

Harmonizing Heritage and Innovation: Evolution, Challenges, and Global Dissemination Strategies of Lingnan Music in the Digital Age

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Abstract: This paper mainly explores the problems encountered in the current development of Lingnan music and put forward a future feasible development strategy. In the context of deglobalization, Lingnan music does not dominate in the communication of foreign markets and the audience of Lingnan music is very limited. Based on the current situation of the development of Lingnan music, this paper uses case analysis to focus on several major problems in the development of Lingnan music. After analyzing the above cases, combined with the development characteristics of Lingnan music, this paper proposes that Lingnan music needs to combine the current artificial skills and technologies, including the need to strengthen the cooperation with international music, while retaining its own music characteristics, but also need to integrate new cultural elements.

Keywords: Cultural heritage and innovation; digital age; Lingnan music

1. Introduction

Lingnan music is mainly popular in Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan and other places. Its main music forms include Cantonese opera, Chaozhou opera and Hakka folk songs. Lingnan music is also an important part of the southern Chinese music culture. The history can be traced back to the Qin and Han dynasties, prospered in the Tang Dynasty, and reached the peak in the Ming and Qing dynasties[1]. Lingnan music has not only the tradition of Central Plains music, but also integrates the music style of ethnic minorities, so Lingnan music is a relatively unique music style. With the southward movement of the Central Plains culture and the migration of various ethnic groups, Lingnan gradually built up a diversified and integrated cultural landscape. Over the long years, Lingnan music has not only integrated foreign musical elements, but also mingled with local traditional music, giving rise to unique musical styles[2]. From the folk opera and rap art of the Ming and Qing dynasties to modern pop music, Lingnan music has always been developing through innovation and fusion, displaying a unique artistic charm. It is the melody optimization, the lyrics are moving, very close to people's lives.

2. Characteristics and Charm of Lingnan Music

The Lingnan music refers to the folk music of Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan, including the music of Guangfu, Chaozhou, Hakka and ethnic minorities. It has a long history and carries the aesthetic taste, philosophy of life and cultural traditions of the people in Lingnan[3]. With its delicate emotional expression, rich rhythmic variations and unique playing techniques, Lingnan music displays distinctive regional characteristics and cultural charms.

2.1 Representative Works of Lingnan Music

2.1.1 Step by Step

A classic piece of Lingnan music, 'Step by Step' was composed by the famous musician Lv Wencheng[4]. The piece is well loved for its cheerful melody and positive spirit. The melody is progressive and the rhythm is bright and powerful, as if depicting a magnificent picture of people going forward and climbing up the mountain in the tide of reform and opening up. It is not only a classic piece of Cantonese music, but also a spiritual force that inspires generations of Cantonese people to strive for improvement.

The charm of 'Step by Step' lies in the smoothness of its melody and rhythm, as well as the positive and progressive spirit it embodies. This spirit coincides with the character traits of the people of Lingnan region who are brave and striving to move forward, and therefore it is loved by the people of Lingnan.

2.1.2 Rain Beating on Plantains

Rain Hits the Banana' is another representative piece of Lingnan music. With its delicate strokes and beautiful melody, it depicts a picture of a rainy scene in the south of the Yangtze River[5]. In the piece, the sound of raindrops falling on banana leaves is skilfully incorporated into the music, creating a serene yet vibrant atmosphere. With its unique musical language

and mood, this piece has become a classic in Cantonese music.

Rain on the Banana' is characterised by its delicate emotional expression and vivid musical images. Through the music, the listener seems to be able to immerse himself in the courtyard of Lingnan and feel the seclusion and quietness of the rain. This unique musical experience makes 'Raining Banana' occupy an important position in Lingnan music.

2.1.3 Dragon Race for the Brocade

As one of the masterpieces of Guangdong music, 'Race the Dragon for the Brocade' presents the spectacular scene of dragon boat racing during the Dragon Boat Festival with its stirring melody and warm atmosphere[6]. In the music, drums, gongs and trumpets are interwoven together, as if bringing the listener into the exciting scene of the race. Its music is structured and fast-paced, fully reflecting the Guangdong people's spirit of striving and forging ahead.

The glamour of 'Race for the Dragon' lies in its impassioned melody and vivid musical scenes. Through the music, the listener can feel the tension and excitement of the dragon boat race, as well as the spirit of unity and hard work shown by the people of Guangdong in the race.

2.2 Analysis of Representative Lingnan Musicians

2.2.1 Lü Wencheng

Lü Wencheng (1898–1981), a native of Zhongshan, was a highly influential figure in the Lingnan music scene. He showed a keen interest in music from an early age and was proficient in Western instruments such as the violin and yangqin[7]. On his musical path, he not only devoted himself to the composition of Cantonese music but also made significant contributions to performance techniques. Characterised by their rich historical background and melodious tunes, Lü Wencheng's compositions have won wide acclaim in Lingnan. Among his most renowned works is Step by Step, as well as masterpieces such as Autumn Moon on the Pinghu Lake and 'Fishing and Singing in the Evening. His music not only shows the unique flavour of Lingnan culture but also incorporates modern musical elements, giving Lingnan music a new lease of life. Lü Wencheng's significant contribution to the innovation and advancement of Lingnan music was his introduction of Western instruments and performance techniques into Cantonese music. His efforts not only enriched its expression but also left a lasting musical legacy for future generations.

2.2.2 Xian Xinghai

Xian Xinghai, a figure in Guangdong's music industry, has become a model of Lingnan music. Born in Macau and rooted in Panyu, Xian Xinghai saw a profound impact of his life and work on the history of modern Chinese music[8]. He became an important contributor to the Chinese music scene, with his works exhibiting profound ideological connotations and unique artistic styles.

Xian Xinghai's masterpieces, such as the Yellow River Cantata, not only occupy an important position in the history of Chinese music but also have had a significant impact on global music culture. His musical compositions skilfully combined elements of Lingnan music with the national salvation movement, with music as a powerful rallying cry for the struggle for freedom and liberation. Through his works, Xian expressed deep emotion in the people's strong desire for national rejuvenation and revitalisation of the nation.

2.2.3 Huang Jinpei

Mr Huang Jinpei, born in 1919 and died in 2009, was a native of Huiyang, Guangdong. As an outstanding composer and performer in the Lingnan music scene, he devoted his life to the composition and performance of Cantonese music. Mr Wong's colourful compositions and excellent technique and his elegant playing style made him known as the 'Master of the Yangqin'. He is not only an accomplished composer, but has also been actively involved in the preservation and education of Cantonese music, providing guidance to many talented musicians[9]. Mr Huang Jinpei specialises in combining traditional Cantonese music with modern musical elements, thereby promoting the innovation and development of Lingnan music. His works not only display the distinctive characteristics of Lingnan music, but also incorporate modern musical elements and a variety of expressive techniques, giving Lingnan music a new vigour in contemporary society.

3. Current Development Status of Lingnan Music

3.1 Popular Trends and Audience Groups

In recent years, Lingnan music has shown a favourable trend of development by gradually integrating modern musical elements while maintaining traditional elements. In our lives, the more common traditional Lingnan music forms include Cantonese opera, Teochew opera and Hakka mountain songs, which still play an important role in local cultural activities, especially in festivals and temple fairs. With the rise of pop music and digital media, Lingnan music has begun to experiment with fusing modern styles such as pop, rock and electronic music, attracting the attention of a younger audience. For exam-

ple, some musicians have tried to incorporate Cantonese opera singing into pop songs, creating works with both traditional flavour and modern aesthetics.

At present, the audience for Lingnan music shows a clear demographic divide. The older generation remains the main supporters of traditional Lingnan music, as they have deep emotional and cultural ties with forms such as Cantonese opera and Teochew opera. In contrast, younger audiences are more inclined to embrace Lingnan music that incorporates modern elements, such as electronic music styles. In addition, as China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism has placed emphasis on cultural dissemination over the past few years, more and more foreign tourists have become interested in Lingnan culture, and they are slowly developing a strong interest in Lingnan music through their visits to the region.

3.2 The Role of Lingnan Music in Modern Society

Lingnan music plays multiple roles in modern society. It is an important carrier of Lingnan cultural heritage and a testing ground for artistic innovation. In terms of cultural transmission, Lingnan music passes on local history, folklore and values to the next generation through intergenerational transmission and community activities. For example, Cantonese opera, as a representative form of Lingnan music, also carries the main body of cultural education. In the course of performance, Cantonese opera spreads the traditional virtues of loyalty, filial piety and righteousness, so that the audience can be imbued with the traditional virtues. In addition, Lingnan music plays an important role in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, with many forms of traditional music being listed as national or provincial intangible cultural heritage and receiving attention and support from the Government and the community.

3.3 Case Studies

3.3.1 The Fusion of Cantonese Opera and Modern Music: The Flower Princess

The Flower Concubine is a classic Cantonese opera. In recent years, it has been reinterpreted by a number of musicians, incorporating elements of pop music to make this classic Cantonese opera more widely known. For example, Hong Kong singer Jacky Cheung performed a section of 'Flower Concubine' in the form of pop music in a concert, which retained the unique charm of Cantonese opera while injecting new vigour into the work[10]. This kind of innovation not only attracts young audiences, but also stimulates the interest of more music creators in innovating the form of Cantonese opera.

3.3.2 Modern Dissemination of Hakka Folk Songs: Hakka Treasure

Hakka Treasures is a musical group dedicated to promoting Hakka folk songs, and they enjoy blending traditional melodies with modern arrangements. For example, the song Hakka Essence, which has received millions of views on short-video platforms, has been very successful in spreading Hakka folk songs through new media forms.

3.3.3 Internationalization of Teochew Opera: Chen San and Wu Niang

Chen San and Wu Niang is a classic play of Teochew Opera, and in recent years the play has appeared in many cultural exchange activities and has gained international popularity. For example, performances in Southeast Asia and overseas Chinese communities have not only been warmly welcomed by overseas Chinese, but have also attracted local audiences. This development strategy is worthy of study and reference for other music genres.

4. Challenges Facing Lingnan Music

4.1 Market Competition

At present, the user group of active music listening online is very large, and the preferences of users are also very different. Young listeners receive relatively high levels of foreign music style, which is also related to the fast-paced life of today's society and the influx of foreign culture. Although Lingnan Music is a local intangible cultural heritage, it has gradually lost many young user groups, many post-00s or even post-10s groups, who are very fond of rap and electronic music. Behind rap and electronic music is a kind of cultural output, which affects people's values. If Lingnan music needs to cope with the market competition, it needs to strengthen the dissemination of Lingnan culture and form a strong cultural brand.

4.2 Cultural Integration

Lingnan music culture is a kind of light-weight music culture, which embodies lightness, brightness, calmness and beauty, etc. It is very different from the heavy music culture, which embodies gravity and elegance. It is very different from the fast-paced, punk style embodied in Western music culture. Western music often emphasizes harmonic and rhythmic complexity, whereas Lingnan music prioritizes melodic beauty and emotional expression. For example, the Lingnan guqin is known for its robustness and brightness, and Guangdong music has a clear and gentle style. Lightness is one of the obstacles to the inheritance and innovation of Lingnan music culture. Currently, most of the work related to Lingnan music culture is centred on the development and utilisation of resources, with little attention paid to the innovation of Lingnan music culture

in terms of historical heritage and cultural connotations, and a lack of independent innovation.

4.3 Copyright Protection

The public's weak awareness of copyright law has led unscrupulous music companies to take advantage of the situation to disseminate music works without copyright. The government needs to continuously improve relevant laws and regulations to crack down on piracy in accordance with the law, and at the same time incentivise the public to report music piracy so that the winds of justice become a norm. Currently, blockchain technology can be used for copyright registration and tracking of musical works to ensure that the legitimate rights and interests of creators are effectively protected. As blockchain is tamper-proof and traceable, the blockchain platform will provide each digital music work with a proprietary, timestamp-verified, tamper-proof and permanently preserved digital signature for copyright information, and each licence and transaction of the work will retain an untamperable record on the blockchain distributed account, which can be traced and traced at any time. In conclusion, the blockchain-based digital music copyright management system is an innovative solution with broad application prospects.

5. Communication Strategies of Lingnan Music

5.1 Technological Innovation

Generative Artificial Intelligence gives Lingnan music to be showcased in more musical forms with the help of AI. With the assistance of AI, musicians are now more capable of producing rich, high-quality accompaniments. AI tools can give Lingnan music more possibilities and more creative forms. And AI can increase the efficiency of music production and can make music accessible to a wider public. Interdisciplinary cooperation can make Lingnan music have more possibilities, for example, the AI team and the Lingnan music research team jointly develop a big model of Lingnan music style, so that the public can take the initiative to extend more music works on the basis of the generative model of Lingnan music style.

5.2 Globalization Impact

The sweeping tide of globalization has unveiled a world of promising prospects alongside complex challenges for Lingnan music's journey into tomorrow. This cherished cultural treasure now stands at a thrilling crossroads, where its melodic soul could dance across global stages - from the passionate rhythms of international music festivals to the vibrant exchanges of cultural showcases. Through these heartfelt connections, our musical ambassadors can not only share their art's delicate beauty but also listen intently to the pulse of worldwide audiences, nurturing mutual understanding through shared artistic experiences.

5.3 Cultural Heritage and Innovation

The future progress of Lingnan music necessitates a harmonious integration of cultural heritage and innovation. A comprehensive exploration and preservation of the traditional elements inherent in Lingnan music serve as the cornerstone for its prospective development. It is imperative for music scholars to delve into the origins of Cantonese opera, Teochew opera, and Hakka songs to acquire primary data. Using digital technology, we can protect these classical forms and ensure that they are preserved in perpetuity.

6. Conclusions

This paper analyses the current development, challenges and Communication Strategies of Lingnan music. It reveals the multiple roles and complex situation of Lingnan music in contemporary society. This paper proposes the future development direction of Lingnan music in terms of technological innovation, impact of globalisation, cultural heritage and innovation by analysing the issues of popular trend, audience groups, cultural integration and copyright protection. the future development of Lingnan music requires a balance between preserving traditional characteristics, expanding international markets, and promoting technological innovation. Through concerted efforts, Lingnan music has the potential to achieve new breakthroughs in the modern era, making greater contributions to the inheritance and development of Chinese culture.

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