

Inheritance of the Jieshou Fishing Drum

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Abstract

In 2006, the Jieshou Fishing Drum (*Jieshou yugu*) was selected for inclusion in the first batch of the Anhui Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Project List. The only artist of the Jieshou Fishing Drum, Qingchen Miao, was also announced as a provincial inheritor of intangible cultural heritage by the Anhui Provincial Department of Culture in November 2008. This article serves as an entry point to the world, mainly introducing the artistic career of the Jieshou Fishing Drum, its artistic inheritance, and the preservation of the fishing drum tradition. It analyzes the challenges of preservation and actively explores effective methods of inheritance. This contribution has greatly advanced the research of the Jieshou Fishing Drum.

Keywords

Jieshou Fishing Drum
Inheritance
Qingchen Miao

Online publication: November 19, 2023

1. Introduction

Inheritors of intangible cultural heritage are individuals engaged in cultural activities such as production and performance, who are willing to pass on their exceptional skills or knowledge to designated individuals or groups as appointed by the government. Yucai Feng, a Chinese folk literary figure, once remarked, “The inheritance of national culture is diminishing, and every minute, folk culture fades away.” Currently, fishing drum music stands as one of the folk cultures that is at risk of fading away. It is imperative to preserve and prevent the loss of national culture as well as retrieve what has been lost ^[1].

Local communities and educational institutions should integrate local geography and national cultural traditions to develop music programs that reflect regional, national, and institutional characteristics. Incorporating local music culture into university music education, and exploring its path of inheritance, responds to the diversified trend in global music education and effectively promotes local folk culture ^[2].

The cultural economy underlying cultural tourism should not be overlooked. As an integral part of traditional culture, the fishing drum has the potential to generate substantial economic value in various forms

^[3]. Beyond serving as a cultural tourism resource, the fishing drum can also be cultivated as a distinctive global cultural phenomenon. The emerging cultural industry is akin to a dawning industry, integrating influential and appealing cultural elements into production and services, thereby enhancing social and economic benefits through increased cultural significance to improve market competitiveness. China's "Full-time Compulsory Education Music Curriculum Standard (2011 Edition)" emphasizes the development of music programs with regional, national, and institutional characteristics ^[4]. Local communities and educational institutions bear the responsibility of nurturing versatile music educators capable of transcending generations. However, music education is not a solitary endeavor; it requires comprehensive cooperation and coordination, with the government playing a crucial role in the process. Seeking government policies and regulations regarding music education in schools, as well as formulating teaching materials and training standards for educators, should encompass a comprehensive spectrum of teaching concepts and methodologies. This article aims to serve as a gateway to the global arena, endeavoring to establish a robust platform for the integration of professional music education and local musical traditions.

2. Jieshou Fishing Drum

The Jieshou Fishing Drum originated in the Ming Dynasty and flourished during the Daoguang period of the Qing Dynasty. It was adopted by Taoist priests with Taoism as the theme of discourse. When it spread to the folk through missionary work, it became popular in Jieshou, with a history of over four hundred years. The Jieshou Fishing Drum is one of the origins of the Henan Zhuizi genre and is also the precursor of the local rare drama genre, Daoqing, in China. The singing style that has been passed down to the present through several generations has undergone inheritance, innovation, and development, giving new connotations to the original narrative style. It serves as a comprehensive encyclopedia reflecting the social, political, economic, cultural, educational, ethical, moral, ethnic, and religious aspects of the Yingshui River Basin that reflects the common origins and development of the fishing drum and traditional opera. It is praised by

experts as the "living fossil" of the Yingshui River Basin and a "unique flower in Anhui's traditional performing arts."

The performance instruments of the Jieshou Fishing Drum consist of the Fish Drum Tube, commonly known as Daotongzi, with a diameter of 6 cm and a length of 120 cm. The tube body is made of high-quality bamboo, soaked in tung oil, wrapped with twine, coated with old lacquer, and one end is covered with pig heart skin. The elderly artist of the Jieshou Fishing Drum, Qingchen Miao, often uses a 130 cm long fishing drum tube that is made of bamboo with a central section (one joint with three thicker segments) for performances. When making fishing drum tubes, the bamboo must be hollowed out in the middle, with both ends being of similar thickness. The joints of the bamboo must be sawed off; typically there are five to six joints. After sawing off the joints, the bamboo sections are glued together one by one. One end of the bamboo must be covered with pig heart skin (the thin outer layer of pig heart) or python skin can also be used ^[5]. The other end remains open to facilitate sound transmission. Then, the bamboo is tightly wrapped with cotton cloth, followed by a layer of cotton thread and several coats of tung oil. After completing these steps, both ends of the bamboo are fastened with iron hoops to prevent cracking and finally wrapped with black adhesive tape to finish the process. Another instrument is the Jian Ban, which is a percussion instrument for the fishing drum. The performer holds the fishing drum tube vertically with the left arm and strikes the rhythm with the Jian Ban held in the left hand, while lightly tapping the drum skin with the index, middle, and ring fingers of the right hand to produce sound. There are three types of drumming rhythms: first, the Jian Ban strikes while the fishing drum beats lightly; second, the Jian Ban and fishing drum create a rhythmic pattern with the Jian Ban hitting the primary beats; third, the fishing drum and Jian Ban are struck simultaneously.

The performance style of the Jieshou Fishing Drum primarily involves a single performer singing while seated. However, when emotions intensify, occasional standing performances occur, with a focus on singing interspersed with recitations. Following a segment of singing, the performer sets down the drumboard and transitions to a storytelling format before resuming the

performance. Regarding vocal technique, the singing range of the Jieshou Fishing Drum spans from the low note 3 to the mid-range 6^[6]. Typically, the vocal range falls within 11 octaves, although individual notes may reach as high as octave I, expanding the range to 13 octaves. During performances, a one-word-one-note approach is often adopted, with occasional instances of melismatic singing. Vocalization in the Jieshou Fishing Drum incorporates both ascending and descending phrases, with different vocal tones used to express various emotions such as joy, anger, sorrow, happiness, sadness, urgency, worry, and melancholy, in accordance with changes in the plot and characters' emotions and thoughts. Rhythmic rhymes are sometimes incorporated into the melody of the singing to enhance pronunciation. The singing style typically features a slightly hoarse tone, characterized by clear articulation and powerful projection, resulting in lively performances. Occasionally, techniques such as swift recitations and wordplay are employed to captivate the audience, often eliciting applause. Furthermore, vibrato is frequently utilized in the singing of the Jieshou Fishing Drum, aiming to achieve a melodious and lingering quality. This technique is particularly suitable for expressing the elegant, melodious, and emotionally entangled sentiments that the low-pitched fishing drum excels at conveying, creating a harmonious intertwining of emotions and vocals^[7].

3. Inheritance of the Jieshou Fishing Drum

Qingchen Miao was born in Renzhai Township, Jieshou, where many folk artists specializing in Quyi performances, including zhuizi, fishing drum, big drum, and qinshu, gathered. Influenced by them since childhood, Qingchen Miao gradually developed a strong interest in these forms of traditional performing arts^[8].

In 1962, due to his artistic talent, Mingde Li, who was in charge of the Quyi Association, arranged for Qingchen Miao to learn performing arts there, becoming his first mentor. In his first year at the Quyi Association, Qingchen Miao learned to perform the big drum, followed by several years of learning zhuizi. During this period, Qingchen Miao returned to his hometown once and discovered an exceptional storytelling performance

of "Yang Family Generals" given by Minggui Wang. Captivated by the performance, he developed an interest in learning storytelling. With Mingde Li's consent, he later apprenticed under Minggui Wang to learn storytelling. Under the mentors' guidance, Qingchen Miao quickly mastered various forms of Quyi and distinguished himself among fellow Quyi performers.

In 1979, he became the captain of the Jieshou Quyi Troupe. Since the reform and opening of the Chinese nation from the late 1970s to the 1980s, Qingchen Miao has written performances reflecting the new people and events emerging in rural areas. These performances cover topics such as promoting neighborly harmony, family planning, observing laws and regulations, debunking superstitions, HIV prevention and control, and advocating for anti-corruption and integrity. In 1990, Qingchen Ming won the third prize at the Anhui Provincial Arts Festival for his performance of "The Credit Cooperative is Our Reliable Support." The Jieshou Fishing Drum performances he presented have won awards multiple times in domestic Quyi competitions.

Today, Qingchen Miao continues to tirelessly devote himself to the inheritance and development of the Jieshou Fishing Drum, dedicating himself to promoting the art of the fishing drum, nurturing new talents, and passing on his skills. He compiles teaching materials, serves as an instructor, and has successively organized nearly thirty training sessions for the Jieshou Fishing Drum. He also established the Jieshou Fishing Drum Quyi Troupe. His disciples, including Yan Li and over 30 other inheritors of the Jieshou Fishing Drum, are actively performing on stages across China throughout the year^[9]. Additionally, he has conducted lectures on the art of the Jieshou Fishing Drum at Anhui University, Fuyang Normal University, and other universities, spreading and teaching the art of the Jieshou Fishing Drum, and performing with students on the same stage.

4. Integrating classroom and community: establishing a social platform

The dwindling presence of the fishing drum, coupled with the mouth-to-mouth inheritance model and the shortage of professional researchers, poses numerous obstacles to the development of the Jieshou Fishing

Drum. The inheritance path is fraught with concerns, and urgent action is required. The author contends that the government should proactively implement measures to safeguard inheritors. With the backing of pertinent policies, inheritors can benefit from both material support and the spiritual fortitude of intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Jieshou Fishing Drum in local folklore can serve as seeds for inheritance in colleges and primary and secondary schools. Additionally, integrating fisheries with local tourism can pave the way for cultural industry development, ensuring a sustainable future for the Jieshou Fishing Drum. Increased attention towards the Jieshou Fishing Drum is eagerly anticipated, preserving its legacy for future generations.

For a prolonged period, music education in China has prioritized Western music, often neglecting traditional music. Educators responsible for preserving traditional music culture must acknowledge the nation's existing intangible cultural heritage. Leveraging geographical advantages and tapping into excellent teaching resources, renowned folk cultural inheritors should be invited to engage with universities. Through university programs, students can be cultivated in traditional music and instilled with an appreciation for traditional Chinese music culture, fostering a sense of national identity^[10].

Nevertheless, efforts towards the inheritance and protection of the Jieshou Fishing Drum remain

inadequate. Government support and public participation are indispensable. Swift development of school-based courses and comprehensive training for the preservation of the fishing drum tradition are necessary^[11]. This training should encompass professional development, short-term workshops, specialized conferences, and knowledge dissemination to grassroots personnel regarding intangible cultural heritage. Collaboration with the North China Cultural Research Center and seeking guidance from expert scholars will further enhance these efforts. Establishing effective communication channels will foster a conducive atmosphere for fishing drum inheritance.

5. Conclusion

Amidst the challenges posed by economic globalization and the modern entertainment industry, the Jieshou Fishing Drum faces uncertainties in maintaining its economic viability. However, this does not diminish the intrinsic allure of the Jieshou Fishing Drum or the audience's appreciation for it. In regions where local music cultures are endangered, it is imperative to acquaint students with their hometown music, cultivating an awareness and respect for these local musical traditions. The duty remains to reclaim the essence that has been lost.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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