

Summarization of the thesis paper: “Banhu Playing Techniques in Northern China.”

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Abstract

The first chapter is related to the introduction and background study. It shows the statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, the importance of this study, the description and definition of several terms related to this study, and the study's conceptual framework. The second chapter is related to the literature review. This chapter discusses Northern China, some basic knowledge about Banhu, some theories like musicology theory and western music theory. Finally, it is shown the outcome of reviewing some relevant literature. The third chapter is related to research methods, where the scope of the whole research and research process has been shown. The fourth chapter is related to the historical background of the Banhu. This chapter investigates the historical aspect of banhu fiddle, different stages of history, and Banhu's historical stages in the musical period. In the fifth chapter, the banhu playing technique has been analyzed where it is discussed some basic techniques of banhu, its stylized and modern techniques. The sixth chapter has analyzed banhu's selected compositions, including entry level, mid-level, and high-level composition. Finally, in the seven-chapter, the concluding remark of the whole thesis is shown and given some necessary suggestions.

Key Words: Banhu Playing, Music theory and Review

Introduction

This is a summarization paper of a thesis related to “Banhu Playing Techniques in Northern China”. The author of this thesis is Yun Meng. This thesis was submitted in February 2021 for the partial fulfillment of getting a Ph.D. degree in Music from Mahasarakham University. The primary determination of this thesis was to examine the Banhu playing techniques and their application. In this thesis, it has been investigated and examined the history of Banhu related to Northern China. It has also classified Banhu based on the difficulty of its playing technique. For this study, the qualitative research method has been used to collect and analyze the data. It has been used observational and interview method to collect the necessary data. It is conducted a field survey and collects required data from Banhu players, banhu educators, and fans. Based on this thesis it has been found lots of things related to Banhu. For instance, it is found the sound, structure, function related to Banhu, its musical characteristics in several periods. It is found three types of banhu playing techniques, including general, stylistic, and modern playing techniques. In this thesis, it has also shown the way by which Banhu is used in the music sector with given necessary examples.

There are seven chapters in this thesis. The first chapter is related to the introduction and background study. It shows the statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, the importance of this study, the description and definition of several terms related to this study, and the study's conceptual framework. The second chapter is related to the literature review. This chapter discusses Northern China, some basic knowledge about Banhu, some theories like musicology theory and western music theory. Finally, it is shown the outcome of reviewing some relevant literature. The third chapter is related to research methods, where the scope of the whole research and research process has been shown. The fourth chapter is related to the historical background of the Banhu. This chapter investigates the historical aspect of banhu fiddle, different stages of history, and Banhu's historical stages in the musical period. In the fifth chapter, the banhu playing technique has been analyzed where

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In the following summarization paper, it will be firstly summarized the theory and literature review related to banhu. Then it will be summarized the historical and development aspects of Banhu where it will be shown the description and general knowledge of Banhu, the history & development of banhu. After that, it will be summarized the banhu playing techniques and banhu selected composition. Finally, it will be shown the conclusion of the entire summary paper.

Summarization of the theory and literature review

The literature review section has reviewed some relevant literature related to the historical aspects of banhu, its origin & development aspects, and its technical aspect. This chapter also discusses Northern China, some basic knowledge about Banhu, some theories like western music theory. Banhu was used to convoy operas during the time of the opera period. The category of Banhu is almost similar to Western violins. The Banhu may be used in different ways within traditional Chinese music. It may be played with one string held lightly against the player's left hand to give more volume and clarity to the sound. The banhu is a typical instrument of Beijing Opera, particularly in the Northern and Shanxi provinces. The general sound quality of the banhu depends on the instrument's pitch range, the tonality and register of the music it is playing, and its use of fingering. It was developed for collaborative and solo music with various timbers and woods. And this instrument has been developed with changing the time. Banhu has started representing the ethical culture of the Northern Chinese. So, along with knowing the detailed technical aspects of banhu, it is essential to know the history and development aspects of banhu. During the 1950s to 1960s, the banhu performers and instrument makers carried out a series of transformations and reforms based on the principle of its sound, performance & style characteristics. After becoming banhu's structure, articulation, and procedure more reasonable than earlier, it made banhu a solo musical instrument and arrived at a new period of banhu Art. Over the changing period, now banhu has become one of the famous solo musical instruments for folk music, opera, dance, and vocal accompaniment.

Under the literature review section of this thesis, it has been used several musicology theories to understand the whole thesis properly. It is initially analyzed the status quo and musical instrument. Then it is discussed the western music theory where included harmony, form musical instruments, and basic music theory. In history, North China comprises multiple nationalities. North China is the birthplace of Chinese civilization and served as the center of political power, economy, population, and culture. Northern China is locked and bordered by numerous other non-Han powers that have attacked China for territorial gains throughout the centuries. The biggest problem with Western Music theory is how it explains rhythm so poorly. Even our notation system treats triplets and syncopations as complex, difficult-to-notate things. Yet, in most pieces of music, they are so simple that apprentice children learning the music can execute them flawlessly. In the related literature section, it is mainly found that all the authors mainly identified the lack of performance skills of banhu as the main problem of banhu. And some of the authors say that this problem is still existing in the banhu.

Summarization of history and development aspects of Banhu

Description and general knowledge of Banhu

The banhu is one of the traditional instruments of ancient Chinese traditional music. It is an integral part of Chinese opera and the traditional Chinese instrument orchestra. From the thesis, it is found

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that in the musical instrument sector of China, the banhu is classified as a bowed string instrument in the huqin family. Primarily it is used in China's northern area. The meaning of Ban from "banhu" is a piece of wood, and "hu" here is the short form of huqin. Banhu is often also called "banghu" as most of the time it is also used in Northern China's banzi opera. The Banhu may be used in different ways within traditional Chinese music. Banhu is the main instrument of both Luantan and Clapper opera. Most often, banhu is used as Solo or ensemble of Chinese local area's opera, and it is also called a principal stringed instrument. Over the hundreds of years, banhu was popularly used in the Northeast, Northwest, and north side of China. These local areas' operas basically absorbed this instrument. Over the changing period, now banhu has become one of the famous solo musical instruments for folk music, opera, dance, and vocal accompaniment. Now different types of banhus appear in different regions of China with their different design, different pattern, and very identical and unique color.

History of Banhu

From the thesis, it is found that Banhu has a history of more than 300 years. Banhu is one of the Chinese traditional musical instruments. And this instrument has been developed with changing the time. So, along with knowing the detailed technical aspects of banhu, it is essential to know the history and development aspects of banhu. Therefore, in the following thesis, it has been given more emphasis on banhu's development and historical aspects. By considering all these aspects, it has been designed the conceptual framework of this thesis as Banhu in Northern China that includes the historical and development aspects of banhu. Then it talks about Banhu techniques and selected composition of banhu and the ways banhu is used in music composition.

Based on the thesis, the history of banhu can be categorized into three periods. The first, second, and third periods are the pioneer period, opera period, and musical period. During the pioneer period, banhu was used to playing court music. Banhu was used to convoy operas during the time of the opera period. And during the musical period, banhu was used as a sound, solo instruments, style features, sound, and many more. In the musical period, banhu can be differentiated into three different periods. The early period was the developing period of banhu music. The participants of banhu have played a vital role in improving their traditional form of opera banhu into a new category of mezzo-banhu and treble-banhu. It was developed for the purpose of collaborative and solo music with various timbers and woods. That helped to make banhu's structure, its articulation, and procedure more reasonable than earlier. Traditionally, banhus are fixed from a single piece of hardwood. The fretting finger of the musician and the thumping finger of the machine maker goes into the vise-like back of the instrument, meeting in the joint in the middle of the back piece. The top plate of the instrument is usually made of wood, carved in the form of a maple figure. The top plate is usually carved into a figure with six fingers to represent the performer's palm. Most banhu are found with two or four strings, most often made of silk or other plastics, with a single piece of metal wound around a central scroll called yang. Initially, the banhu was played with a qinhu or curved bamboo bow, but the bamboo variety is long since replaced with a heavier metal one as it is easier to play.

The category of Banhu is almost similar to Western violins. It can be categorized into Viola, Violin, Cello, and also Centra by pitch. By pitch, banhu is categorized into three different forms: mezzo-banhu, treble-banhu, and euphonium-banhu. It is found that mezzo-banhu has been developed from qin opera banhu. Treble-banhu has been developed from Hebei banhu and by the expansion and development of Shanxi opera banhu Euphonium banhu.

Initially, banhu was one of the instruments of bangzi opera. During the periods of 1950s to 60s, a series of revolutions and reforms are carried out by the banhu performers and instrument makers based on the principle of its sound, performance & style characteristics. Based on these transformations, a

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new type of banhu has been developed with its distinct timber characteristics for Band Ensemble. These successful musical instrument reforms made banhu easier to compose music. Further, it has also been taken initiatives to reduce the weight of hanhu, which made banhu super easier to compose music by the performers. Because of these reforms, banhu was started to use widely, and banhu started to play Solo. With changing times, banhu has also gradually developed and transformed into modern banhu for creating music, offering musical instruments training, performance, and theoretical research in China. By passing all these steps, banhu became a part of the Chinese musical instruments family. There are two standard styles of playing the banhu in different locations. A Beijing style is considered more advanced, whereas a Shanxi style is considered more popular. Though these styles are related to each other, the Beijing style is frequently used in music education in China, so it is generally more well-known.

Development of banhu

Banhu came into existence in the sixteenth century as the Chinese tradition and became popular later in the eighteen century and remains into existence today. Banhu was later categorized into various types. One which is most popular is Banghu which was being noticed mostly in Northern China. In this tradition, bow is being proceeded between the two cords and it is mostly made by the coconut shell, which is played mostly during the folk festivals to represent folk music. It is also made up of bamboo shells as well where it is mainly used in Northern China while representing their tradition. It is also known by different names in most Chinese traditions. To make banhu strings, thread, coconut shell, and hair string are used in order to generate music from the instrument.

This instrument has had a long tradition in Chinese musical culture and is found throughout China. In some communities, it is also an integral part of an opera. This instrument has been used in its present form since last three hundred years. The soprano is one type of banhu mainly used at folk festivals, as the Chinese want to produce high pitch sound. Banhu has a very different sound that is different from other sound producing instruments and shows its uniqueness. It is played during folk festivals. Banhu is played nowadays, at different places and depending on the culture of different places instrument is being played.

Banhu has started representing the ethical culture of the Northern Chinese, which can now improve the performance of the people who play Banhu as it mainly played solo, it has a clear tone along with flawless and smooth at the same time. The banhu is the most commonly used bowed string instrument of modern Chinese music. It is a musical instrument for performing traditional Chinese music and music for the shadow plays which is still very popular in southern China. The banhu has a conical bore. The banhu has one fixed bridge to produce the sound. The banhu usually has a single fretted bass string. The banhu is held vertically while the zheng is held horizontally. It is played with a wooden stick. It is slightly less than two feet long.

After becoming banhu's structure, articulation, and procedure more reasonable than earlier, it made banhu a solo musical instrument and arrived at a new period of banhu Art. In that modern period, it appeared in several musical works, and most of them were related to opera works and local folk music. Banhu has its stagnation period too. During this period, the development of banhu was relatively slower because of the "Cultural Revolution." Modern-day Banhu music can be subdivided into two broad traditions, the western and eastern (in Africa and in Southern China), respectively. The banhu is widely played in the same bamboo flute family. Originally, the banhu was played with a naked twig held between the thumb and the right-hand index finger. In modern China, the instrument is usually played with a metal banhu shawl, a type of Tibetan instrument. Many players also use the blue reed made of bamboo. Many contemporary banhu players have retired from the instruments, leaving traditional styles that are sometimes difficult to play for beginners. There is a craze for young women

playing traditional banhu and for teaching their skills to novice performers. In the 1990s, due to the popularity of "Bangzi, banhu players were able to begin to play for the music of clapper opera and other types of traditional Chinese music.

Summarization of banhu playing techniques

In the fifth chapter of this thesis, the banhu playing technique has been analyzed where it is discussed some basic techniques of banhu, its stylized and modern techniques. This section has discussed the general technique of playing banhu like the way of touching strings, bowstring movement technique, the way to use sliding notes, etc. The basic technique section has been said about the sitting position, technique of holding banhu, finger on the string technique, press the strings, etc. In the stylized techniques section, it is discussed Glissando, Tremolo-bow, and shake-bow. And in the modern techniques section, it is talked about fast speed sequence, double chord, slow speed-bow, fast speed-bow, and some other types of bows.

Banhu performers hold the banhu between their thumb and index finger, with the index finger of the same hand touching the banhu placket and index and middle fingers of the other hand touching the other to allow the banhu to be played quickly in time to the accompaniment. Unlike most traditional Chinese flutes, the right-hand holds the banhu in a relaxed position while the left hand is almost always playing an instrument. The banhu is usually played in two octaves. However, more adventurous players can play all the tones on a significant scale, unlike western bamboo flutes, where the tone of a single note can be varied from instrument to instrument by changing the position of the fingerboard, in traditional Chinese music, the duration of each tone is determined by the position of the plucked or bowed strings. As a result, each string on the banhu is played separately in different keys. The harmonics are created by striking the strings rapidly with a single finger.

The primary technique used for playing the banhu is thought to be a transmission technique used by monks; for example, they play the same note at the same time to reinforce the main harmony of the song or poem. The words are thought to be composed of two tones and a half-tone, with a connecting "bridge" note, or "emperor note". For example, a singing of a long poem would include one-eighth note for each half note of the main melody. This system makes the playing of the banhu sound similar to playing scales on a piano, as the scale is built up in several key relationships.

In traditional Chinese music, a performer must play the banhu with the heel of the index and middle fingers of his or her left hand while his or her right-hand holds the banhu in the usual manner. The heel of the left-hand acts as a fulcrum to determine the drone pitch, a convenient and universal method of keeping the tone and harmony of the music is critical. Like all Chinese traditional musical instruments, the banhu requires several pitches drawn from the diatonic scale, with the major pitches of each triad being drawn with the forefinger, with the minor notes being played with the index finger and the semitones with the pinky finger. It may be played with one string held lightly against the player's left hand, to give more volume and clarity to the sound; with both hands playing in unison, to produce a ringing, sonorous sound; or with one hand holding the string and the other playing a bass line, to give a harsh, dark tone.

The banhu developed into the qinhu, because it is able to replicate the sound of the qinhu. Usually, people play the qinhu with a string instrument, the guqin. However, the banhu can be played with a neck instrument such as a violin or a guqin. The piece called the tong is the smaller one. The person playing the banhu has to make a turning motion using the tong piece. This is called tonging. It is common in the northern part of China, particularly in Qinghai province. The distance between the lü and the tong is around one centimeter. This makes the lü to be light and soft, and also makes the tone to be clear and powerful.

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The general sound quality of the banhu depends on the instrument's pitch range, the tonality and register of the music it is playing, and its use of fingering. When the instrument is strummed, it produces a relatively simple, relaxing sound. The body of the banhu is called the fen. The back part is called the sheng. The body itself is not very heavy so that the banhu can be played easily. The sound quality can also be improved by using different pieces of wood. It can also increase the volume if it makes use of the string holder, called the lantian.

Summarization of banhu selected composition

It is found that in this section of the thesis it has been analyzed banhu selected compositions, including entry-level composition, mid-level composition, and high-level composition.

In the 1980s, the entry-level composition is adopted by Liu Minyuan. That adaptation of bandu composition was named "Yue ya wu geng". This work of Liu Minyuan is widely popular and get recognition from the music industry. Every beginner is needed to learn this bandu composition.

For the mid-level composition, it has been chosen " quig river if the year". This composition contains several basic and stylized techniques. During the time of 1960s, three famous Professors together composed a bandu solo based on a very separate tone of Hebei opera. This project has mainly emphasized the regional comparison of banhu techniques used by the present and past people who live in the bank of the qing river.

At the end of the 1980s new thinking and technique related to banhu had been created by Zhao Duoliang. The name of that High-Level banhu composition was "Xiang xi yin hua". This is considered a masterpiece of banhu composition. Over the last 20 years, this work has gained a new dimension in the field of banhu performance art. This composition work is considered a national instrumental musical work that has expressed the proposition of music in the form of the band and mezzo-banhu.

Conclusion

Banhu is one of the traditional instruments of ancient Chinese traditional music. Banhu has a history of more than 300 years. Once banhu was popularly used in the Northeast, Northwest, and north side of China. It is an integral part of Chinese opera and the traditional Chinese instrument orchestra. And this instrument has been developed with changing the time. So, along with knowing the detailed technical aspects of banhu, it is essential to know the history and development aspects of banhu. In this thesis, it has been investigated and examined the history and development of Banhu related to Northern China. The history of banhu can be categorized into three periods. The first, second, and third periods are the pioneer period, opera period, and musical period. During the pioneer period, banhu was used to playing court music. Banhu was used to convoy operas during the time of the opera period. In the musical period, banhu can be differentiated into three different periods. The early period was the developing period of banhu music. It has also classified Banhu based on the difficulty of its playing technique. From the reviewing of literature it is found that most of the authors identified the lack of performance skills of banhu as the main problem of banhu. And some of the authors say that this problem is still existing in the banhu. Banhu has started representing the ethical culture of the Northern Chinese. So, along with knowing the detailed technical aspects of banhu, it is essential to know the history and development aspects of banhu. Initially, banhu was one of the instruments of bangzi opera. Banhu came into existence in the sixteenth century as the Chinese tradition and became popular later in the eighteen century and remains into existence today. During the periods of 1950s to 60s, a series of revolutions and reforms are carried out by the banhu performers and instrument makers based on the principle of its sound, performance & style characteristics. Because of these reforms, banhu was started to use widely, and banhu started to play Solo. With changing times, banhu has also gradually developed and transformed into modern banhu for creating music, offering musical

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