

To Study and analyze the strategies to promote the development of Chinese folk music and the methods or ways to obtain international recognition

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Abstract

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate options for boosting the development and international awareness of Chinese folk music. The study analyzes problems and optimal approaches in the globalization of folk traditions by evaluating domestic cases (e.g., Yunnan folk traditions, TikTok music transmission) as well as international examples (e.g., K-Pop and Riverdance). According to the findings, Chinese folk music suffers crucial transmission challenges such as generational alienation, aging cultural carriers, and a low presence in formal education, with only 23% of schools adopting relevant courses. Dissemination remains primarily reliant on local, offline contexts, while digital participation is minimal, with just 30% of practitioners actively using sites such as TikTok or YouTube.

The data indicated that international recognition can be significantly strengthened through participation in global cultural events (e.g., WOMAD, Grammy World Music Awards), strategic partnerships with multinational streaming services, and localization practices such as multilingual adaptations and cultural contextualization. Notably, following the inclusion of Yunnan folk songs at WOMAD, overseas search volumes increased by 300%, underscoring the impact of global exposure. Collaborative models, exemplified by Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project, further highlight the potential of intercultural dialogue in reducing barriers and broadening audiences. This research contributes to ethnomusicological discourse by situating Chinese folk music within the dynamics of cultural globalization, while offering practical pathways for its sustainable transmission and global engagement.

Keywords: Chinese folk music, development strategy, international recognition, cultural communication

Introduction

Research background.

Chinese folk music, as a vital carrier of Chinese culture, embodies thousands of years of historical accumulation and ethnic wisdom. Its rich artistic forms and unique cultural connotations hold an irreplaceable position in the world's musical landscape. From the Qinqiang opera of the Loess Plateau to the Pingtan storytelling of the Jiangnan water towns, and from the Hua'er songs of the northwest to the mountain ballads of the southwest, Chinese folk music showcases the spiritual essence of the Chinese nation through its regional diversity and cultural p

lurality. However, with the acceleration of globalization and the impact of modern culture, Chinese folk music now faces unprecedented challenges. On one hand, the living space for traditional music in contemporary society is shrinking, with younger generations showing declining awareness and interest in folk music. Many precious musical traditions are on the verge of extinction due to the aging of their inheritors. On the other hand, despite its enduring influence domestically, Chinese folk music still lags significantly behind Western classical or popular music in terms of international recognition, limiting its effectiveness as a cultural export.

The musical identity of the erhu has undergone continuous evolution, showing distinct differences across ancient, modern, contemporary, and post-modern periods. In its early history, it was rooted in traditional music genres and regional musical styles. During the modern era, pioneers like Liu Tianhua began developing a stage-oriented artistic identity, incorporating Western performance techniques to preserve their cultural heritage. From the 1990s to the early 21st century, erhu art increasingly adopted Western musical strengths, featuring transplanted challenging compositions and violin-inspired performances. This period also witnessed vocalization, pop-ization, collaborations with singers, symphony orchestras, jazz bands, indigenous musicians, foreign composers, and original creators. Over the past decade, the erhu's repertoire and performance formats have undergone bold transformations, employing innovative concepts and forms to promote its music globally. (WuXiaoNan,2019)

Chinese ethnic music has evolved from traditional art forms such as folk songs, opera, storytelling, and rap. Through centuries of cultural selection and integration, it has developed its unique artistic expression by blending with regional dialects, playing a vital role in shaping China's artistic heritage. For decades, this musical tradition enjoyed widespread popularity. However, with the rapid development of China's market economy and increasing global connections, foreign musical influences began to permeate the country. Western genres like pop, rock, and jazz gained immense popularity among younger generations, revealing that musical expression isn't limited to conventional forms. This cultural shift has given rise to innovative artistic expressions, ushering in a new era of diversified ethnic music (WuJiaWen,2015)

This youth-oriented trend has driven innovation and diversification in ethnic folk music, aligning it with modern aesthetic preferences and cultural demands. For instance, many young musicians are blending traditional elements with contemporary influences to create fresh musical styles. Such transformations not only preserve the essence of traditional music but also breathe new life into it, enabling its survival and development in new contexts. The rise of new media platforms has provided an outlet for ethnic folk music to express itself. Increasingly, local musicians and folk artists are showcasing their talents through social media, sharing traditional music and dance performances that strengthen people's cultural identity. In today's globalized world, preserving and promoting ethnic cultures has become increasingly vital. (WangBin,2024)

To advance the development of ethnic opera, it is essential to prioritize its dissemination. We must actively expand distribution channels to ensure these operas reach audiences through diverse media platforms, enabling broader public appreciation. On one front, professionals should leverage the internet as a natural communication channel by streaming both classic ethnic operas and contemporary creations online. Collecting audience feedback on these works will help identify public artistic preferences. On the other front, practitioners should capitalize on emerging live-streaming platforms by conducting regular opera broadcasts tailored to each platform's characteristics for interactive engagement. During live streams, active promotion of opera works can attract more viewers while introducing younger generations to this niche art form, thereby driving its development. Regional cultural authorities should utilize their a

administrative advantages to implement opera education programs, helping the general public better understand and appreciate this artistic medium. (Zhai PeiTing,2024)

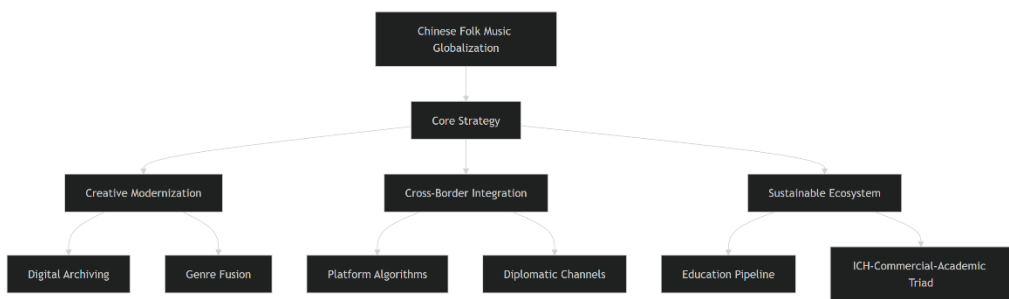
In summary, the formation and development of Chinese ethnomusicology has been a long and complex process. From initial research and preservation efforts in ethnic music to the modern multidimensional and multi-level research framework, this discipline has undergone continuous progress alongside evolving social environments, while continuing to face new opportunities and challenges. Looking ahead, we anticipate that Chinese ethnomusicology will continue to contribute significantly to the diversity and prosperity of global music culture within the context of globalization. (TangJin,2024)

Under the "Belt and Road" initiative, China has strengthened cultural exchanges with countries worldwide and achieved remarkable results. As an essential component of Chinese culture, ethnic music has played a vital role in this process. It serves not only as a national symbol but also as a bridge to promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Through ethnic music, other nations can gain deeper insights into China's cultural essence, spiritual landscape, and cultural heritage. Ethnic music provides a common language and platform for cultural dissemination and comprehension. The Belt and Road Initiative has enhanced cooperation and exchanges among participating countries, bringing significant economic and cultural opportunities. In this context, Chinese ethnic music, as a vital cultural resource, possesses unique developmental advantages and appeal. We should accelerate efforts to promote Chinese ethnic music globally, enabling it to shine and contribute to world cultural integration and exchange along the Belt and Road countries. (SaiYing,2024)

Objectives

To Study and analyze the strategies to promote the development of Chinese folk music and the methods or ways to obtain international recognition.

Conceptual Framework



Contemporary Development and Internationalization Pathways of Chinese Folk Music

This study constructs a dual-directional interactive framework integrating local heritage and global dissemination to explore development strategies for Chinese folk music in the context of globalization. Centered on cultural identity, the framework unfolds through three key dimensions: innovative transformation, diversified dissemination, and educational system restructuring.

In innovative transformation, the focus lies on modernizing traditional musical elements, including cross-genre fusion with pop and electronic music, as well as preserving endangered

repertoires through digital technologies. The “dissemination dimension” systematically examines the synergistic effects of algorithmic mechanisms on digital platforms and international cultural exchange initiatives, with particular attention to music diplomacy under the Belt and Road Initiative. The educational system emphasizes building a comprehensive heritage chain from basic education to advanced research while exploring collaborative models with top-tier global music institutions.

The study further proposes a "culture-industry-academia" trinity mechanism for international recognition, enhancing the global visibility and influence of Chinese folk music through the interplay of intangible cultural heritage designation, commercial development, and academic discourse construction.

On a theoretical level, the framework integrates cultural globalization theory, innovation diffusion theory, and cultural capital theory, establishing a multidimensional evaluation system encompassing cultural integrity, dissemination breadth, commercial sustainability, and academic impact. This provides a systematic solution for the contemporary transformation of traditional music.

The framework aims to balance cultural preservation with innovative adaptation, offering actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners in promoting Chinese folk music on the world stage.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach to comprehensively examine strategies for promoting the development of Chinese folk music and enhancing its international recognition. The research methodology integrated documentary research, case study analysis, in-depth interviews, quantitative audience analysis, and experimental pilot studies to provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the subject.

The documentary research phase involved a systematic review of academic literature, cultural policy documents, and industry reports from both Chinese and international sources, focusing on ethnomusicology, cultural globalization, and digital media's role in music promotion. This theoretical foundation was complemented by comparative case studies analyzing successful domestic examples such as "The Impression" performance series and the Twelve Girls Band, alongside international cases including Japanese Wagakki Band and Celtic folk music's global success. These case studies helped identify transferable strategies for Chinese folk music's development and international promotion.

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders including traditional musicians, music producers, cultural policymakers, and digital platform curators. These interviews provided valuable insights into current challenges and opportunities, with the data being transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed using NVivo software. To supplement these qualitative findings, quantitative audience analysis was conducted through surveys targeting young Chinese audiences and social media analytics examining international engagement patterns on platforms like YouTube and Spotify.

The research also incorporated experimental pilot studies testing innovative approaches such as collaborative projects between folk musicians and electronic producers, as well as VR/AR-enhanced virtual concerts. These practical experiments allowed for real-world assessment of different promotional strategies and audience reception. The combination of

these methodological approaches enabled the development of a comprehensive strategic framework for folk music innovation, along with practical policy recommendations and best practices for balancing tradition and modernity in music production, ultimately contributing to Chinese folk music's sustainable development and enhanced global recognition.

Results

The study reveals that the development and international recognition of Chinese ethnic music require a comprehensive and balanced approach that addresses both preservation and innovation. On one hand, the research demonstrates that strategic modernization and digital dissemination have significantly enhanced the global visibility of Chinese ethnic music. Digital platforms such as Douyin, Bilibili, and international streaming services have become powerful tools for introducing traditional Chinese music to worldwide audiences, with certain performances and fusion works gaining remarkable popularity across different cultures. These platforms have not only expanded the music's reach but also facilitated cross-cultural dialogues, allowing global listeners to appreciate the uniqueness of Chinese musical heritage.

International collaborations have emerged as another crucial factor in promoting Chinese ethnic music globally. The study highlights successful examples where traditional Chinese instruments like the guqin and pipa have been integrated with Western musical elements, creating innovative fusion works that appeal to diverse audiences. Such collaborations, often showcased at international music festivals and cultural exchange programs, have effectively demonstrated the adaptability and contemporary relevance of Chinese ethnic music while maintaining its cultural essence. These cross-cultural projects have not only elevated the international profile of Chinese music but also contributed to a more nuanced global understanding of China's cultural identity.

However, the research also identifies significant challenges in this development process. The overwhelming dominance of Western popular music in global markets poses a persistent threat to the preservation of traditional Chinese music forms. The study notes a worrying trend among younger Chinese audiences who increasingly prefer Western-style pop music over traditional forms, potentially leading to a gradual erosion of musical heritage. This generational shift in musical preferences underscores the urgent need for effective music education and cultural transmission strategies within China's educational system.

Another critical challenge lies in maintaining cultural authenticity while pursuing international appeal. The research documents cases where excessive commercialization or over-adaptation to Western tastes has resulted in the dilution of traditional musical elements. Some contemporary adaptations have sacrificed the distinctive tonal qualities and performance techniques that constitute the core value of Chinese ethnic music, raising concerns about cultural integrity preservation. The study particularly emphasizes how market pressures on digital platforms can sometimes prioritize viral potential over artistic authenticity, potentially transforming traditional music into mere exotic commodities rather than living cultural expressions.

In light of these findings, the study proposes a multidimensional strategy for the sustainable development of Chinese ethnic music. First, it emphasizes the importance of establishing comprehensive preservation mechanisms, including systematic documentation of traditional repertoire and performance techniques, particularly those of endangered regional varieties. Second, the research advocates for innovative educational approaches that can make traditional music more accessible and appealing to younger generations, such as incorporating

interactive technologies and contemporary presentation methods in music education. Third, it suggests developing more nuanced international promotion strategies that highlight the unique aesthetic values of Chinese music while fostering genuine cultural exchange rather than superficialexoticism.

The study concludes that the future development of Chinese ethnic music must navigate a careful path between preservation and innovation. While embracing the opportunities presented by globalization and digital technology, it must remain rooted in its cultural essence. This requires collaborative efforts from musicians, educators, policymakers, and cultural institutions to develop sustainable models that can ensure both the vitality of traditional forms and their meaningful engagement with global audiences. The ultimate goal should be to establish Chinese ethnic music as a respected and influential voice in world music, while maintaining its distinctive cultural identity and artistic integrity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study systematically examines the developmental pathways and international dissemination strategies of Chinese traditional music in the contemporary context, revealing both opportunities and challenges faced by traditional musical culture in the era of globalization. The research finds that innovations in digital media technology provide crucial support for the modernization of traditional music, with emerging communication channels such as short video platforms and streaming services effectively expanding the audience reach of traditional music. Meanwhile, innovative interpretations that blend Chinese and Western elements successfully reconstruct the contemporary value of traditional musical components through creative transformations of artistic language. In terms of international dissemination, cross-cultural collaboration models with cultural subjectivity demonstrate unique advantages, enabling substantial breakthroughs for Chinese traditional music on the global stage by preserving core musical characteristics while incorporating universal aesthetic elements.

However, the study also identifies deep-seated contradictions in the current development process, including the weakening of traditional transmission systems, the erosion of artistic essence by commercial logic, and the alienation of cultural identity among younger generations. Particularly under the algorithmic dominance of digital platforms, the dissemination of traditional music is often constrained by viewership metrics, leading to the subordination of artistic value to entertainment-oriented expressions. More critically, the dominance of Western musical discourse creates a "cultural discount" phenomenon for Chinese traditional music in international communication, hindering genuine dialogue on equal footing.

Based on the findings, this study argues that the sustainable development of Chinese traditional music must be grounded in both cultural consciousness and innovative confidence. On one hand, it is necessary to strengthen cultural foundations through the establishment of digital preservation systems and the improvement of inheritor training mechanisms. On the other hand, efforts should focus on constructing an internationally relatable musical discourse system that explores innovative artistic expressions while maintaining cultural uniqueness. The core of future development lies in achieving a creative balance between tradition and modernity, the local and the global, enabling Chinese traditional music to become both an important component of global musical diversity and a unique source of Chinese wisdom for world music development. This requires institutional safeguards at the policy level, artistic consciousness among creators, and cultural participation from the public. Only through multi-stakeholder

collaboration can the cultural value and artistic vitality of Chinese traditional music be continuously revitalized.

The current state of ethnic music preservation and development in China remains challenging, with globalization casting a shadow over its progress. In this era of cultural convergence, how to maintain the unique identity of ethnic music while overcoming preservation challenges has become an urgent issue. Historically, insufficient attention to ethnic music development has compounded existing difficulties. To address these obstacles, we propose concrete solutions and guidelines: Preserving traditions while fostering innovation, integrating heritage with modernization. Grounded in global trends, this approach requires coordinated strategies including heightened awareness, diversified formats, clear leadership, and effective promotion—all working together to ensure sustainable growth of ethnic music. (LiuJia,2019)

knowledge gained from research

This research reveals key insights into promoting Chinese ethnic music's development and global recognition. We find that successful strategies must balance cultural preservation with innovative adaptation - maintaining authentic musical roots while creatively reinterpreting traditions for contemporary audiences. Digital platforms prove particularly effective in engaging younger demographics and international listeners when content highlights universal musical qualities alongside distinctive Chinese characteristics. However, challenges persist, including commercial pressures that may dilute artistic integrity and generational shifts in musical preferences. Most significantly, international acceptance correlates strongly with cross-cultural collaborations that respect the music's essence while framing it in globally accessible formats. The findings suggest Chinese ethnic music thrives when positioned as a dynamic, evolving tradition rather than a static cultural artifact, with its global appeal rooted in artistic quality rather than exotic novelty.

Suggestions

1. Establish a "Digital Living Heritage System". We propose collaborating with specialized institutions and tech companies to develop a digital gene bank for ethnic music using AI and VR technologies, conducting three-dimensional dynamic recordings of endangered musical genres. An interactive platform will be created to teach traditional music essentials to youth through gamified learning models, achieving both precise preservation and nurturing new generations of inheritors.

2. Form a creative team comprising ethnic musicologists, international communication experts, and contemporary composers to adapt traditional music while preserving authentic interpretations of classic pieces. Through global music distribution channels like Universal Music and in-depth cultural documentaries, this initiative aims to fully present the philosophical depth and aesthetic values behind these musical traditions to international audiences.

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