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### The Performance Art of Bamboo Flute of the North and South School in China

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#### Abstract

The Chinese bamboo flute was one of the most representative traditional musical instruments in China. According to the archaeology research, it had a history of more than eight thousand years. In the 1950s, the bamboo flute was officially put on the stage as a solo instrument, and formed the South school represented by the Qu flute and the North school represented by the Bang flute. This paper introduced the history of the bamboo flute, and through the performance analysis of 4 representative pieces, summarized the main performance techniques of the South school and the North school, as well as the music style.

#### Keywords

bamboo flute; South school; North school; performance technique

**JEL Classifications:** J11, F43

#### 1. Introduction

Chinese Bamboo flute is one of the most representative traditional national musical instruments in China. The Encyclopedia of China has the following description for the bamboo flute: "Chinese flute, blowing hole and whistling instrument. It is mostly made of bamboo, also known as bamboo flute; because of horizontal blowing, it is also known as horizontal flute. It is widely used in the accompaniment of Chinese opera and folk art, as well as the solo and ensemble of instrumental music... There are many kinds of bamboo flutes, and the most commonly used are Qu flute and Bang flute." (*Encyclopedia of China*, 2011) In

1977, the bone whistle and bone flute unearthed at Hemudu ancient cultural site in Yuyao, Zhejiang of China, they were made 7000 years ago after scientific determination. From 1986 to 1987, the other bone flute unearthed at the ancient cultural site of Jiahu in Wuyang, Henan Province of China, they was determined to be 7920 (+150) years ago after scientific determination. These bone flutes are made of the bones of large birds. They are about 20cm long and 1.1cm in diameter. They are open at both ends. Most of them have seven sound holes, and some of them still have marks marked before the opening. The most intact one can play six tone scale and seven tone scale. "The discovery of these musical instruments shows that there was a very developed music culture in China at that time." (Zeng, 1995) why are they made of bone instead of bamboo? "It should be due to the durability of bamboo, bamboo flute can't be saved for thousand years." (Wang, 2014) This just shows that bamboo flute has a long history. Bamboo flute evolved from the bone flute. In the West Zhou Dynasty, according to the different materials for making musical instruments, they were divided into eight categories: gold, stone, earth, leather, silk, wood, pao and bamboo, which were called "Eight tones", and bamboo refers to flute type instruments. In ancient Chinese poetry literature, many literary works involving bamboo flute have been handed down for thousands of years and become an important part of Chinese culture. During the Yuan Dynasty, Chinese operas were very popular. Bamboo flute was often used as the main accompaniment instrument of Kunqu opera, Bangzi opera and other operas, resulting in new classified names such as "Qu flute" and "Bang flute". In 1953, folk artist Feng Zicun first played bamboo flute solo works "*Happy meeting*" and "*Flying kites*" on the stage, which caused great repercussions in China. Since then, bamboo flute has officially stepped onto the performance stage in the modern sense. It can not only accompany and ensemble, but also become a popular solo instrument on the stage.

This paper takes the performance art of bamboo flute as the research object, studies the South school represented by Qu flute and the North school represented by Bang flute, raise the following questions: 1. How did Qu flute and Bang flute was invented and developed? 2. What are the similarities and differences between North school and South school of bamboo flute in performance techniques? 3. What's the differences between North and South school of bamboo flute in playing style? Therefore, I interviewed representatives of the following four groups: (1) Professional performers of bamboo flute; (2) Teachers of bamboo flute in professional colleges; (3) Folk artists engaged in bamboo flute performance; (4) Composers who often write music works for bamboo flute. The time range of bamboo flute works studied in this paper is limited to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Relevant materials are collected and sorted out through relevant historical research literature, audio and video materials, character interviews, performance observation and so on, as the research basis.

## 2. Research Objectives

1. To clarify the history of the emergence and development of the names of Qu flute and Bang flute;
2. To analyze the similarities and differences in the performance techniques between the South school and the North school flute;
3. To explain the different musical styles of the North and South school bamboo flute performance.

### 3. Literature Review

After reading, analysis and screening, a part of the literature directly related to this topic is selected as a reference. For the first research objective, here are some literature. "Chinese Flute is not only the oldest musical instrument in China, but also all wind instruments." (Songting, 1983) Zhao Songting used a large amount of historical data to organize the origin of bamboo flute. Wang Zichu cited a large number of ancient documents, combined with the cultural relics of Mawangdui in Changsha, Hunan Province and Zenghouyi Tomb in Suixian County, Hubei Province. Through rigorous analysis, he thought that "the flute of today is developed and evolved on the basis of ancient Chinese flute and Western Hu flute." "At least more than 2000 years ago, the Chinese have used bamboo flute, it is obviously not correct to say that flute originated in the Western region." (Wang, 1988) Fang Jianjun studied the bamboo flute musical instruments of the Pre-Qin and Western Han dynasties, on the origin of the flute, the author negates the "From western" and "From external" on the origin of the flute, saying that "the origin of the flute in our country will be pushed up to at least seven or eight thousand years, and the origin of the flute is at least two places, they are in the middle reaches of the Yellow River and the lower reaches of the Yangtze River ." (Fang, 1989) Zeng Suijin given the meaning of "Culture" above bamboo flute , it is discussed from three aspects, it says "the bamboo flute has been placed by the ancients on the sacred desire to govern in ancient Chinese written records." "Chinese flute is a magic flute." (Zeng, 1995, 1996) I think, this assessment is objective and pertinent. Among all kinds of flute instruments in the world, only Chinese bamboo flute has a membrane hole and is pasted with bamboo film or Reed film to make its pronunciation more crisp and clear, thus producing unique timbre. Qu Guangyi have made the research about bamboo with membrane. "The appearance of the film bamboo flute may be early to the early years of the Western Han Dynasty, more than two thousand years ago." Qu Zhang Na believes that the development of Chinese bamboo flute art has undergone the development process of "great unification" (Zhang, 2015), North-South differentiation, North-South integration, and China-west integration. The above literature is only part of the chapter.

The bamboo flute playing technique includes three main parts: breath, finger and tongue, they are inseparable in actual performance. Zhu Hanbin believed that, from the early 20th century to the 1950s, "in terms of performing techniques, the traditional playing techniques were mainly used, such as: the performance skills in the north include 'spit, slide, stamp, and trill tongue', and the performance skills

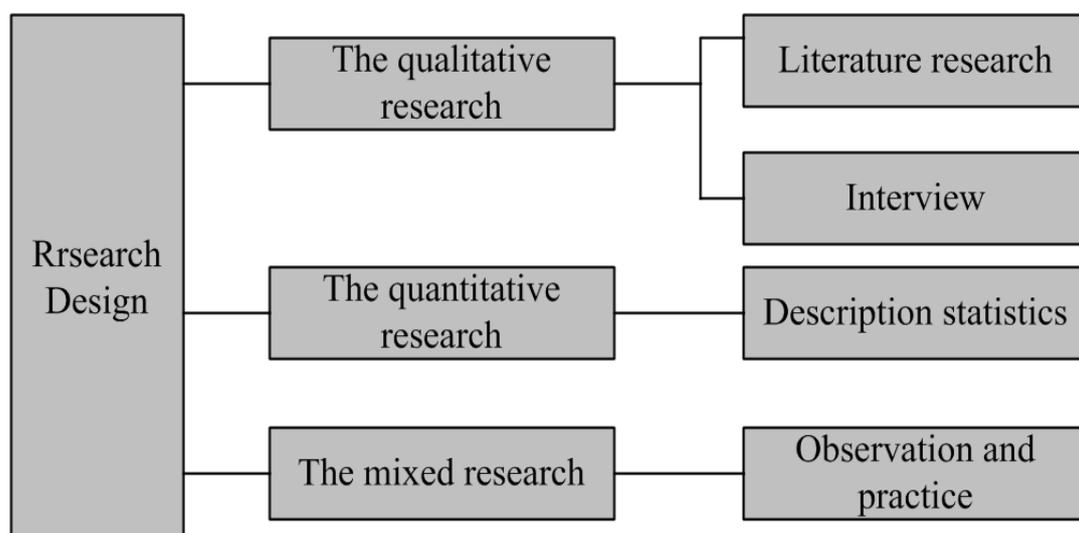
in the south include 'trill, overlapping, giving, and beating.'"(Hanbin, 2000). The playing techniques are closely related to the style of bamboo flute. The bamboo flute performance styles are mainly divided into the South and North genres in history, and they are almost connected with the types of opera in different regions, and they are different from each other in performance skills and musical characteristics. However, the bamboo flute music after the reform and opening up the work has gradually weakened the geographical boundaries of the North and South, showing the new characteristics of North and South blending."Different forms of flute and playing skills, the formation of flute tone style has a direct and profound impact." (Zhan, 1997) From the point of view of flute melody,"the composition of flute melody and flute music style, it is closely linked with the different creative techniques, the expression of music image and the use of music materials. It is one of the important factors that constitute the style and genre of flute music in the North and South." Combined with the form of band accompaniment." (Zhan, 1997)

#### 4. Research Methodology

The qualitative research of the research object in this paper will involve the role and status of bamboo flute in the history of music development, mainly using the following research methods:Literature research and Interview.

The quantitative research involves the analysis of the types and characteristics of bamboo flute playing techniques, the analysis of representative bamboo flute works, and the analysis of representative performers.The following methods are mainly used:Description statistics.

The mixed research mainly involves the personal experience and practice of the music style of bamboo flute about the North and South schools, mainly using the following methods:Observation and practice.



#### 5. Research Findings

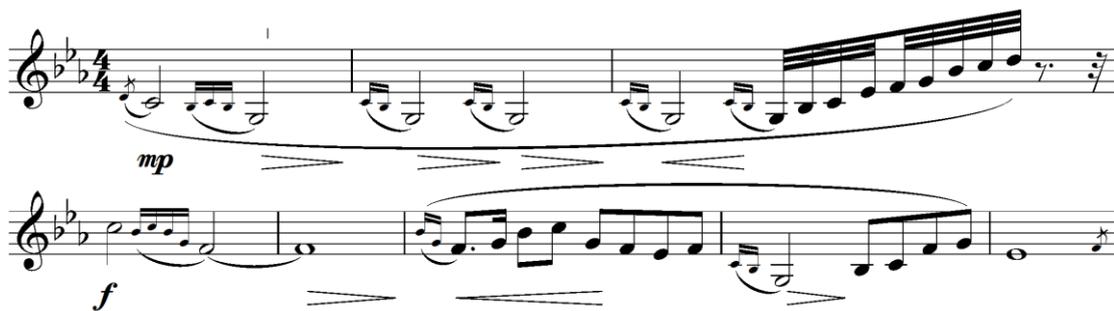
The Qin Mountain and Huai River line is what we often call the geographical dividing line between North and South China. The northern and southern of this line are different in terms of geographical features, climatic conditions, people's mode of production and cultural customs. Bamboo flute has a long history and spread widely in time and space. Influenced by the factors of North and South, it has formed obvious cultural differences, and gradually has the distinction of South school and North school in terms of music style. There are some commonalities between them, that is, most of the creative materials come from opera and folk music. Bamboo flute is often used as the accompaniment of opera singing in history. It is natural to absorb and develop opera factors and integrate them into itself. For example, the Northern Style bamboo flute works and performance technology are deeply influenced by Northern operas such as Errentai and Bangzi opera, while the Southern style bamboo flute works and performance technology are deeply influenced by operas and folk music such as Kunqu Opera, Southern opera and Jiangnan Silk and Bamboo. The vast northwest and the Loess Plateau with thousands of gullies make the northern music high pitched, rough, simple and vigorous. The gentle, quiet and tranquil water town in the south of the Yangtze River is consistent with the gentle, smooth, beautiful and graceful southern music style. This is the internal reason for the different character of North and South school music. As a national musical instrument closely related to people's life, bamboo flute also shows this different musical "character" incisively and vividly. Represented by Zhao Songting and Lu Chunling, the South school bamboo flute is good at using the low, gentle and soft tone of Qu flute to express the mild temperament in the southern culture. Represented by (Qu) the North school bamboo flute is good at using the loud, and crisp timbre of Bang flute to express the bold and rough character and temperament of the people in the north. There are obvious differences in performance technology and music style between the northern and southern bamboo flute music works, which is not only reflected in technology, but also reflected in music materials, composition techniques and emotional content.

### **5. The Bamboo Flute of South School**

South school flute is closely related to Kunqu art in China. As the Kunqu flute player Jiang Feng who I interviewed said, "Kunqu represents a model in the music aesthetics of the south, especially in the south of the Yangtze River." The South school bamboo flute playing skills include trill(vibrato), overlapping, giving and beating, which has formed the unique performance art style and group performance mode of the South school of Chinese bamboo flute. The representative works of bamboo flute works of South school include "*Orchid meeting the spring*", "*Gusu walking*", "*Happy song*", "*Partridge flying*", "*Three-five-seven*", "*Erfan*" and so on.

### 5.1 Performance Analysis of Bamboo Flute Work "Orchid Meeting the Spring"

"Orchid meeting the spring" was created by Zhao Songting and Cao Xing. The music material is based on Kunqu music. This work is a ternary form with introduction and ending. It is played with the fingering of "Mi" and C or B-flat key. The total number of bars in the whole work is 170, but it may increase according to the performer. Introduction (bars 1-18), it emphasizes the strong and weak contrast of breath at the beginning, as well as the application of vibrato, overlapping and giving tone techniques, which requires the performer to have strong breath control ability.



Section A (bars 19-45), Adagio, shows the mood of elegance like song and admiration. It mainly focuses on the playing skills such as vibrato and overlapping tone. The dense rhythm with dotted note reflects a certain power. Although it is adagio, but contains internal tension.



Section B (bars 46-116) turns to the fingering of "sol", and actually turns to C major key. The color of tone is much brighter. Through the introduction of 9 bars, it enters the Allegro part, with happy mood, dexterous and elastic fingers, especially the vibrato part, which forms a bright contrast with the adagio part.



Section C (bars 117-170) is a technical colorful section, which uses fast flexible finger vibrato and circular breathing technology to push the mood of the whole song to a climax. "Orchid meeting the spring" is the work of Mr. Zhao Songting in the mature period of his artistic career. It is not only a revolution in the systematization and standardization of bamboo flute, but also a sublimation of artistic creation.

### 5.2 Performance Analysis of Bamboo Flute Work "Gusu Walking"

Gusu is the ancient name of Suzhou City in China. "Gusu walking" shows the pleasure of tourists when they visit Suzhou gardens. "In terms of melody creation techniques, this work adopts the tonal materials of Kunqu Opera and scales with national characteristics. In terms of musical form structure, it also absorbs the creation techniques of ternary form from western music...The melody is beautiful, elegant, lyrical and has profound connotation and artistic conception." (Q. Liu, 2000) This music is a three-segment music form with reappear section. The structure is A+B+A<sup>1</sup>with introduction. It is played with the fingering of "Sol" in C key. Introduction (bars 1-8). The melody is like a curved long line. With the strength of the strong and weak changes, it shows a dynamic process from tranquility to excitement, and then back to tranquility. In terms of playing techniques, trill and overlapping are mainly used, coupled with stable breath control and relatively free rhythm, which seems to outline the rough outline of the beautiful landscape of the garden.



The speed of section A (bars 9-47) is an elegant andante, which shows the relaxed and comfortable state of tourists walking and watching while entering the garden. According to the characteristics of melody development, this part can be divided into three segments: a, b and c, mainly showing the theme of "walking". In terms of performance technology, it integrates trill, overlapping tone, giving tone and beating tone, and then combines the strength control of breath to express delicate, soft and relaxed emotions.



Section B (bars 48-81) is a passionate allegro. The melody is lively and fluctuates greatly, forming a sharp contrast with the front, just like the excitement of tourists intoxicated with the beautiful scenery of the garden, and also like the vivid scene of children chasing and playing, setting off a cheerful and lively atmosphere. It emphasizes lightness and fluency in performance, pushing the music emotion to the climax, and it is important to pay special attention to the control of strength and breath.



Section A<sup>1</sup> (bars 82-94) was the reappear theme of section A. The length of the passage was reduced, and the speed was more relaxed. It showed that tourists love the beautiful scenery and reluctant to leave. In terms of the performance technique, the application of the trill, overlapping tone, giving tone, and the beating tone seemed to be more elegant and unhurried.

### 5.3 The Bamboo Flute of North School

The bamboo flute works of North style have the following four characteristics: ① Most of them use Bang flute in G and A key; ② the music style is rough and unrestrained, combining hardness and softness; ③ They mainly use spitting, sliding, stamping, trill tongue and other playing techniques; ④ Most of the music content is adapted by performers according to local folk songs, operas and other traditional music, showing a cheerful and lively life scene. North school bamboo flute represented by (C. Liu, 1991) Guanyue. The style is vigorous and bold, forming a unique performance art style and group performance mode of the North School of Chinese bamboo flute. The representative works of bamboo flute works of the North school include "Happy meeting", "Five Bangzi", "Bird in the shade", "Hanging the red light", "Selling vegetables" and so on. The following is the performance analysis of two representative works.

### 5.4 Performance Analysis of Bamboo Flute Work "Happy Meeting"

"Happy meeting" is one of the most important representative works of North school bamboo flute. It is adapted by Feng Zicun, a famous bamboo flute player. The music material is a folk song of Inner Mongolia before. In the process of spreading, it gradually integrates the musical elements of North opera Errentai and Bangzi opera. The musical style of Errentai is rough and bold, which is obvious in this work. This work is played with the fingering of "Re" in G key. The music consists

of four sections. The first section is the presentation of the theme, and the last three sections are three different variations, which belong to the variation form (A-A<sup>1</sup>-A<sup>2</sup>-A<sup>3</sup>) from the perspective of musical form.

Section A (bars 1-30) starts from a slower speed and gradually speeds up. In terms of performance techniques, it mainly uses spitting, sliding and trill tongue to express the rising joy.



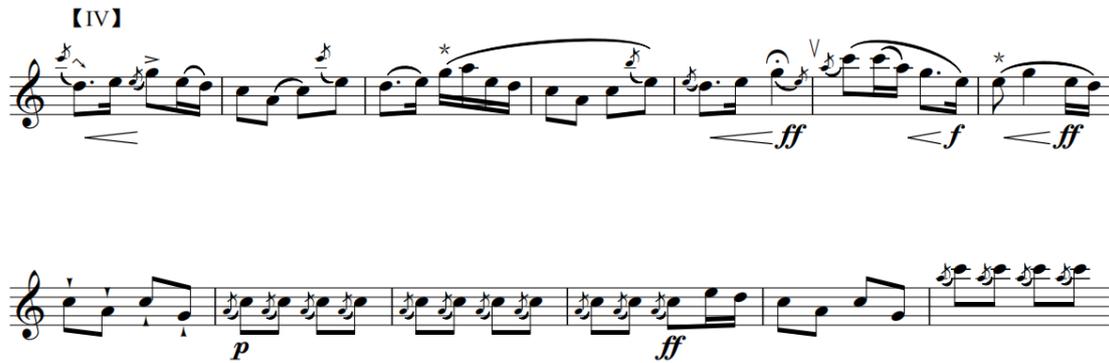
Section A<sup>1</sup> (bars 31-58)) is the first variation of the theme. The speed is 92 beats per minute, but it needs to be played with an "elegant" expression. Here, the performance techniques such as spitting, sliding and stamping are mainly used, and the bold and rough momentum is gradually formed.



Section A<sup>2</sup> (bars 59-86) is the continuation and upsurge of the theme of "joy". The speed reached 176 beats per minute, more than three times the initial speed. This section makes a lot of use of spitting technology, including single spitting, double spitting and three spitting, such as the crisp sound of horseshoes, running out of happy notes.

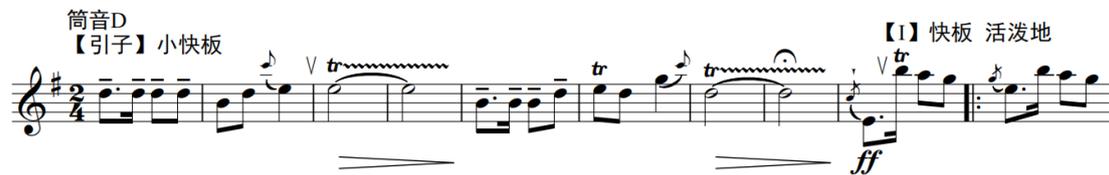


Section A<sup>3</sup> (bars 87-114) is the third variation of the theme, "trill tongue" performance technique appears repeatedly here, setting off the high enthusiasm of the emotion and pushing the music emotion to a climax.



### 5. 5 Performance Analysis of Bamboo Flute Work "Bird in The Shade"

"Bird in the shade" is the masterpiece of Liu Guanyue, a famous flute player in China. He and Feng Zicun are the main representatives of the North school bamboo flute. This song is played with the fingering of "Sol" and in G key by Bang flute. The melody is cheerful and lively, and depicts a vibrant scene of hundreds of birds singing in the forest. It has a three-stage structure. The introduction (1-8 bars) expresses a cheerful and lively theme with full spit tone, sonorous and powerful stamp tone and fast vibrato.



The first passage (bars 9-61) is a lively allegro. The melody takes the progressive and downward short notes as the main musical vocabulary, combined with the auxiliary melody. Through the contraction and expansion of the phrase, the melody is combined with the sound of birds. Most melodic sounds are located in the middle and high tone range, but each stamp will fall on the bamboo tube in the low range, so as to achieve the balance. About playing technology, it mainly focuses on stamp and short vibrato.



The second section (bars 62-173) accounts for most of the whole work, and it is also the content that best reflects the characteristic theme. Here, the bamboo flute is used to imitate the sounds of skylarks, swallows, magpies and other birds. With the accompaniment of the band, it sets off the lively scene of hundreds of

birds in the forest and makes people feel the vigorous vitality of nature. The effect of glide has been brought into full play. It combined with stamp sound, spit sound, trill tongue sound and so on, it fully demonstrates the performance technology of North style bamboo flute.



The third section (bars 174-224) is the reappear of the theme of the music. The playing technology is the same as before, it is faster and more urgent to reach the climax of the music. The work "*Bird in the shade*" integrates the most distinctive performance techniques of the North school and has become one of the necessary repertoires for professional bamboo flute players.

## 6. Conclusion

Through data analysis, investigation, research and performance practice, combined with the setting of research objectives, the following research conclusions are as follows:

Conclusion 1: Through the analysis of a large number of historical materials and research documents, it is concluded that the prototype of Chinese bamboo flute has been seen from the bone flute unearthed 8000 years ago in Jiahu, Wuyang, Henan Province; Later, it developed into a bamboo flute, which was widely spread in the Qin and Han Dynasties and communicated with the music culture of the western regions. It developed in performance techniques and work contents. The bamboo flute played an important role in the advocacy music of the court and the army, and was more reasonable in rhythm and form; During the Tang and Song Dynasties, bamboo flute was active in the court and folk; During the Ming and Yuan Dynasties, bamboo flute became the main accompaniment instrument for opera performance, so the titles of Qu flute and Bang flute gradually appeared. Qu flute and Bang flute have become important features reflecting the style of North and South school flute music.

Conclusion 2: It is concluded that the performance techniques of Southern and Northern bamboo flutes are closely related to the human geography and opera culture of their respective regions. Influenced by Kunqu Opera and Jiangnan Sizhu music, South school bamboo flutes commonly use trill, overlapping, giving and beating techniques, and North school bamboo flutes and Bangzi opera, Er-ren-tai and other opera singing are combined, and techniques such as spitting, sliding, stamping, trill tongue sound are commonly used. Different performance techniques and music content create different styles between the North and the South.

Conclusion 3: The performance style of South school flute is euphemistic, subtle, beautiful and tactful, forming the unique performance style and group performance mode of Chinese South school bamboo flute. The performance style of North school is rough and bold, high pitched and jumping, forming the unique performance style and group performance mode of North school bamboo flute.

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