

1. *Guqin* and Body

The *guqin* is a traditional musical instrument in Chinese culture. While playing *guqins*, the ancients were in pursuit of spiritual enhancement, which necessitated the tranquility of mind. In the hustle and bustle of modern life, how the *guqin* learners can rest their bodies and minds such that they can experience the beauty of *guqin* sounds? If modern people can perceive the sense of peace as the ancients did, it would be easier for them to realize the elegant state of learning *guqin*. Yet, how can they reach the level of sublimity? From the dynamics of body and mind experienced in *ya-yue* dance, which means elegant dance, *guqin* learners can feel that their bodies were full of energy when they touch *qin* strings. The present course will adopt *ya-yue* dance and focus on this type of energy (hereinafter *liang-jue*, which means *the sense of energy*) to serve as an introductory training for *guqin* beginners.

2. *Liang-jue* (*the sense of energy*) for Body and Mind

To define *liang-jue*, the following is an example for elaboration. Put two fruits of similar size and appearance (say, an orange and an apple) separately in our right hand and left hand, we can find that these two fruits give us different sense of weight even though their sizes are much the same. The heavier one is with shiny hue on its surface and with heavier weight and juicy taste; on the contrary, the lighter one is with dull hue, lighter weight, less water and smells no fragrance. When being placed on the scale, the heavier one must weigh more than the lighter one. The physical and spiritual concept of *liang-jue* lies in roundness and heaviness. As to human body, this state of body and mind reflects relaxation and spacing out. As we try to place both of our hands on a scale, the reading of the clenched fist and that of the relaxed fist may differ— usually, the relaxed fist will show heavier weight. Even though the weight of body measured by the scale slightly varies, the ease and tension of body significantly impact our health. *Liang-jue* also occurs in the process of learning the art of calligraphy. The soft brush in calligraphy and the force exercised by the calligraphers after they relax their upper limbs are in pursuit of *liang-jue* for body and mind. Calligraphy teachers have traditional techniques to guide learners to write in an expressive approach. The same situation applies to learning *guqin*. With the assistance of *ya-yue* dance, people can get a zone out for a while to attain body relaxation. Therefore, the physical and spiritual mechanism can return to the status of even pure circulation and we can feel that energy flows through our body and mind.

For human body, how to mellow out and relax body strength so the energy of our four limbs can be delivered to the end of our ten fingers and thus facilitate *guqin* learners to play *qin* in a smooth and relax way?

The following dynamic exercises are the results of the ten-year cooperation

between professor Chen Yu-shiu and the *guqin* master Wang Hai-yen. The application of *ya-yue* dance into *guqin* enables *qin* learners to enhance the state of body and mind. The principles of dynamics include self-reflection, the relaxation of whole body, the exertion of strength of certain body parts, and releasing forces to the end of our limbs. Consequently, in the process of learning *guqin*, the energy of finger tips on *qin* strings can be delivered from the end of our feet by stepping the ground, producing the sense of energy and reaching the solidarity of body, mind and *qin*.

5. Notes

The mechanism of dynamic movements for *guqin* lies in lending force from the ground, whose essential requirement depends on the relaxation of body and mind. Without borrowing the force from earth, the dynamic interaction of human body and mind may result in the disconnection of exerting force between upper body and lower body, the inability of *guqin* performance to produce profound sense of energy, and even cause injuries after long-term practices and performances. These injuries are common not only for *guqin* performers but also for other musical instrument players. For the players of stringed instruments, the most frequent injuries are on neck and shoulders. This type of injuries are found in *guqin* players and various musical instrument players, including piano players' injuries in spine and harp players' slanted chest. The dynamics of players' upper body often influences their chests. The imbalanced *Qi* channels will impact the whole body and the dynamics of the lower body. In contrast, for dancers who use their lower body frequently, the dynamics issue will affect their cavum pelvis. In addition, the problem of pelvis is relevant to backbone, viscera, chest, neck and shoulders and the movements of upper limbs. Eventually, the moving patterns of upper limbs will reflect in the dynamics of one's ends of upper limbs. Thus, we understand that the smooth circulation of *Qi* channels in body and mind is of paramount significance for leaning all the musical instruments. The good dynamics function of body and mind can be cultivated in a slow and relaxed pace.

While playing *guqin*, with the force borrowed from the ground, the energy concussion produced by the interactions between finger tips and the *qin* can make human body even softer and reserved and our mind more flexible. The ideal tone of *guqin* can be achieved with sufficient time endowed by *liang-jue* (the sense of energy) of body and mind and the interactions between body and *qin*. When the signal of *liang-jue* occurs, the *guqin* will generate profound and solid sounds. The positive interactions between *qin* techniques and *Qi* channels of body and mind can thus make learning *guqin* more interesting. Furthermore, *qin* players' skills can be advanced in this way.