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On Teaching Music Business in 2006 China

Theodore J. Piechocinski
Indiana State University

What follows is a collection of thoughts, reports, and pedagogical insights stemming from a unique opportunity to teach music business in China. While travel to China is not in itself all that unusual in today's global neighborhood, to actually teach a full course there (as opposed to giving just one visiting lecture as part of a visit to a foreign campus), to be accepted as a visiting professor, and to be fully responsible for the content and evaluation of a class's progress in an established curriculum is, still, an anomaly. This article is meant to describe the events leading up to the opportunity to teach in China, the challenge of accepting such responsibility, and the personal and professional adventure that such an assignment entailed. Although it is neither a typical pedagogical research paper nor a mere travelogue of a summer's extended adventure, it does, at times, bear some resemblance to both. It is this writer's desire to give the reader some sense of this intriguing, interesting, and challenging endeavor so that one might get a true sense of the answer to so many adventures' compelling beginnings, "What would it be like to...?"

In this day of instant communications and the establishment of global neighborhoods, it is not unusual for American universities and conservatories to establish relationships with other similarly-situated institutions around the world. In 2003, Indiana State University (ISU) entered into a formal relationship with the Shenyang Conservatory of Music (SCM) in Shenyang, China. Through this relationship, as reflected in a formal letter of understanding, the institutions vowed to create unprecedented opportunities for meaningful exchange of culture and teaching through regular interaction and travel between institutions for groups of faculty and students.

Shenyang is a large urban center in Liaoning Province in northeastern China with a population of approximately 6.5 million. While not a typical tourist destination compared to many of the beautiful spots in China, it is nevertheless a thriving business center and, notably, of substantial historical significance. Prior to the 1644 A.D. declaration that Beijing would thenceforth be the political and spiritual capital of China, Shenyang had been the country's capital housing the emperors' sprawling imperial palace grounds, which still stand intact as a major destination of reverence and respect. So,

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while not as picturesque or as cosmopolitan as Beijing, perhaps, Shenyang is a teeming center of activity, culture, education, and business.

During each year subsequent to the establishment of the ISU/SCM pact, ISU has sent groups of students and faculty to Shenyang for approximately ten days of presentations on Chinese culture, history, and music. The ISU groups have also presented many student and faculty performances for SCM audiences and master classes. Similarly, SCM has sent three contingents to the ISU campus for presentations, meetings, and performances by faculty and students. While exchanges involving performing techniques, instrumentation, and repertoire were obvious choices, especially in terms of community engagement and audience appeal, the pact also contemplated a mutual goal to bring music business studies to SCM. Involved from the outset, then-Director of Music Business at ISU, Jim Slutz, was specifically asked to help develop the first music business studies curriculum at SCM. With one trip to Shenyang, the music business ball was rolling and, after his 2003 retirement from ISU, Professor Slutz resided on the SCM main campus for four months to teach the first wave of Westernized music business courses.

A private institution (as many Chinese conservatories are), there are four branches of the school: three in Shenyang and one in Dalian, a beautiful coastal city on the Yellow Sea. While joined in name and some broad administrative oversight areas, including funding allocations, the four branches are largely autonomous in terms of activities, student recruitment, and use of international faculty. Therefore, a sense of competition inevitably arises between branches and, with that, an accompanying degree of political tension. The main campus, in the downtown heart of Shenyang, has traditionally been the center of the entire conservatory, in terms of appeal and hierarchy. But with strong leadership and recruitment resulting in a student body of approximately 3,000, the SCM – South Campus (about twenty minutes from the main campus) is eager to establish itself as a true rival, in all respects, to the main campus.

It was in this atmosphere that, beginning in the fall of 2005, discussions between the SCM – South Campus administration and I began whereby I would teach a full introductory music business course during the school's second semester. From the outset, the mandate from SCM administrators was unequivocal: they wanted a music business course presented to their students based on Western business models and Western business practices. I would incorporate Chinese examples and business models as appro-

prate, but my mission was to teach a Western-based course. While it would be impossible to relocate for the full length of an SCM semester, since I was to be the first active ISU faculty (with considerable ISU teaching and administrative responsibilities) to teach a full course at SCM, it was finally agreed that a compressed course would fit into my schedule. As a result, I agreed to be responsible for a full semester of class material and teaching in a time-span of eight teaching weeks. Due to this tight time-frame, it was necessary for me to complete my ISU responsibilities as quickly as possible during our finals week, travel to Shenyang, and begin teaching there the following Monday.

Logistics

While there are numerous memories and reflections of my Shenyang teaching experience, chief among them is that the Chinese live in a constant state of balance between bureaucratization run amok and seat-of-your-pants planning. I came to view this aspect, philosophically, as part of the yin-yang of Chinese life, but it took a while. The first portent of this characteristic appeared when negotiations regarding the most basic and fundamental logistics of my stay took several months to complete. SCM agreed to pay for all transportation costs, lodging, and a small stipend for living expenses. A formal letter of invitation was provided with which a Chinese visa was acquired. A long application had to be filled out in order to demonstrate my bona fides in the area of music business.

Another quick lesson learned (there was no alternative but to learn this quickly) is that planning, in the Chinese culture, is best done in pencil, not pen. Plans and logistical details of the smallest or largest issues can change extremely fast and one must simply be ready and willing to accept these changes and move forward. Details regarding my specific teaching schedule were extremely sparse, prior to arrival in Shenyang. Once I arrived and was met by my contact and international representative from the SCM – South Campus, I was taken to my lodgings, which were on the campus in a multi-unit four-story building. The class schedule discussed upon my arrival was different from that discussed previously and, not surprisingly, differed yet again from the final schedule that coalesced on the first day of my class three days after my arrival.

Once I was on campus, there were more bureaucratic matters with which to deal. Although I had filled out the extensive professional information application weeks before and had provided copies of all professional

degrees and diplomas, it was necessary to be interviewed by an administrator and, yet again, go through the details of my education and experience so as to be deemed acceptable as a visiting professor at SCM. Of course, with me actually being on-site, it would have been nonsensical to reject me at that point, but bureaucracy was served. Surprisingly, while China is making tremendous strides in providing technology to university campuses, there were few computers used in this review procedure or in the everyday workings of the conservatory's departments. Databases and word processors, such commonly-used tools in U.S. offices, were not greatly evident at SCM. Finally, after months of discussions, negotiations, and shifting plans, I was in Shenyang, ensconced on campus, and ready to teach.

Environmental Factors and Issues

The lodging provided was adequate once I got accustomed to the idea that there are certain lifestyle peculiarities in China. In typical Chinese apartment-style "homes," there are no dedicated closets. Rather, space is taken in front rooms or curtained areas where a rod can be hung for clothing. Cooking was done entirely on a two-burner propane stove. While these and similar aspects were generally simple areas of adjustment, it was more difficult to accept the quality of tap water in this and most homes; the water coming from taps, simply stated, smells rancid. While no one I encountered in Shenyang drinks tap water (rather, they have bottled drinking water regularly supplied to their homes), I was still apprehensive about washing in such water or cleaning dishes and clothing in it. While I can't say I became oblivious to the water's stench by the time I left, I was able to acclimate to bathing and doing laundry and dishes with it. One adjusts.

Regarding much-needed communications access, the most immediate and pressing problem I faced was the initial lack of internet access in my home. It took two weeks of adamant discussion and bureaucratic navigation to figure out a way to get access. There was no single phone company, for instance, to contact and make an appointment to acquire dial up or high-speed access. It became apparent that much is accomplished through an "I have a friend who has a friend who knows someone who knows how to do this..." approach. It was, in fact, impossible ever to tell if a repairman who finally appeared was actually affiliated with a telephone company, for example, or whether he just had enough skill and information to tap into the correct circuitry. While paperwork for an internet access company was eventually presented (so that I knew the access I had was, indeed, legiti-

mately acquired) the “how” of how it occurred was never clear. In the final analysis, I had internet access to the rest of my world outside of Shenyang and that is what mattered most to me.

My home was quite comfortable (after I discovered the couch was much more comfortable to sleep on than the supplied bed) and clean. A television was included, which provided a valuable education about Chinese popular culture. Over the course of my stay, I saw varied programming ranging from traditional Chinese opera (available at almost any time) and overwrought productions dramatizing the revolution epitomized by China’s human almost-deity, Mao Tse Dung, to silly game shows and a great variety of sporting events. Most welcome during my stay were the live broadcasts of the NBA finals (without listening to the Chinese commentary) and the then-occurring, extremely popular, World Cup matches.

Construction and infrastructure improvement projects in Shenyang are occurring at an amazing rate, largely due to the impending 2008 Olympics based in Beijing (about a one-and-a-half hour flight from Shenyang). Because of this, and the fact that there is still a tremendous number of neighborhoods based around dirt paths and roads, the amount of dirt and dust in the air at any given time was tremendous. Compounded with a staggering number of trucks, cars, motorbikes, and taxis, all seemingly operating with no regulatory emissions controls, the air quality was poor. Add to this public spitting (by men and women of all ages and social strata) and, with surprising regularity, public urination, it’s easy to imagine that the environment was less than pristine. Perhaps this helps explain the absolute compulsion, practiced in every single household I entered while in China, that street shoes are never worn in Chinese homes. All homes provide slippers for inhabitants and visitors as soon as the entrance door is opened. While walking anyplace in Shenyang is a challenge, due to the unclean elements described, the meticulous care to keep one’s home floors spotlessly clean at all times was, while incongruous, very intriguing. Many inhabitants frequently go so far as to change slippers in their own home when moving from the living room area into the bathroom or kitchen areas.

The incongruity of Chinese life quickly became an explicit theme of my stay. As mentioned, many neighborhoods are literally built around dirt paths and roads. I became an avid rider of extremely crowded Chinese buses and was fascinated by the vision, witnessed numerous times, of stylishly-dressed women, replete with spike heels, climbing off of a bus and walking down dirt paths into their neighborhoods; all while clinging to

their ever-present cell phones. Sanitation ranges from Western-style bathrooms to community outhouses. What Westerners might describe, perhaps unfairly, as squalor was very often within minutes of a highly Westernized complex of hotels, shops, and apartments. Quite literally, in one instance, a single bus ride yielded a dusty, dirt-oriented neighborhood and, five minutes later, a fully-articulated Armani store. The face of China is changing at an extraordinary pace; the rate of construction of roads, housing developments, shopping areas, and public structures is remarkable. But, one need only look at the neighborhoods, donkey-powered carts, and traditionally drab clothing of older generations compared to the much more Westernized garb of younger people to realize that China today is, it seems, defined by incongruity. The “old” is not giving way at the same rate as the “new” is pushing forward and, as a result, incongruity and inner cultural clashes abound.

A few other environmental factors bear mention. The number of people on the move in Shenyang at any given time was extraordinary. Having previously spent considerable time working in New York City, I am well versed in the movement of crowds, where the regularity and relatively consistent respect for traffic patterns, signals, and enforced regulations for drivers and pedestrians make traversing such crowded urban streets quite manageable. In contrast, drivers and pedestrians in Shenyang exhibited only a small portion of such recognition of patterns, rules, and respect for communal, civil, urban travel. Two- and three-wheeled vehicles yielded nothing to larger vehicles. Time and again, I witnessed bus, truck, and taxi maneuvers that were extremely creative, yet dangerous, leading me to conclude (only somewhat facetiously) that traffic signs and signals are merely suggestions rather than commands. And the perfect companion to such driving while under no influence is the presence, day and night, of the ubiquitous honking of horns—not sixteenth-note honks, either, but accented half-note honking.

Teaching

It is within this framework, finally, that I met and began working with my Chinese students at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music – South Campus. With China’s vast population and potential student pool, it is not surprising that competition for entrance into China’s universities is extremely difficult. Top-tier institutions such as Beijing University accept only a minuscule portion of all the country’s students who aspire to university matriculation. The vast majority of students seeking higher education are rel-

egated to lower-tier institutions, with a large percentage of those being private schools. The Shenyang Conservatory – South Campus is a private school with approximately 3,000 students, 321 full-time faculty, and 147 adjunct professors. It provides training in ten areas of study including traditional Western music, Chinese folk instruments/music, dance, music education, and art business, which is SCM's version of a music business curriculum. Being still a relatively new curricular offering, the art (music) business program is still developing. The core of studies in this area include:

- Business Writing (no contracts)
- Marketing Research
- Electrical Business (basically, using the computer and internet for business)
- Music and Society (entails the sociology of music, role of critics, and demographics)
- Music Psychology (explained as the cultivation of an elevated taste in music)
- Market Analysis (a three-year survey, which includes American music and other world markets)

The course I was to teach was a basic, Western-style introductory music business course that served as a survey of key areas of industry study, thus exposing students to the depth of the music industry and, of course, the positions that might be available to them as music industry professionals. The areas covered during our class included an industry overview, music publishing, copyright, music merchandising, record industry, the artist's "team" (attorneys, agents, managers), and professionalism.

The Student Profile

My Chinese class of music business students numbered around fifty-five students. Women outnumbered men two to one. The vast majority of the student group was twenty or twenty-one years old. In a survey of background, aspirations, and attitudes, about 70% of the students identified themselves as upper-middle class and 20% as lower-middle class. About 50% of the class had studied music privately for at least three years prior to enrollment (although music performance involvement of music business students was almost irrelevant to their degree studies) but only about 20% professed

to some small degree of music theory and music history studies prior to SCM enrollment. In terms of career aspirations, students ranked prominent areas of industry positions as follows (from most sought to least):

- Agent (“brokers” in the Chinese music industry)
- Manager
- Record Business
- Music Publishing
- Music Retail Sales

In terms of favorite musical genres, given five choices to rank (from most to least listened to), students ranked them as follows:

- Pop (mostly Chinese pop with some American influences)
- Hip-Hop
- Chinese traditional music
- Rock
- Classical

Like typical American university students, a significant majority of my Chinese students admitted that some of their personal music libraries included illegally-downloaded MP3 files. Reading these broad-based generalities of the Chinese music business students, nothing is startlingly different from what might be found in a similar survey of American music business students. However, one statistic was profoundly divergent from typical American educational institutions of higher learning. In the survey of Chinese students in my music business class, 100% indicated that their educations were paid for completely by their families; no governmental assistance, no loans, and no scholarships. This was very sobering.

Class Time

On meeting my class for the first time, there was a formality to the proceedings. I was asked to wait in the hallway by my classroom as an introduction was made by the dean of art business studies and one of SCM’s vice-presidents. Then I was welcomed with warm applause by the students and presented with a certificate representing the formal acceptance of my qualifications and recognition as a visiting professor. After words of thanks and acknowledgment, my class and I went to work.

A translator was present for all my SCM class sessions. Actually, there was a loose rotation between three translators that sometimes led to its own difficulties because of the lack of continuity between session discussions. For the most part, the translators were very good to work with. A small cadre of students, about eight out of fifty-five, had a working ability to speak and understand some English, but the translators were absolutely essential. With many new terms and concepts regarding Western music business, it was often necessary to explain things to the translator first so that she could syntactically present it to the class. I quickly learned to speak in shorter, more concise fragments of thought. Some terminology had no Chinese translation and, I soon found out, idiomatic phrases were difficult to include. For instance, in explaining how music business concepts often tie into a “big picture” of the industry, “big picture” did not translate in language or concept.

Chinese students are, generally, reluctant to speak out in class or to otherwise stand out from their classmates. Discussion of concepts is an important part of Western-style teaching. In China I had to work very hard to engage students in a way that was perceived inviting enough for them to feel comfortable verbalizing a thought, opinion, or disagreement with a concept. It was important, then, to quickly establish a level of comfort and connection between the students and myself. Never prone to strictly lecturing about a topic, I took care to give many examples to which students could relate, either from aspects of Chinese culture (including pop culture, as I acquired Chinese examples from which to draw) and to make them more comfortable with me on a personal level. Very respectful and deferential, the students enjoyed it when I treated them as young colleagues rather than just students to whom information was being imparted.

Prior to my arrival, my Chinese class had all assumed Americanized names to go along with their given Chinese names, but, even with that to assist me, it was important to learn their names as quickly as possible. I was greatly aided by taking digital images of small groups of four to five students and studying them in the evenings. Each student in the picture made a placard with his or her Chinese name and taken English name. The students appreciated my efforts to learn and say both names, though the English name was, by far, the more used. The names ranged from traditional (Vivian, Lisa, Veronica, and Susie) to names obviously taken from pop idols (Axl and Slash) and, yes, a nod to Kenny G, an extremely popular figure in Chinese pop music.

Along with the difficulty of using idiomatic phrases, care had to be taken in using humor or jokes during class sessions. With relatively few touch-points in common, in terms of shared experiences, many references would be lost. Therefore, the best approach simply seemed to be to connect with the students as human beings and let them see that I cared for them as people, not just as charges in a classroom. Students reacted positively when I introduced them to an American word or phrase that sounded very attractive, such as an emphatic “you rock!” at an opportune time. Having a class of fifty-five Chinese students use it at the same time, in reaction to the mutual understanding of a concept, was a good moment of class connection. “Posse” and “bling” also got considerable use.

There is no textbook that the students typically use for their art (music) business studies; therefore, all materials and notes emanated from the material I presented and discussions held in class. It became apparent that students’ points of reference regarding work-related issues and exposure to workplace issues were sparse. Very few had ever held even a part-time job, so there was a gap in understanding that had to be addressed. This gap, in fact, indicated that a substantial number of the students in this introductory course had little inkling of the music industry or what it might yield as to their future careers. Furthermore, it was apparent that some percentage of the students, perhaps twenty percent in my estimation, were obviously just “going through the motions” of attending the conservatory. Rather than being driven by a passion to make one’s way in the industry and embrace it and its study, some students were there because, at the moment, they had nothing better to do with their lives. In some of the most extreme cases, there was not the slightest attempt to feign interest in the class; and a few disinterested students openly attempted to use their ever-present cell phones to text messages. While I corrected such behavior in class and brought up such traditionally unacceptable actions to the administration of the art business program, it became clear that, with families paying considerable tuition and other fees to attend SCM, tolerating such students was considered a necessary evil at the tuition-dependent institution.

Challenges

While communication, syntax, and a common level of everyday experiences provided some challenges in the classroom, they were no more daunting than dealing with differing socio-economic or regional differences experienced in U.S. classrooms. However, there were some cultural issues

that were more difficult to maneuver around. First, there can be no mistake that, despite many recent free-market initiatives, the People's Republic of China is still very much a socialist state and, while usually subtle, socialist influences permeate society at all levels. Before being allowed to teach, Chinese teacher candidates must pass a rigorous series of examinations demonstrating their knowledge of, and faithfulness to, the doctrine outlined by the Communist Party. Thankfully, this was not necessary for visiting professors. Students, too, are regularly mandated to attend "education meetings," which are, in fact, party indoctrination and education sessions. These sessions were never announced to students (or visiting professors) any more than minutes, or an hour, before a class was to be held. The meetings lasted anywhere from two hours to entire days. When they occurred, class was simply cancelled with no further explanation or discussion. Not surprisingly, I was never privy to any discontent by students or faculty with regard to these gatherings. They were simply zones of experience and commonality with which the students and I could not relate. I came to view them as unexpected opportunities to explore another part of the city due to the extra time available.

Another new challenge to me dealt with the level of instruction and example typically available to Chinese music business students. In performance-related areas, it was evident that faculty were selected based on their performing expertise. That is not surprising. But, in the art (music) business area, such expertise was not evident. The administration seemed unclear as to how expertise in this area might manifest itself with regard to permanent faculty. In the U.S. we favor finding music business faculty who have done many of the things they teach about, who have worked in substantive positions within the music industry, and who can relate first-hand experiences about the rewards, challenges, and travails of the music industry. Ideally, they have credibility in their field. At SCM, I did not detect that degree of experience among the faculty and administration. One administrator had experience in the import/export field and another was a music educator assigned to the art business area. But, they did not have direct experience in the area of art (music) business. While faculty and administrators were dedicated and earnest, as far as I could ascertain, there was an experiential element lacking that was, to students, conspicuous in its absence. I detected little sense of respect for the experiences offered by SCM art business faculty and administrators.

Prior to taking my position at ISU, I spent many years as a music lawyer and music publisher and therefore have considerable first-hand experiences to share with students. That is not to say my experiences are significant or overly impressive, but the point is that they are, at least, *real* experiences in the music industry. Music business students, whether in China, the U.S., or elsewhere need to hear about real experiences “in the trenches” to achieve the greatest insights into their own career goals and paths. In order to create an aura of authenticity and credibility concerning music business studies in China, there needs to be far greater attention paid to the caliber of the professors. This is one example of the “disconnect” between the theory and the practicalities of Chinese music business education.

This idea of a disconnect manifests itself in numerous ways. Another example, from a musical standpoint, is the manner in which SCM students and faculty have assimilated certain performance practices. First, Chinese performances are truly events, not mere performances. For all the performances I witnessed (approximately twenty in my nine-week teaching stint), a large auditorium seating 1,200 people was always near, if not at, full capacity. For every performance, the area in front of the large stage was bedecked with large vases of fresh flower arrangements. After each performance, the performers would be besieged by bouquet-bearing audience members—not small bouquets, but large ones. Of course, these are great gestures, but it quickly became clear that it was just that, a gesture that audience members understood they were supposed to do. Similarly, applause was always forthcoming after performances, but always in a way that indicated it was expected, rather than drawn from the emotion of the performance. Hearing a range of performance quality from mediocre to terrific, the degree of applause was always the same: polite, but rather tepid. It was as if the audience was enamored of the idea of performance, but was not connected emotionally to the performance.

A more significant example of this is my observation that performance staging and showmanship seemed much more important than the musical and aesthetic qualities of the experience. Pop music study is an accepted area of concentration at SCM, and that is commendable, but the students tended to think, it seemed, that such concentration gave them license to favor showmanship over musical quality. At virtually every pop music concert I attended, there was great emphasis on smoke machines billowing from the stage wings, disco style lighting effects, and loud, over-amplification. All recitals and concerts, regardless of musical style, featured numer-

ous gown and costume changes and the ever-present master or mistress of ceremony. However, the most unfortunate aspect witnessed in this disconnect between substance and style was that pop performers were, in many cases, not playing their instruments; instead they were synching to pre-recorded tracks. In some instances, the instrument synched was not even the same type of instrument on stage. During one pop vocal performance, it took just a moment to realize that the voice emanating from the speakers was actually a recording of Celine Dion! All of this led to a rather demoralizing conclusion that style over substance was not only acceptable in some SCM performances, it was, in fact, taught and encouraged by conservatory faculty. It was as if the affectations of popular performers and performances were closely studied and mimicked, but, in the process, the musical aspects—the soul of the performing and teaching experience—were sacrificed for the good of a flashy production. An aberrant occurrence might be forgiven, but a constant string of such episodes was troubling. This is certainly not meant to cast aspersions upon Chinese educational practices or levels of professionalism; this writer is acutely aware and appreciative of the high levels of musicianship and professionalism of world-class Chinese artists. These comments are simply real-time impressions of particular points in time and should not be taken as negative labeling of Chinese efforts, generally.

These examples illustrate the frequent “disconnects” between two extremes in many instances of Chinese life and culture. An apt analogy about these types of episodes, whether it involves performance practices or the tug between dirt streets and Armani stores within minutes of each other, is that one can read a book about fixing a car or painting a picture, but that does not mean one is prepared to be a mechanic or an artist. This sometimes strange dichotomy surfaced again when my music business class and I dug into the area of copyright, which will be addressed below.

Methodology

It was important to constantly impress upon my Chinese students that a career in the music industry has broad, exciting possibilities and that their education would prepare them for a wide variety of opportunities. This type of intangible goal-setting can be more of a challenge for music business students than, for example, a music education student who can readily envision a future as a teacher or the performance major who can envision oneself on stage. It was a constant subtext of my teaching to share the

excitement of the unknowable career path, to be prepared for opportunities that would arise. Targeted stories and examples of the music industry were tremendously useful tools.

Experiential learning is a popular catch-phrase on today's American campuses. Foundational learning through reading is fine and valuable, but that foundation can be vastly enhanced and enriched by doing or experiencing something that gives life to the concept or lesson. This is hardly a revolutionary concept, but in introducing elements of it at SCM, it was seen as quite extraordinary. And the easiest way to bring reality into education? The time-honored tradition of the field trip.

In a city of 6.5 million people that serves as a regional hub of commerce, art, and business, numerous opportunities for experiential learning are available. Weeks before discussion of the corresponding topic areas in class, I approached the art (music) business and SCM administration about allowing me to take my class on two field trips: one to a music publishing company and the other to a music retail operation. After considerable discussion, it was determined that these activities would be allowed, as experiments.

Our first field trip was to the offices of the Liaoning Publishing Group, one of the region's largest publishers. The company produces a wide range of publications, including children's books and music folios. While production aspects such as music engraving and arranging are done off-site, the offices do have an art department and some editorial staff. Students were shown the offices and then brought to a conference room where a music editor discussed the music publishing process for folios. The students were extremely receptive and enthusiastic about this contact with the "real" world of music business in their own neighborhood. They asked relevant and insightful questions of the editor. This simple, common experience (in the U.S.) was a revelation to the students and, subsequently, to SCM's administration. Word quickly passed to the SCM administration, through the art business dean's assistant who accompanied us on the trip, that this was a very successful and worthwhile activity.

One week later, the class visited a typical Chinese piano retail store. First, the class was addressed in a recital-sized space by several representatives of the business. The representatives spoke briefly about inventory issues and the cooperation between the store and local teachers who used its recital space. Then the class went to another floor of the store where pianos were displayed in a typical manner with many styles, finishes, makes,

and models presented in enticing ways (Yamaha and Young Chang were clearly the most prominent pianos on display). While the students enjoyed seeing so many instruments in one place, it was clear that the interest in music retail was not the same as it had been in the publishing company. After discussing this with a few students, it seemed there was somewhat of an inherent aversion to actually selling goods as opposed to the attraction of a “professional” atmosphere presented by the publishing company. Even if the piano store did not interest students in the prospects of music retail, it was nevertheless successful in helping students realize the breadth of the music industry. Another reason for the lack of positive reaction (again, gleaned from casual conversations with students) could have been that retail stores are often owned and operated as small family businesses in China. Therefore, it is not a natural career path to work in a retail store that one’s family does not own.

In the same survey (taken near the end of the music business course) in which I learned about students’ prior training, tastes, and financial ability to attend the conservatory, I canvassed them regarding their favorite method of instruction (e.g., lecture, open discussion, etc.). In the truest, universal spirit of students of any age anywhere around the world, the number one answer for favorite method of instruction was “field trip.”

Areas and Subjects Covered

The course was designed to be a typical music business survey. It was intended to introduce students to the main areas of the music industry and to give a sampling of some of the concepts, issues, and challenges likely to be encountered. In this regard, my approach was much the same as when I present such a course to first-year music business students at Indiana State University. At the specific request of the SCM administration (indicated from the onset of this adventure’s negotiations) the course was to focus on Western standards and practices. Where possible or practicable, I incorporated Chinese examples (including some offered by my students) and welcomed discussions that spotlighted similarities as well as differences between Western and Chinese industry practices. General areas addressed within the class included music publishing, copyright, music merchandising, the record industry, and the artist’s “team.” This “Introduction to Music Business” course was held four days each week; two classes were 1½ hours long and two were 3½. Several highlights bear mention.

Generally speaking, the Chinese students were extremely attentive and took detailed notes. After every class, a small group of students invariably gathered to delve into greater detail or clarification regarding the session's topic. When discussing the topics of music publishing and the record business, there were exercises to demonstrate the various computations of artists' royalties, including print royalties, mechanical license fees, and record contract artist royalties. In these exercises involving mathematics and problem-solving, the Chinese students excelled. It was not just a few students who comprehended immediately; a large majority of the students quickly grasped these concepts. This probably reflects the depth of math and logic preparation Chinese students undergo in the primary and secondary grades. Whatever the underlying reason, it was impressive how quickly and deeply the class understood and demonstrated its understanding of these aspects of the music business. Similarly, when discussing music merchandising, and the computation of product turns to help determine quantities to stock, the Chinese students grasped the concepts much quicker, generally, than my typical American class of second-semester freshmen.

My SCM students also showed an intriguing interest in the area of artist management. In China, agent and personal manager functions are often handled by a hybrid music industry professional called a broker. Through class discussion, the students became animated as they relayed how brokers achieve near-celebrity status through their work for prominent Chinese artists. It was this topic, too, that brought several students out of a rather dormant state as they became active participants in the discussion. I had not anticipated this level of interest from so many students, but it reminded me that it is impossible to predict what bit of information will pique a student's interest and perhaps serve as the trigger for further studies, ultimately leading to a career. Because it was an area that the students already had such a grasp of (from a celebrity angle, at least) it was interesting that they, at times, led the discussion more than I did. This was a great moment of discovery, bonding, and empowerment for the class.

Most intriguing of all the topics we discussed was music copyright. With many trade publications telling the American music industry that a grossly disproportionate amount of music and movie products (primarily DVDs and CDs) in the Chinese market are pirated, it was clear this would be a sensitive SCM class topic. Rather than lecture (or preach to) students about the illegality of such actions, I thought it much more appropriate to do a side-by-side comparison of U.S. and Chinese copyright laws. In fact,

the Chinese copyright laws are quite comprehensive, and written with impressive specificity and clarity. While the Chinese laws are impressive, it is, of course, in the enforcement of them that the system founders. There are occasional enforcement actions resulting in large manufacturers or dealers getting charged with piracy of copyrighted goods, but those actions are not numerous enough to thwart the unauthorized products openly available in shops and street corner stalls, or hawked by individual entrepreneurial “merchants” on pedestrian bridges and sidewalks. As part of my research on this topic, I had no difficulty finding places where such copies were sold in large numbers. With my comparative law approach, I intended to guide students to their own conclusions regarding the effects an economic model built upon pirated product might have on the global music and film industries.

The side-by-side approach covered copyright fundamentals such as creation of copyright, registration, fair use, compulsory licenses, statutory fees, and civil and criminal penalties for infringement. As with other subjects, the students were attentive and took copious notes. I made sure to convey my respect for the efforts made by China in formulating such a good body of copyright laws; the students appreciated these sincere thoughts. However, when it came to the moment when I hoped the students might realize that the strength of any law is no more effective than the legal, ethical, or inherent moral correctness (i.e., knowing right from wrong) of an action in supporting those laws, there was, again, a disconnect for most of the students. The moment of enlightenment that I had hoped for did not materialize. There was no recognition that piracy does indeed have negative effects on the global music and entertainment market. To use another metaphor, we could not quite connect the final dots in this picture of laws and compliance.

To students and others I spoke with during my stay in China, authorized copies of DVDs and CDs are simply too expensive; therefore, they rationalize, supporting piracy is acceptable. The desire to acquire DVDs, CDs, and software generally overrides a compelling sense of compliance with existing copyright laws. The temptations are certainly tremendous considering that, one week after the release of virtually any major American movie, excellent DVD knock-offs are available on the street for the equivalent of 62.5¢. I must admit I found it disappointing the students didn’t conclude that the fundamental support of piracy is wrong. Even the brightest students who understood my presentation in English didn’t demonstrate

an ethical or moral dilemma. It was another example of a societal disconnect where reason is cast aside for the sake of quick and inexpensive acquisition. Perhaps there are cultural differences that, some might argue, make it difficult to label such behaviors or thought processes as “wrong,” but through Western eyes, at least, the behavior equates to a societal disconnect. It is my hope that our class discussions at least planted seeds of thought for these future leaders of the Chinese music industry.

Evaluation

The SCM’s “Introduction to Music Business” was a unique course for the participants and for me. How to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching, comprehension, or coverage of useful materials was somewhat of a dilemma. Considering that, even with the best of interpreters, it was difficult for students to comprehend much of the hard data presented in class, creating an effective and useful examination to measure learning would be a real challenge. With such a large class, and limited time in which to complete and grade an evaluation, I nevertheless had the mandated responsibility to construct a final exam. Given a two-hour testing period, I devised a sixty-question, multiple-choice test. It was translated and presented in English and Chinese. It is not surprising that those students who were diligent and attentive during the entire eight weeks of classes did better than the students who were not. Students are students, regardless of geographical location or political orientation. Based on a rigid grading scale, determined entirely by the SCM Art Business administration, approximately forty percent of the students failed the exam. However, one must consider the unusual burdens placed upon the students. This was an intense eight-week course taught entirely through translation. Additionally, the course dealt with concepts that were as foreign to the translator as to the students. Given these mitigating circumstances perhaps a multiple-choice exam was not the best testing method to use. Unfortunately, with the rigid Chinese and SCM bureaucracies deeply entrenched, there was no acceptable alternative to this traditional means of evaluation. Developing a better exam format should be a priority when this course is offered again.

Conclusion

The time I spent in Shenyang was tremendously enlightening to me, both personally and professionally. The opportunity to actually live in another culture, rather than just visit for a few days, allows glimpses of differ-

ent societies that are not otherwise apparent. The same holds true, certainly, for time spent with students in a classroom. One can give a single lecture to any class and feel a sense of accomplishment, but to see a class through an entire course, introducing great amounts of new material and concepts and in the process adopting the class as one's own, is a much deeper and fulfilling experience.

In a very short time, I came to see my SCM students as *my* students, just as I view the American music business students who I teach and advise through complete degree programs. I made efforts to get to know the SCM students, to see what drove them, what inspired and motivated them. The students were very welcoming, respectful, and friendly. When I watched intramural soccer games between the art business team and other student teams, the students appreciated my attention and interest. Before each class session, a student would supply me with a glass of hot water, a traditional beverage. After our final class session, students presented me with many gifts and keepsakes to commemorate our time together. There was mutual respect, affection, and enjoyment.

While music business studies is still a very new offering in China, it is easy to see that, like Chinese product marketing, development, and manufacturing, there is tremendous career potential for this burgeoning population of students. With increasingly Westernized marketing efforts to broach global music and entertainment markets, and to create new partnerships, China will undoubtedly have even more effect on global markets in the years ahead. With increased market presence, the cadre of informed and prepared Chinese music and entertainment executives will surely increase markedly. I would not be surprised in the slightest to see some of my Shenyang Conservatory of Music – South Campus students rise through those ranks and emerge as members of the next generation of informed, insightful leaders in the Chinese—and global—music industry.

With my responsibilities completed and time finished, I left Shenyang to return to my familiar surroundings...and potable tap water. I thoroughly enjoyed my time spent in China and hope to return in the years ahead. With time for reflection since leaving Shenyang and returning to the ISU campus, I come to the conclusion that no matter where they are, what language they speak, how they finance their education, or what they wear, university students everywhere share some things in common: some are great students, others are marginal; some are driven and others are taking up space in the classroom; some are passionate while others are grasping for some-

thing to hold their interest. But, they are all searching for the answers to their situations, their lives, and their futures. It is a tremendously rewarding honor to work with music business students and help them discover the answers they seek. To see individual sparks of enlightenment, excitement, and passion for an issue or topic, leading students to a higher level of growth, development, and understanding in the pursuit of their ultimate careers, is gratifying regardless of whether the students are in China, the U.S., or anywhere else. To lead students and, at times, have them lead us, through the constantly shifting thickets of the music and entertainment industry is energizing. My time in Shenyang taught me many new things, but most importantly it reinforced the fundamental lesson that people, wherever they live, are searching for happiness, contentment, and a life with meaning. In this, we all share a common goal. Should anyone have an opportunity to teach music business in China or elsewhere, my recommendation is to embrace it and learn.

THEODORE J. PIECHOCINSKI, Associate Professor and Director of Music Business at Indiana State University, holds a Juris Doctor degree from the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, an M.M. in saxophone performance from New Mexico State University, and a B.S. in music education from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He has worked as an Assistant Director of Law for the City of Cleveland (Ohio) and for many years within the music industry as Senior Vice President of Cherry Lane Music Company, President of MusicExpresso, a revolutionary online publishing company, Vice President for Marketing and Business Affairs for Ludwig Music Publishing Company, and Director of Business Affairs for The FJH Music Company. Prof. Piechocinski has published numerous articles and spoken to many groups across the country on issues of music copyright, employment law, contracts, the music industry, and the business of music education.

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Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association
1900 Belmont Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37212 U.S.A.
office@meiea.org
www.meiea.org

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