Creative Arts & Humanities Education in Hong Kong: Issues and Solutions

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The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Creative Arts and Humanities in the Past

In the past, the creative arts were holistic

- Medieval trivium and quadrivium - grammar, rhetoric, and logic; arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music

- Confucian “six arts” “六藝”, that is ethics, music, archery, chariot-riding, calligraphy, and arithmetic 禮、樂、射、御、書、數

- Specialized instruction for creative arts did exist, but in the form of ateliers or guilds such as the *schola cantorum*
Such specialized creative arts education evolved separately from humanities and the university with the formation of formal ‘arts’ schools such as the École des beaux-arts, 1648 and Conservatoire national de musique, 1795.

Modern universities did not develop specialized arts education until the late nineteenth century but often firewalled these departments or schools from the ‘Arts and Science’ curriculum.
In China, ‘arts’ education has remained especially isolated from the university and confined to such dedicated stand-alone schools as the:

- Central Academy of Fine Art, 1918/1950-
- (Shanghai) Conservatory of Music, 1927-
- Chinese Academy of Art, 1928-
- Central Academy of Drama, 1950-
- Beijing Dance Academy, 1954-
And yet, Chinese Visual Art, especially painting, has ironically flourished throughout the twentieth century.

Chinese Music reached a similar scale of global achievement from the late twentieth century onwards under the leadership of numerous distinguished performers as well as such composers as Bright Sheng, Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Tan Dun.
Creative Arts Education in China

Chinese achievements in the Creative Arts are demonstrably greater than in the humanities and arguably approach the quality of Chinese achievements in engineering and science.

However, unlike engineering and science which are taught to train engineers and scientists, humanities faculty generally teach the creative arts as Critics not Creators, as Consumers not Producers.
The HKUST Solution
HKUST has launched an alternative approach to creative arts education based on the principle of Research Embedded Teaching, by which we mean:

Our teachers are active practitioners who teach a curriculum based on their own ‘research,’ that is creativity rather than criticism.

Our students are taught to understand the arts from the perspective of creators and producers rather than consumers and critics.
Two HKUST Creative Arts Programs
Our lead program begun in 2010 is in music composition and performance, lead by Bright Sheng, centered around *The Intimacy of Creativity*.

We plan to launch in 2014 a successor program in creative writing lead by Liu Zaifu with the participation of Gao Xingjian and Mo Yan.
In each program, three to four composers or writers in residence teach and produce research in their respective areas.
Internationally-acclaimed, annual two-week partnership devoted to promoting an intimate dialogue between composers and performers.
Open Discussions

World-renowned composers and performers, together with emerging composers, present and revise their chamber music compositions after in-depth Open Discussions on the campus of HKUST

Lo Ka Chung Building, HKUST
Preview Concerts

Revised compositions are formally presented at Preview Concerts at HKUST
World Premiere Concerts

And at World Premiere Concerts in downtown Hong Kong

Hong Kong City Hall, 2014
**Lunchtime Lectures**

Distinguished Guests are given the opportunity to speak more in-depth about their work.
FINANCIAL TIMES
FINANCIAL TIMES TUESDAY MAY 3 2011

CLASSICAL MUSIC
The intimacy of Creativity
Concert Hall, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

Ken Smith

The composer Bright Sheng came to Hong Kong’s University of Science and Technology with an intriguing proposal: if playwrights can have extended rehearsals where scenes in their head are shaped on the stage with help from actors, why shouldn’t music benefit from a similar process?

So, as part of UST’s inaugural programme, entitled The Intimacy of Creativity, an international gathering of young composers received a week of daily feedback from musicians in residence, the Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Yohudi Wyner and Sheng himself, all in front of UST students and interested observers. The results were put to the test at a sold-out concert at Hong Kong’s Academy for Performing Arts on Sunday.

Though my own spot-check of rehearsals barely detected structural changes in the pieces, the music’s dramatic character evolved sharply as performers grew more familiar with each composer’s personality.

Clarinetist Richard Stoltzman and pianist Mary Wu found in Pedro Faria Goncalves’s Nachtmaar an almost operatic implausibility where silence was as much of a character as sound. They played with violinist Min Young Kim and cellist Roman Romakishnan (both of the Dacordus Quartet) navigated so many influences in Ted Goldman’s Scrooge, from Brahms to Indian raga to art-rock, that silence was barely an option. In Ming-Hei Yen’s Logo City, these four musicians scaled a modular verticality shaped by pulsating rhythms, but only after negotiating Yen’s placement of their instruments in an uncomfortably high register.

Lee Ou-fan reviews
The intimacy of Creativity

Lee Ou-fan is professor of musicology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
The Intimacy of Creativity

All students, as part of their Arts Curriculum, hear and watch the creative process in action

- Understanding first hand the complexity of the creator/producer perspective of art
- Experiencing first hand the emerging 21st century collaborative model for the production of art
- Learning the value of creativity and collaboration and its applications in such other fields of study as the Arts
Student enthusiasm for music participation classes, as opposed to music appreciation and music performance, show their genuine interest in deepening their understanding of the creative process and their willingness even to attempt to be creative themselves.

Many students who begin with appreciation-oriented courses choose to continue with such participation-oriented courses as Music Theory and Music Composition.
Through music theory and music composition, including *The Intimacy of Creativity*, the HKUST Arts Program, in other words, teaches new ways of critical thinking and criticality.

We thereby challenge the traditional notion of creativity by the “lone genius” and focus on collaborative processes of production.

We therefore teach the Arts as a continually transforming creative process rather than as a static product.
The HKUST Arts Requirement

Currently, approximately 2500 taught UG students, that is one-quarter our entire student body, take music or visual arts every year.

Beginning in 2012, the vast majority of HKUST students now take Arts courses as part of a required Common Core Education.
Beginning in 2013, the HKUST Summer Music program, lead by Bright Sheng, offers

- Courses open to students from Hong Kong, mainland China, and beyond,
- Including A New Approach to Music Making, a course developed and taught by Bright Sheng.
Begun in 2012, the HKUST Music Alive! concert series expands the initiative beyond the classroom by:

- Promoting HKUST as a destination for creative, well-rounded global leaders exposed to the power of the arts.
- 8-10 concerts per season feature acclaimed international and local artists.
- The 2012 inaugural event featured the internationally-acclaimed Munich Chamber Orchestra and was attended by over 800 students and university community members.
Development of Arts Facilities
Development of Arts Facilities

- Cheng Yu Tung Building (RAB), including a 400-seat Multipurpose Hall and arts classrooms, opened Spring 2015
- 1000-seat, state-of-the-art HKUST Multipurpose Auditorium, currently being proposed
HKUST Center for Creative Arts Education

With the development of these facilities, the HKUST Center for Creative Arts Education is currently being proposed to coordinate:

- Arts education-related programs at HKUST
- Performing arts initiatives, including *The Intimacy of Creativity* and *HKUST Music Alive!* series
Goals
Arts Education at HKUST, in other words, serves two different purposes:

- We offer and produce what the Financial Times calls “the most innovative music program” in Hong Kong.

- We also use this program to educate our students about the Arts, about creativity, and about collaboration to prepare them for a life-long critical engagement with the aural, the visual, and the world of work.
By placing the creative process at the heart of Creative Arts Education at HKUST

- Our students discover the real inner-workings of creativity
- Our students learn to value the power of those creative inner-workings in their own lives
The Master said, “Enrich yourself with the Odes. Base yourself on Propriety. Fulfill yourself through Music.”

“興于詩，立于禮，成于樂”《論語》
THANK YOU