



On the Musical Characteristics of the Local Opera Liushan Bangzi

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Abstract: Local opera is a general term for opera genres with regional characteristics popular in a certain region. Local opera is both a vital part of intangible cultural heritage and a “living” form of traditional cultural expression. Liushan Bangzi, also known as Kaoshan Bangzi, is a traditional local opera that originated in Linyi, China, more than 200 years ago. Based on Shanshan Bangzi, it mixes elements of Linyi’s dialect, folk music, and traditions to create a distinctive opera brand. This paper uses the interview method and field research method, combined with my own practice of learning to sing Liushan Bangzi, to trace the origin of the opera and Liushan Bangzi’s musical characteristics, such as singing, plate structure, singing characteristics, and accompanying musical instruments. It also discusses three aspects of the study of Liushan Bangzi, including an analysis and summary of the musical characteristics of Liushan Bangzi, in the hope of drawing the attention of other researchers on Liushan Bangzi and giving research references.

Keywords: Liushan Bangzi, Kaoshan Bangzi, Origin of the opera, Musical characteristics, Accompanying instruments

Introduction

Opera is a theatrical genre with distinctive expressive methods that developed in China due to its distinct social, cultural, and folk practices. In addition, it has an aesthetic consciousness. It has multiplied into hundreds of local opera plays throughout the country due to the differences in social customs and aesthetic needs of various ethnic groups and regions. This is especially influenced by the languages of various ethnic groups and regions and different musical styles^[1]. Liushan Bangzi, passed down in Linyi, has developed a distinct and bold artistic style. This is done by integrating with the local environment and customs, combining the local dialect with the local dialect, and absorbing other local operas. It has played a crucial role in meeting the cultural needs of people throughout its 200-year existence by preserving folklore, promoting the spirit of the times, and recording personal tales. As part of Linyi City’s intangible cultural heritage list in 2014 and Shandong Province’s fifth batch of representative intangible cultural heritage items in 2021, it was selected for inclusion on both lists. To further grasp this distinctive opera genre, the author plans to examine Liushan Bangzi’s history, musical elements, and supporting instruments.

Literature Review

Liushan Bangzi was not listed in the 1994 edition of the Chinese Opera Book, which was edited by the People’s Republic of China’s Ministry of Culture^[2]. In 2015, China’s State Council announced that the Ministry of Culture was in charge of conducting a census of local opera repertoire around the world. In China, there are 10,278 opera performance organizations and 384 different opera styles as of August 31, 2015, although Liushan Bangzi is yet unrecorded. In 2014, Zang Xiangdong^[3] investigated the history of Liushan Bangzi from the standpoint of troupe development, concentrating on Liushan Bangzi’s survival. the plan of development. Zang recently^[4] examined the Liushan Bangzi’s development mechanism and operation legislation from the standpoint of inheritance and development in the new age. Zhao Shunji^[5] gives a brief overview of Liushan Bangzi’s historical context and opera board features, concentrating more on the opera’s use of regional languages and the literary and aesthetic qualities of its lyrics than on its musical traits.

Research Method

Fieldwork is the most crucial stage in ethnomusicological research; it is the eyewitness report that underpins all results (Helen Myers). Fieldwork materials include field observation notes, musical and interview recordings, photographs, and visual material^[6]. In this paper, the author recorded audio and video materials of Liushan Bangzi performances through field research and excavated and collated Liushan Bangzi scores and scripts. Through interviews with Liu Jiaxun, the author of the Liushan Bangzi monograph *Autumn Rhythm*, Bai Zhenhua, the director of the Lanshan District Culture Museum in Linyi City, and actors from the Liushan Bangzi Country Music Troupe in Wanggou Town and the

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Feng Sheng Liushan Bangzi Troupe in Fangcheng Town, they learned about the origin, musical style, accompanying instruments, and the development of Liushan Bangzi. By learning to sing and perform from Liu Qing Ai, the provincial intangible cultural inheritor of Liushan Bangzi, and summarizing the musical characteristics of Liushan Bangzi in the practice of singing it firsthand. Based on the fieldwork, this paper presents an in-depth analysis of three aspects of Liushan Bangzi: its origin, musical characteristics, and accompanying instruments, in the hope of drawing the attention of other researchers to Liushan Bangzi.

Research Contents

The Origin of Liushan Bangzi

A separate opera genre called Liushan Bangzi, sometimes called Kaoshan Bangzi, eventually emerged as a separate opera genre in the mountainous region of Feimeng. This was after being influenced by the local language.

The Shanshan Bangzi among Jin merchants persisted and spread in the Qilu region during the Ming Dynasty's middle. This was when Jin merchants in Shandong were more active. Liushan Bangzi was brought to Shandong in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties from Kaifeng and Shangqiu in Henan Province. It spread to Cao County, Heze, Jining, Tai'an, Laiwu, Zhangqiu, Linyi, and others. They were combined with local customs, languages, and aesthetic practices to create various opera types. In the Qianlong era of the Qing Dynasty, Yan Changming wrote in his *Qin Yun Fuying Xiao Gene*: "After the courtyard book, the performance is Manchu, for the strings." The north is where strings are most common. People from Shanxi sing in the Qin cadence. The "Qi" in the article refers to Shandong. This article records that the Shanshan Bangzi has spread to Henan, Hebei, Shandong, and Shanxi and has been influenced by the local language and voice, thus forming the local opera. Although the sound is changed, their native language has less change in [7].

There are different stories about the origin of Liushan Bangzi. In the book *Millennium Ancient County-Fei County*, there are several stories about Liushan Bangzi's origin. One of them is that the name Liushan Bangzi is also called "Liu Bang" because the predecessor of Liushan Bangzi was a mixed "three-in-one" troupe, sometimes called "three open boxes", that is, a troupe that can sing Beijing opera, Liuzi (string), and Bangzi. It is customary to refer to the "three open boxes" troupe as "Liu Bang", and over time, the troupe's name has replaced the genre name. The second thing to note is that Kaoshan Bangzi is also commonly referred to as Liushan Bangzi, which refers to a slippery dialect that means imitation, or, in other words, model singing Shandong Bangzi. In addition, the word "liu", the Fei County dialect means "follow", which means to follow the clappers performed near Meng Mountain. The fourth, Liushan Bangzi is sometimes called "desperate bang", named for the melodic ups and downs of the singing voice. The high notes are harsh, long, and spicy [8]. Liu Jiaxun, the former head of the Publicity Department of Fei County, Linyi City, began field investigations of Liushan Bangzi in 1982. Through interviews with veteran artists Hu Wenxiu, Liu Jingwei, Ma Jingchun, Liu Wenquan and Wang Wenxue, he proved that Liushan Bangzi is an independent opera derived from Shanshan Bangzi. This opera has spread widely in Fei County. Liu is not an imitation, but is a part of the Mengshan area, singing clapper Opera [9].

According to *Shandong Local Opera Music*, "before the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty, the Liushan Bang had already set up a drama club to perform, and during the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty, there was a self-proclaimed old Taoist Cao Hetai to teach and often sing some folk tunes, bangzi cadences, and the performance was rubbed into folk blowing and rapping music, etc. This was the predecessor of the Fei County Liushan Bang Troupe" [10]. In 1885 (the eleventh year of Guangxu), Caozhou artist Li Zhongsan (stage name: Xi Laohen) fled to the village of Zhong Xijiang and was taken in by the opera troupe. He incorporated Shandong Bangzi and Henan Bangzi tunes into his original singing style. He gradually developed an independent opera type, called "Liushan Bangzi" (also known as Kaoshan Bangzi). [8]

Around 1920, Li Guixiang, son of Li Zhongsan, presided over the troupe, which performed more than 300 pieces. This made the reputation of the troupe and the art of "Erhe" a household name around Meng Shan. In 1939, Li Guixiang set up a troupe in Wanggu Zhuyuan village, including more than 40 people who learned to sing more than 70 plays. In 1939, Li Guixiang set up an opera troupe in Wanggou Zhuyuan village. The performance range extends from Lanshan District in Linyi City to the south, from Fei County and Pingyi to the west, and from Qinghu, Sunzu, Shuangxiang, Yazhi, Zhangzhuang, Mamuchi, Mengliang Mount, and Dozhuang in Mengyin County to the north, and from Tangtou and Gaoli to the east.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Zhang Shushen, a teacher, came to Daguangzhuang Village in Fangcheng Town to teach and sing Liushan Bangzi. This expanded the influence of Liushan Bangzi. The Fei County troupe devolved old artists to Daguangzhuang Village in 1960, resulting in a climax of Liushan Bangzi troupes. Since the reform and opening up, with the continuous development of the economy and new media technology, the means and ways for people to receive art communication have become more and more abundant and diverse, and the local opera Liushan Bangzi has gradually faded from people's attention. With abundant and diverse adoption, the local opera Liushan Bangzi has gradually faded from people's attention. With the adoption of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in October 2003, the global initiative for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding was launched. China has also strengthened intangible cultural heritage protection. In 2007, Wanggou set

up the Xiangyin Liushan Bangzi Troupe headed by Wang Yingyi. Wang led the troupe to excavate and organize the traditional repertoire of Liushan Bangzi and singing techniques. This made Liushan Bangzi performances appear frequently in people's lives again. In 2016, with the support of the Fangcheng town government, the Fengsheng Liushan Bangzi Troupe was re-established and resumed performances. The two troupes perform more than twenty times a year, with more than a thousand people watching^[11].

The Musical Characteristics of Liushan Bangzi

Singing Characteristics. Liushan Bangzi, which combined the local language, folk songs, and customs to create the distinctive expression and twisting tunes of the Feimeng Mountains, is the origin of Liushan Bangzi. Liushan Bangzi has been widely gathered and incorporated over the course of centuries of development, absorbing the performance benefits of other operas and established an artistic performance style that is not only standardized and rich and has its own distinctive traits. The singing voice is high and majestic, the atmosphere is warm, and the melody is simple and smooth. The main cadence of Liushan Bangzi is referred to as the basic tune of the vocal cadence, which is summarized on the basis of the vocal cadence's spin, rhythm, modulation and structural logic of the song, with a unique musical style and strong local characteristics, is the basis of the tune of Liushan Bangzi to create the singing voice and shape the musical image of the characters. The chorus is divided into two lines, mostly in *seven-character* or *cross-character* pairs, with accompaniment in the middle of each line. The tune is high and loud, with a wide range of tones, and the vocal range is $e^1\text{-}\#c^3$.

Example of score I:

$\underline{6\ 3\ 5\ 6}$	5 -)	$\underline{2\ 2\ 7}$	$\underline{7\ 6\ 6\ 3}$	$\overset{\frown}{5\cdot}$	$\underline{3}$	$\underline{7\ 6\ 6\ 3}$	
		你 的	儿 生 就 的			力 是 力 量	
$\underline{6\ 5\cdot}$	$\underline{6\ 6\ 7\ 6}$	$\underline{5\ 6\ 7\ 6}$	$\underline{6\ 5\ 2\ 4\ \#}$	$\underline{5\ 5\cdot}$	$\underline{(6\ 6\ 7\ 6)}$		
		强 啊，	日 夜 间	打 虎	已 到 山	岗 啊。	

In the first example of the score, *The King of Yan sweeps the North*, Yan Yueniang sings (Dan cadence), the score is notated in the key of E, with a wandering spin, a downward progression of the melody, a rhythm board, and a B-gong tuning, presenting the musical characteristics of the smooth and bold voice of Liushan Bangzi, which is both rigid and flexible.

Example of score II:

〈上〉	2	2		5	$\underline{6\ 4}$		5	-		$\underline{(2\ 6\ 7\ 6)}$		5)	$\underline{2\ 2}$		4	5		$\underline{6\ 4\ 6}$		5	-	
	一	二		三	四	五	六					(那个)	七	八	九	十							
〈下〉	$\underline{2\ 1\ \#}$	2		$\underline{2\ 1}$	2		4	5		$\underline{6\ 4}$		5	-		$\overset{\frown}{5}$	-							
	一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十													

On the basis of the "basic tune" of the Dan cadence, the downward progression is changed to an upward rotation, and the low register is shifted to create the "basic tune" of the Sheng cadence, which is simple, bold and powerful. In the second example of the score, the melodic progression is centered on the tonic dominant, and the tonic dominant appears twice in each phrase, with the last note falling on the tonic dominant. The phrase ends with an upward second (fa-sao) melodic progression, which gives an upward momentum and adds stability to the opera melody. In the rhythm, the Sheng cavity also uses the board up and board down, but in the key, it uses the B-shang tuning, which contrasts strongly with the Dan cavity Gong tuning, giving it distinctive characteristics of the line.

Plate Construction. The structural system of the singing voice of Liushan Bangzi belongs to the board cavity, "one drum and two gongs" is the basic board style, 2/4 beat, board up and board down, fully reflecting the style characteristics of the genre in terms of rotation, modulation and rhythm. The main tones of the tune appear in the melody at intervals, which makes the melody show stable, lively, friendly and bright musical characteristics. (See example 1). On the basis of the basic board, there are many variations such as [three-eyed board], [five-tone head], [flowing board], [one mouthful of dry], [slow four tiger head], [tight four tiger head], [one slow and first yellow], [scattered board], [hanging hitching mouth], [golden hook hanging], [puffing moth] and so on. Depending on the number of words sung and the emotional level of the content, a single board structure can be used, or a complete set of cadences can be used. In the case of set singing, the core section of a repertoire is sung using a variety of contrasting variations and different expressions of the genre to portray the complex psychological changes of the characters^[12]. Sets of singing is one of the main means of expressing inner emotions and shaping characters in Liushan Bangzi opera. For example, in *The Broken Bridge*, in order to express the complex emotions of the White Lady's love for Xuxian and her resentment towards him for leaving her, the cadence is composed of [loose board]-[three-eye board]-[original board]-[two boards]. The cadence consists of [scattered board]-[three-eyed board]-[original board]-[two boards]-[one

drum and one gong]-[five tone head] and other sets of boards, which deeply expresses the complex inner world of the White Lady. There are two ways of interchanging the various board styles: one is to transfer the board by passing through the door; the other is to transfer the board by singing, and when the board is transferred, the upper line of a fixed cadence takes over the lower line, so that the transition between the two different board styles is natural and closely connected. For example, in *The Little Garden*, Zhang Yanmei sings, [one drum and two gongs] followed by [loose board] transition and then [five tone head].

5 - | 6 . i | 5 6 | i - | i v 2 | 2 3 |
 银 拿 在 手， 我 请
 6 3 | 5 - | 2 5 | 3 2 | 1 - | 1 -) |
 姑 娘 进 花 亭。
 (i . 2 | 3 3 | i . 2 | 3 3 | 2 i 7) | i -)
 2 - | 2 2 2 2 2 i | 3 5 - | v 2 - | 2 - 1 - v |
 高 打 银 灯 翠 路 径 哼
 (转五音头)
 4/4 5 3 5 | 6 5 6 3 5 - | 3 . i 2 - 3 | 2 3 2 6 1 . 6 |
 哎
 2 6 i - | 5 6 7 7 5 6 2 . 7 | 6 5 6 4 5 - ||
 啊 哈 哪 呀 啊 哈 哪 呀 啊 哈 哪 呀 哈。

The [three-eyed board] is the essence of the music of Liushan Bangzi and is rich in characteristics of the board: it is mostly the central section, 4/4 beat, with the eyes starting and ending the board, and the melody is carried out with a big jump in the upper and lower seventh lines, producing a stretching, firm and bold musical effect, showing the simple and bold character of the Yimeng Mountain people. [Three-eyed board] the upper and lower sentences are composed of two clauses, the first clause is two and a half bars, there is a small interlude between the two clauses, the second clause is three bars, and there are seven and a half bars passing between the upper and lower sentences. (See the example of *The Great Garden* sung by Liangyue).

i -) i i | 0 7 6 6 5 | 3 2 7 6 5 6 |
 龙 国 太 呀 他 回 到
 (2 2 2 2 7 6 5 6) | 2 2 2 3 5 | 6 - - - |
 朝 阳 院。
 (2 6 7 2 6 7 6 5 | 6 5 6 2 6 7 6 5 | 3 3 3 3 5 6 i i 5 |
 6 5 6 i 6 i 3 5 | 3 5 6 i 5 6 i 5 3 | 2 3 2 2 2 2 3 |
 5 6 i 5 3 6 5 5 3 | i -) 6 5 | 0 6 5 6 7 |
 二 佳 人 貌
 3 2 7 6 5 | (2 2 3 3 3 6 5 6 5) | 2 3 5 6 5 6 |
 同 回 到 绣 楼
 5 - - - ||
 闹。

[Water board] is also called second board, and is generally sung in the form of a single board with the eyes rising and falling, and can be changed at different speeds according to the needs of the characters, and is mostly used for lyricism and narrative. The rhythm is tight, which makes the melody easy, lively and jumpy, especially the final part of the fluttering cadence, which absorbs the musical characteristics of local folk drum tunes, and makes the music more simple and friendly, fresh and crisp, with distinctive local characteristics.

[Yi Kougan] is also called a string of bells, 2/4 beat, one set. Its melody characteristics are similar to the one drum and two gongs in the Danqiang, but there is no prelude at the beginning, the mouth will sing, and there is no interplay in the middle. The melody is mostly three degrees of up and down small jump, bearing wave type, smooth and beautiful melody.

[The melodic progressions] are mostly progressive and simultaneous, and the rhythm and intensity change with the change of feelings and content, reflecting the characteristics of bold, impassioned and rough music. (See the example of Northern Customs sung by Lei Zhenhai)

仓 才 仓 才 仓 — ||: $\overset{36}{\underset{6}{\curvearrowright}}$ — — —) $\overset{7}{\underset{6}{\curvearrowright}}$ 6 6 6 5 6 6
 放 了 他 来 放 了
 $\overset{7}{\underset{6}{\curvearrowright}}$ — — — ($\overset{36}{\underset{6}{\curvearrowright}}$ — — —) 仓 才才 仓 ($\overset{36}{\underset{5}{\curvearrowright}}$ | — — —) 5 6 6 3
 他 。 怎 知 我 绑
7 6 5 6 $\overset{6}{\underset{5}{\curvearrowright}}$ — — — ($\overset{6}{\underset{5}{\curvearrowright}}$ — — — 仓 才才 仓) ||
 了 个 小 儿 男 。

There are also 16 distinctive styles of Liushan Bangzi, such as *the big board*, *the planting board*, *the small planting board*, *the weeping fanzi*, and *the fast Yang Huang*, as well as the absorption of the boards of sister operas, such as the *Qua dazui*, *the Golden Hook*, and *the Puffing Moth*, forming Liushan Bangzi as a local opera genre with strong local characteristics and widely loved by local people. During the development of Liushan Bangzi, it has widely absorbed the local folk tunes, folk blowing music and rap art based on the local dialect, making Liushan Bangzi inseparable from the customs and culture of Linyi.

Singing Characteristics. There are four lines in Liushan Bangzi: *Sheng*, *Dan*, *Jing* and *Chou*, each of which has its own branches. This is a unique feature of Liushan Bangzi, which requires high singing skills and is generally sung in falsetto. The tone of *Sheng* is broad and bright, deep and relaxed, and has an inner tension. The real voice in the middle and bass area is not the *big native voice*, but the real voice that opens the resonant colors of the throat, mouth and chest cavity and uses the breath to sing^[13]. The falsetto is used in the soprano region in combination with the continuation of the real voice in the middle and bass regions. The *Dan* is a simple, soft, rounded, smooth and strong tone, and is sung in falsetto, and the intensity and color can be fine-tuned within the falsetto due to the age, character and temperament of the character played. *Hua Faces* is the common name for the traditional opera *Jing* line, which is sung with a combination of real and falsetto voices, with a bright, broad, bold and penetrating voice.

Liushan Bangzi Accompaniment Instruments

The instrumental part of opera music includes the accompaniment of singing, opening and passing music. The accompaniment of the singing voice, the passing door and the line strings play the role of supporting the cadence and the tone, and set off the performance. The percussion music used in the opening, transitions and martial arts plays the role of rendering the atmosphere and regulating the rhythm of the stage. After a long period of practice and refinement, Liushan Bangzi has formed its own orchestra and performance style.

The backing band contains instruments:

Main strings: two *Banhu*, one each with steel and silk strings, 36 strings; two *Erhu*, fixed 52 or 15 strings; one *Sheng*.

Plucked instruments: one *Pipa* or *Sanxian*; one Central *Ruan*.

Wind instruments: one *Bamboo Flute*.

Bass instrument: one *Bass Erhu*.

Percussion instruments: a pair of *Clappers*; *board Drums* including *Drums*, *Boards* and *small hall Drums*; *large Gongs* including *soprano Gongs*, *alto Gongs* and *bass Gongs*; *small Gongs* including *soprano Gongs*, *alto Gongs* and *bass Gongs*; *Cymbals* including *soprano Cymbals*, *alto Cymbals* and *large Cymbals*.

The orchestra is divided into two parts: the cultural field is dominated by the *Banhu*, which plays the leading role, and there are also *Erhu*, *Pipa*, *Bamboo flute*, *Sheng*, etc. In the modern Liushan Bangzi troupe, electronic instruments are added to highlight the melody of the singing voice. The martial arts are mainly percussion instruments. The *Clapper* is a rhythmic instrument that plays the role of the rhythm of each board; the *Board and Drum* is the collective name of two instruments. The *Board* refers to the hand board, which is made of sandalwood, mahogany or boxwood, mainly used for singing the beat, and the *Drum* mainly plays the role of leading and beating the beat. The *Board* and *Drums* are played by one person, and the *Board and Drums* are not only the main performers in the martial field, but also the conductors in the cultural field, as well as the coordinators and organizers connecting the actors and the orchestra^[9].

Conclusion

The growth of new media in recent years has altered people's entertainment and cultural lives, and the original opera performance, which served as the primary source of entertainment, has slowly lost popularity. In this essay, we

describe the distinctive opera music style of the Linyi local opera Liushan Bangzi, examine its musical traits, and call attention to Liushan Bangzi among scholars.

Liushan Bangzi, a distinctive local opera genre in the Linyi region, is rooted in the fertile ground of Yimeng folk music, forming a distinctive artistic style and strong local characteristics. It has positively contributed to the development of local art and culture, the building of spiritual civilization, and the revitalization of the economy. As they developed their craft over a long period of time, the musicians absorbed ideas from a variety of musical genres, making the music beloved by the Yimeng people and a rich source of spiritual nourishment for the inhabitants of the Yimeng Mountains. Liushan Bangzi's features of opera music must be studied, inherited, and developed by researchers so that more people will know, understand and like Liushan Bangzi.

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