



Research on the Inheritance and Innovation of Cui's Suona in Intangible Cultural Heritage Based on Music Semiotics

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Abstract. Through the analysis of music semiotics, this study explores the characteristics and evolution of the traditional music of Cui's Suona, focusing on the balance between tradition and innovation. By integrating the theories and practices of music education, it discusses how to incorporate the intangible cultural heritage of Cui's Suona into music teaching practice to cultivate a new generation of traditional music talents. This study aims to provide new theoretical and practical pathways for the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Music Semiotics, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Music Education

1 Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage, as a traditional cultural expression passed down through generations among various ethnic groups, carries rich historical and cultural connotations. Shandong Province, as a major province of wind and percussion music, occupies an important position in the history of Chinese music culture with its colorful forms of wind and percussion music art. Among them, the drum and wind music of southwestern Shandong, as a representative of Shandong's drum and wind music, has a long history and has been inherited to this day, listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2006. Suona, as an important instrument in drum and wind music, plays a significant role in Shandong's drum and wind music. In recent years, Cui's Suona in Linyi has been included in the municipal-level intangible cultural heritage, highlighting the historical and cultural value and inheritance value of this music form. However, in the face of the dangers of endangerment and loss, the inheritance and protection of Suona, an intangible cultural heritage, are particularly important.

Music semiotics, as a method of analyzing music, provides a comprehensive perspective for understanding musical works for this study [1, 2]. Through semiotic analysis, the production process, sound practices, and people's perception of musical works can be deeply explored [3]. In the inheritance of the intangible Suona, it is found that the inheritors may be both music creators and practitioners. Therefore, analyzing Suona music from a semiotic perspective can better create, analyze, study, protect, and listen to this intangible cultural heritage [7].

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Saussure, in the "Course in General Linguistics," defines the combination of sound image and concept as "sign," emphasizing the relationship between sound effects and concepts. In Suona music, the sound image is combined with traditional culture, historical memory, and other concepts to form unique cultural symbols with significant cultural significance and inheritance value. The perspective of semiotics provides a new way of thinking and analytical framework for the study of the intangible cultural heritage of Cui's Suona [5].

Through this study, using the method of music semiotics, it delves into the characteristics and evolution of Cui's Suona traditional music, explores the balance between tradition and innovation, and combines the theories and practices of music education to discuss how to integrate the intangible cultural heritage of Cui's Suona into music teaching practice to cultivate a new generation of traditional music talents. This research will provide new theoretical and practical pathways for the inheritance and innovation of intangible cultural heritage, promoting the inheritance and development of Suona music.

2 Methodology

This study adopts a case study approach, focusing on Cui's Suona in Fei County to explore its traditional music characteristics, evolution process, and current status of inheritance.

For data collection, multiple approaches were used. First, field investigations and observations were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the performance environment, status of inheritance, and related activities of Cui's Suona. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out, engaging in-depth exchanges with inheritors of Cui's Suona, music educators, and cultural workers to collect their opinions and perspectives.

In terms of data analysis, the method of semiotic analysis was applied. By analyzing the case, the traditional characteristics, inheritance difficulties, and protection measures of Cui's Suona were summarized and generalized. Simultaneously, using the theory and methods of semiotics, the musical symbols of Cui's Suona were interpreted and analyzed, exploring their significance and role in the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

3 Results

3.1 Results of Semiotic Analysis

Introducing the theory of semiotics into the field of music, that is, music semiotics, includes the study of all complex semiotic activities and phenomena involving creators, works, and audiences. It investigates the characteristics of musical sign operations and the generation of referential phenomena, not only including musical facts but also scientifically analyzing human activities triggered by these facts. The analysis of music semiotics encompasses three levels: generative level, perceptive level, and the middle analysis (the material entity of the work) [4, 6].

Semiotic Analysis of the "Productive Item" of Cui's Suona

Inheritor: Cui Shiguang

Cui Shiguang, born on October 13, 1959, is a renowned Suona performer and composer. At the age of 20, he was admitted to the Linyi Teachers Advanced Studies College and later studied under Mr. Liu Bingchen, a Suona performer from the Shandong Arts College, significantly improving his skills. Over years of experience, Cui Shiguang developed his unique performance style, capable of playing dozens of traditional Suona pieces in various modes. His representative works include "Peach Blossom," "Ten Scenes," "Red Sister's Love," and "Beating Dates." He has won numerous awards in competitions and performances across the country, such as the first prize in the 1979 provincial and municipal arts festival and the first and second prizes in the 1994 "Xueguo" Cup Suona Competition in Shandong Province.

Cui's Suona Genealogy

The inheritance lineage of Cui's Suona includes six generations: Cui Zhimin, Cui Fengyun, Cui Fuqi, Cui Huaishan, Cui Shiguang, and Cui Xin. Cui Shiguang's grandfather, Cui Fuqi, migrated from Shanxi's Magpie Nest to Feixian in the Yimeng Mountains, where he made a living playing the Suona as the third-generation inheritor. By Cui Shiguang's generation, the playing technique of Cui's Suona had improved significantly, forming a unique style. The music style of Cui's Suona is simple and bold, high-spirited and passionate, which is beloved by the masses and plays an important role in various occasions, carrying significant social meaning.

Middle Analysis of Cui's Suona

In semiotics, the process from "signifier" to "signified" is called the act of signification. In musical works, the "signifier" usually refers to the work itself, while the "signified" is the meaning or emotion conveyed by the work. In music semiotics, this act of signification is divided into "internal signification" and "external signification."

Internal Signification

Cui's Suona, as a traditional form of folk music, primarily exhibits its internal signification in the following aspects:

Instrumental Characteristics: Cui's Suona often uses large, medium, and small suonas, each with its unique timbre. Besides, the construction and reed design of the Suona are meticulously crafted, allowing performers to easily control the timbre and express emotions. The reed shape of Cui's Suona is bag-shaped, easy to control, with a loud, sweet, soft, and gentle sound.

Performance Techniques: The playing techniques of Cui's Suona are rich and diverse, including common techniques like spitting tones, sliding tones, tongue trills, finger trills, and vibrato, as well as special techniques like tongue rush tones, air rush tones, plucking tones, and continuous plucking tones. The application of these techniques enriches the musical expression, giving it a broader emotional range.

External Signification:

The external signification of Cui's Suona is more reflected in the emotions, cultural connotations, and social significance conveyed by the music: Taking "The Jin Tune" as an example. As shown in Table 1

Table 1. Structure Diagram of "The Jin Tune"

Music Section	A	B	C	D
Number of Measures	1-34	35-71	72-112	113-165
Time Signature	2/4	2/4	4/4	2/4
Tempo	Fast	Slow	Moderato	Allegro

"The Jin Tune" is a piece with a strong Shanxi style. Cui Shiguang made secondary adjustments to the piece during his performance, giving it a more personal charm. In terms of tempo, different degrees of changes were made to the four sections: Section A gradually slowed down from fast tempo; Section B transitioned from slow to slightly slower, then returned to the original speed before gradually slowing down again, followed by a rapid tempo, and finally transitioning from sudden slowdown to gradual deceleration; Section C was played at a slow tempo; Section D started fast and gradually slowed down before ending with a rapid tempo. The variation in tempo, accompanied by changes in intensity, enhanced the musical drama, reflecting Cui Shiguang's understanding and handling of the piece, with a rich rural flavor and ethnic charm.

As the fifth-generation inheritor of the Cui family Suona tradition, Cui Shiguang has transformed traditional Suona scores such as "Ten Scenes," "Peach Blossoms," "Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix," and "Calling Sentences" to develop his own performance style. He has also optimized modern pieces such as "A Salesman Came to the Village," "Joyful Observation of the Commune Warehouse Full of Grains," "Celebrating the Bumper Harvest," and "Lantern Festival on the Fifteenth Day of the First Lunar Month," making them unique and combining dexterity with breath control. Cui Shiguang has imparted these techniques to his Suona students, allowing them to benefit from his teachings at an earlier stage.

Perceptual Aspect of Cui's Suona

Emotional Expression:

Suona music in China has a profound ability to project emotions. Through the expressive power of Suona music, people imbue it with various emotions. For instance, lively and vibrant pieces like "Peach Blossom" played at wedding ceremonies express the enthusiasm and joy of celebratory occasions; while in bittersweet moments, such as a daughter's marriage, "Ten Scenes" with its upbeat rhythm and passionate mood, portrays both joy and reluctance to part.

Performers adjust and express the music according to different emotions and scenes, allowing Suona music to be played both in joyful and serene atmospheres as well as in sad and painful moments. This emotional creativity enriches the connotation of Suona, adding practical value to its music creation.

Cultural Connotation:

As one of China's ancient and widely circulated national musical instruments, the Suona carries rich national musical culture. Its sound is bright and bold, high-pitched and clear, beloved and welcomed by the masses, and widely used in folk ceremonial accompaniments, such as weddings, funerals, and marriages. The Suona is not only an

important part of Chinese national musical culture but also one of the sources of China's musical tradition.

As an intangible cultural heritage of national musical instruments, the inheritance and development of Suona music are vital to the vitality of Chinese musical culture. The development of Suona music requires the active participation and promotion of every Chinese, to maintain its vitality and promote its better inheritance, dissemination, and development, thereby protecting and inheriting China's rich and colorful musical cultural heritage.

3.2 Results of Educational Inheritance

Artist Inheritance

Cui's Suona has been passed down from generation to generation, transferring the art of Suona playing. From the first generation, Cui Zhimin, to the sixth generation, Cui Xin, the skill of Cui's Suona has been continuously developed and inherited. Especially the fifth generation, Cui Shiguang, has trained a large number of students majoring in Suona playing throughout his long teaching career. These students are spread across the country and have made positive contributions to the inheritance and development of Suona music.

Promotion of Cultural Tradition

As an important part of Chinese national musical culture, Cui's Suona, through educational inheritance, passes its rich cultural connotation to future generations. While learning to play the Suona, students also acquire knowledge of the history, geography, folklore, and other cultural backgrounds behind Suona music, enhancing their sense of identity and pride in Chinese traditional musical culture.

Cultivation of Innovation Consciousness

Educational inheritance not only focuses on the transmission of traditional skills but also emphasizes cultivating students' innovative consciousness. Students of Cui's Suona not only learn traditional Suona pieces but also actively explore and develop new forms and styles of Suona music through creation and interpretation, injecting new vitality into the innovation and development of Suona music.

Dissemination of Social Culture

The educational inheritance work of Cui's Suona is not only conducted within schools but also extensively carried out in various social fields. Artists like Cui Shiguang have brought Suona music to a broader social audience through concerts, cultural exchange activities, and more. This not only increases the public's awareness and appreciation of Suona music but also promotes the spread and development of Suona music culture, contributing to the cultural diversity and social harmony.

4 Discussion

Cui's Suona, as one of the important representatives of traditional Chinese music culture, showcases its unique status in the realm of folk instruments through generations of inheritance. Its development journey not only reflects the integration and inheritance of regional cultures but also demonstrates the continuous development and adaptability of ethnic music in modern society [8]. The experience of Cui's Suona indicates that the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture are complementary processes that require ongoing innovation while upholding traditional values.

From the perspective of music semiotics, the playing techniques, selection of pieces, and emotional expressions of Cui's Suona all reveal rich internal and external significations. These significations enable Suona music to transcend mere musical performance, becoming a medium for cultural symbol transmission and emotional experience. Thus, the study of music semiotics not only aids in understanding the structure and form of music but also uncovers the cultural meanings and emotional depths behind it [10].

The successful experiences in the educational inheritance of Cui's Suona highlight the importance of cultural transmission and the profound impact of education. Through the teaching of teachers and the learning of students, Suona music has been inherited and developed, making a positive contribution to the prosperity of national music. Hence, the promotion and inheritance of music education should be valued more, enabling more people to meet and understand the charm of national music, thereby contributing to cultural diversity and social harmony [9].

To further propagate Cui's Suona in contemporary society and captivate the interest of the younger generation, leveraging modern technology and media platforms presents a promising avenue. Through online tutorials, virtual performances, and interactive multimedia exhibitions, the accessibility and appeal of Suona music can be amplified, reaching a broader audience, and sparking renewed interest among youths. Additionally, incorporating innovative elements such as fusion collaborations with contemporary music genres, interactive mobile applications for learning and composition, and multimedia storytelling initiatives can infuse Suona music with fresh vitality, making it more relatable and engaging to the younger demographic. By embracing technological advancements and innovative approaches, the timeless beauty and cultural significance of Cui's Suona can be revitalized and perpetuated for generations to come.

5 Conclusion

In summary, Cui's Suona, as a significant representative of traditional Chinese music culture, demonstrates its unique value and significance in music semiotics and educational inheritance through its rich musical expressions and deep historical roots. The theoretical framework of music semiotics provides a new perspective for a deeper understanding of Cui's Suona music, revealing its rich cultural connotations and emotional expression capabilities. The success of educational inheritance underscores the importance of cultural transmission and development, and the irreplaceable role of music education in cultivating talents and promoting social progress. Therefore, further

research and inheritance efforts for Cui's Suona music are needed to protect and promote the essence of national music culture, contributing more significantly to building a harmonious society and enriching the spiritual and cultural lives of the people.

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