

# The influence of Jiangsu folk music on bamboo flute performance

Yan Ye

Conservatory of Music, Zhaoqing University, Zhaoqing, Guangdong, 526061, China

**Abstract:** Jiangsu folk music has a profound and unique influence on the art of bamboo flute performance, especially in terms of musical style, performance techniques and forms of expression. As an important birthplace of Jiangnan culture, Jiangsu has a rich variety of folk music, with Jiangnan Sizhu and Kunqu opera being particularly representative. As a traditional musical instrument, bamboo flute occupies an important position in Jiangsu folk music. Its performance art not only inherits traditional bamboo flute techniques, but also integrates local characteristics and cultural elements. The elegant melody and rich rhythm of Jiangsu folk music provide unique artistic inspiration and performance space for bamboo flute performance. The exquisiteness of Jiangnan Sizhu and the euphemism and softness of Kunqu opera have influenced the use of breath, fingering techniques and timbre expression in bamboo flute performance. Under the nourishment of Jiangsu folk music, the art of bamboo flute performance has not only enhanced the expressiveness of timbre, but also promoted the innovation and development of performance techniques. By integrating the unique musical style and emotional expression of Jiangsu, bamboo flute performance has gradually formed an art form with unique local characteristics and has become an important part of Jiangsu folk music. This study aims to explore the influence of Jiangsu folk music on the art of bamboo flute performance, analyze its profound role in music creation, performance techniques and artistic inheritance, and further understand the shaping and contribution of local folk music to the art of traditional musical instrument performance.

**Keywords:** Jiangsu folk music, bamboo flute performance art, influence

## 1. Introduction

After thousands of years of precipitation and baptism, Chinese folk music has produced countless outstanding artists and classic works. As a country with 56 ethnic groups, the folk music of various ethnic groups in my country shows rich diversity. The author has a special feeling for Jiangsu folk music, because the music of this land has been exposed to me since I was a child, and it is also one of the most touching music[1].

According to research, my country is one of the earliest countries in the world to create flute instruments, with a long history of nearly 9,000 years. Traditional bamboo flutes are mainly divided into two categories according to their functions: "bangdi" and "qudi". Unlike the "bangdi" which is named after bangzi opera, the "qudi" in Kunqu Opera occupies an extremely important position. The traditional bamboo flute music style can be roughly divided into two types: northern music and southern music: northern music is influenced by the two-person stage in Shanxi and Inner Mongolia and the blowing song in Hebei, while southern music is mainly influenced by Jiangnan Sizhu in Jiangsu and Zhejiang and Wu Opera in Zhejiang. Jiangnan Sizhu and Kunqu Opera are the most representative forms of Jiangsu folk music, and both originated from Jiangsu and are widely spread here. The inheritance and development of my country's national instrumental music cannot be separated from the nourishment of folk music culture. The two can be said to be the relationship between roots and leaves[2].

Jiangsu Province has a rich tradition of folk music and opera, which is an important part of Chinese culture. There are 14 major operas in the province. Among them, Kunqu Opera, Su Opera, Xi Opera and other operas in southern Jiangsu are deeply influenced by Wu culture and present a soft and smooth style; Tongju, Yangju and Huaiju in northern Jiangsu are simple and natural, with strong local characteristics. There are many kinds of folk art in Jiangsu, such as tanci, spring, and Paiziqu, showing distinct regional diversity. Folk instrumental music, ensemble music and folk songs are deeply rooted in the social culture of Jiangsu. Among them, solo instruments such as Jiangnan Sizhu, Erhu, Pipa, and

ensemble forms such as wind and percussion music, gongs and drums are all indispensable parts of Jiangsu folk music. These traditional music forms not only reflect the daily life of the people of Jiangsu, but also reflect the close connection between themes such as labor, love, and customs. The diversity of folk songs, folk instrumental music and opera together constitutes Jiangsu's unique musical style, showing rich cultural heritage and artistic charm[3].

## 2. Overview of Jiangsu Folk Music

Chinese traditional folk music is divided into five forms due to different social functions, namely folk opera, folk instrumental music, folk songs, folk music and folk dance. Jiangsu spans the north and south of the Yangtze River, and the differences and diversity of folk customs and culture have formed a diversified cultural area and a rich variety of folk music culture.

### (1) Folk opera in Jiangsu

Jiangsu has a rich variety of folk operas. According to statistics, there are 14 types of operas, which are divided into southern Jiangsu opera and northern Jiangsu opera by the Yangtze River. Among them, the five operas in southern Jiangsu, namely Kunqu Opera, Su Opera, Xi Opera, Haimenshan Opera and Dan Opera, are mainly influenced by Wu culture. "From the Nanyin of the pre-Qin Dynasty, the Yuefu of the Han and Wei Dynasties, the Wusheng songs of the Six Dynasties, to the Wu songs of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, they have been passed down from generation to generation, forming the common style of the various operas in southern Jiangsu, which are charming, gentle, and flowing. Southern Jiangsu is connected by rivers and lakes, and is rich in rice. With the rowing of boats and the plowing of rice, folk songs and horns are sung in harmony, and the charm of the water town is nurtured in the labor life." Kun Opera (Kun Opera) uses a large number of folk songs, and Su Opera, Xi Opera, and Dan Opera also contain a large number of folk songs. The Haimen Mountain Opera is directly developed from the folk songs in Qidong and Haimen. The other two operas, Gaochun Gaoqiang and Yangqiang Mulian Opera, are geographically adjacent to Anhui and are greatly influenced by the Qingyangqiang in Anhui. The operas in northern Jiangsu are also influenced by different cultures and have formed their own unique styles. Tongju, Haizhou Tongzi Opera, Yangju and Huaiju are all operas of the same lineage in northern Jiangsu. They belong to the national culture of ancient Nuo and have become several major operas today after a long period of development and evolution. Due to the profound influence of local folk songs, the singing style is extremely simple and the singing is natural. Liuqin Opera and Jiangsu Bangzi Opera are mainly popular in the northwest of Jiangsu, mainly in Xuzhou and Suqian. The culture of this area is influenced by Shandong and Henan, and the language and lifestyle are similar to those of Henan and Shandong. Therefore, the local opera is also similar to that of Shandong and Henan, with a high-pitched and rough style and rich and varied singing.

### (2) Folk Opera in Jiangsu

According to statistics, there are 27 types of opera in Jiangsu. They can be divided into eight categories according to their characteristics. Among them, there are two types of tanci and tanhuang: one is tanci and the other is tanhuang. Tanci mainly includes Suzhou tanci, Yangzhou tanci and Qihai tanci, while tanhuang is composed of Suzhou tanhuang and Changxi tanhuang. Suzhou tanci is more popular in southern Jiangsu. The language is in Suzhou dialect and the means of expression are extremely rich. Qihai tanci is the product of the fusion of cymbal opera in Qidong and Haimen and Suzhou tanci. Yangzhou tanci is mainly sung in dialect and is mainly concentrated in the vicinity of Yangzhou and Nanjing. The storytelling of Suzhou tanhuang and Changxi tanhuang includes first-person singing and character dialogues, and is popular in Suzhou, Shanghai and Suzhou, Wuxi respectively. Qinshu and Gushu are composed of Xuzhou Qinshu, Subei Dagou and Huaihai Gonggu. Xuzhou Qinshu is sung in Xuzhou dialect and is divided into long and short pieces. Short pieces are mainly sung, while long pieces are more spoken than sung. The singing is high-pitched and bright, and the style is rough and bold. Subei Dagou is popular in Xuzhou, Suqian and Lianyungang. The singer beats the drum with one hand and holds a crescent copper piece with the other hand for accompaniment. He sings and performs by himself, and speaks more than sings. The most representative feature of Paiziqu is that it is only sung without speaking, and the singing is based on the popular songs and minor tunes handed down from the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The themes are mostly narrative and lyrical short passages, and there are also stories based on myths and folk legends. The dissemination and singing of Paiziqu are all performed on the basis of dialect, including not only Yangzhou Qingqu, Nanjing Baiju and Xuzhou Silk String, but also Yancheng Paiziqu, Jiangnan Paiziqu, Haizhou Paiziqu and Qinghuai Xiaoqu. In some areas of northern Jiangsu, the storytelling style that uses fishing drums

and simple boards as accompaniment instruments belongs to the category of fishing drum Daoqing.

Among the types of Xuanjuan karma songs circulated in southern Jiangsu, there are two types: Xuanjuan and Shuoying. Xuanjuan means preaching treasure scrolls, and the content is related to religious beliefs and has a strong color. Shuoying is also called "pingqu" and "Daoqing", which is popular in southern Jiangsu and Shanghai. Because the content is mainly to persuade people to be good and karma, it is called Shuoying. The Tongzi storytelling type is mainly composed of Tongzi storytelling and Dongtai Baixiangting. Tongzi storytelling has the same origin as Haizhou Tongzi Opera, Yang Opera, Huai Opera, etc. in opera, that is, "ancient Nuo". Nuo is a ritual to drive away ghosts, pray for gods, and pray for peace. Because the ritual requires a boy, that is, "Tongzi", the word originates from this. The style is similar to local folk songs, with high pitch and passionate emotions. Dongtai Baixiangting is similar to Tongzi's storytelling, and is closely related to sacrifice and blessing. The main feature of Huagu is that storytelling and dancing are combined, including Huagu and Dingdingqiang. Huagu refers to the type of music that uses drums as dance props. Of course, drums also have the function of accompaniment. It can be divided into three categories: Yancheng Huagu, Yangzhou Huagu, and Xuzhou Huagu. Dingdingqiang does not use Huagu, but it is also accompanied by dance during storytelling, and is popular in Xuzhou and other places. Popular singing is generally popular in southern Jiangsu. Most of the content is related to folk life, and the style is exaggerated and funny. It consists of five types of music, namely Langdang, Changchun, Monologue, Suzhou Documents, and Xiaorehun.

### (3) Folk instrumental music in Jiangsu.

Folk instrumental music mainly consists of solo music and ensemble music. The solo music popular in Jiangsu includes stringed music represented by the erhu and plucked music headed by the pipa; the ensemble music includes wind and percussion music, string and bamboo music, drum and wind music, and gong and drum music.

The solo music in Jiangsu includes stringed music represented by the erhu and plucked music of the two instrumental types, the guqin and the pipa. Among them, the guqin music started early and has a long history, giving rise to famous schools such as the "Yushan Guqin School" and the "Guangling School". It also gave birth to a group of famous guqin performers, the most famous of whom was Zhu Quan, a guqin scholar in the Ming Dynasty. He published the first guqin music collection in the history of Chinese music, "Shenqi Mipu", which laid a solid foundation for the art of guqin. In terms of pipa, there are two famous performers in history. One is Tang Yingzeng in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, known as "Tang Pipa", whose interpretation of "Chu-Han" is very influential; the other is Hua Qiuping, a pipa performer in the Qing Dynasty. Hua's "Pipa Score" compiled by him and his disciples is a collection of pipa music in the north and south styles, which has brought positive and far-reaching influence on the learning of pipa by later generations. Jiangsu is known as the "hometown of erhu" and has nurtured many outstanding erhu performers. A Bing, Liu Tianhua, Xiang Zuying, Jiang Fengzhi and others are all from Jiangsu.

The ensemble music in Jiangsu mainly includes four categories, namely: string music, wind and percussion music, drum music and gong and drum music. String music can be roughly divided into two parts of Jiangsu, north and south. In southern Jiangsu, the three main types of Jiangnan string music, Hongkou string music and Yixing string music are popular. Among them, Jiangnan string music is the most widely spread, with rich repertoire, strict structure, beautiful melody, and suitable for solo and ensemble. Among them, the eight widely circulated representative works are "Happy Song", "Yunqing", "Sihe Ruyi", "Slow Six Board", "Walking Street", "Sanliu", "Slow Three Six", and "Zhonghua Six Board". The two types of music, Hongkou Silk String and Yixing Silk String, have few repertoires and have not formed a fixed scale, so they have not been passed down well. The silk and bamboo music in northern Jiangsu is greatly influenced by other local folk music types.

In Jiangsu, whether in cities or rural areas, there is a custom of inviting wind and percussion bands to perform to add to the fun whenever there are weddings, funerals or major festivals. There are many folk bands, with various forms and rich and colorful repertoires. It can be roughly divided into the following types of music. Ten-part wind and percussion and ten-part gongs and drums are mainly popular in southern Jiangsu. Yangzhou and Lixiahe Paiziqu centered on Yangzhou; Huai'an Ten-part in Huai'an area; Nanjing, Yangzhou, Lianyungang wind and percussion music. Drum and wind music refers to a type of music that uses national wind instruments such as flute and suona as the main instrument, and national percussion instruments such as cymbals and bangzi as accompaniment. There are two main types of drum music in Jiangsu: Zhenjiang drum music and Xuhai drum music. Zhenjiang drum music is also called Zhenjiang music, which is more popular in Zhenjiang and Yangzhou. Xuhai

drum music is mostly popular in Xuzhou, Lianyungang, Yancheng, Huaiyin and Yangzhou. It is usually called suona band and drum music band in folk.

Gong and drum music in Jiangsu is spread all over the province, with various types and styles, and is closely related to people's production and life. The varieties of gongs and drums in Jiangsu include Qing gongs and drums popular in Suzhou and Wuxi, mortuary gongs and drums in Liyang, Changzhou, Ahu gongs and drums popular in Xuzhou, Jiaozhuang gongs and drums in Lianyungang, Mabu gongs and drums and Gaochun gongs and drums in Nanjing.

(4) Folk songs of Jiangsu. Folk songs are folk songs and songs of the people, which best reflect the voice of the people. The subject matter is closely related to the daily life of the people. Jiangsu folk songs include three life themes: labor, struggle, and love. "Folk songs on the theme of people's labor life summarize agriculture, handicrafts, transportation, docks, and water operations. They are not only sung along with labor, but also directly generated from labor, so they are always consistent with the rhythm of labor, and even the intensity and speed of labor." The theme of reflecting people's struggle life includes two types: describing the people's oppression and suffering, and praising the people's revolution. There are a considerable number of folk songs related to people's love life, describing the beautiful love life between men and women from different angles. In addition to the above three themes, there are also various themes such as expressing people's love for life, love for hometown, and relieving labor fatigue. Traditional folk songs are divided into five categories, namely folk songs, minor tunes, trumpets, custom songs and children's songs. Most of the folk songs in Jiangsu are popular in the Wu dialect area south of the Yangtze River. Similar to labor chants, their main function is to cooperate with labor and combine work and rest. They are divided into small folk songs, big folk songs and narrative folk songs. Minor tunes account for a high proportion of Jiangsu folk songs, which can be divided into general minor tunes and song and dance minor tunes. Chant is closely related to the labor life of the people and is generally named according to the type of labor. Custom songs are closely related to the traditional folk activities of the people, and are mainly divided into wedding etiquette songs and sacrificial etiquette songs. Children's songs are divided into children's songs and lullabies. Children's songs are songs sung by children when playing, and lullabies are songs hummed by adults when coaxing children to sleep.

### **3. Jiangsu folk music elements contained in bamboo flute playing style**

Traditional Chinese folk music is usually divided into five categories according to its social function: folk opera, folk instrumental music, folk songs, and folk dance. Jiangsu is located in the south of the Yangtze River, and its rich and diverse regional culture has created the diversity of its folk music and opera. There are 14 main types of operas in the province, which can be divided into southern Jiangsu opera and northern Jiangsu opera according to regional division. Kunqu Opera, Su Opera, Xi Opera, Haimenshan Opera, Dan Opera, etc. in southern Jiangsu are deeply influenced by Wu culture, and the singing style is soft and smooth; while Tong Opera, Haizhou Tongzi Opera, Yang Opera, Huai Opera, etc. in northern Jiangsu are influenced by ancient Nuo culture and other regional cultures, showing a simple and natural style. In addition, Liuqin Opera, Jiangsu Bangzi Opera, etc. are popular in northwestern Jiangsu, deeply influenced by Luyu culture, with a high and rough timbre, showing distinct regional characteristics[4].

As folk ballads, folk songs can best reflect the voice of the people. Traditional folk songs include mountain songs, minor tunes, trumpets, folk songs and children's songs. Among them, minor songs account for a large proportion in Jiangsu, which can be divided into general minor tunes and song and dance minor tunes. The trumpets are closely related to labor life and are often named according to the type of labor; the folk songs are closely related to traditional folk activities and are divided into wedding etiquette songs and sacrificial etiquette songs; children's songs include nursery rhymes and lullabies, which are usually used for children's entertainment or sleep[5].

In the art of bamboo flute, traditional performance styles are usually divided into southern and northern schools, with the Yangtze River Basin as the dividing line between the north and the south. The southern school originated from southern folk operas such as Kunqu Opera, Jiangnan Sizhu Opera, and Zhejiang Wu Opera, with a crisp and soft style; the northern school was influenced by northern music such as Shanxi, Inner Mongolia Errentai and Bangzi, and the timbre is high-pitched and loud. With the development of bamboo flute art, new performance schools continue to emerge. In addition to the traditional southern and northern schools, there are also new schools such as the Chang'an flute school with a strong northwest style, the grassland flute school, and the Central Plains flute school with

a Chu-Han style[6].

Jiangsu's Kunqu Opera and Jiangnan Sizhu have played an important role in the formation of the southern bamboo flute music style. Kunqu Opera and Jiangnan Sizhu are known for their elegant, smooth and soft styles, which have had a profound impact on the southern bamboo flute music. First of all, the southern bamboo flute usually uses a qudi, which is thicker and thinner than the northern bangdi, which makes the southern bamboo flute sound more mellow and soft, while the northern bamboo flute is high-pitched and loud. Secondly, there are significant differences in the musical styles of the north and the south. The music of the north is passionate, cheerful and varied, while the music of the south is softer and more subtle, with a balanced rhythm. These differences are due to the differences in natural environment and cultural background. It is also the unique style of Jiangsu folk music that has profoundly influenced the evolution of southern bamboo flute music[7].

#### 4. Jiangsu folk music elements contained in bamboo flute playing techniques

Bamboo flute playing technique refers to the playing methods and skills accumulated and summarized over a long period of time during the performance of bamboo flute music. Bamboo flute playing techniques are diverse and are usually classified by style and genre, such as northern and southern techniques. Northern techniques include spitting, flower tongue, chopping, glissando, etc.; Southern techniques include vibrato, overlapping, gifting, hitting, etc. With the improvement of performance level, performance techniques continue to develop, and performers have invented new techniques, such as circular breathing, circular double spitting, throat sound and finger-percussion hole sound. Jiangnan Sizhu and Kunqu music in Jiangsu folk music have an important influence on bamboo flute playing techniques, especially the techniques of "tremolo", "overlapping", "gifting" and "hitting" in southern flute music. These techniques are not only widely used in traditional music, but also inherited and innovated in modern creative works. There are two types of vibrato: one is vibrato, which takes a certain note as the base tone when playing, and quickly lifts the fingers to form an effect of alternating with the second tone above. When the melody is fast, the vibrato also speeds up, and when the melody is slow, it slows down. The other is the virtual finger trill, which is mainly used for the high-pitched sol of the tube sound with 5 fingering. The virtual finger action makes the high-pitched sound more vivid and less boring. This technique is used in traditional repertoires such as "Happy Song" and "Zhonghua Liuban", and plays an important role in modern creations such as Zhang Weiliang's "Flower Cry" and Zhang Yanwu's "Country Song"[8].

Overlapping sound is used to decorate notes, usually between two notes with a line, and the second note is one pitch higher than the main note. When playing, the fingers need to be raised and lowered quickly, which requires a high finger speed of the performer. Overlapping sound is usually marked as "also" in the score. The hitting sound is similar to the overlapping sound, but the pitch is one pitch lower than the main note. It is played by quickly dropping and then quickly raising the finger, which is short and elastic. It is usually represented by the "ding" symbol when notating. The gift sound is the decoration sound at the end of the main note. Its function is similar to the back note, but the duration is shorter and the volume is weaker. It is usually notated with the "Bei" symbol. The gift note enriches the expressiveness of the music by adding decorative notes at the end of the main note[9].

Finger tremolo is similar to virtual finger tremolo, both of which are used to avoid the dullness of long notes. It is usually used in the middle and high pitch area of the tube note 5. When playing, the finger vibrates on the third hole, or vibrates on multiple holes at the same time, producing a certain note fluctuation effect, making the long note more vivid. Through the use of these techniques, bamboo flute performance not only shows the unique style of Jiangsu folk music, but also reflects the richness and expressiveness of bamboo flute performance technology, becoming an important part of bamboo flute art that cannot be ignored. In the evolution of folk music, the expression of bamboo flute art has experienced a variety of forms of development from the ensemble in traditional opera and string and bamboo orchestra to the current solo, duet, ensemble and concerto. Although new forms of expression emerge in an endless stream, the traditional ensemble and solo forms are still popular and have not disappeared. In recent years, bamboo flute art has shown many innovative and diversified forms of expression. In general, the development trajectory of bamboo flute art can be summarized in eight words: "based on tradition, going to the world"[10].

In Jiangsu folk music, bamboo flute, as one of the important ensemble instruments, frequently appears in various musical forms such as string and bamboo music, wind and percussion music, and drum and wind music, especially traditional performance forms such as Jiangnan string and bamboo

music and southern Jiangsu wind and percussion music. These classic repertoires have been passed down to this day with the efforts of several generations of musicians. It is worth mentioning that many colleges, groups and even non-governmental organizations have established small string and bamboo orchestras, and the performance form has gradually developed from single-part ensemble to multi-part duet, and some orchestras are even named chamber orchestras. The government also actively supports this development, and various styles of string and bamboo orchestra competitions are held across the country. Competitions at different levels have further promoted the spread and development of bamboo flute art. Traditional string and bamboo music, wind and percussion music and other music in Jiangsu have laid a solid foundation for these performance forms, and also provided materials for the innovation of performance content[11].

In recent years, many innovative works have emerged in the emerging bamboo flute performance forms influenced by Jiangsu folk music. For example, on December 23, 2013, at the "Da Ya Guo Feng" concert held at the National Grand Theater, "Wutong Qingqiu" composed and performed by the famous bamboo flute player Zhang Jian left a deep impression on the audience. The original name of this music is "Fantasy". Through the combination of bamboo flute, electronic band and Kunqu Opera, it shows the beautiful scenery of Jiangnan water town. The bamboo flute melody and Kunqu Opera singing and recitation complement each other, leading the audience to feel the picturesque scenery of Jiangnan[12].

The last work of the same concert, "Lake and Mountain Dreaming", was composed and performed by flute master Zhang Weiliang, which cleverly combines bamboo flute, Suzhou tanci, orchestral music and electronic music. At the beginning of the piece, the dialogue between the bamboo flute and the female voice of the tanci is melodious and lingering. In the middle part, the mood is cheerful. The bamboo flute and the tanci pipa lead the melody together, and the coordination of electronic music and drum beats pushes the music to a climax. Finally, the combination of bamboo flute and tanci chorus, electronic music, and Western string music pushes the music to a warm peak. The author expresses his deep affection for his hometown through these musical elements of his hometown, creating a just right artistic effect.

This innovative form of expression may feel familiar to listeners who are familiar with Western electronic music, because they belong to the categories of New Age and World music in contemporary electronic music; but for folk music lovers, this form is extremely novel. The art of bamboo flute shows the fusion of tradition and modernity, East and West through the clever combination of electronic music, and the elements of Jiangsu folk music such as Kunqu Opera and Suzhou Tanci provide inspiration and material for these emerging forms of expression.

## 5. Conclusion

The influence of Jiangsu folk music on the art of bamboo flute performance is reflected in three aspects: performance style, performance technique and expression form. First, the styles of Kunqu Opera and Jiangnan Sizhu have directly promoted the formation of southern flute music; second, many performance techniques in these folk music are widely used in bamboo flute performance; finally, Jiangsu folk music elements provide musicians with creative inspiration and enrich the expression form of bamboo flute art.

As learners and inheritors of traditional Chinese folk instrumental music, we should not only master the skills in the process of learning performance techniques, but also deeply understand and study the folk music culture closely related to our profession. Combining these national folk music cultures with performance techniques can not only improve the accuracy of performance, but also broaden the expressiveness of performance. Through the medium of bamboo flute, we can spread the essence of these folk music to a wider audience. I believe that through such efforts, traditional folk music culture will be better preserved and inherited, the development of national instrumental music will be more colorful, and Chinese folk music will usher in a new era.

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