

The Practical Application of Traditional Music Aesthetic Concepts in Yangqin Art Creation

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Abstract: The aesthetics of traditional Chinese music have formed the spiritual core of instrumental composition for this ethnic instrument. The yangqin, a mainstream plucked instrument, has undergone extensive development, deeply integrating classical aesthetic elements. This study systematically examines the manifestations of traditional musical aesthetics in instrumental performance, analyzes the classical aesthetic significance embedded in classic yangqin repertoire, explores practical approaches and challenges in incorporating traditional aesthetics into contemporary yangqin compositions, clarifies rational strategies for integrating aesthetic concepts into creative processes, preserves the unique artistic characteristics of the yangqin, and ensures the enduring preservation of this instrument and its associated tradition of national musical aesthetics.

Keywords: traditional music aesthetics; yangqin; artistic creation; inheritance; aesthetic expression

1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese music aesthetics encompasses core elements such as harmony, artistic conception, and musical resonance, forming a distinctive aesthetic framework unique to Chinese instrumental music. Through their distinctive timbres and performance techniques, various Chinese instruments transform classical aesthetic concepts into audible artistic forms. The yangqin, having undergone localization development, has become a pivotal medium for transmitting traditional aesthetics. As folk music composition continues to evolve, how to preserve and expand classical aesthetic traditions in yangqin works has emerged as a focal point of scholarly interest. By examining the overall characteristics of Chinese instrumental music and concrete examples of yangqin compositions, this study explores specific approaches for integrating traditional aesthetics into creative practice and identifies the underlying principles governing artistic inheritance and innovation.

2. The Universal Embodiment of Traditional Music Aesthetics in Ethnic Instruments

The aesthetic principles cherished in traditional music aesthetics—such as the beauty of harmony, the fusion of emotion and imagery, and the interplay between reality and abstraction—are naturally integrated into the performance and composition of various ethnic instruments. Each instrument expresses classical aesthetic ideals through its unique timbre, melodic structure, and performance conventions, creating distinct stylistic atmospheres tailored to its artistic characteristics. For instance, the guqin produces a simple yet profound sound that evokes a serene and tranquil state of mind, infusing works with the refined elegance favored by literati, thereby serving as a prime example of interpreting traditional aesthetic concepts [1]. The bamboo flute and guzheng construct auditory landscapes that blend reality and abstraction through variations in pitch, conveying natural scenery and personal emotional reflections through their melodies. The entire aesthetic system of ethnic instruments is interconnected, adhering to traditional aesthetic values and providing a comprehensive framework for the creation and performance of instruments like the yangqin.

3. The Concrete Manifestation of Aesthetic Thought in Yangqin Repertoire

Classical musical aesthetic concepts have been preserved throughout generations of yangqin compositions, where performance techniques, melodic development, and emotional expression interweave to embody the distinctive aesthetic characteristics of Chinese music. Time-honored yangqin masterpieces consistently emphasize the creation of artistic conception. Performers leverage the instrument's rich tonal qualities and flexible notes to depict vivid imagery, seamlessly blending sound with visual representation, emotion with artistic atmosphere. This fully demonstrates traditional aesthetic principles, where the instrument's inherent artistic appeal resonates with classical aesthetic ideals, endowing the pieces with profound cultural depth and artistic impact.

The timeless piece “Yangguan Sandie” features a slow, melodious tune with lingering resonance. Its performance employs distinctive techniques such as vibrato and staccato to gradually evoke the sentiment of parting, embodying the classical aesthetic of subtlety, warmth, and sorrow without despair. In contrast, “Fishermen’s Boat Singing at Dusk” boasts a lively yet expansive melody with steady rhythm, vividly depicting the evening scenery of a waterside village and the tranquil scene

of fishing boats returning home, integrating traditional philosophical concepts like harmony between humanity and nature into its musical composition [2]. Throughout history, both composition and performance of yangqin have prioritized artistic conception over technical precision. This approach ensures stage performances align with classical aesthetics while deeply embedding principles such as balance, rhythmic flow, and interplay between reality and abstraction within musical works. Numerous outstanding compositions continue to evolve in this direction, consistently conveying the unique spiritual essence of the Chinese nation, thereby ensuring the enduring vitality of traditional musical aesthetics within the art form of yangqin.

4. Practical Approaches and Challenges in Contemporary Yangqin Composition that Preserves Traditional Aesthetics

Contemporary yangqin composers have consistently explored ways to integrate traditional aesthetic concepts with modern creative practices. While maintaining the instrument's unique artistic characteristics, they continuously enrich the expressive forms of their works. Many new compositions delve deeply into the core elements of traditional aesthetics, redefining melodic trajectories and structural frameworks while employing contemporary compositional approaches to expand the expressive scope of yangqin art [3]. Masterpieces such as "Phoenix Head Nodding" and "Night of Falling Flowers" employ innovative arrangements that preserve classical musical tones while incorporating contemporary artistic considerations, blending ancient charm with modern sensibilities. This integration enables the traditional instrument to manifest diverse expressions within new creative contexts, thereby opening up new avenues for classical aesthetic education.

During the integration of traditional aesthetics with modern musical creation, various practical challenges have gradually emerged. Some creators blindly pursue novel performance techniques, focusing solely on technical display while neglecting the refinement of artistic conception, thereby eroding the distinctive elegance inherent in traditional music. Many practitioners maintain a superficial understanding of classical music aesthetics, mechanically replicating external performance forms and melodic styles without grasping their profound cultural significance and spiritual essence. This has led to numerous creative deviations that undermine the connection between yangqin art and traditional aesthetics, significantly diminishing the works' artistic depth, hindering the effective transmission of the instrument's aesthetic value, and creating substantial obstacles to its sustainable development.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, current research focuses on traditional music aesthetics and yangqin artistic creation, clarifying the manifestations of classical aesthetic concepts in ethnic instrumental music and yangqin repertoire, while analyzing their contemporary creative applications and existing challenges. Traditional music aesthetics underpin the developmental trajectory of yangqin art; preserving the core elements of classical aesthetics and properly balancing inheritance with innovation are essential to maintaining the instrument's distinctive artistic characteristics. This creative approach can also be extended to the broader realm of ethnic music, gradually integrating the aesthetic threads inherent in China's traditional music and infusing it with renewed vitality as it evolves. In today's multicultural environment, the influx of foreign musical styles has led many instrumental compositions to prioritize technical novelty at the expense of local aesthetic uniqueness, often resulting in homogenization or Westernization in yangqin creations. Upholding traditional aesthetics does not mean stagnation or rejection of innovation but rather building upon cultural heritage while incorporating modern compositional techniques to endow works with contemporary relevance. Integrating the subtle, restrained, and emotionally rich Chinese aesthetic into arrangements not only preserves the yangqin's warm tonal qualities but also aligns with contemporary listeners' preferences. The continuity of ethnic music relies on the persistent dedication and exploration of generations of creators. Using the yangqin as a case study, continuously exploring traditional aesthetic values and striking a balance between tradition and innovation can guide more ethnic instruments toward clear developmental paths, ensuring that Chinese musical aesthetics endure across eras, establish a solid foothold in modern culture, and perpetuate the unique artistic charm of the East.

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