

Passing on the Flame, Sounding the Guzheng – Research on the Transformation of Chinese Guzheng Art in the 1950s

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Received January 23, 2025; **Revised** March 3, 2025; **Accepted** March 31, 2025

Abstract

This article aimed to 1) investigate the social identity transformation and musical perspective of Chinese Guzheng musicians in the 1950s; 2) study the development of Chinese Guzheng art in the 1950s; and 3) study the impact of the transformation of Guzheng art in the 1950s on the later development of modern Guzheng art. The sample was in the 1950s. Chinese Guzheng art was characterized by a long history, an extensive number of schools, and a significant level of artistic interest. However, Chinese Guzheng art has progressively transitioned from tradition to modernity in the modern sense since Zhao Yuzhai in the 1950s, as evidenced by the works of Changyuan, Yanjia, Manqin, et al. The development of modern Guzheng art is commonly understood in academia in this way. This qualitative research used literature review and field study methodologies to objectively compile and synthesize important research on this topic for theoretical support. This interdisciplinary study used musicology and music sociology methods to understand the relationship between the transitional era's background and artistic production. The research results were as follows: 1) This study revealed that during the initial period of the People's Republic of China, the Guzheng major was introduced to universities, and folk Guzheng performers transitioned into university lecturers and 2) This research commenced with the "representation of workers and peasants" in the narrative of contemporary Chinese history.

Keywords: 1950s Chinese Guzheng Transformation; Institutionalization of Guzheng; Modernization of Guzheng Music; Guzheng Education Reform; Music Sociology of Guzheng

Introduction

This article takes the traditional transformation of Guzheng art in the 1950s as the background, selects a group of Guzheng artists who transformed from folk Guzheng practitioners to professional higher music teachers during this period, and studies their music teaching and performance activities after entering the music academy. This article combines theories of ethnomusicology, music morphology, and history to study the musical form of Guzheng during this period from the aspects of teaching, creation, performance, and instrument improvement (Jingjing, 2023). From the perspective of the history of music development, objectively examine the phenomenon that greatly improved the level of Guzheng art during this period, as well as the main reasons for the exchange, reference, and integration between different schools, in order to accurately position the historical contributions of this generation of Guzheng musicians.

This study starts from the turning point of the development of Guzheng art in a specific historical period, reviews the starting path of modern Guzheng art, enhances the understanding of Guzheng modernization, and proposes a Guzheng art development plan that is in line with the development of the times and can correctly handle the opposition between tradition and modernity.

Research Objectives

1. To study the social identity transformation and musical perspective of Chinese Guzheng musicians in the 1950s.
2. To study the development of Chinese Guzheng art in the 1950s.
3. To study the impact of the transformation of Guzheng art in the 1950s on the development of modern Guzheng art in the later period.

Literature Review

This article intends to take the historical changes of Guzheng art as the starting point, and deeply analyze the transformation of Guzheng art from traditional to modern in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China. From a musical perspective, explore the humanistic connotations reflected behind the transformation of Guzheng music, and seek cultural factors that promote the healthy development of Guzheng music from a cultural perspective. The relevant literature mainly includes the following categories:

1. Research on Cultural Ecology in the Political Environment of "Industrial Agrochemicals" during the Early Founding of the People's Republic of China

The narrative research on the "industrialization" of intellectuals in Yan'an to "Seventeen Years" literature mainly focuses on the intellectuals during the Yan'an to "Seventeen Years" period (1935–1966), who underwent ideological changes in continuous revolutionary movements, gradually transforming from "popular" leaders to "popular" socialist intellectuals. The author believes that from the Yan'an period to the "Seventeen Years" period, the portrayal of intellectuals often showed characteristics that deviated from mainstream narrative norms. The article summarizes the life trajectories and creative styles of the main writers (such as Ding Ling, Xiao Jun, Wang Meng, Zong Pu, etc.) who participated in the narrative of the "Yan'an Period" and "Seventeen Years" revolution in relevant historical periods, in order to illustrate the issue of "industrialization and agriculturalization" of intellectuals in a specific historical context (Zhang, 2021).

The "Integration" under the "United Front" Policy: A Study of the "Literary and Art Circles" in New China in 1951. This article takes the Chinese literary and artistic circles in 1951 as the research object, attempting to outline the literary and ideological significance of 1951 as an important year in New China. The period from 1949 to 1951 was an important period for the adjustment of the artistic community under the policy of "united front" in the field of literature and art. All literary movements and literary criticism are specifically aimed at the "purification" of the literary and artistic team, as well as the construction of new literary styles and "new literature" – "people's literature" (Yuan, 2010).

2. Research on the development of higher professional music education in China in the early years of the founding of the People's Republic of China

Continuation and Development: Research on the Construction of Higher Music Education System in Early New China. This article studies the process of the construction of higher music education system from 1949 to 1957. The author reviewed the construction of higher music education systems in liberated areas and national administrative regions before the founding of the People's Republic of China, and summarized the characteristics of the construction of higher music education systems in liberated areas (Su, 2022).

The study on the formation of the higher education model at the beginning of the founding of New China focuses on the continuation of the higher education model in the old liberated areas, involving the higher education experiences of the Soviet Union and old China, and

comprehensively examining the reform and development history of higher education in the 17 years since the founding of New China (Chen, 2019). Research suggests that at the beginning of the founding of New China, the influence of the experience of higher education in the old liberated areas and old China on the formation of higher education models cannot be ignored.

Conceptual Framework

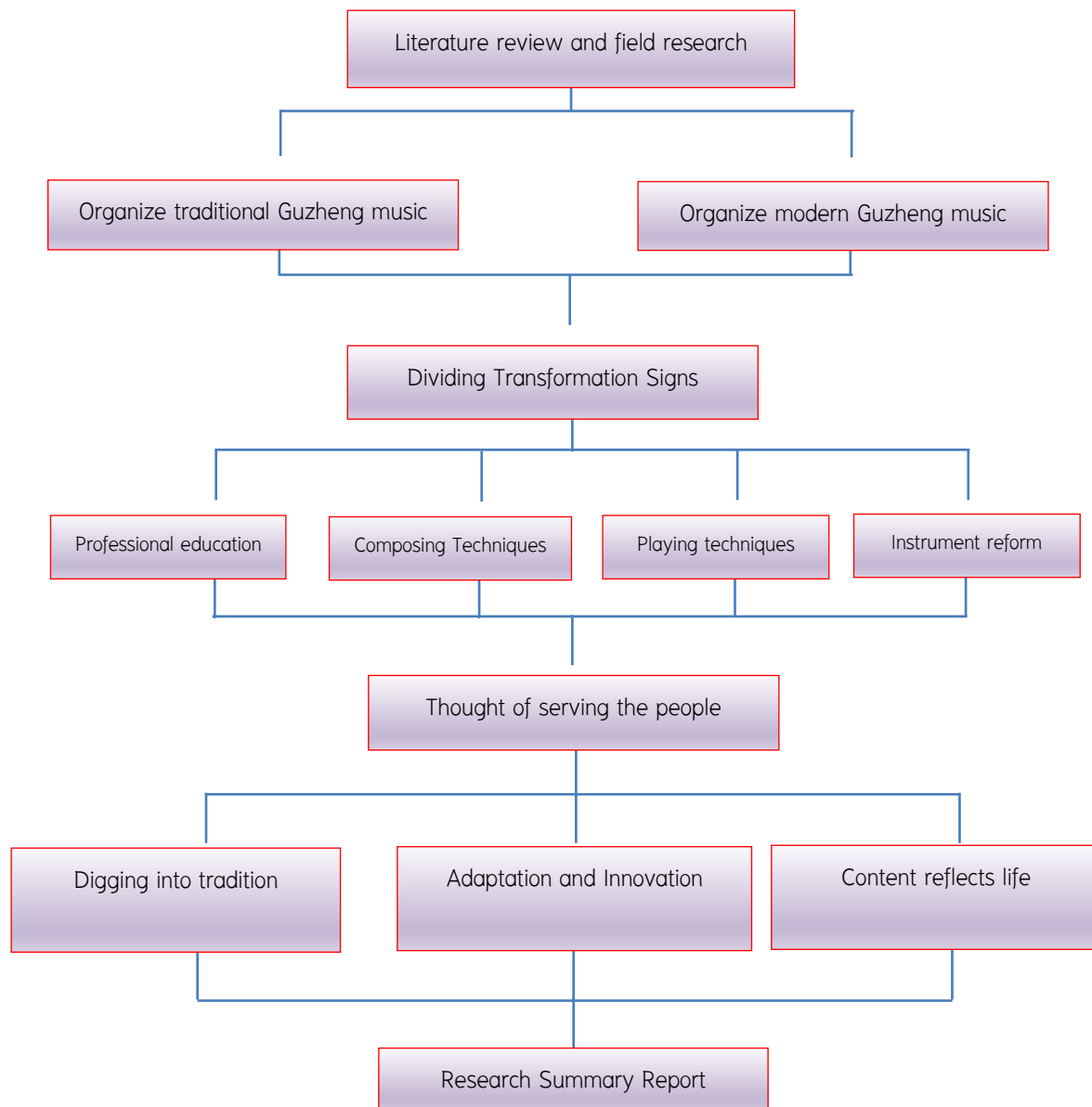


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative research. Using literature review and field investigation methods, objectively sorting and summarizing relevant literature related to this topic as theoretical support. This project collects records of Guzheng art works and related artistic practice activities in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, as well as representative character archives, to analyze the historical materials of the development of Guzheng art during the transition period. This study adopts an interdisciplinary research method, using the research methods of musicology and historical and cultural studies, to provide a specific explanation of the intrinsic connection between the background of the transitional era and the production of works. Using comparative analysis method, this study investigates and analyzes the overall development status of traditional Chinese music in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and proposes a feasibility analysis for the innovation of "modernization of guzheng art" and the construction of traditional Chinese music culture, in order to solve the problem of constantly updating guzheng traditional art and keeping pace with the times in actual development.

Research Results

1. Research on the Social Transformation and Musical Perspectives of Chinese Guzheng Musicians in the 1950s

Case Study on the Social Identity Transformation of Guzheng Musicians.

This study takes the perspective of new social history and uses folk Guzheng artists such as Gao Zicheng and Wang Xunzhi as case studies to discuss their reform of folk literature, transformation of social identity, and the combination of politics and folk literature. Furthermore, it analyzes some internal relationships between official or political discourse during this period and their ability to enter households.

Cultural Background of Transformation.

In 1942, Mao Zedong proposed at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art that "literature and art should be popularized, which means that the thoughts and emotions of our literary workers and the masses of workers, peasants, and soldiers should be integrated..." In his speech, Mao Zedong's attitude towards "literature and art are all for the people" pointed out the direction for the development of literature and art, and the new era of combining new literature with the masses of workers, peasants, and soldiers began from then on. It is precisely because of the

important content of the literature and art policy of the CPC that the content reflected in the zither music after the founding of the People's Republic is closely related to the people's working life and expresses the praise for the new life.

Presentation and Analysis of the Musical Perspective of Guzheng Musicians.

The practice of the music concept of "serving workers, peasants, and soldiers". Specifically, it is manifested in the excavation and organization of traditional music. Secondly, adaptation of traditional music. Thirdly, the creation of Guzheng music with the theme of "praising workers and peasants".

2. The Development Status of Guzheng Art in China in the 1950s

Analysis of the Characteristics of Guzheng Music.

Firstly, emphasize the realism of music. In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the creation of Zheng music highlighted the reflection of real life in its themes, especially depicting the labor life of industry and agriculture and the ideological and emotional views of workers and peasants in socialist construction, closely integrated with the situation of the times. Secondly, innovation in composition techniques. Combining the use of ethnic colors and harmony with the continuation and breakthrough of traditional music structures. In the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the creation of Guzheng music had already departed from the traditional Guzheng music structure, and some Guzheng music even boldly broke through the traditional Guzheng music in terms of music structure. Thirdly, explore innovative performance techniques. Learn and absorb the playing techniques of foreign and domestic instruments. The sweeping of the Guzheng is borrowed from the sweeping of the pipa, while the scraping of the strings is borrowed from the playing techniques of the Western colored qin. Scratching is a technique that applies many techniques. At the beginning and end of a song, large-scale scraping is often used to create an atmosphere. As the concluding sentence of 'Yao Dance'. Example, 1=D.

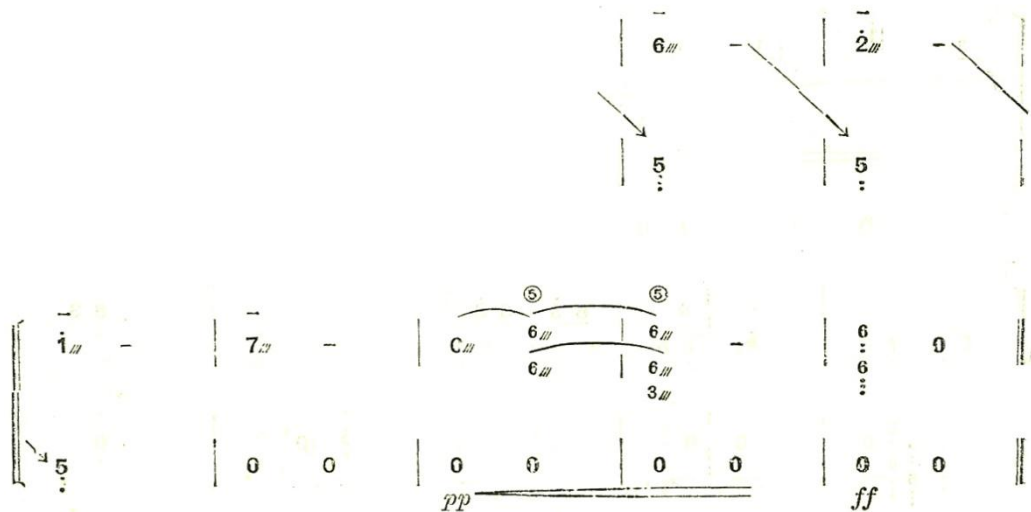


Figure 2 Yao Dance

Source: Chinese Guzheng examination level set

The following is a list of the main technical features and compositions of zither music created in the 1950s:

Table 1 Main technical features and compositions of zither music created in the 1950s

Year	Name	Creator	Main Technical Features
1952	Spring Stream and Flowing Spring	Xu Disheng	Left sweep
1955	Celebrating a Harvest Year	Zhao Yuzhai	Alternating large clusters of hands; Scraping report; Arpeggios; Right hand flicking, left index finger pointing column
1955	Textile Busy	Liu Tianyi	Left hand scraping; Alternating small arms; Click to play
1956	Happy Lantern Festival	Cao Dongfu	Left hand scraping; strumming
1957	New Year	Zhao Yuzhai	Left hand arpeggios; Alternating large clusters of hands; Shake your fingers
1957	Yao Dance Music	Liu Tieshan; Mao Yuan	Left hand arpeggios Scraping report; Sweeping strings; Shake your fingers

Year	Name	Creator	Main Technical Features
1957	Liu Hai and Hu Xiuying	Cao Dongfu	Left hand tuft and scraping
1958	Worker Praise	Zhao Yuzhai	Left hand arpeggios; Scratching with both hands
1958	Heroes Defeat the Dadu River	Luo Zongxian; Shi Lemeng	Alternating large clusters of hands; Scraping report; Point finger; Shake your fingers
1958	The Canal of Happiness	Ren Qingzhi	Scratching with both hands; Scratching on the left side of the piano code
1958	Embroidered Gold Plaque	Zhou Yanjia	Right hand large support chopping
1950–1958	The Valley Blooms Red Flowers	Ren Qingzhi	Right hand large support chopping

Improvement of Guzheng instruments in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The successful trial production of the S-shaped 21 string guzheng can be said to be the biggest breakthrough in the traditional guzheng form in the 1950s and 1960s. The guzheng not only expands and increases the volume and range, enhances expressiveness, but also better adapts to various requirements of guzheng music in the era. The improved 21 strings, like the 88 keys of a piano, have been established as the most basic configuration. The progress of guzheng has promoted the prosperity of guzheng music creation, developed guzheng performance techniques, and enriched performance forms. The advancement of instrument making technology and the standardization and uniformity of production have provided convenience for the teaching of guzheng.

3. The impact of the transformation of Guzheng art in the 1950s on modern Guzheng art Guzheng moves from folk to professional.

The differentiation and evolution of social roles of Guzheng musicians. From the development history of Guzheng, the social role differentiation of Guzheng people mainly occurred against the backdrop of strong input of Western music culture. The dynamic shaping of the social roles of Guzheng performers began in the early 20th century and was completed in the mid-20th century, ultimately forming two categories: "folk Guzheng performers" rooted in traditional soil and

"professional Guzheng masters" incorporated into the music education system, completing the differentiation between "folk" and "professional" modern Guzheng art. The special historical phenomenon of "folk Guzheng masters entering schools" that emerged in the mid-20th century is a product of this differentiation process.

The transformation has promoted the development of modern guzheng art.

Specialization in Guzheng Education. The comprehensive cultivation of Guzheng artistic ability in college Guzheng majors includes a combination of Chinese and Western courses. During this period, the curriculum of Guzheng major drew heavily on the education and teaching model of Western music, and generally offered compulsory courses in music theory such as music theory foundation, sight singing and ear training, harmony, polyphony, musical form analysis, Western music history, as well as compulsory courses in professional skills such as piano and choir. It also accounts for a large proportion in the curriculum and class hours, which to some extent expands the diversified musical perspective of traditional Guzheng. Secondly, the focus is on cultivating creative abilities. In order to create new songs that reflect the spirit of the socialist era, the Guzheng professional education in the 20th century emphasized the cultivation of music creation ability in both subject settings and teaching plans. Thirdly, the subject setting is a "three in one" approach. The "three in one" disciplinary structure model established by Shanghai Conservatory of Music, which integrates ethnic instrument performance, ethnic band guidance, and ethnic music theory, is the most representative. Fourthly, in terms of teaching plans, in order to expand music creation materials, enhance the functional positioning of Guzheng music as a tool for workers, peasants, soldiers, and serving the people, various Guzheng majors in universities not only invite folk artists and performance groups to give short-term lectures, hold various academic lectures and concerts, but also regularly organize students to observe local operas and ethnic songs and dances outside the school, hold discussions and visits.

Fifthly, the education of Guzheng major adopts an open music concept and a "gathering the strengths of hundreds of schools" academic perspective, breaking free from the constraints of a single region, a single genre, and a single technique. It gathers a diverse group of teachers with different styles, making it easier for students to seek advice from Zhou and more inclusive. This enriches the content and knowledge system of Guzheng professional teaching, as well as the characteristics of Guzheng music style, becoming the main force in the modernization development of Guzheng in China.

Discussions

The focus of this study is:

1. How to view the issue of "tradition and modernity" in the inheritance and development of contemporary traditional Guzheng art.

In the article "From Multiple Perspectives on the Tradition and Modernity of Guzheng Art", it is divided into two parts for discussion: firstly, emphasizing the traditional repertoire of Guzheng. Secondly, dialectically view tradition and modernity. On the other hand, traditional music is perfect, while modern music is less traditional and lacks high style. The author believes that modern music has diverse creative concepts and areas worth absorbing from traditional music, so it cannot be completely denied. In short, traditional music and modern music should be examined from a multicultural perspective. Their advantages and disadvantages are not different, but rather the relationship between their foundation, soil, and future development (Wang, 2017).

This study supports the viewpoint of "dialectically viewing tradition and modernity". In addition to "no superiority or inferiority", "tradition and modernity" also imply that they are in a state of "constant updating and change", and today's "modernity" may become tomorrow's "tradition". Therefore, we should approach tradition and modernity with a developmental perspective and a dialectical approach.

Based on the particularity of the social and historical period in the mid-20th century and the phased characteristics of Guzheng professional education, folk musicians have undergone multiple transformations in social identity, music playing methods, inheritance concepts, teaching methods, textbook compilation, and other aspects after entering universities, presenting a gradual "modernization" process that is explicit or semi explicit. However, for the Guzheng, which has been in its original field for thousands of years, these changes were not achieved overnight. Musicians who originated from the folk and rooted in tradition, such as "entering universities" musicians, still retain many "traditional" aspects in their internal cultural attributes, forming the "root" of Guzheng art in the mid-20th century. Based on the present, compared to the Guzheng art of the 1950s, how much of the "modern" of that time has become the "traditional" of today. For example, from the perspective of music, solo was the trend of that era. The works adapted and created by folk Guzheng musicians at that time were almost all for personal performance. In the 21st century, the way of playing the Guzheng has gradually shifted from the mainstream led by solo to the era of ensemble, and various large-scale Guzheng groups that use ensemble as a form of expression have sprung up like mushrooms after rain. Obviously, the multi part ensemble, rich sound system,

and powerful stage visual impact make the Guzheng closer to the hearts of young people. These reasons have made Guzheng ensemble the mainstream of Guzheng art today. Solo has not disappeared, it has become a "tradition" and is still active on more serious stages. High difficulty solo works are still preserved in professional competitions with higher standards of Guzheng. The above example proves that "tradition and modernity" are constantly evolving and changing.

2. How to view the relationship between the development of Guzheng art in the 1950s and the identity recognition of Guzheng musicians.

For example, the research on the inheritance of Shandong Guzheng music art at Shenyang Conservatory of Music mainly introduces the historical contributions of Zhao Yuzhai, the founder of Shandong Guzheng School. The music of Shandong Guzheng is mainly spread in Heze, Juancheng, Yuncheng, Liaocheng and other places in Shandong. In 1953, Zhao Yuzhai, a Guzheng player from Shandong, went to teach at Shenyang Conservatory of Music. He transformed from a folk artist to a university teacher, and under the leadership of Zhao Yuzhai, Shandong Guzheng music broke through the limitations of its original regional and folk inheritance, and began to transform into academic inheritance. He has made innovations in the design of Guzheng instruments, the creation and inheritance of Guzheng music, and has cultivated generation after generation of Guzheng music educators and performers. He established a systematic and scientific teaching system for Guzheng music, innovated the playing techniques of Guzheng, pioneered the dual handed performance of Guzheng, opened up new avenues for Guzheng music creation, and played an immeasurable role in promoting the development of Guzheng art (Jiang, 2021).

This study suggests that sorting out the inheritance models of schools, as well as the narratives of inheritance, development, and innovation that arise from them, may not necessarily conform to the subjective identity of Guzheng musicians. Because an undeniable fact is that, based on the life experiences of Guzheng artists such as Zhao Yuzhai, Wang Xunzhi, and Gao Zicheng, they were not the trendsetters of the times, but only unexpectedly became famous for their works. The reason why they were able to make their works famous is not only because they seized the special opportunity during the period of social transformation, but also because of their unique talents. The fundamental reason is that although they are not senior communists, they can consciously identify themselves as socialist literary and artistic workers, constantly trying to find the best fit between ancient zithers and modern Chinese society. Specifically, in terms of music theory, they advocate that "literature and art serve workers, peasants, and soldiers" and adhere to the ideal of socialist literary and artistic creation. Therefore, from the perspective of the history of

music development, it is feared that "economic development and technological progress" are not the main reasons for the "comprehensive and significant enrichment and development" of Guzheng music since the 1950s. The main reason is the comprehensive and profound influence of the socialist music culture concept that prevailed in the mid-1950s on folk Guzheng musicians.

Conclusion

The construction and development of the Guzheng major in the 1950s originated from and relied on the traditional cultural foundation and inclusive folk Qin schools nurtured by the group of "entering universities" folk Guzheng masters. With the joint efforts of "entering universities" Guzheng masters, generations have continued to inherit and create the thriving development scale and trend of Guzheng education today. The construction of the "professional" boundary of Guzheng education is precisely the process of individual artistic accumulation of "folk" Guzheng masters merging with standardized music education paradigms, and ultimately developing into a universal, comprehensive, scientific, and strict Guzheng professional teaching system, meeting the requirements of modern education discipline refinement and teaching effectiveness, and becoming an important basis for the professional development of contemporary Guzheng.

This study traces and summarizes the practical exploration at the beginning of its establishment, not only to narrate the past, but also to reflect on the present. In the macro context of China's social and cultural changes over the past 70 years, the social function and cultural attributes of the Guzheng have undergone profound changes. It has gradually moved from folk soil to professional education in the university system, gradually moving away from its traditional culture and folk foundation that has lasted for thousands of years. It is facing challenges such as the dissolution of humanistic spirit, solidification of musical forms, and convergence of aesthetic representations. Therefore, from the dual perspectives of institutional development and professional construction, systematically reviewing the history of the initial stage of Guzheng professional education undoubtedly provides a mirror for the inheritance and development of contemporary Guzheng from another dimension of time and space.

Suggestions

This study takes history as a mirror and traces back and explains the historical event of "folk Guzheng masters entering universities" in the mid-20th century. It is precisely following the reverse trajectory of history, interpreting "the past" and "the past", returning to the starting point of

the hundred year professional education of Guzheng, and searching for the "stones from other mountains" that integrate and coexist the natural inheritance mode of Guzheng and professional teaching mode. In the context of social development and cultural changes since the mid-20th century, we need to re-examine the process of the gradual intersection of the development of Guzheng from "folk" to "university", and deeply consider the future development path of Guzheng professional education in the interactive relationship between tradition and modernity. With the contemporary continuation of the mechanism of "folk Guzheng families entering universities", we aim to reconstruct the balanced ecology of Guzheng "living" inheritance and performance paradigms. This is the research theme that this article aims to reflect on and explore in depth, and it is also the historical proposition that Guzheng education has presented to our era after a hundred years of ups and downs.

In summary, from the "cultural relics" of the first half of the 20th century to the "intangible cultural heritage" of the 21st century, the structural flow of Guzheng art from singularity to diversity, from simplicity to complexity, precisely reflects the specific projection of the binary relationship that has influenced the development and ideological changes of Chinese society over the past century in the field of modern and contemporary Guzheng, including tradition and modernity, professional and amateur, popular and elite, openness and conservatism, inheritance and innovation.

As one of the important ways for the continuous development of Guzheng art, today's Guzheng professional education will inevitably return to the focus on "folk" and "tradition". With the mechanism of "folk Guzheng families entering universities", through the integration of cultural identity, composite inheritance channels, and diverse presentation methods, it will build a symbiotic situation of mutual connection and dependence between the "professional" and "folk" Guzheng groups, and jointly build a collaborative relationship and balanced ecology for the inheritance and development of contemporary Guzheng.

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