

# The Analysis of Artistic Features of Hebei Folk Music "Little Donkey"

## ——A Case Study of Central Hebei Pipe and South Hebei Suona

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### Abstract

Hebei blowing song is one aspect of the development process of drum and wind music, it is the main performance form which takes wind instruments and percussion instruments in traditional music since the Han, Wei and Six Dynasties. There is a long history and deep cultural heritages in Hebei blowing songs, however, with the development of society in recent years, many factors have made the inheritance and development of folk musical instruments such as Suona and wind music particularly slow. The tunes of Hebei blowing songs are sometimes rough and bold, sometimes euphemistic and delicate, and are loved by the people of Hebei Province, "Little Donkey" is the most representative work, and pipe and suona are the most important accompaniment instruments in Hebei blowing songs, and other accompaniment instruments form "one head and one harmony" with them. The simple analysis of tunes, pipe and Suona were conducted through the investigation and study of Hebei blowing song "Little Donkey".

### Keywords

Hebei blowing songs; Pipe; Suona.

### 1. Introduction

According to the differences of popular area, Hebei blowing songs can be divided into East Hebei, Central Hebei and South Hebei blowing song. The performance form of Hebei blowing songs is led by the pipe, accompanied by suona, big drum, big cymbal, small cymbal, flute, snare drum and other instruments, it is mostly performed in accordance with local living customs, and it is deeply loved by the masses with cheerful, lively and unrestrained performances, so it is popular among the people. However, with the development of society in recent years, many factors have made the inheritance and development of national musical instruments such as suona and pipe particularly slow.

There are certain differences in different regions of Hebei blowing songs, each has its own style characteristics and performance skills, for this reason, the differences in folk culture among regions constitute the richness of Hebei blowing songs, and these customs reflect all aspects of local people's social life. It is not only a form of folk art, but also a symbol of regional culture; and makes more people understand different folk cultures and understand Hebei blowing songs.

### 2. Hebei Blowing Songs

#### 2.1 Brief introduction to Hebei blowing songs

The beginning of establishment of New China was boom years for Hebei blowing song, in the 1950s, many things waited to be done, and talents from all walks of life were urgently needed, therefore, many people entered into art groups, became professional actors, and went abroad to represent the country for artistic exchanges, with the development of society at that time, wind and drum music has been continuously inherited and developed in the long river of history.

Hebei wind and drum music is popular in all regions of Hebei Province and has a long history, in the long-term labor process, the people of Hebei have created colorful folk music art forms. Most of the music performed by the artists is adapted from folk songs and folk tunes, and most of them are opera singing, and some are traditional songs that have been passed down to this day. Its playing instruments

are mainly wind instruments, supplemented by percussion instruments, so it is also called "sheng wind music", and folks are commonly called "concert". The styles of Hebei blowing songs are simple, vigorous, vivid, lively, and full of local folk music.

Hebei blowing songs mainly include east Hebei blowing song, central Hebei blowing song and south Hebei blowing song. East Hebei blowing song is represented by Tangshan flower blowing. central Hebei blowing songs are mainly popular in Dingzhou, Anguo, Xushui, Jingxian and other places, the main instrument is the pipe, and the auxiliary wind instruments are percussion instruments such as suona, flute, sheng, gongs, drums and cymbals, "one head and one harmony" and other forms, the form and melody are mostly the customs of the central Hebei Plain, and life flavor is very rich. The blowing songs in southern Hebei are mainly based on the blowing songs of Yongnian County.

## **2.2 The inheritance and development of Hebei blowing songs**

In recent years, with the development of society, despite the glorious history of Hebei blowing songs, various factors have greatly reduced the inheritance and development of folk instruments such as suona and pipe. The reasons can be summarized in four points, first, the rapid urbanization of rural areas, a large number of rural laborers continue to flow into cities, and as a result, artists in folk art associations such as folk blowing song association and yangko association are driven by economic interests, the number of peasants engaged in the wind and drum music in rural areas has decreased. Due to the changes in the social environment, the inheritance and development space of blowing songs has become smaller and smaller, which hinders the skill inheritance of the folk art predecessors of, and it is extremely disadvantageous for its inheritance and development. Secondly, in recent years, in response to the country's call for simple arrangements of weddings, funerals and other customs, the development of wind and drum music has also been affected to a certain extent. Third, farmers mainly till the land, their incomes are lower, and learning costs are higher, as a result, inheritors decrease. Finally, with the development of science, technology, culture, etc., and the influence of Western countries, students learn more Western musical instruments, which also affect the development and inheritance of wind and drum music.

## **2.3 Development significance of Hebei blowing songs**

Hebei blowing song is a folk art that mainly reflects the life and music culture of farmers in Hebei, and it is a product of agricultural civilization. Hebei blowing songs are closely related to local folk farming and daily life, the social function of Hebei Chuuge cannot be ignored. It spreads the folk culture inherited from Hebei for thousands of years, reflects the differences in regional culture, economic life, social structure, folk customs, language, and religious beliefs, and interprets the customs of local people. Secondly, it records the cultures of different regions, so that the types and repertoires of Hebei blowing singing are diverse, and it absorbs and precipitates the local regional culture. Once again, people can judge social life in different eras based on Hebei blowing songs, and they can explore the historical and cultural style by appreciating the performances of blowing song artists.

# **3. Instrumental Music "Little Donkey"**

## **3.1 The overall introduction to the folk music "Little Donkey"**

"Little Donkey" ("Herd the Donkey") is a folk wind song circulated in Hebei. First of all, this piece of music was compiled and interpreted from the labor life of farmers, for example, herding the donkey, transporting, and farming. Therefore, farmers cherish donkeys very much, and sincerely understand the various states and sounds of donkeys. Secondly, this piece of music evolved from the yangko "Running Donkey", a folk song and dance in Hebei, so the content of "Little Donkey" is similar to "Running Donkey", it is full of joyful, lively, humorous, and crude and festive scenes.

The performance of "Little Donkey" adopts question-and-answer forms to talk, the main instrument is the pipe, and the auxiliary wind instruments are percussion instruments such as suona, flute, sheng, gong, drum, and cymbal. In order to enhance the humorous effect, pipe uses complicated techniques such as shuan pipe and double spitting, sometimes accompanied with other wind and percussion

instruments, depict the lively scene of farmers "running donkeys" during the festive season (every festive occasion, farmers wear colorful clothes and gather together, the performers have a man and a woman, the women put on donkey-shaped props and pretend to be riding the donkey, the men lead and drive the donkey, both the donkey rider and the donkey driver all perform "running donkey steps, uphill steps, downhill steps, big running, scared donkey jumping" and other actions in dance steps to make everyone laugh).

### **3.2 Introduction to the "Little Donkey" instrumental music**

A long note at the beginning of the music is played with pipe; it shows a shrewish, jocular, and humorous musical mood, it mimics the hissing of the donkey when farmer herding the donkey and the audience focus on him (it) from the beginning.

The first time people heard the music, it gave people a warm, rousing, humorous and pleasant feeling. The reason for this piece of music is that it is accompanied by wind and percussion instruments such as suona, hall drums, big gongs, and small cymbals, foil atmosphere, from slow to fast and ends in climax. The main part of the music has a strong Hebei folk song style, bold and unrestrained, has strong singing. From the point of view of the musical structure, it adopts the form of opening, developing, changing, re-opening, and concluding. In particular, each phrase has short or long repetition, which is called "double sentence" in folk. From the perspective of performance forms, it uses the pipe lead, accompanied by instruments such as suona and hall drums, forms a question-and-answer dialogue with the band, in the folks, people call this kind of concerted performance as "imitate mechanically", so that the expression of music emotions is more cheerful, powerful and vibrant.

### **3.3 Central Hebei pipe, south Hebei Suona**

#### **3.3.1. Central Hebei pipe**

The most popular in the Central Hebei plain is sheng pipe music, namely wind and drum music in south of Beijing, west of Tianjin, and north of Cangzhou and Dingzhou, and nearly 30 counties and cities, it is called as "concert" in folk. It is also called "pheng pipe music" because it is led by pipes and accompanied by sheng pipe.

The pipes in Hebei blowing songs can be based on different styles, so there are various techniques and musical forms, most of which are played by pipes, such as commonly used trill, shuan voice, portamento, liu voice, pad voice, double voice, tongue voice, dental and complicated playing skills, so that Hebei blowing song music are rich and colorful, and also makes pipe play an important role in wind and wind music.

The pipe originated from "Persia" (modern Iran), it is an oboe blowing instrument with a reed, the ancients called it "reed pipe" or "bili". In Xinjiang, China, more than two thousand years ago, the pipe became a universal musical instrument; it was introduced to the mainland from Xinjiang during the Sui Dynasty, nowadays, the pipe is more popular among the Chinese folk and has become a commonly used musical instrument by the northern people. The volume of the pipe is louder, the tone is rough and loud and the rural flavor is strong, and it is often the leader in the northern wind and percussion music. When playing, in addition to playing with the fingers, the use of breath and the control of the whistle are also important aspects of musical performance. This seems to have something in common with similar musical instruments suona, which will be introduced below. However, due to the differences in the form and whistle between the two, there are also differences in tone and style.

#### **3.3.2. South Hebei suona**

Around the 3rd century BC, suona was mostly circulated in Persia and Arabia, the name of suona was transliterated from ancient Posno. It was widely used in the late Ming Dynasty in our country and occupied an important position in opera music. Suona has a long history in our country, spread more than 20 provinces, cities, regions and dozens of ethnic groups, it develops rapidly and has always been regarded as an important member of our national musical instruments. South Hebei suona is mainly popular in Xingtai and Handan areas, it borders Henan to the south and Shandong to the east.

Suona has a bright tone, high volume, and high-pitched voice, but the mouth can use various techniques control the pitch, volume, and tone changes of the whistle, it is a very expressive instrument that can be played solo, accompaniment or ensemble. On May 20, 2006, Suona art was included in the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage lists with the approval of the State Council. The artistic characteristics of Suona as follows: according to different tunes, their characteristics are different, or warm and hot, or gentle and delicate, or simple and crude. The most representative piece of music is "Birds pay homage to the Phoenix", in the early 1950s; it won the Silver Award in the Folk Music Competition at the Fourth Youth Party.

#### **4. How to Inherit the Culture and Art of National Musical Instruments**

##### **4.1 Deeply recognizing the status of national musical instruments in Chinese traditional culture and art**

Establishing and inheriting national cultural traditions and promoting national music culture as the basic concept. Only Chinese traditional culture can maintain long-term vitality and carry forward its value.

##### **4.2 Protecting Chinese traditional culture-national instrumental music**

China is a country with 56 nationalities, there are various national musical instruments, national music culture has a long history, contents and forms are rich, and different national musical instruments show different folk customs characteristics, which are important manifestations of different national cultures in our country. The inheritance and development of our country's national musical instruments requires young people to jointly inherit these musical instruments with national characteristics.

##### **4.3 Co-opting and spreading foreign music culture to promote the development of the national music culture**

Due to the diverse nature of music, in order to promote the development of our national music, we must first respect, inherit, and bring forth our national music, form national cultural self-confidence, and secondly, understanding, learning, and using the music culture of all countries in the world. Carry forwarding and inheriting Chinese traditional culture and art, and build the artistry of Chinese traditional culture, its ultimate goal is to make Chinese traditional culture deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and go out of China and walk into the world. We must continue to absorb new and good art, develop national musical instruments, concentrate on research, learning and practice, broaden the world, broaden our horizons, enrich traditional cultural components, enhance the status of national musical instruments, run through the concept of multicultural music education, and make national musical instruments lead Chinese traditional culture and art at the forefront of the world.

#### **5. Conclusion**

To sum up, Hebei Chuange has the characteristic of "one song with various changes", the music originates from the labor life when farmers herding the donkeys. This shows the high flexibility and artistic creativity of folk artists. The ensemble of Hebei blowing song reflects the Chinese people's "harmony" and "harmony as beauty" aesthetic taste. Therefore, when playing Hebei blowing songs, it is necessary to pay attention to not only giving play to the characteristics of own instruments, but also taking into account the co-creation with other instruments, and mutual coordination and integration become the most perfect art, reflects the highest aesthetic philosophy of "harmony". However, these national musical instruments have unique performance skills, and the long-term neglect of folk performance art has made the traditional performance skills of national musical instruments not better protected and inherited.

Inheritance is the most fundamental guarantee for the long-term sustainable development of Hebei blowing songs. Intangible cultural heritage is the common property left to us by our ancestors, the exploration and protection, inheritance and development of traditional music culture not only reflect modern people's respect for ancestral culture, but also affirm their own history and national culture.

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