Figure 1, where the melody aligns closely with the natural cadence of spoken Mandarin, creating a seamless blend between the lyrical content and musical expression. This alignment underscores the importance of melodic literacy in crafting compositions that resonate with the linguistic and cultural nuances of the audience.

Di." The song's harmonic structure is innovative and grounded in a deep understanding of traditional harmonic progressions, which Guo Ding adapts to suit the modern pop genre. In the pre-chorus section, as shown in Figure 2, harmonic literacy is highlighted through the use of syncopated rhythms and complex chord structures that build tension and anticipation, setting the stage for the emotional release in the chorus. One informant stated, "His harmonic progressions always surprise me. He blends traditional harmonies with modern techniques in a completely natural way." Guo Ding's ability to manipulate harmony to enhance the song's emotional impact illustrates his advanced harmonic literacy. By integrating Western harmonic techniques with Chinese musical elements, Guo Ding creates a sound that is both familiar and fresh, reflecting broader trends in the hybridization of Chinese pop music.

Exploration of harmonic literacy in songwriting

Harmonic literacy is another critical aspect of Guo Ding's composition process, particularly in constructing "Qi Mei

Rhythmic literacy and its role in chinese pop music

Rhythmic literacy plays a crucial role in the overall composition of "Qi Mei Di," particularly in how it contributes

Table 3. Data collection step

Data Collection Step	Description
Interview Preparation	Develop a semi-structured interview guide based on the research objective and question. Include open-ended questions focused on the informants' experiences with musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques.
Conducting Interviews	Schedule and conduct interviews with the three key informants. Each interview lasts approximately 60-90 minutes to explore the informants' perspectives in depth. Interviews are audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure accuracy in data collection.
Transcription and Coding	Transcribe the recorded interviews verbatim. Employ thematic coding to identify patterns and themes related to musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques.
Content Analysis	Analyze the musical elements of "Qi Mei Di" to identify specific composition and arrangement techniques. Focus on the structure, melody, harmony, rhythm, and instrumentation. Compare the findings from the content analysis with the insights gained from the interviews.

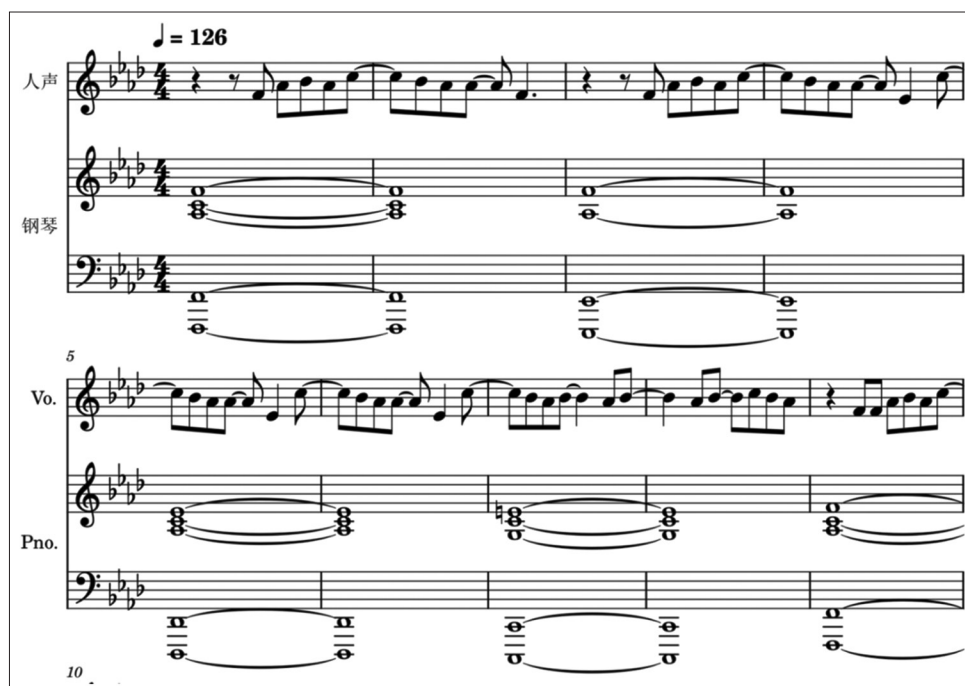


Figure 1. The verse section of "Qi Mei Di"

to the song's dynamic and emotional narrative. Guo Ding's use of rhythm is intentional and precise, with each rhythmic choice reinforcing the song's thematic elements. One of the interviewees noted, "The way he plays with rhythm, especially in the chorus, gives the song an incredible sense of urgency and movement." In the chorus section, as shown in Figure 3, rhythmic literacy is demonstrated through the interplay between syncopated rhythms and a driving beat, which adds a layer of urgency and intensity to the music. This rhythmic approach supports the melody and harmony and enhances the listener's emotional engagement with the song. The rhythmic patterns in "Qi Mei Di" reflect a deep understanding of how rhythm can manipulate energy and

flow within a composition, making it an essential component of Guo Ding's musical literacy.

Through these examples of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic literacy, "Qi Mei Di" is a case study of how these elements are integrated into Chinese pop music. Guo Ding's work reflects broader trends in the genre, where traditional Chinese musical literacy is combined with modern pop sensibilities to create music that is both innovative and deeply rooted in cultural traditions. The compositional literacy practices in "Qi Mei Di" offer valuable insights into literacy development in Chinese pop music, showcasing how these techniques can create music that resonates on multiple levels.

Figure 2. The pre-chorus section of "Qi Mei Di"

Figure 3. The chorus section of "Qi Mei Di"

Arrangement Literacy Techniques

Instrumentation literacy: balancing traditional and modern sounds

In “Qi Mei Di,” Guo Ding demonstrates a profound instrumentation literacy, skillfully balancing traditional Chinese musical elements with modern pop instrumentation. This literacy is evident in carefully selecting and integrating instruments complementing the song’s thematic content and emotional tone. For example, in the verse section shown in Figure 4, Guo Ding uses a minimalistic approach with only three instruments—piano, electric guitar, and drum set—to create a haunting yet intimate atmosphere. One informant said, “He knows exactly how to create space in a song, leaving room for each instrument to breathe and contribute to the overall feel.” The piano and electric guitar provide a harmonic foundation that blends seamlessly with the vocal line, while the drum set adds a subtle, driving rhythm that propels the song forward. This choice of instrumentation not only supports the song’s emotional narrative but also reflects Guo Ding’s ability to draw from traditional and contemporary sounds, a hallmark of his instrumentation literacy.

Structural literacy: crafting the song’s form and progression

Guo Ding’s structural literacy is a key component of the arrangement in “Qi Mei Di,” where the song’s form and progression are meticulously crafted to enhance its overall impact. The structure of “Qi Mei Di” is complex and purposeful, designed to take the listener on an emotional journey. In the pre-chorus section, as shown in Figure 5, Guo Ding introduces a change in rhythmic pattern and

harmonic density that builds tension and anticipation. One participant noted, “The structure of his songs always feels like a journey—there’s a clear sense of where the music is taking you.” This strategic structure shift heightens the chorus’s emotional release, illustrating Guo Ding’s deep understanding of structural literacy in music arrangement. By carefully shaping the song’s form and progression, he ensures that each section contributes to the song’s narrative, guiding the listener through a dynamic and cohesive musical experience.

Textural literacy: layering and orchestration in pop music arrangement

The textural literacy in “Qi Mei Di” is particularly evident in Guo Ding’s sophisticated use of layering and orchestration. Textural literacy involves creating depth and richness in a musical arrangement by carefully layering different sounds and timbres. In the chorus section, as shown in Figure 6, Guo Ding expands the song’s texture by incorporating additional electronic timbres alongside traditional instruments. “The way he layers sound is truly masterful. Each layer adds something new without overwhelming the others,” said one of the informants. This layering creates a lush, immersive soundscape that enhances the emotional intensity of the chorus. The bass line, in particular, plays a crucial role in this section, with its rhythmic variations filling in the gaps between vocal phrases and adding a dynamic counterpoint to the melody. Guo Ding’s orchestration in this part of the song demonstrates his advanced textural literacy, as he expertly balances different layers of sound to achieve a complete and compelling musical arrangement.

Through these arrangement literacy techniques, “Qi Mei Di” showcases Guo Ding’s ability to blend traditional

The image displays a musical score for the verse section of "Qi Mei Di". It consists of six staves: two for distorted electric guitar (dist. guit.), piano (pno.), drums (drm.), and two for clean electric guitar (clean guit.). The piano part is written in treble clef, while the guitar parts are in standard tuning. The drums part shows a consistent rhythmic pattern with eighth notes. The electric guitar parts feature chord progressions and melodic lines. Chord diagrams are provided for Fm/Ab and C# at the top, and Fm and C# at the bottom. The score is marked with '13' and '11' for the first two guitar parts, and '4' for the clean guitar part. The tempo is 4/4.

Figure 4. The verse section of “Qi Mei Di”

The musical score for the pre-chorus section of "Qi Mei Di" is presented in a multi-staff format. At the top, the electric guitar part (dist. guit.) features a melodic line with fret numbers 17, 13, 14, 13, 14, 13, 18, 13, 14, 13, 14, 13, 19, 13, 13, 13, 13, 20, 11, 11, 11, 11. Below this, the piano (pno.) part consists of two staves with chords and moving lines. The drum (drm.) part shows a steady rhythmic pattern. The second electric guitar part (dist. guit.) includes three chord diagrams: C# (4x, 1333), F (8x, 1333), and D# (6x, 1333). The fl. bs. (flute bass) part has a line with notes 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 3, 3, 3, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1. The cbs. (contrabass) part is a simple bass line.

Figure 5. The pre-chorus section of “Qi Mei Di”

The musical score for the chorus section of "Qi Mei Di" continues the multi-staff arrangement. The electric guitar part (dist. guit.) has a melodic line with fret numbers 25, 13, 14, 13, 14, 13, 26, 16-15, 13, 11, 27, 13, 28, 12, 13, 12, 13, 12. The piano (pno.) part continues with chords and moving lines. The drum (drm.) part maintains the rhythmic pattern. The second electric guitar part (dist. guit.) includes three chord diagrams: C#5 (4x, 133), G#5 (4x, 133), and C5 (4x, 133). The fl. bs. (flute bass) part has a line with notes 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 1-0, 3-1, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 3, 3, 5, 5, 3, 3. The cbs. (contrabass) part is a simple bass line.

Figure 6. The chorus section of “Qi Mei Di”

and modern elements, craft a compelling song structure, and create rich, textured soundscapes. These techniques reflect broader trends in Chinese pop music and highlight the evolving literacy practices that define the genre’s development. Guo Ding’s work in “Qi Mei Di” serves as a model for how arrangement literacy can be used to create music that is both innovative and deeply rooted in cultural tradition.

Reflecting Broader Trends in Chinese Pop Music through Literacy

Integration of composition and arrangement literacy in contemporary practice

The song “Qi Mei Di” is a powerful example of how composition and arrangement literacy are increasingly intertwined in contemporary Chinese pop music. Guo Ding’s approach to this song exemplifies a holistic understanding

of musical literacy, where the boundaries between composing and arranging are fluid and interconnected. His ability to seamlessly integrate melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic literacy with sophisticated arrangement techniques reflects a broader trend in Chinese pop music, where artists are expected to be proficient across multiple domains of musical literacy. This integration allows for a more cohesive and unified musical expression, enabling artists like Guo Ding to create works that resonate on both an artistic and cultural level. The synthesis of these literacies in “Qi Mei Di” highlights Guo Ding’s mastery and mirrors the evolving demands of the Chinese pop music industry, where multifaceted literacy is becoming increasingly essential.

Influence of global and cultural literacy on chinese pop music

Global and cultural literacy has significantly influenced the development of Chinese pop music, as seen in the work of artists like Guo Ding. In “Qi Mei Di,” Guo Ding’s ability to draw from traditional Chinese music and contemporary global trends demonstrates a high level of cultural literacy. This is evident in his use of the pentatonic scale, a traditional Chinese musical element he skillfully integrates into a modern pop framework. Furthermore, his incorporation of global music influences, such as Western harmonic progressions and electronic instrumentation, showcases his global literacy. This blending of cultural and global elements reflects a broader trend in Chinese pop music, where artists increasingly engage with global musical practices while staying rooted in their cultural heritage. Guo Ding’s work exemplifies how cultural and global literacy can coexist and enrich the Chinese pop music landscape, creating a sound that is uniquely Chinese and globally resonant.

Literacy development in emerging chinese pop music trends

The literacy practices demonstrated in “Qi Mei Di” also offer insights into the emerging trends in Chinese pop music. As the genre evolves, there is a noticeable shift towards greater complexity and sophistication in composition and arrangement. Artists like Guo Ding are at the forefront of this development, where literacy in music is not just about technical proficiency but also about creative innovation and cultural expression. The increasing emphasis on arrangement literacy, as seen in the intricate layering and orchestration of “Qi Mei Di,” reflects a trend towards more textured and nuanced music production. Additionally, the growing importance of melodic and harmonic literacy in songwriting suggests a movement towards richer, more emotionally resonant compositions. These trends indicate that as Chinese pop music develops, musical literacy will become even more central, guiding the genre toward new heights of artistic and cultural achievement.

In summary, “Qi Mei Di” reflects the broader literacy trends in Chinese pop music, where the integration of composition and arrangement literacy, the influence of global and cultural literacy, and the development of literacy in

emerging trends all contribute to the genre’s evolution. Guo Ding’s work not only exemplifies these trends but also highlights the critical role that literacy plays in creating music that is both innovative and deeply rooted in tradition.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings from this study on the musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music, mainly through the case study of Guo Ding’s “Qi Mei Di,” are consistent with the theoretical principles discussed in the literature. This research confirms that the evolving practices in Chinese pop music are deeply rooted in a synthesis of traditional cultural elements and modern global influences. As Carl (2020) outlined, the compositional theory emphasizes accessibility, repetition, and emotional resonance, which is evident in Guo Ding’s melodic development and harmonic structuring. His work aligns with the theories of melodic contour and tonal ambiguity, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of how to create melodies that resonate with both traditional and contemporary audiences (Wang, 2023).

The study’s exploration of arrangement techniques further supports existing theories. Guo Ding’s integration of traditional Chinese instruments with Western pop elements, as discussed by Bei and Jian (2024), highlights the hybridization trend in Chinese pop music. This blending of sounds creates a unique musical texture that appeals to a wide audience, demonstrating the practical application of arrangement literacy in contemporary Chinese music. Moreover, the detailed analysis of rhythmic patterns and structural literacy in “Qi Mei Di” corroborates Tobias’s (2015) argument that modern pop music often involves complex layering and rhythmic sophistication, which are crucial for maintaining listener engagement.

However, while the findings are broadly consistent with theoretical expectations, some aspects of Guo Ding’s work suggest a departure from traditional approaches. For instance, his use of syncopated rhythms and complex chord progressions reflects a shift towards more intricate and experimental forms of musical expression. This may indicate an emerging trend in Chinese pop music towards greater musical complexity and innovation. This observation aligns with Vasil’s (2019) assertion that popular music increasingly embraces informal learning practices and innovative compositional techniques, which could redefine the boundaries of musical literacy in the future.

The study also underscores the importance of cultural and global literacy in shaping Chinese pop music. Guo Ding’s ability to integrate global music influences with traditional Chinese elements supports the notion that cultural hybridity is critical in modern music creation (Chen, 2022). This finding is consistent with the theories of cultural hybridity and globalization, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between local traditions and global trends in shaping contemporary music (Jones, 2020).

The implications of these findings for music education are far-reaching. As Chinese pop music continues to evolve, there is a growing need for music curricula to reflect these changes by integrating lessons on composition and

arrangement techniques that balance traditional and modern elements. Educators should focus on cultivating technical proficiency and creative innovation by encouraging students to explore diverse musical styles and hybrid forms. Incorporating contemporary Chinese pop music examples like “Qi Mei Di” into teaching materials could help students connect theory to practice, demonstrating how compositional and arrangement literacy can be applied in real-world settings. This approach would enhance students’ technical skills and broaden their cultural awareness, preparing them for a globalized music industry where blending local and global influences is increasingly important.

Moreover, the findings suggest that music education programs should emphasize the role of technology in music creation. As digital audio workstations and online platforms become integral to the music industry, teaching students how to use these tools effectively will be essential for developing their compositional and arrangement literacy. Fusing traditional music education with modern technological training can help aspiring musicians navigate the evolving landscape of Chinese pop music more effectively.

In conclusion, this research contributes significantly to understanding musical composition literacy and arrangement techniques in Chinese pop music. By analyzing the case study of Guo Ding’s “Qi Mei Di,” the study highlights the intricate processes involved in creating music that is both innovative and deeply rooted in cultural tradition. The findings demonstrate that musical literacy in Chinese pop music encompasses a wide range of skills, from melodic and harmonic development to rhythmic structuring and textural orchestration. These practices reflect broader trends in the genre, where traditional Chinese musical elements are seamlessly integrated with modern pop sensibilities.

For future research, several potential areas have been identified. Studies could explore how different genres within Chinese pop music, such as hip-hop, rock, and electronic music, influence compositional and arrangement literacy. Additionally, the impact of digital technology on music creation warrants further investigation, particularly how digital audio workstations and online platforms shape the literacy practices of contemporary Chinese musicians. Comparative studies between Chinese pop music and other East Asian pop music genres, such as K-pop and J-pop, could offer a broader perspective on how cultural and global influences shape musical literacy across different cultural contexts.

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