



Exploring and Revitalizing Anhui's Traditional Music: A Cultural Journey

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Abstract: This paper explores the intricate tapestry of Anhui's traditional music culture, situated in the heart of China, where history, geography, and artistic expressions converge. Spanning epochs marked by conflicts and migrations, Anhui's Traditional Music emerges as a resilient testament to the diversity inherent in Chinese musical history. However, the study unveils critical challenges threatening its inheritance and development. Weak awareness, insufficient exploration of cultural resources, and a succession gap demand urgent attention. Addressing these challenges, the paper proposes practical strategies for the revitalization of Anhui's musical heritage. Broadening dissemination paths, innovating traditional music content, strengthening cultural inheritor training, and integrating music culture into schools form a comprehensive framework. Beyond academic discourse, these strategies present a proactive response to ensure the continuity of Anhui's rich cultural legacy. In envisioning the future, the paper emphasizes the integration of modern technologies, calling for a dynamic engagement with dissemination platforms. This is not a static preservation effort; rather, it is a dynamic call to breathe new life into Anhui's Traditional Music. The proposed strategies aim to usher in an era where Anhui's musical traditions resonate vibrantly, transcending temporal boundaries and enriching the cultural mosaic of China. The paper, thus, extends a collective call to action, inviting scholars, enthusiasts, policymakers, and the public to actively participate in this cultural revitalization, ensuring the enduring legacy of Anhui's Traditional Music in the cultural fabric of the nation.

Keywords: Traditional Music Culture, Cultural Inheritance, Music Culture Dissemination, Cultural Heritage Revitalization, Succession Gap

I. Introduction

China's Anhui province is located in the central part of the country, bordered by Jiangsu to the east, Zhejiang and Jiangxi to the south, Hubei and Henan to the west, and Shandong to the north (Figure 1). It is intersected by the Yangtze River and the Huai River, delineating the region into three natural zones: northern Anhui, central Anhui, and southern Anhui. Throughout its history, the territorial boundaries of Anhui have been marked by instability, characterized by conflicts and wars. From the struggles between the Wu and Chu states to the periods of the Three Kingdoms, Six Dynasties, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing, Anhui has witnessed continuous warfare. This turbulent historical backdrop, coupled with frequent migrations by successive rulers, has resulted in a highly complex demographic composition.



Figure 1, map of Anhui, China. Source: www.vectorstock.com

The territory and demographics of Anhui, characterized by constant changes and diverse influences, have given rise to the multifaceted nature of its music and culture. The various regions, cultures, and linguistic environments within Anhui contribute to the diversity of its music, notably the "Hui music culture" in the southern part. This culture uniquely reflects the distinctive qualities of Chinese music and represents a concrete manifestation of the diversity in Chinese musical history.

"Anhui's Traditional Music" refers to the music culture rooted in Anhui from ancient times to the Ming and Qing dynasties, spreading and radiating outward across China. The regional characteristics of Anhui's music culture hold profound significance, evident in both the spatial and temporal concepts it encompasses.

Anhui's Traditional Music reflects the distinct musical culture of the Anhui region, influenced by the overall atmosphere of Anhui's Traditional Music as history and culture evolve and integrate, carrying the unique features of Anhui. Positioned historically, Anhui's Traditional Music is considered one of the crucial regional music cultures in China. It can be said that



Anhui's unique and diverse cultural landscape is nurtured by the region's soil and water, giving rise to Anhui's distinctive cultural charm.

Beyond exploration, our endeavor is to breathe new life into these melodic echoes. In an era where traditional art forms are at the crossroads of preservation and adaptation, understanding and revitalizing Anhui's Traditional Music becomes an imperative cultural undertaking. This study seeks to unravel the unique qualities of Anhui's musical culture, examining its historical significance, regional influences, and the intricate interplay of diverse elements.

As we embark on this cultural journey, our aim is not only scholarly inquiry but also a call to action. By delving into the past, we aspire to pave the way for a vibrant future—a future where Anhui's Traditional Music resonates not just as a relic of antiquity but as a living, breathing testament to the enduring spirit of Chinese cultural heritage.

II. Literature Review

Anhui, with its intricate history and geographic centrality, has been a focal point of scholarly investigation. In his seminal work, Wang et al. [1], traced the historical evolution of Anhui's traditional music, emphasizing its role as a cultural touchstone reflecting the socio-political dynamics of different eras. The study highlighted the significance of music as a conduit for understanding the nuanced historical transitions within the province.

Anhui's musical landscape is not only shaped by historical events but also by the diverse cultures and linguistic environments within the region. Li and Wu [2] explored the impact of regional diversity on Anhui's music, shedding light on how varying cultural elements have contributed to the unique musical traditions. Their findings underscore the importance of considering Anhui's cultural mosaic in any endeavor aimed at revitalizing traditional music. As traditional art forms face the challenges of preservation and adaptation in the contemporary world, studies by Chen and Liu [3] delved into the specific challenges faced by Anhui's Traditional Music. The research outlined strategies employed in other regions for revitalizing traditional music and highlighted potential avenues for adaptation that resonate with modern audiences.

In recent years, a shift in focus towards revitalization efforts has emerged. The work of Zhang and Zhou [4] provided insights into contemporary perspectives on Anhui's Traditional Music. Their study documented ongoing initiatives, discussing how these efforts bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, aiming to ensure the continued relevance of Anhui's musical heritage.

Chen and Wang's interdisciplinary study explores innovative approaches to bridging traditional Anhui melodies with contemporary artistic expressions. By examining collaborative projects across various art forms, the authors highlight the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity in shaping the musical landscape of Anhui [5]. Li and Wu [6] delve into the technological aspects of preserving Anhui's musical legacy. Their study emphasizes the role of digital archiving and online platforms in ensuring the accessibility and global reach of traditional compositions, providing insights into the intersection of technology and cultural preservation. Focusing on the educational domain, Xu and Zhang investigate the integration of Anhui's Traditional Music into formal education systems. Through a case study of music academies, the authors explore how traditional skills are transmitted to the younger generation, contributing to the continuity of Anhui's musical traditions[7]. Wang and Liu's study examines the role of cultural events and festivals in fostering contemporary appreciation for Anhui's Traditional Music. Through in-depth analyses of curated programs, the authors shed light on how festivals serve as dynamic platforms for dialogue and cultural exchange[8].

III. Characteristics of Anhui's Traditional Music Culture

An examination of the characteristics of Anhui's traditional music culture reveals several salient aspects. Firstly, it boasts a rich and enduring heritage. Positioned at the confluence of the Yangtze, Yellow, and Huai River basins, Anhui's unique geographical location has facilitated the amalgamation of diverse river basin cultures, contributing to the prolonged development of its regional music culture. Serving as a convergence point for three major cultural circles in China, the region's extensive history of human migration has resulted in a diverse and open musical culture shaped by the collision and fusion of multiple cultures. Anhui's music culture dates back to the Western Zhou period and flourished during the Qin and Han dynasties, demonstrating remarkable vitality and resilience. Works such as Li Bai's "Autumn Pu Song" and Han Yuefu's "The Peacock Flies Southeast" are closely connected to the Anhui region, becoming integral to the development of its regional music culture[9].

Secondly, Anhui's traditional music culture exhibits distinctive regional characteristics. The development of art in Anhui has always been inseparable from the support of the cultural environment. The interplay between the two has resulted in Anhui's traditional music culture being an indispensable part of Huizhou culture. Consequently, this culture carries a strong regional cultural imprint, incorporating not only local customs but also the influence of Anhui's history, dialects, and other cultural elements. (Figure 2) Examining showcased folk customs, traditional music pieces such as "Baihua Tang" and "Walking to the Bride's Home" primarily depict local marriage customs. Pieces like "Huolongzi Diao" and "Picking Pomegranates" illustrate scenes of local labor and production, as well as grassroots culture. From the perspective of Anhui dialects, the use of Anhui dialect in Fuyang's "Chutou Ge" reflects a distinct regional cultural characteristic [10].



Figure 2, Shouzhou gongs and drums, Anhui Intangible Cultural Heritage. Source: Shou Zhou Art.

Thirdly, Anhui's traditional music culture manifests diversity in genres and forms. An analysis of the genres and forms reveals the inclusion of mountain songs, folk tunes, and shouts. Folk tunes are particularly suitable for expressing various emotional changes, displaying inclusiveness and strong narrative qualities. Examples include "Blooming Osmanthus Everywhere in August," "Picking Pomegranates," and "Wang Sanjie Goes to the Fair." Mountain songs, born from everyday labor scenes, consist of mountain songs in mountainous areas and plain mountain songs. Shouts have a shorter structure and are

locally known as "shouting shouts," such as the argumentative shouts and sawing board shouts in She County folk songs. These shouts, with only four words like "yi ya he hai," exude a robust and resolute musical personality, emitting a rich flavor of life. In addition to these, folk songs, as an essential component of Anhui's regional music culture, can be further categorized into Fengyang songs, Huoqiu folk songs, Wuhe folk songs, beggar music, yangge (a form of Chinese folk dance), fair songs, solar term songs, dance songs, and wedding songs, among others. Due to the influence of factors such as different regional customs and living environments in Anhui, the music culture also exhibits a diversified style[11]. For instance, vocal music in the western part of Anhui is characterized by high-pitched and loud features, with representative works like "Slowly Herding Cattle" and "Earning Red Neck." Vocal music in the eastern part is relatively humorous, as seen in works like "Zabulong Dong Shua" and "Little Cat Tune," which are full of amusement. Vocal music in the northern region has a simple and rugged style, with flower drum lantern being the most representative. Vocal music in the southern region features lyrical, smooth, and lively characteristics .

IV. Challenges in the Inheritance and Development of Anhui's Traditional Music Culture

(1) Weak Awareness of Inheritance and Development

In examining the inheritance and development of Anhui's traditional music culture, despite the substantial time and effort invested by practitioners in music culture, focusing on the standardized exploration, collection, organization, and protection of traditional culture, the developmental trajectory of Anhui's traditional music culture has witnessed significant acceleration. However, in specific efforts related to inheritance and development, some local authorities exhibit insufficient emphasis, with inadequacies apparent in supporting mechanisms for cultural protection and dissemination, a dearth of financial support, and a scarcity of specialized personnel. Consequently, the inheritance and development of Anhui's traditional music culture face notable challenges. Moreover, many local folk songs exhibit distinct regional characteristics, and numerous musical pieces are performed in dialects, resulting in an insufficient awareness among contemporary youth. This, to a certain extent, hinders the inheritance and development of Anhui's traditional music culture .

(2) Insufficient Exploration of Traditional Music Culture Resources

The inheritance and development of traditional music culture constitute a prolonged process requiring multi-faceted communication and the establishment of favorable working conditions. In practice, relevant departments in some regions lack sufficient efforts in exploring Anhui's traditional music culture resources. They fail to integrate and utilize these resources effectively based on actual needs, resulting in a scattered state of some Anhui folk songs in the exploration of folk music cultural resources. At the level of dissemination methods, the use of modern communication means is not fully realized, lacking a robust and complete traditional music culture system. This deficiency impedes the subsequent implementation of inheritance and protection efforts, affecting overall effectiveness].

(3) Serious Succession Gap Issue

The majority of Anhui's traditional music culture originated from the daily labor of the masses, developing through oral transmission. However, in recent years of development and innovation, the lack of support from professional talents has confined Anhui's regional music culture to limited means of inheritance. Additionally, Anhui folk songs and traditional operas contain numerous dialect elements, and the scarcity of compound professional music talents inevitably limits the development of Anhui's music culture, leading to a precarious succession gap.

V. Practical Strategies

1. Broaden Music Culture Dissemination Paths

To propel the high-level inheritance and development of Anhui's traditional music culture and infuse it with renewed vitality, a primary focus should be on diversifying dissemination paths. Expanding the reach of dissemination and consistently augmenting public awareness and appreciation are paramount. Cultivating a sense of identity among the public, based on an understanding of its cultural characteristics, plays a pivotal role in creating favorable conditions for

inheritance and development. Therefore, a crucial step involves promoting and highlighting local music as a cultural hallmark of Anhui. This necessitates crafting a regional identity and transcending temporal and spatial constraints through varied information dissemination and presentation methods. Emphasizing the cultural propaganda functions of institutions like cultural and historical museums in dissemination paths is essential. These efforts should align with the practical lives of the masses, promoting traditional culture dissemination through suitable methods. Achieving this requires personnel in grassroots public cultural institutions to delineate their responsibilities, deepen their comprehension of traditional music culture, and actively participate in tasks such as collecting, organizing, protecting, and presenting traditional music culture. Organizing special cultural activities grounded in the exploration of traditional music culture characteristics, expanding activity platforms, and hosting high-quality cultural events can maximize the attractiveness and influence of Anhui's traditional music culture.

To harness the advantages of advanced technology in dissemination, it is imperative to introduce modernized technological means, address the shortcomings of traditional music culture dissemination techniques, and keep pace with the times. Expanding the dissemination paths of Anhui's traditional music culture is crucial. For example, through internet and new media channels, combining with popular and entertaining ways to transmit and share information can better meet the diversified information needs of the public. Relevant departments can establish official accounts on platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin, continuously enhance the operation and maintenance level of new media platforms, and support the development of traditional music culture dissemination through the diverse functions of new media. On new media platforms, short videos themed around Anhui's traditional music culture can be recorded and widely promoted, effectively integrating people's fragmented time, attracting attention and support, and significantly improving the effectiveness of cultural dissemination.

2. Accelerate Innovation in Traditional Music Culture Content

In the current rapidly developing society, people's living environments and spiritual needs have undergone changes. Ensuring the enduring vitality of Anhui's traditional music culture and continuously drawing sustenance from the contemporary environment are crucial aspects of cultural inheritance. Given the significant position of Anhui's traditional music culture in local folk culture and its popularity among the local populace, it is essential to actively promote innovation in traditional music content[11]. This involves integrating contemporary elements, enriching its contemporary connotations, reflecting the spirit of the times, and further satisfying the aesthetic and cultural needs of contemporary audiences.

Taking Anhui's folk song culture as an example, folk songs directly reflect the daily production life of local laborers. Through folk songs, one can perceive the cultural aspirations and aesthetic characteristics of local laborers. Therefore, based on this foundation, folk song melodies, lyrics, and structures can be reprocessed to meet the aesthetic needs of contemporary audiences. For instance, the Anhui folk song "Xiao Shiqiao" was adapted by rewriting the lyrics and refining the melody, making it more melodious and widely appreciated by the local population. In reality, "Xiao Shiqiao" originated from the local folk song "Pangxie Ge." Cultural practitioners, through fieldwork and adaptation, completely rephrased and reorchestrated the song, turning it into a modern folk song [12]. Additionally, integrating other art elements and promoting innovative fusion within Anhui's regional music culture is possible. This can involve incorporating elements of popular music into Anhui's local traditional music or exploring the integration of traditional music culture elements into the mainstream music system. By creating music works that possess both Anhui's music culture characteristics and popular music features, such as blending classic local performances with popular music, new compositions can emerge. This approach not only enhances the appeal of Anhui's traditional music but also expands its influence and popularity[13].

3. Strengthen the Training of Cultural Inheritors

The preservation of any cultural heritage hinges on individuals, making the active integration of resources for the training of cultural inheritors paramount for the continuity of Anhui's traditional music culture. Primarily, elevating the status of traditional music culture inheritors and providing material support are indispensable measures. This involves creating conducive conditions for artistic creation, meeting the spiritual and cultural needs of inheritors while alleviating their concerns, allowing for a more substantial contribution to the ongoing development of music culture. Relevant authorities must conduct thorough on-site investigations, comprehend the actual needs of inheritors, and offer targeted assistance, ensuring robust support for talent cultivation and protection[14]. Additionally, refining the talent cultivation incentive mechanism is crucial. Given the current challenges in cultivating talents in traditional music culture, recognizing deficiencies and actively optimizing and improving them is necessary. Establishing more stringent talent cultivation standards and formulating a reasonable incentive mechanism, applicable across society, will attract more young talents to engage in traditional music culture, becoming the primary force in its inheritance. Lastly, a top-down planning and design approach tailored to the needs of the inheritance and development of traditional music culture guarantees systematic training of inheritors, enhancing the quality of talent cultivation. This has profound significance for boosting the influence of Anhui's traditional music culture.

4. Promote the Integration of Anhui's traditional music culture into Schools

The inheritance and development of Anhui's traditional music culture constitute a systematic project. To achieve innovative inheritance and development goals, actively promoting the integration of Anhui's traditional music culture into schools is essential. Leveraging the advantages of schools to facilitate the integration and utilization of traditional music

culture resources not only expands its influence but also enriches the content of campus music culture, playing a positive role in cultivating outstanding young cultural inheritors. Relevant departments should implement reasonable policy systems supporting the integration of Anhui's traditional music culture into schools. Policies can guide schools to integrate traditional music culture content, expedite the creation of distinctive campus brands, and incentivize schools to continually conduct traditional music cultural activities through a system of honors and rewards. Simultaneously, Anhui's traditional music culture content can be incorporated into music classrooms or campus music festivals. Establishing elective courses or traditional music clubs with professional guidance allows schools to regularly host lectures or music-themed events related to Anhui's traditional music culture. This attracts more students to actively participate, transforming them into advocates and inheritors of Anhui's traditional music culture[15]. This not only enhances the penetrative power and appeal of Anhui's traditional music culture but also subtly imparts positive cultural influences to students, deepening their understanding and identification with Anhui's traditional music culture, laying a solid foundation for the long-term inheritance and development of Anhui's traditional music culture.

VI. Conclusion

In traversing the intricate landscape of Anhui's traditional music culture, this study reveals the profound interplay between history, geography, and the artistic expressions rooted in this central Chinese province. Anhui's Traditional Music, deeply embedded in the region's soil and water, has weathered the storms of historical conflicts and migrations, emerging as a vibrant testament to the diversity within Chinese musical history.

The challenges identified in the inheritance and development of Anhui's traditional music culture underscore the urgent need for strategic interventions. Weak awareness, insufficient exploration of cultural resources, and a critical succession gap are formidable obstacles that demand concerted efforts from both scholars and practitioners. This study serves as a clarion call for heightened emphasis on cultural protection, dissemination, and talent cultivation to ensure the continuity of Anhui's rich musical heritage. The practical strategies proposed in this exploration provide a roadmap for the future. Broadening music culture dissemination paths, accelerating innovation in traditional music content, strengthening the training of cultural inheritors, and integrating traditional music culture into schools collectively form a holistic approach. These strategies are not mere academic exercises; they are a proactive response to the challenges identified, aimed at breathing new life into Anhui's Traditional Music.

In weaving Anhui's traditional melodies into the fabric of contemporary society, the integration of modern technologies and dissemination platforms becomes imperative. The proposed strategies envision a future where Anhui's Traditional Music is not confined to the echoes of the past but resonates vibrantly, reaching new audiences and ensuring a dynamic continuum of this cultural legacy.

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