



THE STUDY OF XIANFENG SOUTHERN OPERA MUSIC IN ENSHI, HUBEI PROVINCE



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THE THESIS TITLED
THE STUDY OF XIANFENG SOUTHERN OPERA MUSIC IN ENSHI, HUBEI PROVINCE

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The objective of this research is to examine the musical characteristics and the status of Xianfeng Nan Ju opera in Xianfeng County, Enshi Prefecture, Hubei Province. This study also examines the relationship between music and performance through accompaniment in the Xianfeng Nan ju and Laifeng Nan ju opera teams using qualitative research. It was discovered that the musical characteristics of both teams include four vocal styles: Nan Lu vocal style, Bei Lu vocal style, Shang Lu vocal style, and the other vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju and Lai Feng Nan Ju, which is a special characteristic of singing. The musical instruments used in the performance are traditional Chinese instruments, and the music selected matches the emotions of the characters, judging mainly from the script and dialogue. It creates an atmosphere that blends with the rhythm of the song. This includes the status of Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province, which has received support from the public and private sectors, as well as those who are interested in preserving arts and culture. There are opportunities to perform on various stages both live and online throughout the year, and it is popular with people of all generations. Nan Ju music is transmitted mainly through oral tradition. There are courses in educational institutions that promote learning performing arts, as well as practical training activities to promote and conserve Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province as intangible cultural heritage.

Keyword : Xianfeng Nan Ju, Musical characteristics, Opera status, Hubei traditional opera

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Xianfeng County, Enshi, Hubei Province, belongs to the Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Enshi, Hubei Province, is in the border area of Hubei, Hunan, Guizhou and Chongqing provinces, with a unique and important geographical position. The county is in the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau east extension between Wuling Mountain and Daba Mountain. The county area is vast, up to 2550 square kilometers. Xianfeng County has undulating mountains, ravines, complex and diverse landforms, forming a rich natural landscape and unique ecological environment. The terrain of Xianfeng is high in the south and low in the north. The three kinds of landforms cross each other, forming a unique geographical pattern of Xianfeng. These geographical features not only give Xianfeng rich natural resources, but also provide unique conditions for its economic and social development. (Xianfeng Overview. 2024, Online)

In fact, Enshi music culture shines like the stars. Here it is known as the "singing and dancing sea", its music culture is unique charm. Enshi music culture mainly includes various folk songs, percussion music, folk dance and Quyi art. Like the high and stirring folk songs, melodious minor keys, and the warm and cheerful lamp songs, are the treasures of Enshi music. Especially those folk songs rich in local characteristics, such as "Dragon Boat Tune", "Huang Si Jie", etc., are loved by people and sung well (Ma Ping. 2024, pp. 11-13). These songs not only have beautiful melodies, but also simple lyrics, full of local flavor and human touch. Enshi percussion music is also unique, such as Jianshi silk string gongs and drums, Enshi flower gongs and drums, their rhythm is bright and magnificent, adding a strong color to the music culture of Enshi. In addition, Enshi's folk dance and folk art are also rich and colorful. Dance forms such as waving dance and drumming, as well as folk art such as Enshi dulchen and Jianshi silk string fully demonstrate the wisdom and creativity of the Enshi people. (Tan Xiaolu. 2024, pp. 1-4) For the music of Enshi, I think it is a shining pearl in the treasure house of Chinese culture. It not only has a high artistic value, but is also the crystallization of the wisdom

and emotion of the people of Enshi. Enshi's music culture not only enriches people's spiritual life, but also inherits and carries forward the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. I am proud and proud of Enshi's music culture!

Then what is the performance form of Xianfeng Nan First, his singing style is a combination of South Road, North Road and Shang Road three major voices, and absorbs Kunqu opera, Gaoqiang and other mixed voices, minor keys, singing style is varied, unique. Secondly, the content of his performance is mostly based on historical legends, romance, Han folk stories, and Tujia life, and the characters are born, Dan, clean and ugly. Thirdly, his makeup and modeling follow the customs of the Tujia family, using traditional Tujia costumes, and his performance forms are diverse, including singing, doing, reading, fighting and "killing fork" and "spitting fog" and other breathtaking action performances. So why study Nan Ju? (Liu Yihan. 2023, pp. 39-41) That is because the Xianfeng Nan Ju is the witness of the historical development of the Enshi area, and it is also a precious cultural resource with important value. The performance of Xianfeng Nan Ju N Helps to inherit and promote the traditional culture of ethnic minorities such as the Tujia and enhance the sense of national identity and cohesion. Nan Ju performance can also enrich people's spiritual life, improve cultural literacy, and promote cultural exchanges and development. In recent years, with the emphasis on the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, Nan Ju has attracted more and more attention. The government and all sectors of society are actively promoting the inheritance and development of Nan Ju, and letting more people know and enjoy Nan Thorough the introduction of opera into campuses and the integration of cultural and tourism. Xianfeng Nan Ju has also carried out many cultural exchange activities at home and abroad, winning wide praise and recognition, showing that people are indeed very concerned about this traditional art form. (Song Hui. 2021, p. 1)

TheXianfeng Nan Ju of Enshi in Xianfeng, Hubei Province also occupies an important position in Chinese operas. First, as a true portrayal and historical record of the traditional culture of the Tujia people, the Nan Ju carries too much of the fine cultural

quality of the Tujia people and reflects the production and life characteristics of the Tujia children. It is not only one of the concentrated expressions of Tujia culture, but also an important part of China's intangible cultural heritage. The study and protection of Nan Ju can better grasp the unique Tujia culture in western Hubei and play an immeasurable role in further developing it. Next, talk about the accompaniment instruments of Nan ju is a kind of Pihuang opera, accompanied by strings and percussion composed of two parts. In terms of strings, there are Jinghu, Erhu, Yueqin, three-string, suona, flute; (Zhou Liling. 2024, pp. 7-8) Percussion is played throughout, and there are instruments such as cover boards. The north and South Road plays Jinghu as the main instrument and covers the board as the main instrument on the road. Sometimes Yang Qin, pipa, sheng and other instruments are added. It is lively as for the songs in the Nan Ju, they have a special flavor. The plays of the Nan Ju are mostly legends and historical stories, such as the large-scale Nan Ju "Tangya Chieftain" (Hu Xiao. 2023, p. 7), which is adapted from a series of historical stories such as the succession of chieftain and the marriage of chieftain in Tangya Chieftain during the reign of heaven in the Ming Dynasty and praises the personality characteristics of the Tangya chieftain Tan, who is open-minded, inclusive, kind and wise. The singing of the Xianfeng Nan Jus varied, high and rhythmic, which makes people really enjoy listening! In general, Nan ju plays a pivotal role in Chinese operas. It is not only a treasure of Tujia culture, but also an important embodiment of the cultural diversity of the Chinese nation. Through the Nan Ju, We can better understand and inherit the traditional culture of ethnic minorities such as the Tujia and promote the exchange and integration between different ethnic groups.

The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province. Enshi, Xianfeng, Hubei has long been important. There are stories that are shown and accepted by the public. It has a distinctive and important feature that attracts the audience. It has a long history. Therefore, the researcher is interested in studying the study of music in Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province.
2. To study the status of the Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province.

The significance of the study

The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province to study the musical characteristics and the status of Nan Chinese opera in Enshi, Xianfeng, Hubei. In the study have some knowledge about the relationship between music and Xianfeng Nan Ju, which are unique Xianfeng Nan Ju performances.

The Scope of the study

The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province has the scope of the study as follows:

The scope of area

1. Xianfeng Nan Theatre Company, Xiangfeng Theatre Company address; Hongqi Road, Xianfeng County, Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Hubei Province.
2. Laifeng Nan Theatre Company, Laifeng Nan Ju Theatre Company address; No.71 Fengxiang Road, Laifeng County, Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Enshi, Hubei Province.

The scope of contents

1. The musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music accompaniment.
2. The instrument of Xianfeng Nan Ju music accompaniment.
3. The script used in Xianfeng Nan Ju
4. The songs for singing and playing for Xianfeng Nan Ju music accompaniment
5. In the study on the status of the Xianfeng Nan Ju follow as
6. The opportunity to perform of the Xianfeng Nan Ju

7. The popularity of the Xianfeng Nan Ju
8. The transmission of the Xianfeng Nan Ju

The benefit of the study

The benefit of the study in Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province follows as.

1. Allows us to have a deep understanding of the history, culture and customs of Enshi, Hubei Province.
2. The research can study the unique artistic style and performance form of Xianfeng Nan Ju
3. The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju can promote cultural diversity and promote cultural prosperity.
4. The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju can provide new ideas and inspiration for modern opera.

Definition of Terms

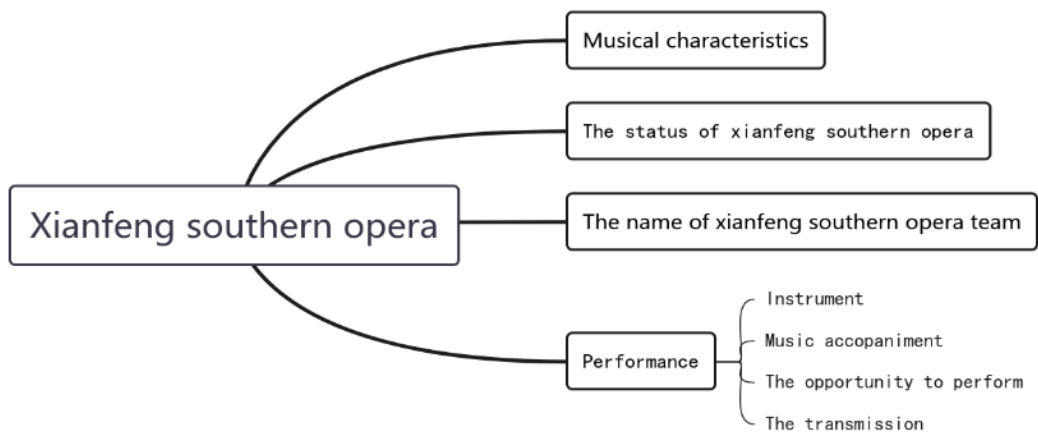
Xianfeng Nan Ju (Xianfeng Nan Ju)

Xianfeng Nan Ju is a multi-tone local opera popular in Xianfeng County, Enshi City in Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, Hubei Province, which combines the folk tunes of the Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) vocal technique (Northern vocal style), the Nan lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) vocal technique (Southern vocal style), Kunqu Opera of the middle part of China style, and several Chinese vocal styles.

Enshi's music culture

Musical characteristics are multiple vocal techniques, local languages, singing style, various music instruments, showing strong local characteristics and artistic charm. Music accompaniment is mainly played by string instruments such as Huqin and cover Huqin, accompanied by percussion and wind instruments such as drums, Suona and flute.

Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province has divided Musical characteristics the literary review related to this study into the following contents:

- 1.Zhong Guo Xi JU or Chinese opera
- 2.Xianfeng Nan Ju
- 3.Music instrument for Chinese opera
- 4.The musical characteristics
5. Xianfeng County in Enshi City

1.Zhongguo Xiju or Chinese opera

Yu Qiuyu (2021, pp. 21-37) In the history of Chinese drama, Yu Qiuyu wrote that Chinese drama, as an important part of Chinese national culture, has a long history and rich diversity. Its origin can be traced back to ancient times. Originally, it refers to the game, play and other behaviors on specific occasions. Its essence is "dress up and performance", its source can be traced back to the original religious ceremony. The formal formation of Chinese drama was at the end of the Northern Song Dynasty, that is, the beginning of the 12th century. Prior to this, performing arts already existed, such as song and dance performances and various professional life fragments during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States period. Opera is the Chinese traditional drama. After a long period of development and evolution, it gradually formed the "Peking Opera, Yue opera, Huangmei Opera, Pingju, Yu opera" these five kinds of opera as the core of the Chinese opera garden.

2.Xianfeng Nan Ju

Li Aimin (2023, pp. 4-9) wrote about Xianfeng Nan Ju as an important local opera in Hubei Province, which has profound historical heritage and unique artistic value. Its origin can be traced back to the era of the Tusi system in the Yuan Dynasty,

and it was gradually conceived in the work and sacrifice of the Tujia in southwest Hubei. During the Jiaqing period of the Qing Dynasty, the landlord class of Xianfeng set up Nan Ju classes, and the professional and "playing friends" class clubs emerged, which spread throughout urban and rural areas in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China.

Nan Ju is rich in voice, including South Road, North Road, Shandong, Gaoqiang, Kunqiang and Chaoqiang, the role is divided into four lines: Sheng, Dan, Jing and ugly. Its repertoire draws on a wide range of materials, known as "800 pieces", about 600 existing materials have been retained, and about 300 popular ones, most of which originate from historical romance, folk stories, myths and legends. (Tianmin, 2021. P153) In the process of development, Xianfeng Nan Ju has continuously achieved excellent results. In 2012, the Xianfeng Nan Ju "Daughter Village" won the "Chutian Wenhua Outstanding Drama Award" and the "Wenhua Performance Award" of Hubei Province; In 2015, he won the outstanding works Award of the ninth "Qu Yuan Literature and Art Award" in Hubei Province. (Wang Tong 2019 4-5) In the large-scale Nan Ju "Tangya Tusi Lady", Wang Tong wrote that the drama takes the world cultural heritage - Tangya Tusi City as the background, highlighting the national spirit of the Tujia people. At present, the Xianfeng County government attaches great importance to the inheritance and protection of Nan Ju, provides a solid financial guarantee for it, promotes the excavation, collation and resumption of traditional plays, and carries out activities such as "opera into campus". Today, as a national intangible cultural heritage, Xianfeng Nan Ju is not only a local cultural treasure, but also continues to move to a broader stage, and is loved and recognized by more

3. Music instrument for Chinese opera

The accompaniment instruments are divided into two parts: strings and percussion. The following is a detailed introduction

String section:**Jinghu**

Nie Jiexuan (2020, p. 5) is the main instrument in the North-South Road opera. Its tone is crisp, bright and has a strong expressive force. It can highlight the characteristics of Nan Ju's Pihuang dialect well in the performance, and carry on a powerful accompaniment for the singing, making the singing more intense. Erhu: As an auxiliary string instrument, it adds a richer harmonic effect and emotional expression to the music of Nan Ju Its tone is soft and delicate, which echoes with Jinghu and makes the music more full.

Yueqin

Miao Xin (2017, pp. 2-3) plays the role of embellishment and setting off in the accompaniment of Nan Ju The sound of the Yueqin is crisp and pleasant, and the rhythm type played can enhance the sense of rhythm and rhythm of the music, adding a lively atmosphere to the performance of Nan Ju

Sanxian

Sanxian has a unique timbre and strong penetrating power. In the accompaniment of Nan Ju, it can add a unique charm to the music and cooperate with other string instruments to make the music more hierarchical. (Yu Jia Fang, 2002. p151)

Cover board:

It is the main instrument in the road (i.e. playing opera, Sichuan Clapper). (Fuxuexin, 2015. p3-4) The timbre of the cover board is hard and loud, which can well reflect the characteristics of the road voice and provide powerful musical support for the performance of the road opera.

Dulcimer:

In the process of improvement and innovation, (JunRong, 2022. p34) the dulcimer was also added to the accompaniment of Nan Ju The dulcimer's tone is crisp, bright, and has a wide range, which can add richer harmonic effects and color changes to the music of Nan Ju

Pipa:

The addition of pipa further enriched the musical expression of Nan Ju (Mahuayong, 2019, p1) The pipa has a beautiful, soft tone and rich and varied playing skills, which can add delicate emotional expression and unique artistic charm to the music of Nan Ju Sheng: Sheng is a wind instrument with a soft, melodious tone. In the accompaniment of Nan Ju, (Hanxue, 2022. P77) Sheng can add a unique atmosphere and charm to the music, making the music more harmonious and pleasant.

Percussion part:

Cloud plate and drum:(Zhangzhentao, 2022. pp1-3) The cloud plate is usually used to send out clear rhythm signals, and plays a role in directing and guiding the performance of Nan Ju () The drum is an important instrument in percussion. Its rhythm is bright and powerful, which can create a tense and warm atmosphere for the performance of Nan JuGongs and gongs: the sound of gongs and gongs is strong, which can enhance the sense of rhythm and strength of music, and make the performance of Nan Jumore passionate and tense. (Decha Srikongmuang, 2019, p80) The unique timbre of the hook gong can play the role of embellishment and setting off in the performance, adding a unique charm to the music of the Nan Ju

4.The musical characteristics

First, the voice is rich and diverse. The tunes of Nan Ju mainly include six major tunes, namely, South Road, North Road, ShangRoad, Gaoqiang, Kunqiang and mixed tune.

South Road is like "Erhuang", (zhengpeikai, 2013. p1) the melody is graceful and melodious, the rhythm is more soothing, and it is good at expressing delicate emotions.(chenwenxin, 2018. p4) Its singing is mainly lyrical, which has a unique advantage in expressing the inner world and emotional changes of the characters.

The North Road is like "Xipi", (Lichunyi, 1994. p983) the rhythm is bright, the melody is passionate, and it has a strong sense of rhythm and expression. Suitable for fierce battle scenes and heroic characters heroic spirit.

On the road for the play of Sichuan Clapper, (Zhousiyao, 2024. p1) the tone is crisp and bright, and the rhythm is compact and powerful. This kind of voice often adds tension and excitement to the plot.

Gaoqiang (Zuodafen, 2013. P3) has the characteristics of loud and passionate, singing and harmonizing. Its singing form is free and unrestrained, which can fully show the bold style of Nan Ju

Kunqu Opera (Meng Weiping, 2016. P1) is famous for its elegance and exquisite melody. In the Nan Ju, the use of Kunqu Opera adds a classical charm to the performance of the play.

5.Unique music style

The musical style of Nan Ju has strong local characteristics and national style.

The music of Nan Ju (Daozhonghua, 2023. P3) integrates the musical elements of Tujia, Miao and other ethnic minorities, reflecting the ethnic cultural characteristics of western Hubei. (Yangxiaojun, 2021. p4) Its singing is often with the local dialect of western Hubei, humorous, easy to understand, and rich life atmosphere.

The music of Nan Ju has a unique charm of "the sound of deep mountains and valleys". (Xiqu Culture network, 2019. Online) The singing is loud and strong, giving people a shocking feeling. This unique music style is closely related to the natural environment and cultural customs of western Hubei.

6.innovation and development

In modern society, the music of Nan Juis is constantly innovating and developing.

On the basis of retaining the characteristics of traditional music, some Nan Juworks incorporate modern musical elements, (Lioufan,2021.P3-4) such as electronic music and symphonies, which make the music of Nan Jumore colorful and attract the attention of more young audiences.

Xianfeng Nan Ju artists are also constantly exploring new singing methods and performance forms, injecting new vitality into the development of Nan Ju (Xianfeng on the cloud, 2021. online)

To sum up, the musical features of Nan Ju are rich and diverse, with unique artistic charm. Its rich voice, unique accompaniment instruments, rich musical style, continuous innovation in inheritance and development, have made an important contribution to the prosperity of Chinese opera culture.(Masu, 2023. p4)

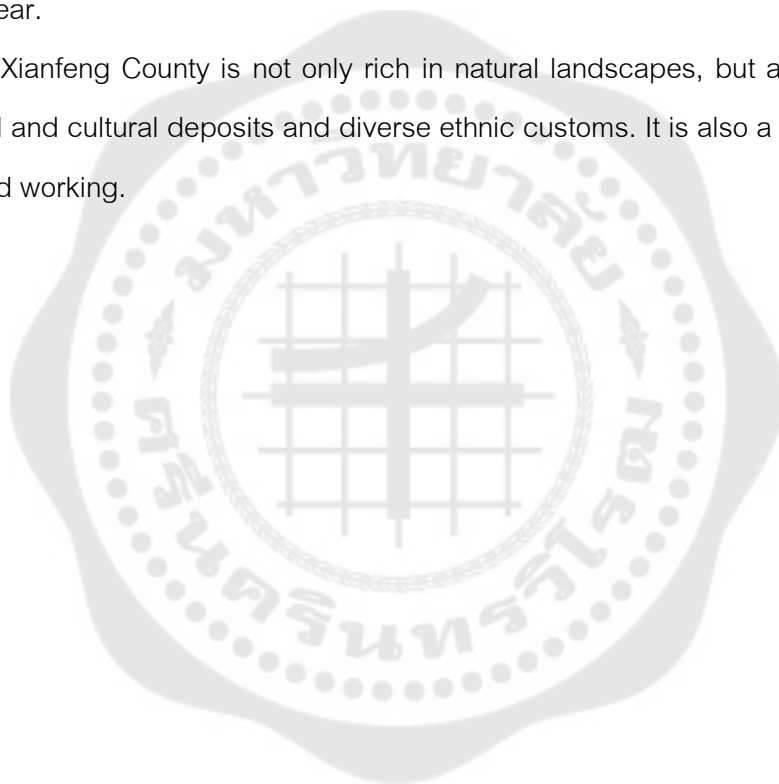
The popularity of Xianfeng Nan Ju in China can be summarized as follows: Xianfeng Nan Ju is mainly popular in Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hubei Province, and has a profound impact on Chongqing, Hunan, Hubei and border areas.(Guangming Daily, 2023. Online) It is deeply loved by local people. As one of the four major operas in Hubei Province, Nan Ju has a deep mass base in Enshi and is an important part of the spiritual and cultural life of the local people. Nan Ju also occupies a certain position in the Chinese opera circle, and its unique artistic style and performance form have been widely concerned and praised.(Tianmin, 2021. p154) Although the popularity of Xianfeng Nan Ju is not as great as that of some major operas in the whole country, it still maintains a high degree of popularity and influence in Enshi, its birthplace. rarity in Chinese opera.

7. Xianfeng County in Enshi City

Xiao Jiancheng (2015, pp. 129-134) wrote in the literature and history of western Hubei, Xianfeng County of Enshi is in the southwest of Hubei Province and belongs to Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, which is the western gate of Hubei Province. (Lijinlong, 2014. P535) Xianfeng County is located between the remnants of Wuling Mountain and Daba Mountain in the eastern extension of the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. It has a beautiful geographical environment with a forest coverage rate of 73%. It has several national or regional and provincial nature reserves and national 4A level scenic spots. The county covers an area of 2,550 square kilometers, and by the end of 2022, the permanent population is about 308,900. (Daiqingtang, 2024. online) Xianfeng County has a long history and a long history of

culture and has given birth to many national and provincial intangible cultural heritages, such as Nan Ju In addition, Xianfeng County is also one of the counties with the largest number of stilted buildings and the best construction skills in the Wuling Tujia area. These stilted buildings have witnessed the development history of Tujia and are precious national cultural heritage. Xianfeng County's climate characteristics are also unique, belonging to the sub-alpine climate type, the altitude is between 800 and 1200 meters. There are four distinct seasons and good air, with more than 360 days of good air per year.

Xianfeng County is not only rich in natural landscapes, but also has profound historical and cultural deposits and diverse ethnic customs. It is also a place suitable for living and working.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province has 2 objectives: to study the musical characteristics and the status of the Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province , using qualitative research methods.

Research Design

1. Document study

In order to comprehensively collect relevant information, this study will be collected mainly through the Internet, with China National Knowledge Infrastructure and Baidu Academic as the main platforms. Meanwhile, we will also refer to other literature websites, such as Wanfang and Wipe, to obtain more extensive and diverse information, such as The Central Library of Srinakharinwirot University, China National Knowledge Infrastructure, Wanfang online data, CNKI online data, and Xianfeng County Library

2. Research Instruments

2.1 Interview Form

2.2 Observational Form

3. Data Collection

The authors conducted a survey of data sources in Xianfeng, Enshi, Hubei province to determine the scope of the research area in 2 places as follows

3.1 Xianfeng Nan Ju fieldwork

The results of my field investigation of Xianfengnan Troupe in Enshi are as follows:

In this field investigation, I have an in-depth understanding of the development process, artistic characteristics and current challenges of Xianfengnan Troupe in Enshi.

First, as an important opera group in Enshi, Xianfengnan Troupe carries rich historical and cultural traditions. Since its establishment, the troupe has been committed to the inheritance and development of Nan Ju. Through continuous excavation and sorting out of traditional plays, it has cultivated batches of outstanding Nan Ju actors, making important contributions to the inheritance of Nan Ju art.

Secondly, Enshi Xianfengnan Troupe has a unique charm in artistic characteristics. Its performance style is simple and natural, singing melodious, not only passionate ambition, but also touching love. The company attaches great importance to innovation in repertoire creation, combining tradition with modernity, and has produced a number of excellent plays that are deeply loved by the audience.

However, in my field research, I also found that the Xianfengnan Troupe in Enshi faces some challenges. With the diversification of modern entertainment, audience groups are gradually aging, and young audiences are not interested in Nan Ju. At the same time, there are also some difficulties with funding, venues and talents, which restrict the further development of Nan Ju.

In view of these problems, I think Enshi Xianfengnan Troupe needs to actively seek a way of innovation and development. On the one hand, we can strengthen cooperation with schools, communities and other institutions, carry out the popularization of Nan Ju education activities, and cultivate young audiences; On the other hand, it can explore integration with modern science and technology, and use digital technology and other means to enhance the communication power and influence of Nan Ju. At the same time, the government and all sectors of society should also give more attention and support to Nan Ju, and jointly promote the prosperity and development of this local opera art.

3.2 Laifeng's Nan Ju fieldwork

The results of my field investigation of Enshi Laifeng's Nan Ju are as follows:

In this field investigation, I have a deep understanding of the southern opera art in the Laifeng area of Enshi, and feel its unique charm and profound cultural heritage.

First, I found that Enshi Laifeng's Nan Ju performance

forms are rich and colorful, both traditional folding operas and modern adapted plays. The actors dressed in gorgeous costumes, through superb acting and moving singing, will be a vivid story presented in front of the audience. Their performance is full of emotion and power, and it is deeply contagious.

Secondly, Enshi Laifeng's Nan Ju also has a high level in script creation and musical accompaniment. The content of the script closely follows the pulse of The Times, reflects the life and emotions of the local people, and has strong practical significance. The musical accompaniment combines traditional musical instruments and modern musical elements, both classical charm and modern sense.

In the field investigation, I also learned that the Nan Ju of Enshi is facing some challenges and difficulties. Due to the diversification of modern entertainment methods, the audience is gradually aging, and young audiences are not interested in Nan Ju. At the same time, the inheritance and development of Nan Ju also lacks sufficient financial support and professional talents. All these problems restrict the further development and promotion of Nan Ju.

However, despite these challenges, the actors and fans of the Nan Ju from Enshi still persist in their love and pursuit of art. Through continuous learning and innovation, they strive to enhance the artistic quality and ornamental value of Nan Ju. At the same time, they also actively seek support and help from all walks of life to contribute their own strength to the inheritance and development of Nan Ju.

In general, this field investigation made me have a deeper understanding and understanding of the Nan Ju of Enshi. I felt the unique charm and profound cultural heritage of Nan Ju, and saw the challenges and difficulties faced by Nan Ju in its inheritance and development. I believe that with the joint efforts of everyone, the Nan Ju of Enshi will surely glow more brilliantly. I conducted an online interview with the Laifeng Nan Ju Troupe

3.3 Interview

3.3.1 The Structural Interview

I mainly interviewed the following people of the Xianfeng Nan Ju

Nie Jiexuan: Great contribution to the development of Xianfeng Nan Ju, familiar with Nan Ju, north, road singing. He painstakingly founded and operated an amateur theater, and later made great contributions to the founding of the "labor troupe". More than 300 traditional plays were organized, accounting for more than half of the traditional plays of Southwest Hubei opera.

Yang Daoyun: a national-level representative inheritor of Southern Opera, he has been dealing with Nan Ju for 61 years, making bold innovations in singing and keeping pace with The Times.

Li Ai min: Director of Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center, leading the troupe to take the road of "marriage between culture and enterprise", so that the Nan Ju art in a difficult state can be revived and revitalized.

Yang Lili: Currently the deputy director of Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center, is the main business backbone of the South Troupe. Born in August 1983, she graduated from the music major of the Art Department of Hubei University for Nationalities in 2005. In July of the same year, she joined the Nan Ju Troupe (now the Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center) and has been working ever since. In the work, she based on their duties, dedication, since joining the work has been the backbone of the regiment, has been several consecutive years by the unit as an advanced worker.

Qin Weizheng: legal representative of Laifeng County South Opera Troupe and inheritor of provincial Nan Ju

Gong Min: National second-grade actor, representative inheritor of Nan Ju Enshi at the state level, full of love for Nan Ju, once participated in the creation of Nan Ju "Xilankap".

Zhang Yong: Actor of Laifeng County Nan Ju Transmission Research Institute, starring in many Nan Ju, popular with the audience, has participated in "Desperate Secretary" ("Original Heart ") and other plays.

Yu Jianguo: Excellent actor of Nan Ju, once participated in the Nan Ju "True Colors" reflecting the spirit of Zhang Fuqing, played the middle-aged Zhang Fuqing in the play.

Zhang Dezhi: The representative inheritor of the Nan Ju at the county level, once participated in the Nan Ju "True Colors", played the elderly Zhang Fuqing in the play.

3.3.2 Unstructured Interview

The author asks a person who can provide unplanned information at the bottom of the page, where that person can provide useful information. Explain the knowledge or what is the answer to the research related to studying the musical characteristics and the status of the Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province.

3.4 Observation

Participant Observation under the leadership of Yang Lili, I made a participative observation of Nan Ju and obtained first-hand information through personal experience and in-depth communication.

I personally went to Laifengnan Theater Company or other southern theater companies to have close exchanges with actors, directors, scriptwriters and other theater members, to understand their creative process, performance skills, as well as the inheritance and development of Nan Ju.

I tried to learn the performance skills of Nan Ju, including singing, body, movement, etc. to feel the unique charm of Nan Ju through personal experience.

Observation of rehearsal and performance: I carefully observed the rehearsal and performance process of Nan Ju, paying attention to the performance details of actors, stage layout, musical accompaniment, etc. to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of Nan Ju.

Through the participation observation, I can have a deeper understanding of the artistic characteristics and cultural connotation of Nan Ju and provide strong support for the research and development of Nan Ju. At the same time, this research method also helps to enhance the authenticity and credibility of the research, so that readers can more intuitively understand the charm of Nan Ju.

Through watching the video, I deeply felt the unique charm and cultural value of this local opera. Enshi Nan Ju, with its rich performance forms, unique singing charm and profound historical and cultural heritage, has shown a strong local color and national customs. Through observation, I found that Nan Ju embodies a high degree of artistry and professionalism in the content of the repertoire, stage performance, musical accompaniment and other aspects. Its actors vividly present historical stories and characters in front of the audience through their superb acting skills and affectionate interpretation. At the same time, Nan Ju also faces many challenges in its inheritance and development, such as the change of audience groups and the impact of modern entertainment methods, but its unique artistic charm and cultural connotation still attract the attention and love of many audiences and cultural researchers.

4. Data Analysis

In the study on the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province. The data analysis principles and content analysis methods of the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju, the authors carry out the collation of relevant data and classifications as follows: Data Analysis

In the study on the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province. The data analysis principles and content analysis methods of the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju, the authors carry out the collation of relevant data and classifications as follows:

music in Enshi, Hubei province 4.1 The musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province.

4.1.1 Xianfeng Nan Ju

4.1.1.1 The vocal techniques for Xianfeng Nan Ju

- Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) in Xianfeng Nan Ju
- Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) in Xianfeng

Nan Ju

- Shang Lu vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju
- The other vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju

4.1.1.2 The vocal uniqueness of Xianfeng Nan Ju

- Ming Liang vocal technique (High and bright)
- You Ya Duo Bian vocal technique (Graceful and

versatile)

- Vocal techniques combined with local music
- Rhythm characteristics
- Application of rhythmic structures

4.1.1.3 Lyrics and dialogue

- Rhyme of lyrics and dialogue
- Dialogue and dialect

4.1.1.4 Musical instruments accompaniment for Xianfeng Nan Ju

- Huqin; a general term for certain two-stringed string

Instruments.

- Yueqin, a four-stringed plucked instrument with a full-moon-shaped sound.

- Sanxian, a three-stringed plucked instrument
- Suona
- Da lu
- Tongbo
- Xiaoluo
- Shaping the character image
- Cooperate with performance actions

4.1.1.5 The script used in Xianfeng Nan Ju

- The best part
- The principle of the explanation
- The songs for singing and playing for Xianfeng Nan Ju musical accompaniment.

4.1.2 Lai Feng Nan Ju

4.1.2.1 The vocal techniques for Lai Feng Nan Ju

Lai Feng Nan Ju

- Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) in

Nan Ju

- Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) in Lai Feng
- Shang Lu vocal style in Lai Feng Nan Ju
- Other vocal style in Lai Feng Nan Ju

4.1.2.2 The vocal uniqueness of Lai Feng Nan Ju

- Ming Liang vocal technique (High and bright)
- You Ya Duo Bian vocal technique (Graceful and versatile)
- Vocal techniques combined with local music
- Rhythm characteristics
- Application of rhythmic structures
- Complex rhythm changes

4.1.2.3 Lyrics and dialogue

- Rhyme of lyrics and dialogue
- Dialogue and dialect

4.1.2.4 Musical instruments accompaniment for Lai Feng Nan Ju

string instruments

- Huqin; a general term for certain two-stringed

shaped sound.

- Yueqin, a four-stringed plucked instrument with a full-moon-
- Sanxian, a three-stringed plucked instrument.
- Da lu

- Suona
- Xiaoluo
- Tongbo
- Da gu

4.1.2.5 The script used in Lai Feng Nan Ju

- The best part
- The songs for singing and playing for Laifeng Nan Ju musical accompaniment.

4.2 The status of the Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province.

4.2.1 The opportunity to perform of the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei Province.

4.2.1.1 Venue of the performance

4.2.1.2 Wutai: There is a large stage for Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei province.

4.2.1.3 Rural Wutai: Laifeng County Nan Ju Art

4.2.1.4 Performance style offline performances include

4.2.1.5 Online performance with the help of modern technology .

4.2.1.6 The Xianfeng Nan Ju music performing in a year.

4.2.1.7 Cultural and natural heritage days (June)

4.2.1.8 Summer travel season (July-August)

4.2.1.9 Cultural activities in autumn (September-October)

4.2.2 The Audience support Government and Private Agencies.

4.2.3 The popularity of the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei Province.

4.2.4 The transmission of the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei province province.

4.2.4.1 The Teaching and learning of the Nan Ju

4.2.4.2 Professional training led by the theatre company

4.2.4.3 Multi-field talent training mechanism

4.2.4.4 Long-term practical training

4.2.4.5 Cross-border talent integration

4.2.4.6 Inter generational relay mechanism

4.2.4.7 Communication and promotion



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In the study on the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province. The data analysis principles and content analysis methods of the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju, the authors carry out the collation of relevant data and classifications as the result follow as

The repertoire is extensive, covering historical narratives from the Investiture of the Gods, the Warring States, and the Three Kingdoms, to Water Margin, Generals of the Yang Family, and The Legend of Yue Fei. The lyrics predominantly consist of seven- or ten-character couplets, while the spoken and sung parts incorporate the local Tujia dialect of western Hubei, making them witty, humorous, and easily understandable.

The singing style is particularly distinctive, renowned for its "civil plays performed with martial vigor," featuring high-pitched and powerful vocals reminiscent of echoes from deep mountain valleys. A thorough exploration of Xianfeng Nan Ju musical characteristics, instrumental usage, scriptwriting, and vocal techniques holds significant theoretical and practical importance for preserving and developing this precious intangible cultural heritage, as well as enriching the study of Chinese opera culture.

1. The musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province.

1.1 Xianfeng Nan Ju

1.1.1 The vocal techniques for Xianfeng Nan Ju

1.1.1.1 Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) in Xianfeng Nan JU.

The vocal techniques for Xianfeng Nan Ju Nan lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) in Xianfeng Nan Ju opera The southern tune of Xianfeng Nan Ju Opera belongs to the erhuang tune system, featuring a rich variety of rhythmic patterns with distinct functions that collectively form its unique musical expressiveness. The introductory rhythm (daoban) adopts a free-meter form, often serving as the opening of a vocal passage. Its high-pitched or prolonged melody captivates the audience, setting the atmosphere and leading into subsequent sections. The first rhythmic pattern (yiliu) is

in 4/4 time, characterized by steady and soothing melodies, serving both narrative and lyrical purposes as the foundational rhythmic pattern of the southern tune. The second rhythmic pattern (erliu) employs 1/4 time, with a compact and lively tempo, frequently used in dialogues and conflict scenes to heighten dramatic tension. The third rhythmic pattern (sanliu) also follows a free-meter form but at a faster pace, suitable for conveying intense or urgent emotions. The rolling rhythm (gunban) features unrestrained tempo, with each word seamlessly connected during performance, ideal for unrestrained expression of strong emotions. The slow three-beat rhythm (mansanyan) moves at a leisurely pace, based on 4/4 time, often employed to depict delicate inner emotions of characters. Additionally, the accompanying tune (genqiang) enhances the atmosphere through repetition and call-and-response techniques. The rapid rhythm (duozi) accelerates the narrative pace with its urgent tempo, while the sorrowful rhythm (aizi) is specifically designed to convey grief and melancholy through plaintive and mournful melodies. Nan Ju The flexible interplay of these rhythmic patterns endows the southern tune of Xianfeng Nan Ju Opera with profound artistic charm.

1.1.1.2 Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) in Xianfeng Nan Ju Opera Nanjing

The northern vocal style evolved from the bangzi tune of "Qin Opera." Its singing style is high and expansive, making it particularly suitable for martial scenes and narrative settings. The musical patterns include the guide board (free rhythm), which opens the singing segment with a free pace to stir the audience's emotions; the first line (4/4 time), with a steady rhythm that conveys grand and heroic sentiments; the starting board (1/4 time), with a brisk pace that sets the stage for subsequent singing; the slow second line (2/4 time), which balances the first and fast second lines in terms of rhythm and emotional expression, offering a narrative quality; the fast second line (1/4 time), with a tight rhythm often used to depict intense and fierce battle scenes or characters' agitation; the flowing board (1/4 time), with a rapid and smooth rhythm that creates a tense yet lively atmosphere; the third line (free rhythm), used to express intense emotions such as anger or despair; the sad board (1/4 time), similar to the sad

board in southern vocal styles, emphasizing the character's sorrow; the flying board (1/4 time), with a unique melody and strong expressive power, often used to portray special moods or situations; the counting board (1/4 time), with a more structured rhythm for chanting, providing a sense of rhythm and melody, commonly used to introduce plot developments or convey characters' thoughts; the stacked board (1/4 time), with a tight rhythm and continuous lyrics, enhancing emotional expression and advancing the story; the eye-clearing board (1/4 time), with unique rhythmic handling, adding more variation to the music.

1.1.1.3 Shang Lu vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju

The Shang Lu vocal style Xiangqiang system includes Tanxi and Chuanbangzi, primarily used to portray stories with intense and tragic plots. Its musical patterns include: Guidan (free rhythm), which captures the audience's attention instantly through its free pace and powerful singing, creating an atmosphere of sorrow and anger; Yizi (4/4 time), with a relatively steady rhythm and simple melody, but it can deeply convey the inner emotions of characters through the actors' performances; Erliu (1/4 time), with a brisk rhythm that adds urgency to the passionate mood; Xiaoyanban (1/4 time), using unique rhythmic changes to further highlight emotional expression; Sanban (free rhythm), with a free pace that builds up the character's sorrow and anger to a climax; Aizi (1/4 time), intensifying feelings of grief and anger; Duoban (4/4, 1/4 time), expressing strong emotions and firm resolve through rhythmic variations and tightly arranged lyrics; Qiban (1/4 time), quickly introducing the singing segment to stir the audience's emotions.

1.1.1.4 The other vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju

Other vocal style tunes consist of colorful tunes and minor tunes (i.e., small tunes), including nine styles with eighteen patterns (4/4 time), "Home Living" (4/4 time), "Life-Calling Drum" (2/4 time), "Netherworld Bell" (free rhythm), "Integrity Official Head" (2/4 time), "Steel Shuttle" (2/4 time), "Third Watch" (4/4 time), "Inverted Board Drilling" (2/4, 1/4 time), and "Stacked Broken Bridge" (2/4 time). These other vocal style tunes have distinct styles and are rich in the flavor of everyday life. They can be lively

and cheerful, humorous and witty, or lyrical and graceful, adding vibrant colors to the music of Nan Ju. They are often used to depict scenes of daily life, characters' relaxed moods, or humorous and witty plots, making Nan Ju more closely connected to people's lives.

1.1.2 The vocal uniqueness of Xianfeng Nan Ju opera

1.1.2.1 Ming Liang vocal technique (High and bright)

Xianfeng Nan Ju is known as the "sound of deep mountain gorges," with its melodies characterized by their high and clear tones, closely tied to the local geographical environment and the people's character. The Enshi region is predominantly high mountains and deep valleys, where people use their voices in a high-pitched manner for communication and emotional expression. This lifestyle has gradually influenced the musical style of Nandrama. The singing style of Nan drama can spread across vast mountainous areas, showcasing the bold and warm-hearted nature of the people in western Hubei. In some classic segments of the plays, actors convey characters' heroic aspirations and intense emotions through their high-pitched singing, which has a powerful artistic appeal, allowing the audience to deeply appreciate the unique charm of Nan drama music.

1.1.2.2 You Ya Duo Bian vocal technique (Graceful and versatile)

In lyrical or narrative singing segments, the melodies of Nan Ju exhibit a graceful and varied character. Through rich ornamentation, glissando techniques, and transitions between different vocal styles, the music becomes more delicate, vividly expressing the emotional changes of characters. Actors, when performing, skillfully apply these techniques according to the plot and the emotional needs of the characters, finely portraying their inner joys, sorrows, struggles, and conflicts. In love-themed segments, the melody may become soft and gentle, using intricate ornaments and glissandos to convey deep affection and shy emotions between lovers; during narrative scenes, the melody changes with the development of the plot, sometimes gentle, sometimes dramatic, guiding the audience's emotions to evolve with the progression of the story.

1.1.2.3 Vocal techniques combined with local music

- Rhythm characteristics

The various vocal styles of Nan Ju all possess rich variations in rhythm, ranging from the slow San Yan Ban to the fast Liu Shui Ban and San Ban, which can be flexibly applied according to the needs of the plot and character emotions. When depicting intense and dramatic scenes, such as martial arts sequences or fierce conflicts between characters, Kuai Er Liou and Liu Shui in Northern Road vocal styles. Threaters, a fast tempo and tight structure are used, like the ough a tight rhythm and strong musical impact, these enhance the intensity and tension of the battle, making the audience feel as if they are right there; whereas in lyrical or narrative scenes, such as inner monologues, emotional outpourings, or storytelling, a slower tempo and relaxed structure are employed, like the Man San Yan and Yi Liu in Southern Road vocal styles, allowing the audience to settle down and savor the emotional world of the characters and the development of the story.

- Application of rhythmic structures

In the same area, Nan Ju often features changes in rhythm, enhancing musical expressiveness and dramatic effect through techniques such as contrasting tight and loose rhythms and shifting beats. In some key arias, a slower tempo is used to set the stage, gradually guiding the audience into the scene and allowing them to feel the character's inner calm or tension. Then, as emotions gradually intensify, the tempo quickens, with shifts in beats and tighter rhythms pushing the emotion to its peak, enabling the audience to deeply experience the intense emotional impact of the character. This variation in rhythm not only captures the audience's attention but also better conveys the character's emotions and the development of the plot, further enhancing the artistic appeal of Nan Ju

1.1.3 Lyrics and dialogue

The lyrics of Xianfeng Nan Ju are mostly in seven-character or ten-character lines, which gives the lyrics a strong sense of rhythm and melody, making them easy to sing and remember. Seven-character lines are typically divided into "two-

two-three" rhythms, such as "Green mountains and clear waters make for beautiful scenery"; ten-character lines are often divided into "three-four-five" rhythms, like "Willows green and willows blue, the river flows gently." These rhythmic divisions conform to the linguistic rules of Chinese, making the lyrics smooth and easy to recite, while also allowing actors to improvise in terms of rhythm and melody, enhancing the musical beauty. The content of the lyrics is extensive, drawing from legends and novels such as "The Warring States," "Investiture of the Gods," "Romance of the Three Kingdoms," "Water Margin," and "The Story of Yue Fei," as well as Han Chinese folk stories and Tujia life, rich in cultural connotations. Through the singing of Nan Ju, these stories not only entertain the audience but also help to inherit and promote traditional culture, allowing viewers to appreciate art while learning about history and culture.

1.1.3.1 Rhyme of lyrics and dialogue

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1.1.3.2 Dialogue and dialect

The dialogue and singing styles often incorporate the local Tujia dialect of western Hubei, which is humorous, easy to understand, and rich in the flavor

of everyday life. The use of dialect not only makes local audiences feel more connected but also helps them better grasp the plot, adding a unique local color to Nandrama. In some dialogues, specific local dialect words and expressions are used, such as "zao meizi" (what to do) and "da" (already), which are vivid and lifelike, reflecting the real-life conditions and language habits of the local people. At the same time, the use of dialect makes Nandrama performances more realistic, enhancing the authenticity and credibility of the characters, making it easier for the audience to resonate with them.

1.1.4 Musical instruments Musical instruments accompaniment for Xianfeng Nan Ju

1.1.4.1 Huqin; a general term for certain two-stringed string instruments

The huqin is the primary melodic instrument in the Xianfeng Nan Ju ensemble, typically divided into large and small huqins. The large huqin has a larger sound box, producing a rich and deep tone, suitable for slow, lyrical melodies, often used to express characters' inner emotions and thoughts. The small huqin has a smaller sound box, producing a bright and clear tone, with more flexible playing techniques, capable of performing fast and smooth melodies, often used to depict lively and cheerful scenes. Huqin performance is achieved through left-hand string pressing and right-hand bowing. Players use various fingerings and bowing techniques, such as glissando, vibrato, trills, legato, and spiccato, to create a wide range of musical effects, adding unique charm to the singing parts of Nan Ju



Figure 1 The huqin, a Nan Ju instrument

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

1.1.4.2 Yueqin, a four-stringed plucked instrument with a full-moon-shaped sound

The Yueqin is a plucked string instrument with a flat, round body and a sound box made of thin wood. It has a short neck and four strings. The Yueqin produces a clear and bright tone with a strong percussive quality, primarily serving to enhance the rhythm and enrich the musical colors in Nan Ju accompaniment. When playing the Yueqin, the performer uses their fingers or a plectrum to pluck the strings, producing sound. By employing different plucking techniques and rhythmic patterns, it can harmonize with instruments like the huqin, making the music more cohesive and unified. The Yueqin often performs lively melodies that add a sense of vitality and agility to the music of Nan Ju, especially in comedic scenes or cheerful tunes. In these moments, the performance of the Yueqin fully showcases its unique charm, making the entire musical atmosphere even more vibrant.



Figure 2 Yueqin, a Nan Ju instrument

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

1.1.4.3 Sanxian, a three-stringed plucked instrument

The sanxian is an ancient plucked string instrument, consisting of the sound head, tuning pegs, neck, bridge, strings, and bridge pins. The sanxian has a rugged and bold tone, with a substantial volume, holding a unique position in the accompaniment of Xianfeng Nan Ju. It often appears in rhythmic patterns, providing a stable rhythmic foundation for the music, while also capable of playing simple melodic lines and harmonizing with other instruments. The sanxian employs a wide variety of techniques, including plucking, flicking, rolling, pressing, and sliding. By skillfully using these techniques, performers can create varied rhythms and melodies according to different plot developments and musical requirements, adding a distinctive style to the music of Nan Ju.



Figure 3 Source: Three Strings

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

1.1.4.4 Suona

The suona is a wind instrument often used in specific scenes and plots of Xianfeng Nan Ju. The suona comes in various types, including high-pitched, medium-pitched, and low-pitched suonas, each with its own distinctive tone quality. The high-pitched suona has a bright and piercing sound, strong in penetration, often used to convey intense and passionate atmospheres, such as battle scenes or grand ceremonies; the medium-pitched suona has a softer, more mellow tone, suitable for playing lyrical and beautiful melodies, often used to express characters' emotions and moods; the low-pitched suona has a deep and resonant tone, capable of creating a solemn and dignified atmosphere, often used for the entrance of important figures or grand scenes. Playing the suona requires performers to master correct breathing techniques and playing skills. By controlling the strength, duration, and rhythm of their breath, as well as using different fingering techniques, tongue trills, and glissandos, they can produce a rich variety of musical effects, adding strong artistic appeal to Nandrama performances.



Figure 4 Nan Ju instrument suona

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

1.1.4.5 Da luo

The Daluo is a percussion instrument with a relatively large surface area, typically over 30 centimeters in diameter. The sound of the Daluo is resonant and rich, with a long-lasting resonance. It is often used in Xianfeng Nan Ju to depict intense battle scenes, the entrance or exit of important characters, and more. The performance of the Daluo is achieved by striking the surface with a mallet. Performers adjust the striking force and position according to different plot requirements and rhythmic demands, producing various acoustic effects. In battle scenes, the strong strikes of the Daluo enhance the stage atmosphere, creating a tense and intense combat ambiance. When important characters enter, the striking of the Daluo helps to highlight their status and identity, making their character more vivid.



Figure 5 Nan Ju Instrument Gong

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

1.1.4.6 Tongbo

Cymbals, also known as clappers, are a type of copper percussion instrument. The sound of tongbois is bright and sharp, with a strong impact. In Xianfeng Nan Ju, they are often used in conjunction with Daluos and xiaoluos to create a tense and intense atmosphere, such as battle scenes or conflict scenarios. The Tongbo produces sound through the collision of two pieces, and performers can control the intensity, angle, and speed of the impact to produce different acoustic effects. In battle scenes, the powerful clashing sounds of the tongboenhance the tension, making the audience feel as if they are right there; in conflict scenes, the use of tongbohighlights the intensity of the conflict, driving the plot forward. The role of accompanying instruments in the performance of Xianfeng South Drama



Figure 6 Nan Ju tic Instruments, Tongbo

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

Different combinations of accompanying instruments and performance styles can create various dramatic atmospheres. For festive scenes, such as weddings and celebrations, lively melodies and rhythms are used, primarily with instruments like the huqin and yueqin, complemented by the light and brisk beats of xiaoluos and drum boards, to create a bustling and joyful atmosphere; for sad and melancholic scenes, such as partings and suffering, slow and somber melodies are employed, mainly with large douhuqin and other instruments, accompanied by muted percussion, to evoke a mournful and painful ambiance. In battle scenes, the intense playing of Daluos and tongbo creates a tense and fierce combat atmosphere, allowing the audience to feel the cruelty and intensity of war.

1.1.4.7 Xiaoluo

The xiaoluo is a small percussion instrument with a relatively small face, typically about 20 centimeters in diameter. The sound of the xiaoluo is clear and bright, with a soft tone. In martial arts performances, it is mainly used to complement the actors' movements, such as walking, turning, and making appearances. The

performance of the xiaoluo is achieved by striking the gong face with a gong board. Performers can flexibly adjust the rhythm and intensity of the strikes based on the performance pace and characteristics of the actors, ensuring that the sound of the xiaoluo closely matches the actors' movements, finely expressing the characters' emotions and rhythmic changes. For example, during a segment of lively dance movements, the xiaoluo can produce a light and cheerful rhythm, adding vitality to the performance; while during a slow and solemn appearance, the xiaoluo can be struck lightly to highlight the stability and dignity of the appearance.



Figure 7 A small gong, a musical instrument of the Nan Ju

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

1.1.4.8 Shaping the character image

Accompaniment instruments, through their unique timbres and playing techniques, can help actors shape distinct character images. For heroic and valiant figures, high-pitched suona horns and Daluos are often used to express the character's courage and fearlessness with their sonorous and resonant tones; for gentle and elegant female roles, instruments like the huqin and yueqin are played to produce

delicate and soft melodies that showcase the character's tenderness, beauty, and subtle emotions; for humorous and witty characters, the nimble playing and unique rhythmic patterns of xiaoluos and sanxian lutes add a comedic touch, making the character image more vivid and entertaining.

1.1.4.9 Cooperate with performance actions

The rhythm changes of Wuchang musical instruments closely coordinate with the body movements and dance actions of the performers, enhancing the rhythm and rhythm sense of the performance. Every gesture and move of the performers echoes with the rhythm of instruments such as the drum and xiaoluo, making the performance more harmonious and unified. During an exciting martial arts scene, the combat actions of the performers change with the rhythm of instruments like the Daluo and tongbos, with the speed and weight of the actions perfectly in sync with the striking force and rhythm of the instruments, making the martial arts scene more spectacular and visually impactful. In dance performances, the rhythm of the instruments can guide the dancers' movements, making the dance more fluid and elegant, showcasing a unique artistic charm.



Figure 8 Scene of a Nan Ju Performance

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

1.1.5 The script used in Xianfeng Nan Ju

Empress of Tangya Tusi: Based on the site of Tangya Tusi, a World Cultural Heritage site, it tells the story of the internal power struggle of Tangya Tusi during the Tianqi period of the Ming Dynasty, the enlightened measures taken by Empress Tian, and shows the national character and heart of the Tujia people.

Tang Ya Tusi Qin Ding was dispatched by the court to suppress bandits and fought with distinction, earning him the imperial commendation of "Heroic Town of Jingnan" and "Guardian of Chu and Shu." However, when the archway was completed, Qin Ding had already passed away. According to ritual, the great seal of the tusi should have been passed to his son, Qin Zongyao, but he lacked both virtue and talent; his daughter, Li Gu, was both literate and martial, deeply favored by the old chief, yet her marriage to a woman instead of a son violated ancestral rules and faced opposition from the chief manager Bal Hai and others. Tusi Lady Tan Tian was wise and brave, defying public opinion. She married Zhang Yunsong from another village and appointed her daughter and son-in-law as deputy officials. At the same time, she sent her son Tan Zongyao to guard the border at the imperial command, while she took over his seal. During her tenure, Tan Tian implemented a military system where "people served as soldiers in peacetime and as civilians in farming," and led her attendants to help her daughter choose a husband and arrange their marriage. She also freed her slaves to allow them to choose their own partners freely. These measures brought Tangya to its zenith.

1.1.5.1 The best part

In the drama, scenes with concentrated conflicts are often the most captivating. For instance, at the critical moment of deciding on the chieftain's succession and development direction, Tan Tian faces conflicts between traditional rituals and practical abilities, as well as contradictions between internal power struggles and external stability. Under immense pressure, she relies on her wisdom and courage to make a series of bold and wise decisions, successfully defusing crises. This fully demonstrates her extraordinary vision and outstanding leadership skills. Especially

noteworthy are her efforts to override objections, break through traditional notions, and arrange power succession based on the actual capabilities of her children, as well as leading her maids to attend the daughter's wedding and freeing the slaves. These actions highlight her enlightened tolerance and benevolent kindness, making them a significant highlight of the story.

1.1.5.2 The principle of the explanation

The story highlights the importance of openness and inclusiveness, as well as the integration of diverse cultures. By accepting Han people from other regions and learning Han culture, it promotes ethnic integration and regional development. At the same time, it emphasizes the significant role of women in historical processes. The Tan family, with their female members, upheld the prosperity of Tangya Tusi, breaking down gender barriers to capability. Additionally, the story underscores the significance of patriotism. The Tan family educated their son to serve the country and took on the responsibility of protecting the region, demonstrating that personal and familial destinies are closely tied to the nation's well-being. Only by maintaining national unity and stability can local prosperity



Figure 9 Stills from the Nan Ju of Lady Tusi of Tangya

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

He Gongwei Created by Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center, based on the revolutionary martyr He Gongwei, it presents the spirit of communist party members who are loyal to the Party and ready to die for it. It is a large-scale red Nan Ju that combines Nan Ju with red revolutionary themes.

He Gongwei was born in 1915 in Xianning, Hubei. During his middle school years, influenced by progressive ideas, he actively participated in the anti-Japanese salvation movement. In August 1936, He Gongwei enrolled at Peking University. While at PKU, he extensively read Marxist works and actively engaged in student movements. In December of the same year, he joined the Communist Party of China and served as an executive member of the Student Union at PKU and a standing committee member of the Beiping Student Federation, dedicating himself entirely to organizing propaganda for the anti-Japanese salvation cause.

Organizing anti-Japanese forces: In 1938, He Gongwei was sent back to Hubei by the Party organization. He carried out anti-Japanese salvation activities in Xianyang and Wuchang, successively formed an anti-Japanese armed force, founded a journal to publicize the anti-Japanese cause, and stimulated the enthusiasm of the people for the anti-Japanese war.

Creating a base: He went deep into the rural areas of southern Hubei, mobilized the masses and established an anti-Japanese base. By establishing party organizations and developing party members, he brought together scattered anti-Japanese forces and led them.

Unfortunately arrested: In January 1941, He Gongwei was arrested as a traitor when he was serving as the secretary of the Special Committee of Exi.

Unyielding Loyalty: After his arrest, the enemy tried both soft and hard tactics on him. First, they lured him with high office and generous rewards, but he firmly rejected them. Then, they subjected him to cruel torture, yet he remained steadfast and unyielding. In prison, He Gongwei endured all kinds of inhuman torment, but he always kept the party's secrets and remained resolute in his communist beliefs. In a letter to his father, he wrote: "I have dedicated myself to truth, with early resolve.

Where righteousness lies, even if knives, saws, axes, and halberds are placed at my neck, and parents and siblings weep around me, this heart must not be swayed, this will must not be altered."

Brave Martyrdom: On November 17, 1941, He Gongwei was taken to the execution ground by the enemy. On the over 1,000 stone steps leading to the execution ground, the enemy threatened him with death, saying they would spare his life if he turned back. However, He Gongwei sang "The Internationale" and walked resolutely step by step toward the execution ground, ultimately meeting his heroic end at the young age of 26.

In order to achieve the cause of national liberation, He Gongwei sacrificed his young and precious life. His deeds and spirit have inspired countless people.



Figure 10 Stills from the Nan Ju He Gongwei

Source: www.enshi.cn

Daughter Village: Based on the changing situation under the local chieftain system, it tells the story of Qin Yuxian, daughter of Jindong chieftain, who led female soldiers to retreat to Yunwu Peak and later crushed the rebellion plot with the help of the imperial army to maintain ethnic unity and national unity.



Figure 11 Stills from the Nan Ju Mrs. Tang Ya Toast

Source: www.enshi.cn

1.1.5.3 The songs for singing and playing for xianfeng Nan Ju music accompaniment.

Bred in the fertile cultural soil of the Jingchu land, Nan Ju has become an indispensable treasure in the Chinese opera landscape by virtue of its unique artistic charm. As the core element of the musical system of Nan Ju, the melody connects the singing, rhythm and emotional expression in a dynamic and changeable form, building up a highly recognizable musical language. From the undulating pitch lines to the logic of melodic development, the melody of Nan Ju not only contains the common genes of opera music, but also highlights the distinctive regional cultural characteristics. They are either gentle and delicate, outlining the state of mind of the characters, or resonant and exciting, rendering the dramatic conflicts, and each note carries the historical memory and artistic craftsmanship. An in-depth analysis of the compositional rules, developmental techniques and aesthetic qualities of the musical melodies of Nan Ju can not only deconstruct its unique musical codes, but also provide theoretical references for the inheritance and innovation of traditional opera music, and explore the continuation path of the excellent traditional Chinese culture in the contemporary context.

Nan ju

tian zi de zhong tuo tu si dequan bing kan si qing ying shi ze
 9
 qian jin guan hu tang ya qian dong bai xing
 17
 an yu wei shuai yu xing gong yu guo bai yu cheng shan e zhong jian
 22
 shu zhen shu jia gong ming li lu shu zhong shu qingquan xi zhi quan
 27
 zhang yin ren wo dan
 36
 xin ni zhong quan zai jian ya wan yao, wo dan xin
 43
 yong quan bu sheng ku bai xing, wo dan xin shi zu niang cheng
 49
 qian gu hen, wo dan xin

2

58

cheng shi bu zu liu ma ming , wo wei er

65

cheng jiu da ye song yi cheng cheng qing chao ting yun ni

71

bian cheng shou xun mu huang en

Figure 12 Genealogy of Lady Tusi of Tangya, Nan Ju)

Source, Zhang Lu; 2025

Nan Ju

Lady Qin Tianshi of the Tangya Tusi was an outstanding woman in the Tangya Tusi City during the Wanli era of the Ming Dynasty. She was open-minded, tolerant, hardworking, wise, benevolent, kind, and loyal to both her sovereign and her country. Lady Qin boldly reformed the Tusi military system, implementing the policy of "serving as soldiers during peacetime and civilians during farming seasons." She appointed the Han outsider Zhang Yunsong to an important position and took him as her son-in-law. She emancipated slaves, granting them the freedom to choose their own marriages. She also commanded her son to follow imperial orders and serve at the frontier to achieve meritorious deeds, while she herself took over his official duties, leading Tangya to its golden age. Her story exemplifies the Tujia people's spirit of inclusiveness, determination, and relentless pursuit of progress, as well as the cultural exchange and integration between Tujia traditions and Han culture. The Nan Ju "Lady of the Tangya Tusi" was created based on her life, showcasing her heroic demeanor and profound devotion to both family and nation.

Nv er hui

The musical score is written in a single system with six staves. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are written in Chinese characters below the notes.

1 nian nian sui sui nv er hui qing ge xiang yue
 4 zhao a mei yi ri xiang hui bai nian hao
 7 hua hao yuan bi yi fei bi yi fei
 10 kan yan qian cheng shuang dui cai die fei wu
 13
 16

Figure 13 Daughters of the Nan Ju score

Source; zhanglu,2025

Nv Er hui

The Nv Er hui consists of six acts plus an epilogue, with a performance duration of about 90 minutes. The play comprehensively showcases the unique charm of local operas in terms of ideological content, dramatic style, music, costumes, and stage design. In musical composition, Yang He ping has meticulously crafted the score, skillfully blending local folk songs with the plot, vividly depicting the lives and emotions of the Tujia people. This allows the audience to feel as if they are immersed in the scenes of Tujia life, experiencing a rich sense of ethnic culture. The unique repertoire of the accompaniment music of Xianfeng Nan Ju consists of gong and drum scores and musical pieces, each with its unique characteristics. The instruments used in gong and drum scores include cloud boards, board drums, gongs, tongbos, and hook gongs. These instruments, when combined with different rhythms, can create a variety of atmospheres. When depicting intense battle scenes, rapid and powerful gong and drum rhythms are employed, such as in "Leopard Head," where the rhythm is tight, the drum beats are dense, and the tongbo sound loud, instantly rendering the tense atmosphere of battle.

Nan tao hua shan

yan zi lou qian jian chun guang

2

6 yan zi lou qian jian chun guang

11 yang liu fei xu ye fen fang

16 xiang jun chao zong chu xiang hui

21 si mu xiang shi xin yi an xu tian zai xin fang

25

30

34 tao hua han bao ying chun fang

Figure 14 Nan Ju Southern Peach Blossom Fan Score

Source: Zhang Lu, 2025

Nan tao hua shan

The adaptation of 'Nan Taohua' into a Nan Ju retains the historical framework and emotional core of Kong Shangren's original work, while infusing new life into the traditional story through regional artistic reconstruction. The play uses the distinctive' Pihuang 'vocal style of Nan Ju as its musical foundation, blending the joys and sorrows of Hou Fangyu and Li Xiangjun with the folk tunes of the Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Enshi, thus giving the imagery of' Taohua 'a fresh artistic luster in the mountains and waters of Bashan and Chuchu. During the adaptation, the creators not only preserved key scenes such as' Blood Splashed on the Poetic Fan 'and' Zhang Daoshi's Enlightenment,' but also enhanced the tragic tension of the interplay between the rise and fall of the Southern Ming Dynasty and individual fates by incorporating Tujia elements in stage direction and costumes and props. This strategy of integrating historical truth with local art not only continues the original intention of 'borrowing the sentiment of parting and reunion to write about the sense of rise and fall' but also achieves the creative transformation of classical drama through the contemporary performance of intangible cultural heritage drama.

1.2 Lai Feng Nan Ju

1.2.1 The vocal techniques for Lai Feng Nan Ju

Lai Feng Nan Ju , a traditional opera of Lai Feng County in Hubei Province, was included in the second batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection List in 2008. With a history of over 300 years, it possesses unique artistic charm. This article focuses on the musical characteristics of Lai Feng Nan Ju delving into its vocal styles, tunes, patterns, rhythms, singing styles, and accompanying instruments to elucidate its musical features. It reveals the significant value of this opera in preserving ethnic culture and enriching people's spiritual lives. The aim is to provide theoretical support for the protection, inheritance, and development of Lai Feng Nan Ju promoting its continuation and innovation in contemporary society.

Lai Feng Nan Ju is popular in the Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hubei Province. It originated during the Rongmei chieftain era in western Hubei, embodying the wisdom and culture of the local people. The lyrics are mostly

seven-character or ten-character lines, with dialogues and singing incorporating the local Tujia dialect, making it witty, humorous, and easy to understand, full of the vibrant atmosphere of daily life. It carries a unique "deep mountain valley" sound, deeply loved by the local population. Over its long development, Lai Feng Nan Ju has absorbed various musical elements, forming a distinctive musical system. Studying its musical characteristics can help deepen our understanding of the artistic essence of this opera genre, promote its inheritance and development, and also add new content to the study of Chinese opera music.

1.2.1.1 Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) in Lai Feng Nan Ju

Nan Lu vocal style originates from the Chu tune and has a deep connection with the Jinghe Han Opera in Hunan. Its style is gentle and graceful, suitable for expressing delicate emotions, often used in comedy and narrative plays. The singing styles are rich, including guide board (free rhythm), first-class (4/4 time), second-class (1/4 time), third-class (free rhythm), rolling board (free rhythm), slow three eyes (4/4 time), follow tone (4/4 time), stack (4/4, 1/4 time), and sad tone (1/4 time). Among these, reverse three eyes (also known as "reverse eight treasures") is in 8/4 time, and yin-diao second-class (1/4 time). For example, in the classic play "The Twin Locust Trees," the use of Nanshan vocal style vividly portrays the subtle emotional changes between characters. Actors transition through different rhythmic patterns, such as from slow three eyes to second-class, to vividly convey the emotional fluctuations of the roles.

1.2.1.2 Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) in Lai Feng Nan Ju

The Northern Road vocal style evolved from the bangzi tune of "Qin Opera," characterized by its high-pitched and expansive tone, often used in martial plays and narratives. Its singing patterns include the guide board (free rhythm), first line (4/4 time), starting board (1/4 time), slow second line (2/4 time), fast second line (1/4 time), flowing board (1/4 time), third line (free rhythm), sad board (1/4 time), flying board (1/4 time), counting board (1/4 time), stacked board (1/4 time), and eye-clearing board (1/4 time). When depicting battle scenes or the heroic aspirations of characters, the high-pitched and stirring nature of the Northern Road vocal style effectively enhances

the atmosphere and intensifies the dramatic impact. For example, in "Mukeshai," the singing segments of roles like Mu Guiying extensively use the Northern Road vocal style, showcasing their brave and valiant personalities.

1.2.1.3 Shang Lu vocal style in Lai Feng Nan Ju

Shang Lu vocal style Opera, also known as Chuan Bangzi, evolved from Qin Opera (Bangzi style). Its singing styles include the Guidan (free rhythm), Yizhi (4/4 time), Erlou (1/4 time), Xiaoyanban (1/4 time), Sanban (free rhythm), Aizi (1/4 time), Duoban (4/4 and 1/4 time), and Qiban (1/4 time). Shang Lu vocal style often portrays intense and tragic stories, such as in "Zhuang Zhu's Assassination of Liao," where the use of Shang Lu vocal style vividly conveys Zhuang Zhu's noble spirit and his tragic sacrifice for justice, deeply moving the audience with the dramatic tension of the plot. Shang Lu vocal style Opera, also known as Chuan Bangzi, evolved from Qin Opera (Bangzi style). Its singing styles include the Guidan (free rhythm), Yizhi (4/4 time), Erlou (1/4 time), Xiaoyanban (1/4 time), Sanban (free rhythm), Aizi (1/4 time), Duoban (4/4 and 1/4 time), and Qiban (1/4 time). Shang Lu vocal style often portrays intense and tragic stories, such as in "Zhuang Zhu's Assassination of Liao," where the use of Shang Lu vocal style vividly conveys Zhuang Zhu's noble spirit and his tragic sacrifice for justice, deeply moving the audience with the dramatic tension of the plot.

1.2.1.4 Other vocal style

Other vocal style tunes consist of colorful tunes and minor tunes (i.e., small tunes), featuring a variety of unique singing styles, such as (Nine Tunes Eighteen Beats) (4/4 time), (Living at Home) (4/4 time), (The Life-Shortening Drum) (2/4 time), (The Bell of the Netherworld) (free style), (The Head of a Clean Official) (2/4 time), (Steel Shuttle) (2/4 time), (At the Third Watch) (4/4 time), (Inverted Board Drilling) (2/4, 1/4 time), and (Broken Bridge Repeatedly) (2/4 time). These other vocal style tunes are rich in local flavor and the essence of everyday life, often used to depict scenes that are light-hearted, lively, or humorous, adding a unique touch to Nan Ju. In some folk operas, the use of other vocal style tunes makes the plot more vivid and interesting, closely reflecting people's lives.

1.2.2 The vocal uniqueness of Lai Feng Nan Ju

1.2.2.1 Ming Liang vocal technique (High and bright)

The male lead roles in Lai Feng Nan Ju possess unique vocal techniques. In the Shanglu vocal style, the guapanzi (a traditional clapper instrument) plays a pivotal role. Its crisp and crisp tones harmonize perfectly with the male lead's singing, significantly enhancing the performance. During performances, these leads skillfully blend elements of high-pitched folk songs from western Hubei with rustic chorus styles, creating a distinctive "mountain valley resonance" that combines bright clarity with earthy depth. For instance, in the opera *Yongcheng Tanmu* (Searching for Mother in Yongcheng), the male lead's vocal segments demonstrate meticulous rhythm control—sometimes tense to build atmosphere, other times gentle to delicately convey inner turmoil. The dialogue features authentic Hubei dialect, making it both accessible and full of life. Paired with rich accompaniment from string instruments like jinghu, erhu, and yueqin, along with percussion such as big drums, gongs, and cymbals, the entire performance achieves layered depth and lingering resonance, fully showcasing the unique artistic charm of Lai Feng Nan Ju

1.2.2.2 You Ya Duo Bian vocal technique (Graceful and versatile)

The vocal techniques of Lai Feng Nan Ju unfold like a vibrant and dynamic artistic tapestry, exuding supreme elegance. Its vocal system boasts rich diversity: the Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) flows with delicate tenderness, resembling a mountain stream whispering tender emotions; the Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) radiates vigor and clarity, akin to a battle drum pulsating with power and passion; while the Upper style embodies rustic grandeur, carrying the earthy essence of mountainous landscapes. Performers masterfully control breath control through chest-abdominal breathing—deep inhalation as if absorbing cosmic energy, steady exhalation that sustains the voice. This creates melodies that flow with emotional warmth, whether lingering or undulating. In diction and phrasing, performers integrate the authentic Tujia dialect of western Hubei, blending accessibility with vivid life imagery. Through strategic articulation and vocal placement, each word resonates

clearly with the audience, seamlessly blending with melodic cadences. The transitions between musical phrases flow naturally, sometimes as gentle as a breeze caressing willows, other times as powerful as waves crashing against shores. These fluid variations showcase the artistry's exquisite versatility, immersing viewers in its unique artistic charm.

1.2.2.3 Vocal techniques combined with local music

The vocal artistry of Lai Feng Nan Ju (Nan Ju) has forged a unique fusion with local music, sparking distinctive artistic brilliance. The opera's vocal styles—South Road, North Road, and Upper Road—were shaped through deep integration with Enshi's yangqin music and folk melodies. For instance, South Road incorporates the lyrical cadences of Enshi's yangqin tunes, creating a tender narrative style that flows like a gentle stream. North Road, influenced by mountain ballads, features dynamic rhythms that deliver powerful emotional intensity, resembling how fierce winds roar through the mountains. Upper Road, blending local work songs, delivers bold and heroic performances that vividly portray tragic or indignant themes. Moreover, Nanguo incorporates elements from Laifeng Daoqing (Tujia folk opera) and regional folk songs in its musical compositions. These operatic ornaments and glissandos blend traditional opera charm with authentic local flavor, transforming the vocal art into vibrant Tujia cultural symphonies deeply cherished by locals.

- Rhythm characteristics

The rhythm variations in FengNan Ju are remarkably intricate and sophisticated, serving as crucial elements for advancing plotlines and character development. Its vocal system boasts diverse styles—Southern, Northern, and Upper Roads each have their unique characteristics—with flexible combinations and transitions in tempo. In Southern Road vocal styles, the first-class and slow third-eye rhythms (4/4 time) create a soothing tempo, as seen in *Qin Xianglian* where the prolonged rhythm meticulously portrays her sorrow and helplessness during personal narratives. The compact second-class rhythm (1/4 time) intensifies tension when conflicts escalate between Qin Xianglian and Chen Shiming, heightening audience anxiety. Northern Road

vocal styles feature brisk tempos like Qiba, Kuai Erliu, and Liushui (all 1/4 time), delivering powerful momentum. In martial scenes like Zhang Fei's battle against Ma Chao in **Three Kingdoms**, the rhythmic interplay with actors' crisp movements and resounding gongs creates an immersive battlefield atmosphere. The lyrical slow second-class rhythm (2/4 time) adds fluidity to emotional expressions, maintaining balanced pacing for nuanced feelings. Upper Road vocal styles showcase rugged intensity through 1/4-time second-class and Xiaoyan beats (slow cadences), effectively conveying heroic spirit in scenes like Yang Yeyi's wedding at Jinshatan Beach from **Yang Family Generals**, or evoking cathartic moments like Dou E's final cries before execution in **The Injustice to Dou E**. Throughout a complete Nanhua opera performance, these varied vocal rhythms are not isolated but intricately woven together according to plot progression and emotional shifts. When the plot is calm and the characters' emotions are delicate, the slow rhythm unfolds gradually; once the conflict breaks out, the rhythm immediately accelerates and becomes compact and powerful. Through the contrast of fast and slow rhythms and strong and weak rhythms, the plot becomes turbulent and exciting, making the audience immersed in the unique artistic world of Nan Ju

-Complex rhythm changes

In Nan Ju, the first and slow third beats (4/4 time) create a soothing rhythm. As seen in **Qin Xianglian**, when she pours out her personal story, the lingering tempo meticulously outlines her sorrow and helplessness. The second beat (1/4 time), with its tight cadence, heightens tension during confrontations like her clash with Chen Shiming, instantly amplifying the stage's intensity and gripping the audience's hearts. Northern opera features brisk rhythms: starting with quick beats, fast second beats, and flowing melodies in 1/4 time. In martial scenes—like Zhang Fei's battle against Ma Chao in **Romance of the Three Kingdoms**—the crisp martial arts movements paired with thunderous gongs and drums create a powerful rhythm that vividly recreates the clashing of armor and hooves on the battlefield. The slow second beat (2/4 time) adds fluidity to lyrical expressions, maintaining measured pacing for

nuanced emotional shifts. Upstream opera's rugged, passionate rhythms—primarily second beats in 1/4 time and xiaoyan beats (slow beats)—heighten heroism. For instance, Yang Yeyi's wedding at Jinshatan Beach in **The Yang Family Generals** or Dou E's final cry before execution in **The Injustice to Dou E**—their intense rhythms deeply resonate with the audience and ignite the stage atmosphere. In a complete Nan Ju performance, these varied rhythmic patterns don't exist in isolation but intertwine skillfully with the plot development and emotional fluctuations of the characters. When the plot is calm and the characters' emotions are delicate, the slow rhythm unfolds gradually; once the conflict breaks out, the rhythm immediately accelerates and becomes compact and powerful. Through the contrast of fast and slow rhythms and strong and weak rhythms, the plot becomes turbulent and exciting, making the audience immersed in the unique artistic world of Nan Ju

1.2.3 Lyrics and dialogue

The lyrics and dialogues of Laifeng Nan Ju are imbued with rich local characteristics and possess remarkable artistic charm. The verses predominantly adopt a seven-character or ten-character structure, featuring well-organized patterns and rhythmic cadences that make them melodious to the ear. When depicting romantic sentiments, lines like "My love flows tenderly, your affection lingers— / My maiden blushes shyly, her eyes whisper sweet" succinctly reveal the subtle yet sincere emotions between lovers. The spoken dialogue and singing incorporate abundant elements of western Hubei Tujia dialect, such as pronouncing "what" as "meizi" and "eating" as "cha fan," creating a down-to-earth intimacy that instantly bridges the gap with the audience. This approach makes the story relatable to local Tujia people, evoking a sense of familiarity and warmth while maintaining authentic daily life authenticity. During plot conflicts, characters deliver concise, witty dialogues that occasionally display bold humor, effectively capturing the audience's attention and fully showcasing the dramatic tension characteristic of Laifeng Nan Ju, highlighting its unique artistic essence.

1.2.3.1 Rhyme of lyrics and dialogue

The rhythmic variations in Laifeng Nan Ju are remarkably intricate and sophisticated, serving as pivotal elements that drive plot progression and character development. Its vocal system boasts diverse styles, with Southern, Northern, and Upper Roads each possessing unique characteristics. The combination and transition of rhythms demonstrate remarkable flexibility. In Southern Road vocal styles, the first-class and slow third-eye rhythm (4/4 time) conveys a lyrical pace, as seen in *Qin Xianglian* where the prolonged tempo meticulously portrays her tragic plight and helplessness during personal confessions. The compact second-class rhythm (1/4 time) heightens tension dramatically when conflicts escalate between Qin Xianglian and Chen Shiming, instantly tightening the audience's heartstrings. Northern Road vocal styles feature brisk rhythms like the opening beat, fast second-class, and flowing stream rhythms in 1/4 time, delivering powerful momentum. In martial scenes such as Zhang Fei's battle against Ma Chao in *Three Kingdoms*, the crisp percussion and swift martial arts movements create a resounding rhythm that vividly evokes the clash of clashing arms on the battlefield. The slow second-class rhythm in 2/4 time adds lyrical grace to emotional expressions, maintaining measured cadence during nuanced character portrayals. Upper Road vocal styles showcase rugged intensity through 1/4 time second-class and slow beat rhythms, effectively intertwining with plot developments and emotional fluctuations. These varied vocal techniques in a complete Nan Ju performance are not isolated elements but are skillfully interwoven according to narrative progression and character dynamics, creating a cohesive theatrical atmosphere. When the plot is calm and the characters' emotions are delicate, the slow rhythm unfolds gradually; once the conflict breaks out, the rhythm immediately accelerates and becomes compact and powerful. Through the contrast of fast and slow rhythms and strong and weak rhythms, The plot becomes turbulent and exciting, so that the audience is immersed in the unique artistic world of Nan Ju

1.2.3.2 Dialogue and dialect

In Laifeng Nan Ju, the ingenious blend of dialogue and dialect creates a vivid tapestry of local life and regional charm. In the classic play "The Golden-Toped Lantern", Pi Jin argues with his wife, who scolds him: "You fool! All you do is wander around aimlessly, never caring about housework. Let me teach you a lesson!" The fiery dialect instantly brings to life the image of a frustrated wife who can't help but criticize her husband. Pi Jin quickly responds with a grin: "Don't be mad! I'm just busy with something. I'll show you better behavior in two days." The interjections "thai" and "da" showcase the unique flavor of Laifeng dialect—playful yet endearing. In "Ge Ma", Ma Duo instructs his worker Ge Ma: "Find Zhang Dahong for me quickly. Don't dawdle!" Ge Ma mutters resentfully: "What's the rush? It's not an emergency." The straightforward "do what" vividly captures the master-servant dynamics through this rustic vernacular. These dialogues infused with Tujia dialect transport audiences to Laifeng streets, immersing them in the distinctive charm of Nan Ju.

1.2.4 Musical instruments accompaniment for Lai Feng Nan Ju

1.2.4.1 Huqin; a general term for certain two-stringed string instruments

Form Characteristics: The huqin commonly used in southern Enshi opera is mainly the Southern Huqin and the Northern Huqin. They have slight differences in form but both belong to the category of bowed string instruments. The sound box is usually made of bamboo or wood, with one end covered in snake skin or python skin. The neck is slender, with a tuning peg on top, and the strings are mostly silk or metal.

Playing Method: The player holds the instrument with the left hand and presses the strings. By pressing, sliding, and rubbing the strings with their fingers, they alter the pitch and tone color. The right hand holds the bow to pluck the strings and produce sound. The huqin has a soft, mellow tone that is rich in musicality, capable of mimicking the gracefulness and subtlety of human voices. It plays a leading role in the melody of Nan Ju accompaniment.



Figure 15 the huqin, the accompanying instrument of the Nan Ju

Source; zhanglu,2025

1.2.4.2 Yueqin, a four-stringed plucked instrument with a full-moon-shaped sound.

Form characteristics: The body of the moon guitar is flat and round, the neck is short, the face is covered with paulownia wood, and the back is round. There are notes and phases on the guitar to determine the pitch, and there are usually four strings, which are made of metal or silk.



Figure 16 Yueqin, a musical instrument used as an accompaniment to the Nan Ju

Source; zhanglu,2025

1.2.4.3 Sanxian, a three-stringed plucked instrument.

In the Enshi Nan Ju opera, the sanxian, as one of the stringed accompaniment instruments, holds unique significance. It collaborates with the jinghu, erhu, yueqin, suona, and gaibanzi, among others, to build the rich musical layers of Nan Ju. The sanxian's timbre is highly distinctive—its high notes are firm and crisp, mid-tones bright and mellow, and bass notes full and resonant, with considerable volume. Its bold and unconstrained character can evoke a variety of emotional atmospheres in Nan Ju performances, such as fervor, sorrow, or joy. In terms of playing techniques, it employs a range of fingerings including plucking, double plucking, double picking, sweeping, and tremolo, resulting in diverse and dynamic musical effects. These techniques complement Ju "deep mountain valley sound" singing style, significantly enhancing the artistic infection and expressive power of Nan Ju, thereby contributing substantially to the formation of its unique artistic style.



Figure 17 Sanxian, a musical instrument used as an accompaniment to the Nan Ju
Source; zhanglu,2025

1.2.4.4 Da luo

Form characteristics: The Daluo belongs to the Daluo class of musical instruments. The gong face is large and flat, and the gong edge is wide. It is usually made of copper. Its diameter is usually between 30 and 50 cm, and it is heavy. Different sizes and manufacturing processes lead to differences in sound color.

Playing Method: When playing, the performer holds the gong rope with their left hand to keep the gong face level, and strikes it with a mallet in their right hand. The sound of the Daluo is resonant and rich, with a long-lasting resonance. Striking the center or edge of the gong produces different pitches and timbres, allowing for flexible use according to the plot and musical needs.



Figure 18 Nan Ju Accompanying Instrument Gong

Source; zhanglu,2025

1.2.4.5 Suona

In the Enshi Nan Ju opera, the suona stands out as a truly remarkable instrument. Its unique timbre is both sonorous and melodious, with an exceptionally wide range that effortlessly spans multiple octaves during performance—from the agitation of soaring high notes to the deep, resonant lows, each is rendered with masterful precision. In terms of playing techniques, suona performers skillfully employ glissandos, vibratos, and tonguing to enrich the expressiveness of the melodies. When the plot intensifies into fierce battle scenes, the suona, with its rapid rhythms and powerful breath control, delivers majestic and stirring tunes that instantly kindle the atmosphere. Conversely, during lyrical passages, it produces heartrending, graceful melodies through delicate breath modulation and fingering variations, precisely conveying the inner emotions of homo sapiens. Simultaneously, it harmonizes seamlessly with other Nan Ju instruments, such as the jinghu and erhu, weaving together richly layered and profoundly infection musical compositions. As a vital bearer

of Enshi Nan Ju artistic charm, the suona significantly enhances the opera's artistic infection and expressive power.



Figure 19 suona musical instrument used as an accompaniment to the Nan Ju

Source; zhanglu,2025

1.2.4.6 Xiaoluo

Form characteristics: The shape of the xiaoluo is relatively small, the gong surface is round, the edge of the gong is narrow and thin, and it is generally made of copper. Its diameter is about 20 cm, the weight is light, and it is easy for the player to operate flexibly.

Playing method: The player holds the gong with his right index finger and thumb, and holds it with his left hand. By shaking the right wrist, he strikes the gong surface with the gong plate. The sound of the xiaoluo is clear and bright, with a flexible and varied rhythm. It often adds vitality to the performance of other instruments with its lively rhythm patterns and atmosphere.



Figure 20 xiaoluo, musical instrument used as an accompaniment to the Nan Ju

Source; zhanglu,2025

1.2.4.7 Tongbo

Form characteristics: The tongbo is made up of two circular copper plates. The raised part in the middle is called the bowl. The size and shape of the bowl will affect the sound of the tongbo. The edge of the tongbo is thin, the size and weight of the two tongbo are roughly the same.

Playing Method: When playing, the performer holds the two tongbo in each hand. By striking them together, separately, or rubbing against each other, different sounds are produced. The sound from striking is loud and powerful, while separate strikes produce shorter, crisp tones. Rubbing creates unique friction sounds that enhance musical expression.



Figure 21 Tongbo, accompanying instrument of Nan Ju opera

Source; zhanglu,2025

1.2.4.8 Da gu

Form characteristics: The drum used in Enshi South drama is mainly a board drum, which is flat and round in shape. The drum frame is made of hard wood and the drum surface is covered with cow or pig skin. The board drum is small in size, and the drum skin at the center of the drum is thin, with a clear, bright and penetrating sound.

Performance Method: The performer uses two long drumsticks to strike different positions on the drum, such as the center and edges, producing a variety of rhythms and timbres. The striking force, speed, and rhythm combinations of the drumsticks are rich and diverse, capable of simulating various sound effects, from dense drumbeats like a sudden storm to steady and slow rhythmic patterns.



Figure 22 Daughters of the Nan Ju score

Source; zhanglu,2025

The accompanying instruments of Nan Ju each have their own characteristics, playing crucial roles in creating musical ambiance, supporting actors' performances, and advancing the plot. Their close cooperation and collaboration form the unique and rich musical system of Enshi Nan Ju. However, with the impact of modern culture and the shortage of talent for inheritance, Nan Ju faces severe challenges in its transmission. The performance skills and musical essence of its accompanying instruments are also at risk of being lost. Therefore, strengthening research, protection, and inheritance of the accompanying instruments of Nan Ju is of great practical significance. By organizing relevant cultural activities and cultivating professional talent, this excellent traditional opera art can be sustained and developed, allowing its unique musical charm to shine anew in the new era.

Qu shi

feng qing qing ye cheng cheng
 pi yi chi jiao pi yi chi jiao chu gui
 men , shou tan pan li
 南路一字
 man yi
 bu
 kong jing

2

27

yi fu meng zhong ren ,

32

wo jin lu chu nv er shen ,

37

hai shi wei zhi bai guo xian qi pa

42

yan gaun quan ying . xi lan ya wo bu shi qing fu

48

ying dang nv , ye bu shi feng chen

52

xia jian ren wo sui fei

55

tian shang zhang qi jie ,

Figure 23 Score of the Nan Ju Pusillanamous Quatrain 10

Source; zhanglu,2025

QU Shi

In the picturesque mountain villages inhabited by the Tujia people, there lived a girl named Xilan who was both clever and dexterous, excelling at weaving fine cloth. She meticulously wove the colorful wildflowers from the mountains into her fabric using multicolored silk threads, creating a textile known as "Kapu." The flowers on the Kapu were so vivid and lifelike that they attracted bees and butterflies. Not content with her achievements, Xilan resolved to weave every flower in the world into her Kapu. After much inquiry, she finally learned of an ancient ginkgo tree in the back mountain that bloomed with exquisite white flowers at midnight. Thus, every night, Xilan ventured alone to the back mountain, quietly awaiting the ginkgo blossoms. Her sincerity eventually moved the tree, and one night, the ginkgo flowers silently bloomed. Overjoyed, Xilan picked the flowers to weave into her Kapu. However, her lazy and envious sister-in-law, resentful of her talent, falsely accused her to her father, claiming Xilan was secretly meeting a lover at night. Believing the slander, the father, in a fit of rage, stormed into Xilan's room and accidentally struck her dead. Later, to honor Xilan's memory, the women of the Tujia

An ethnic group learned to weave her Kapu and even fashioned it into quilts, passing down this intricate textile art through generations. This woven brocade came to be known as "Xilan Kapu."

Gui zhong yuan

曲7 淘气唱: bei lu san liu サ

mei mei zuo shi bu si cun bu gai zuo chu

6
zhe shi qing xiang qin men zhi dao

10
lai tao lun wo kan ni ri hou zen wei ren

曲8 玉莲唱: bei lu liu shui :

1
ting ta yan lai hao xiu can, ci shi nan se you xian yanzhuan shen

14
wo ba gong zi yuan ni jia zao nan zhen ke lian nv hai er jia

25
xin changruan wei jiu ni re xia zhe guo duan

曲9 玉莲唱: bei lu san liu サ

1
ge ge shuo hua li bu duan

2

5
qi de yu lian mao huo yan shang qian yu ta

9
lai si da ni wu w qing

12
jie wei na ban

曲10 白：你醒醒，老旦唱 bei lu dao ban yi zhuan san liu サ

1

2
yi jian zhong qing re sheng qi

5
zhan zhan qi sha nian mai ren shou chi jia

9
fa jiang er da da si ni zhe xiao jian ren

1

cha ren gang jin men hai xiang ge ge hu ran zhuan hui

11

xiang xia de nv er hun piao dang you jiang ta cang

19

zai zhe gui xiang ge ge ma er lian chi sang

27

ni shuo er yuan wang bu yuan wang

28

Figure 24 Qu X of the Nan Ju Silankapu

Source; zhanglu,2025

Gui Zhong yuan

The Fate in the Cabinet" is a widely circulated folk tale with multiple versions and adaptations across various theatrical genres. The main plot revolves around the following: After Yue Fei was wrongfully executed, his son Yue Lei was pursued by government troops. During his escape, Yue Lei, in a state of panic, fled into Yu Lian's home. At that time, Yu Lian was alone in the house. Upon learning that Yue Lei was the descendant of a loyal and righteous family, she took the risk of hiding him in a cabinet. Her elder brother Liu Chun, who had just returned from escorting their mother to visit relatives, suddenly came back and wanted to open the cabinet to retrieve something. To prevent the discovery of a young man hidden inside and avoid misunderstanding, Yu Lian went to great lengths to stop her brother from opening the cabinet, leading to a comical misunderstanding between the siblings. Fortunately, their mother, who was deeply principled, inquired about the situation and, upon learning that Yue Lei was the son of the anti-Jin hero Yue Fei and had been persecuted by treacherous officials, decided to rescue the descendant of the loyal family. The mother then arranged for Yu Lian and Yue Lei to be married, thus concluding the story of their serendipitous union.

《Zhang wu nai shi yin》

ai qu nian jian zhao le ge xi fu

men wei lai xiang qin men

jiao ta da

jiao po zhe ge da jiao po

转垛板

hou long zhen de kua

huang tu po ,tui ge shi gun xiang wan tian luo zhang de bi wo gao yi cuo

yao gan cu w chi ba duo ta kan zhong wo shi

yi ge lao shi huo , tuo ren gei woshuo jie

2

52

he , zhi yin jia xiang zao zai huo , ta ying yao dai wo lai guo huo , ta

63

shuo dao you fu liang ren xiang you nangong dan tuo

75

jiu zhe yang yi kuai ba mi tao , yi qi shui miao

87

转四平

jiao , you yi tian wo shi zai shi ren bu guo

91

94

mo le yi xia ta na shuang chang da jiao , shei zhi

97

转垛板

ta shei zhi ta jiu zhu wo er duo , teng de wo ya chi da ke

105

ke wo da ta bu ying shuo hua mei ta e shi zai jiao

118 3

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'Nan JuZhang wu nai shi yin'. It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written in Chinese characters below the notes. The first staff (measures 118-124) has a fermata over the final note. The second staff (measures 125-135) features a continuous eighth-note accompaniment. The third staff (measures 136-145) continues the eighth-note accompaniment. The fourth staff (measures 146-150) concludes with a final note and a fermata.

wo wu nai he wo xiang gen ta lai san huo

she bu de ta chi de ku nai de mo she bu de ta zhi han zhi leng teng ai

wo , wo hai shi xin ganqing yuan yi bei zi bao ta na shuangyou chang

you hei de hao da jiao .

Figure 25 score of the Nan JuZhang wu nai shi yin

source; zhanglu,2025

Zhang wu nai shi yin

Zhang Nuli is a kind and honest farmer who is a little timid. One day, he accidentally picked up an official seal while working in the fields. The official seal was lost by a local corrupt official. Zhang Nuli knew the importance of the official seal and wanted to return it, but he was afraid of getting into trouble.

Encouraged by his wife, Zhang Ruina decided to take the official seal to the county office, hoping to expose the corrupt officials' misdeeds and seek justice for the people. However, to protect his position, the corrupt official not only denied that the seal was lost but also accused Zhang Ruina of being a thief, attempting to have him imprisoned. Zhang Nulai suffered all kinds of torture in prison, but he never gave in and insisted on his innocence. Finally, with the help of an upright secretary and some righteous people, the truth came to light, the corrupt official got the punishment he deserved, and Zhang Nulai cleared his name and became a hero in the eyes of the local people.

Through the experience of Zhang, the story shows the struggle and resistance of ordinary people when they face power and injustice, as well as the theme that justice will eventually overcome evil.

Conclusion

Enshi Nan Ju, as a highly representative multi-tune opera in the Tujia ethnic region of western Hubei, exhibits distinct characteristics of regional cultural integration and artistic uniqueness. In terms of its vocal system, it centers on "high-pitched tunes, plucked tunes, and Kunqu tunes," blending the melodic traits of Tujia mountain songs and Nuo opera singing styles to form a chorus-like "lead-and-response" vocal form and a musical style that balances vigor and grace. Among these, the plucked tunes, influenced by Han-style opera, combine sonority with mellowness, while the high-pitched tunes are imbued with the mystical rhythms of Tujia shamanistic culture.

In performance, it retains the stylized conventions of traditional opera while incorporating the kinetic movements of Tujia dances such as the "Hand-Waving

Dance" and "Maogusi." The roles of Sheng (male), Dan (female), Jing (painted face), Mo (middle-aged male), and Chou (clown) subtly embody the humor and vigor of ethnic folk art. For instance, the facial makeup of Jing roles often features motifs of the Tujia totem, the "White Tiger," blending the abstract expressiveness of opera with ethnic symbolism.

The accompaniment is rooted in the "Tujia wind and percussion ensemble," composed of large gongs, drums, horse gongs, and cymbals, while the integration of erhu and suona instruments incorporates local dialect rhythms, creating a highly distinctive rhythmic system. The repertoire draws extensively from historical epics and folk tales, staging both traditional Han themes of "loyalty, treachery, good, and evil" (e.g., excerpts from **The Investiture of the Gods**) and adaptations of Tujia legends (e.g., **Xilankapu**). The language is interspersed with Enshi dialect and colloquialisms, tightly intertwining literary refinement with rustic charm.

Culturally, Enshi Nan Ju is the product of long-term fusion between the Han opera tradition and Tujia aesthetic sensibilities. Its defining traits—"tunes adapting to customs, drama embodying the folk spirit"—not only reflect the adaptability of Chinese opera in cross-ethnic dissemination but also serve as a living specimen for studying the symbiotic relationships of ethnic arts in the Wuling Mountain region.

In the study on the status of the Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province. In the vast firmament of Chinese opera culture, Enshi Nan Ju shines as a uniquely brilliant star. As one of the four major local opera genres in Hubei Province, Nan Ju is primarily performed in the Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Hubei. It originated during the Rongmei Tusi era of Western Hubei in the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty, took shape during the Qianlong era in the mid-18th century, and has endured over 300 years of history, bearing the profound cultural memory of the region. Its vocal styles are diverse, encompassing southern, northern, upper, high-pitched, Kunqu, and other vocal style tunes, while its role categories are divided into four major types: sheng (male roles), dan (female roles), jing (painted-face roles), and chou (clown roles). The repertoire is extensive, with thousands of scripts excavated and cataloged, covering a wide range of historical narratives such as the Investiture of the

Gods, the Three Kingdoms, the Water Margin, the Generals of the Yang Family, and the Legend of Yue Fei. However, under the impact of modern trends, the development of Enshi Nan Ju faces both challenges and opportunities. This paper aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the popularity, dissemination channels, and current status of Enshi Nan Ju, identify the issues it encounters in inheritance and development, and explore sustainable pathways, with the hope of contributing to the preservation and transmission of this precious intangible cultural heritage.

1.2.5 The script used in Lai Feng Nan Ju

Laifeng Nan Ju Opera, as a national intangible cultural heritage, boasts an immense repertoire with extremely broad themes, covering history, folk tales, mythology, and modern life. It is renowned as "Three Thousand from the Tang, Eight Hundred from the Song, and the endless tales of the Three Kingdoms," with over 800 extant scripts preserved to this day.

Historical narrative scripts constitute a significant component of Laifeng Nan Ju Opera. Among them, Nan Ju works based on the Three Kingdoms stories vividly bring the conflicts between Wei, Shu, and Wu to the stage, brilliantly portraying Zhuge Liang's strategic wisdom of "winning battles a thousand miles away with a feather fan and silk scarf," Guan Yu's loyalty and bravery in "passing five checkpoints and slaying six generals," as well as Cao Cao's grand ambition of "holding the emperor hostage to command the nobles." These performances immerse the audience in that era teeming with heroes while Nan Ju operas set against the backdrop of Sui and Tang history—from the chaos at the end of the Sui dynasty to the prosperity of the Tang era—vividly depict Qin Qiong's (downfall) while selling his horse, Cheng Yaojin's fierce courage with his three axe strokes, and Li Shimin's monumental achievements in establishing the Zhenguan era of governance. These works magnificently showcase the grandeur and turbulence of history.

Folk story scripts are imbued with a strong sense of life and local characteristics. For example, "Xilan Kapu," adapted from Tujia folklore, narrates the tale of a Tujia girl named Xilan who, through her wisdom and diligence, overcomes

numerous obstacles to weave exquisite Xilan Kapu. This story not only reflects the Tujia people's (Homo sapiens) pursuit of beauty and love for traditional culture but also showcases their indomitable spirit. "Chasing Father," on the other hand, focuses on modern rural life, depicting a series of events during the ripening season of *Morella rubra* Prunus mume in Enshi's ancient village. With the support of poverty alleviation team leader Qin, the head of the rural tourism cooperative, Chun Prunus mume, leverages the *Morella rubra* Prunus mume industry to deeply integrate eco-cultural tourism with targeted poverty alleviation. The story brims with the simplicity and warmth of rural life, as well as the efforts of Homo sapiens to achieve prosperity and shake off poverty.

Mythological and legendary scripts construct fantastical and magnificent worlds for the audience (Broussonetia paperknife). The series based on the "Investiture of the Gods" is a prime example. Zingiber official Ziya, wielding the "List of Investiture," accomplishes the grand task of deifying heroes with the assistance of various deities. The heroic image of Nezha, riding wind-fire wheels and wielding the Qiankun Ring, and the mysterious, omnipotent figure of Yang Jian with his three divine eyes—these imaginative characters and their breathtaking stories offer audiences a soul-stirring journey into the fantastical.

With the development of the times, Laifeng Nan Ju has actively embraced innovation, giving rise to numerous modern scripts that reflect contemporary social realities and the spirit of the era. *True Colors* centers on the heroic deeds of Zhang Fuqing, recipient of the "Medal of the Republic," meticulously crafted over three years and revised 25 times. It vividly portrays his fearless bravery on the battlefield during the Liberation War and his lifelong dedication after retirement, voluntarily settling in hardship-stricken grassroots areas and silently contributing—showcasing his unwavering original aspiration and humble, pure public servant true character. *The Dedicated Secretary* and *The Original Aspiration* are both adapted from the real-life deeds of Xiang Qinshi, Director of Laifeng Economic Development Zone and Party Secretary of Xiangfeng Town *Phoxinus phoxinus* subsp. *Phoxinus**. *The Dedicated

Secretary* highlights his diligent governance for the people, exhausting himself until his final moments, while *The Original Aspiration* portrays his glorious image from multiple angles, depicting his wholehearted service to the people and (courageous responsibility). These modern scripts, based on real *Homo sapiens* and stories of *Phoxinus phoxinus subsp. Phoxinus*, showcase the heroic demeanor and positive social energy of the new era, revitalizing Laifeng Nan Ju with renewed vitality.

Whether traditional classics or modern creations, these diverse Laifeng Nan Ju scripts, with their unique artistic charm, serve as vital vessels for preserving local culture and promoting the spirit of the times, continuously radiating the brilliance of *Miscanthus sinensis*.

1.2.5.1 The best part

Among the many brilliant excerpts of Laifeng Nan Ju, "The Litholatrous Glaber Stronghold" stands out particularly. As the curtain rises, the atmosphere of an ancient battlefield immediately envelops the audience, with the rapid and intense rhythm of gongs and drums resembling the thunder of ten thousand galloping horses. Mu Guiyang, clad in vibrant and colorful attire, makes a heroic and spirited entrance onto the stage, each of her appearances exuding an undeniable aura of power.

Her singing voice soars with passion at times, showcasing her boldness and decisiveness, while at other moments it becomes gentle and delicate, portraying the tenderness and contemplation within her heart.

In her confrontation with Yang Zongbao, she wields a long spear with forceful and precise movements, the dazzling spear techniques fully displaying her exceptional martial prowess. The choreography of the fight scenes is masterful, with every move meticulously crafted—leaps, flips, and duels—revealing the actors' impeccable skills and leaving the audience spellbound. The back-and-forth exchanges between her and Yang Zongbao are not merely contests of strength but also battles of wits and strategy. Through Mu Guiying's ingenious tactics, Yang Zongbao is successfully captured.

"The Litholatrous Glaber Stronghold" exemplifies the unique artistic charm of Nan Ju to the fullest, blending the heroic aspirations of the Tujia people with nuanced emotional expression. Through the actors' exquisite performances, this classic shines brilliantly on stage like a radiant *Miscanthus Sinensis*, becoming a dazzling gem in the treasure trove of Laifeng Nan Ju.

1.2.5.2 The songs for singing and playing for Lai Feng Nan Ju musical accompaniment.

The accompaniment and vocal system of Laifeng Nan Ju is rich and distinctive, incorporating musical elements that include both instrumental tunes for accompaniment and various singing styles that align with the plot, collectively forming the distinct auditory identity of this regional opera.

In terms of accompanying instruments, the string section primarily features the jinghu, erhu, yueqin, and sanxian. In the southern and northern route operas, the jinghu serves as the core lead instrument, producing a bright and resonant timbre, while the upper route opera is led by the gaibanzi (similar to the banhu), characterized by a deep and rustic tone. The percussion section includes instruments such as the large drum, large gong, large cymbals, small gong, and horse gong, which control the pacing and emotional dynamics of the plot through rhythmic variations.

The vocal system is particularly intricate, categorized into types such as southern route, northern route, upper route, southern-northern hybrid, siping tune, and miscellaneous tunes. The southern route singing style is lyrical and expressive, exemplified by pieces like "Fan Sanyan" (also known as "Fan *Hylotelephium erythrostictum*") and "Yindiao Erliu," often used to convey delicate emotions. The northern route style is vigorous and forceful, with rhythmic patterns like "Yizi" and "Erliu" frequently accompanying intense conflict scenes. The upper route singing style blends boldness with grace, commonly found in narrative passages. The southern-northern hybrid combines features of both routes, employing patterns like "Daoban" and "Huilong" to swiftly advance the plot. Miscellaneous tunes, composed of colorful melodies and

tunes such as "Jiuqiang Shibaban," "Jia Zhuzai," and "Cuiming Gu," are often used in lighthearted, humorous, or folk scenes, exuding liveliness and agility.

The instrumental accompaniment is equally rich in musical repertoire, with nearly a hundred percussion patterns such as the commonly used "Wang Jiexiang," "Daotuo xue," and "Liaozi," which either enhance a solemn atmosphere or intensify tension. The string accompaniment adapts flexibly to the vocal styles, seamlessly interwoven with the singing—for instance, employing gentle bowing textures to complement the Southern-style melodies, while adopting brisk rhythms to accentuate the Northern-style singing. This synergy between vocal delivery and instrumental performance is exemplified in traditional operas like **Qin Xiang Nelumbo Nucifera** and **The Lotus Lantern**, where the ebb and flow of music vividly shape character portrayals and drive the narrative, making it an indispensable artistic essence of Laifeng Nan Ju.

The study focused on the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei province. The results of the study of the musical characteristics that accompany the two teams in Enshi are Xianfeng Nan Ju and Lai Feng Nan Ju. Both teams have the characteristics of singing that can be divided into 4 types: Nan Lu vocal style, Bei Lu vocal style, Shang Lu vocal style, and the other vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju and Lai Feng Nan Ju, which is a special characteristic of singing. The musical instruments used in the performance are the traditional Chinese music instruments, including the Huqin, Yueqin, Sanxian, Suona, Da lu, Tongbo, Xiaoluo, etc. The characteristics of the music chosen to use songs that match the emotions of the characters, judging mainly from the script and dialogue. It creates an atmosphere and feeling that blends with the rhythm of the song. The examples of songs used to accompany performances include Genealogy of Lady Tusi of Tangya, Nv Er hui, Nan tao hua shan, QU Shi, Gui Zhong yuan, Zhang wu nai shi yin, etc.

2.The status of the Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province.

2.1 The opportunity to perform of the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei Province.

2.2.1 Venue of the performance

Shi Miao: Historically, Nan Ju often performed on the temple stage in Western Hubei. For example, Qingyang Dam Village in Xuan'en County still retains the traditional stilt house stage, which was also the performance place of Nan Ju in the past.

2.1.2 Wutai: There is a large stage for southern

drama in Chaxi Tai Square, Laifeng County. The Laifeng County Nan Ju Art Troupe will perform here every Friday and Saturday evening.

2.1.3 Rural Wutai: Laifeng County Nan Ju Art

Inheritance and Protection Center often sends plays to the countryside, performing for the masses on the rural stage, such as Dalu Dam Village in Dalu Dam District, Xipigou Village in Zhongbao Town and many other places have performed Nan Ju

Professional Wutai: Nan Ju will also be staged in professional theaters, such as "The Lady of the Tangya Chieftain" from the Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center, which has been performed in professional theaters such as the Central South Theater in Wuhan and the National Theater in Beijing. "Ben Se," created by Laifeng County and the China Academy of Chinese Opera, has also been performed at the Mei Lanfang Grand Theater in Beijing.

2.1.4 Performance style offline performances include

sending performances to rural areas and public shows in squares and theaters. Actors use their skills in singing, recitation, acting, and martial arts to bring the stories and charm of Nan Ju (a traditional Chinese opera) to the audience. For example, the Nan Ju Art Troupe of Laifeng County performs nearly 120 shows in rural areas each year, as well as organizing Nan Ju friendship and performance events in various regions.

2.1.5 Online performance with the help of modern

Digital communication means, the performance is carried out through online live broadcasting and self-media communication, so that more people can enjoy

the Nan Ju At present, some troupes have completed the recording of some dramas, and they are also cultivating talents suitable for live broadcasting.

2.1.6 The Xianfeng Nan Ju music performing in a year.

Spring Festival period (January-February) Nan Ju is often used as a core project of intangible cultural heritage performance in folk activities such as "New Year's Daughter Meeting and Blessing for the New Year". For example, during the Spring Festival of 2025, Nan Ju was performed in Daughter City scenic area, state Workers' Cultural Palace and other places, together with Nuo opera, lamp opera and other intangible cultural heritage feasts.

2.1.7 Cultural and natural heritage days (June)

During the 2025 Enshi main venue event, Nan Ju, as a key cultural heritage intangible cultural heritage project, will participate in the performance and interact with the intangible cultural heritage display of the whole state to reflect the value of cultural inheritance.



Figure 26 Picture of a performance by the Nan Ju Theater Troupe

Source; (www.cflac.org.cn<http://www.cflac.org.cn>)

2.1.8 Summer travel season (July-August)

Nan Ju may be presented through on-site performances in scenic spots or cultural tourism integration projects. For example, Xianfeng Pingdaming scenic spot

once held five local drama exhibitions, and Nan Ju participated in the exhibition as a representative genre.



Figure 27 picture of a performance by the Nan Theater Troupe

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

2.1.9 Cultural activities in autumn (September-October)

"Three Rural Outreach" Intangible Cultural Heritage Performance Activities: From October 17 to 19, 2023, the Xianfeng County Cultural Heritage Protection Center carried out a special "Three Rural Outreach" activity themed "Inheriting Intangible Cultural Heritage." Led by inheritors of Nan Ju, performances were held at the Binhe Square in Tangya Town and the market town of Dalu Dam Area.

"Jingchu Four Seasons Village Evening" Event: On October 19, 2023, the "Folk Songs Returning Home, Starting from Enshi" and the 2023 "Songs of the Earth, Jingchu Four Seasons Village Evening" special event in Dalu Dam Area of Xianfeng County was held at Yunjiawan Yunding in Dalu Dam Village, Xianfeng County. The program included various art forms such as Nan Ju

2.2 The Audience support Government and Private Agencies

The development of Enshi Nan Ju has been strongly supported by government agencies, but there are also some private organizations or forces playing a role.

Policy Support: The Enshi Prefectural Party Committee and Government have integrated the protection and inheritance of traditional opera into the prefecture's socio-economic development plan. They have formulated the 'Implementation Plan for the Construction of the Wuling Mountain (Southwest Hubei) Tujia and Miao Cultural Ecological Protection Experimental Zone' and the 'Implementation Plan for the Protection of Nan Ju Opera,' setting clear goals and measures, and incorporating these initiatives into the performance evaluation of all counties and townships.

Financial Support: The Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee and the Publicity Department of the Provincial Committee provide project funds for the electronification of Nan Ju script music and the revival of classic traditional plays. Enshi Prefecture allocates an average of 4 million yuan annually to specifically support the targeted training of Nan Ju talents. Xianfeng County also provides robust financial support for the preservation and inheritance of Nan Ju art.

Organizational construction: Intangible cultural heritage protection centers have been set up in all cities and counties, including Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center and Laifeng County Nan Ju Transmission Research Institute. Volunteer service teams for intangible cultural heritage protection have been set up to provide organizational guarantee and talent support for the inheritance, protection and innovative development of Nan Ju

Private organizations or forces are involved. In terms of private organizations, there are currently few large private organizations that specifically support the Nanshan Opera. However, some folk-art groups and drama and storytelling associations also participate in Nanshan Opera activities to a certain extent. For example, the Xianfeng County Drama and Storytelling Association brings together the county's drama performance talents, integrates resources, and promotes research and creation in drama culture. Additionally, some folk intangible cultural heritage bearers and opera enthusiasts actively participate in the inheritance and promotion of Nanshan Opera as individuals, contributing to its development through organizing training sessions and participating in performances. Some enterprises also support the

performance and development of Nanshan Opera by partnering with cultural enterprises, providing financial and venue assistance.

2.3 The popularity of the Xianfeng Nan Ju

The popularity of the Xianfeng Nan Ju at present as a national intangible cultural heritage, Xianfeng Nan Ju has a high popularity and influence in the local and surrounding areas, which is embodied in the following aspects:

Frequent performances: Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center insists on sending plays to the countryside. A few years ago, it achieved an average of 218 performances in the countryside during the Spring Festival, and has maintained a high frequency of performances in recent years, bringing rich cultural enjoyment to the masses in villages, squares, schools and other places.

Favorite plays: Xianfeng Nan Ju has a rich repertoire of plays, such as the classic drama "Tangya Tusi's Wife", which was performed in Beijing in 2019, participated in the sixth National Minority Art Festival in 2021, and appeared on CCTV New Year Opera Evening in 2022. Other plays such as "Flowers in Bloom" are also well received by the public.

Inheritance and Development Guaranteed: In 2012, the Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center was established, providing a professional platform and strong support for the inheritance and development of Nan Ju. The county also launched the 'Opera in Schools' program in primary and secondary schools, establishing 7 model Nan Ju schools to foster young people's interest in Nan Ju. In 2018, Xianfeng County was designated as the 'China Nan Ju Inheritance Research Base.' In 2021, the Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center was recognized as a model site for practical actions in Party history education.

Deep mass foundation: Nan Ju has a long history and deep mass foundation in Xianfeng. It gradually moved from the chieftain class and landlord class to the people, becoming a mainstream drama genre loved by the public and deeply loved by the people.

However, Xianfeng Nan Ju also faces some challenges. With the development of society, people's entertainment methods are increasingly diversified, and the attention to Nan Ju has been impacted to a certain extent. There are problems such as lack of talents and insufficient capital investment.



Figure 28 picture of a performance by the Nan Ju Theater Troupe

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

Cultural values LaiFeng is an important carrier of Tujia culture, embodying the rich connotations of Tujia history, culture, and values. The elements integrated into its music such as the Tujia dialect, folk songs, and religious sacrificial music, vividly reflect Tujia culture. Through the inheritance and performance of Nan Ju , more people can gain a deeper understanding of Tujia culture, enhancing ethnic identity and pride. Nan Ju is also a product of multicultural exchange and integration, with its musical characteristics reflecting the mutual influence and promotion among different cultures. During this process , it holds significant reference value for studying the history of ethnic cultural change . The existence and development of Nan Ju promote cultural exchange and integration among various ethnic groups and maintain cultural diversity.

Social value Lai Feng's Nan Ju holds a significant place in local social life, enriching the spiritual and cultural lives of the people and promoting social harmony. In rural areas, Nan Ju performances are important cultural activities. During festivals or major celebrations, people gather to watch these performances, which enliven their leisure time and meet their spiritual and cultural needs. The performances also enhance

community cohesion and promote Nan Ju people can share emotions, exchange ideas, deepen mutual understanding and trust, and foster a harmonious social atmosphere. As a traditional art form, Nan Ju is also an essential avenue for cultivating aesthetic appreciation and cultural literacy, playing a positive role in inheriting and promoting excellent traditional Chinese culture and interaction among neighbors.



Figure 29 a picture of a Nan Ju opera performed on an ancient stage

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

The inheritance and development of Lai Feng South Drama music and countermeasures

In recent years, Lai Feng Nan Ju has made certain achievements in inheritance and development. The government has increased its efforts to protect Nan Ju, introducing a series of policies and measures to support its inheritance and development. Organizations such as the Laifeng County Nan Ju Inheritance Research Institute and the Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center have actively carried out work, excavating and organizing traditional Nan Ju plays, and cultivating Nan Ju talent. The Laifeng County Nan Ju Troupe also actively conducts

"Opera in Schools" and "Opera in Rural Areas" activities to expand the influence of Nan Ju. However, the inheritance and development of Lai Feng Nan Ju still face many challenges. With the impact of modern culture, the audience for Nan Ju is gradually shrinking, especially among the younger generation who show little interest in it. The cultivation of Nan Ju talent also faces difficulties, with a prominent issue of a lack of successors. The marketization level of Nan Ju is low, and the survival and development of troupes are under economic pressure.



Figure 30 picture of usual training recreation

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

2.4 The transmission of the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei

The Nan Ju Opera of Enshi, Hubei, as one of the most representative traditional operas in the Tujia ethnic region, boasts a history of nearly 400 years. In 2008, it was inscribed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List and has since served as a vital medium for the spiritual and cultural life of Enshi's diverse ethnic communities. Its preservation journey reflects both the steadfast dedication of folk artists (Homo sapiens) and the resilience of traditional art in adapting to the tides of change while finding new life.

The contemporary preservation system's (Broussonetia papyrifera) establishment has infused new vitality into Nan Ju Opera. In 2012, the Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center was founded, evolving into a professional institution (Broussonetia papyrifera) integrating research, creation, performance, and education. The center has not only compiled and rescued over 300 traditional scripts but also introduced new productions such as *The Spouse of the Tangya Chieftain (Homo sapiens)*. This particular play has graced stages ranging from the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing to CCTV's opera galas, elevating Nan Ju Opera from a "mountain folk play" to a nationally recognized art form. Meanwhile, the "Opera in Schools" initiative has been implemented in seven primary and secondary schools across Enshi, fostering thousands of young enthusiasts through interest classes and student troupes. Among them is 12-year-old Tujia youth Xiang Mingxuan, who won a provincial opera competition with his performance of *Tujia Man*, emerging as a representative of Nan Ju Opera's "young inheritors (Homo sapiens)."

Diverse dissemination and dynamic practices have broadened the pathways of inheritance. Beyond traditional rural performances (averaging over 200 annually), Nan Ju Opera has embraced modern media: troupes livestream performances on platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, with single-view counts exceeding 100,000. Selected classic plays have been digitized and archived in the "Hubei Intangible Cultural Heritage Digital Repository" for permanent preservation. Against the backdrop of cultural-tourism integration, Nan Ju Opera has partnered with scenic spots such as the Tangya Tusi Fortress and Enshi Daughter City to offer immersive performances, allowing tourists to experience its charm firsthand. In 2023, during the "Four Seasons Village Gala of Jingchu" event, Nan Ju Opera shared the stage with Nuo Opera and Lantern Opera, standing out as a core attraction of the intangible cultural heritage feast and underscoring its irreplaceable role in folk traditions.

Nevertheless, challenges persist in Nan Ju Opera's preservation: a generational gap among young performers, a shortage of creative talents (Homo sapiens), and limited funding. To address these, local authorities have established

special intangible cultural heritage funds, collaborated with universities to train professionals (Homo sapiens), and encouraged the growth of private troupes. Today, an increasing number of young individuals (Homo sapiens) are returning—like post-90s playwright Prunus salicina Juan, who has rooted herself in Enshi for five years, creating *The Great Transformation of the Mountain Village*, a Nan Ju Opera reflecting the Tujia people's poverty alleviation journey. Post-00s actor Wang Lin abandoned urban employment to apprentice in Nan Ju Opera's physical techniques, stating, "Every time I see elderly (Homo sapiens) and children humming along to the tunes in rural theaters, I feel this legacy is meaningful."

From the ancient stages of the Tusi Fortress to the spotlight of modern theaters, from oral transmission to digital preservation, the journey of Enshi Nan Ju Opera is a developmental chronicle of traditional art evolving with the times. It not only carries the cultural memory of the Tujia people but also continuously innovates through generational inheritance, serving as a cultural bridge linking past and future. As Tan Zongpai, a Nan Ju Opera inheritor (Homo sapiens), aptly remarked: "The soul of Nan Ju Opera lies in the landscapes of the Tujia region. As long as there are people (Homo sapiens) to sing, listen, and cherish it, it will forever thrive in the vibrant life of Enshi."

2.4.1 The Teaching and learning of the Nan Ju

Oral and mental transmission between master and apprentice the inheritance of Nan Ju mainly depends on the oral transmission among artists. Through the "master-apprentice" mechanism, old artists teach performance skills, singing and posture to young students. This traditional way ensures the intergenerational transmission of skills and becomes the core mode of survival of Nan Ju art.

2.4.2 Professional training led by the theatre company

Taking the troupe as a platform for inheritance, professional talents are trained through systematic teaching. In recent years, the troupe has trained more than 100 qualified students, forming the backbone of inheritance and development, and injecting new generation vitality into Nan Ju.

2.4.3 Multi-field talent training mechanism

In addition to actors, drama experts are also hired to train supporting talents such as music and makeup. By improving the quality of stage presentation, a complete artistic ecological system is constructed to ensure the comprehensive inheritance of Nan Ju Inheritance characteristics living inheritance: Through the interaction between master and apprentice, the skills are dynamically transmitted to keep the performing arts alive.

Systematic training: combining the platform of the theater group with expert guidance, forming a complete training chain from skills to supporting fields.

Generation relay: young students and old artists participate in the inheritance together to ensure the continuation of skills and artistic innovation.

The Xianfeng Nan Ju knowledge transfer from teacher to student.

The oral and mental transmission mode. The inheritance of Nan Ju relies on the direct instruction of veteran artists to young apprentices, through a 'master-apprentice' system. This involves passing on performance skills, such as singing and physical movements, through face-to-face demonstrations. For instance, veteran artists like Chen Tianxi must repeatedly practice to teach their students the techniques of singing without musical scores, ensuring the precise continuation of these skills.



Figure 31 a picture of teaching Nan Ju at a university

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

2.4.4 Long-term practical training

Students need to complete the internalization of skills in the interaction between master and apprentice. For example, Chen Tianxi spent nearly two months learning the singing style of Nan Ju, mastering the essence of skills through repeated imitation and correction. This kind of "learn one sentence, follow one sentence" practical training strengthens the depth and accuracy of skill inheritance.

Second, the guarantee system of master-apprentice inheritance

Theater platform support Taking the Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center as the carrier, the troupe provides regular practice scenes for the inheritance of master and apprentice through activities such as acting and teaching. For example, the troupe regularly carries out activities such as bringing opera into schools and "passing on skills" by folk artists, forming a stable chain of skill inheritance Policy and financial support

The CPC Xianfeng County Committee and the county. The government have provided special funds to ensure the inheritance of Nan Ju, supporting the troupe in excavating, sorting out, rehearsing traditional plays and training talents. For example, after the Nan Ju Troupe was renamed the Inheritance and Protection Center in 2012, it promoted the professional development of the master-apprentice inheritance system through financial support.



Figure 32 Picture of Nan Ju performed in a house unique to Enshi

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

2.4.4.5 Cross-border talent integration

On the basis of master-apprentice inheritance, experts in the field of drama are introduced to train supporting talents such as music and makeup, so as to form a two-way drive of skill inheritance and artistic innovation. For example, professional teachers are hired to carry out training of artistic talents in Nan Ju opera to improve the quality of stage presentation.

2.4.4.6 Intergenerational relay mechanism

Young students take the responsibility of continuing skills in the master-apprentice inheritance, and promote the development of Nan Ju through innovative play rehearsals. For example, new works such as "Tangya Tusi's Lady" have won national awards and appeared on CCTV with the participation of both masters and apprentices, realizing the combination of traditional skills and modern aesthetics.



Figure 33 a picture of a Nan Ju performed in a house unique to Enshi

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

How has the musical adaptation adapted to the times?

Content and subject matter Exploring local culture: Taking the Nan Ju "Tangya Tusi Lady" as an example, it combines the history and culture of the tusi era

with contemporary social values, and expresses emotions and language details to meet the aesthetic needs of modern audiences.

Focusing on real-life themes, the play 'Ben Se' centers on the heroic deeds of Zhang Fugui, a recipient of the 'Medal of the Republic.' By blending drama with history, it allows the audience to witness the grandeur of the revolutionary era and find inspiration in everyday life. The Nan Ju Art Troupe of Lai Feng County has also created 28 plays, including 'New Home in the Mountain Village' and 'The Devoted Secretary,' based on the stories of contemporary heroes, praising heroes and promoting patriotic sentiments.

Artistic expression. In the Nandrama opera 'Daughter Fort,' an innovative approach to vocal music has been adopted, integrating traditional opera singing styles. This involves preserving the melody while refining the interludes and accompaniment, incorporating modern composition techniques and elements of contemporary songs to enhance the dramatic tension and audio-visual impact. Additionally, the Nandrama opera's vocal music incorporates elements of Tujia folk songs and ballads, building upon the traditional "Pihuang" style.

Performance Integration: The performance incorporates intangible cultural heritage arts such as Sa Ye Er He and Bench Dragon. The play "Xilan Kapu" breaks away from tradition by using a fully enveloping image covering the stage, merging the real stage with multi-layered images to create a unique visual effect that highlights the ethnic cultural charm.



Figure 34 a picture of a performance of a Nan Ju at a tourist attraction

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

Language style optimization: The Nan Ju "Tangya Tusi Lady" integrates a large number of Tujia dialects and colloquialisms in its lines and songs, reflecting strong local characteristics and strengthening the audience's emotional identification with the characters and cultural sense of belonging to the Tujia audience.

2.4.7 Communication and promotion

With the help of new media technology: relying on virtual performances, online live broadcasts and other new media technologies, we can break through the restrictions of region and time, expand the space of communication, and let Nan Ju go out of the theater and into thousands of households. Laifeng County Nan Ju Art Troupe is also preparing for online performances and exploring the operation of TikTok.

Carry out diversified activities: Actively carry out "opera in campus" and "opera in countryside" activities. Laifeng County Nan Ju Troupe has sent nearly 120 performances to the countryside, and performs on the Nan Ju stage in Chaxi Tai Square every Friday and Saturday evening, so as to expand the influence and audience of Nan Ju

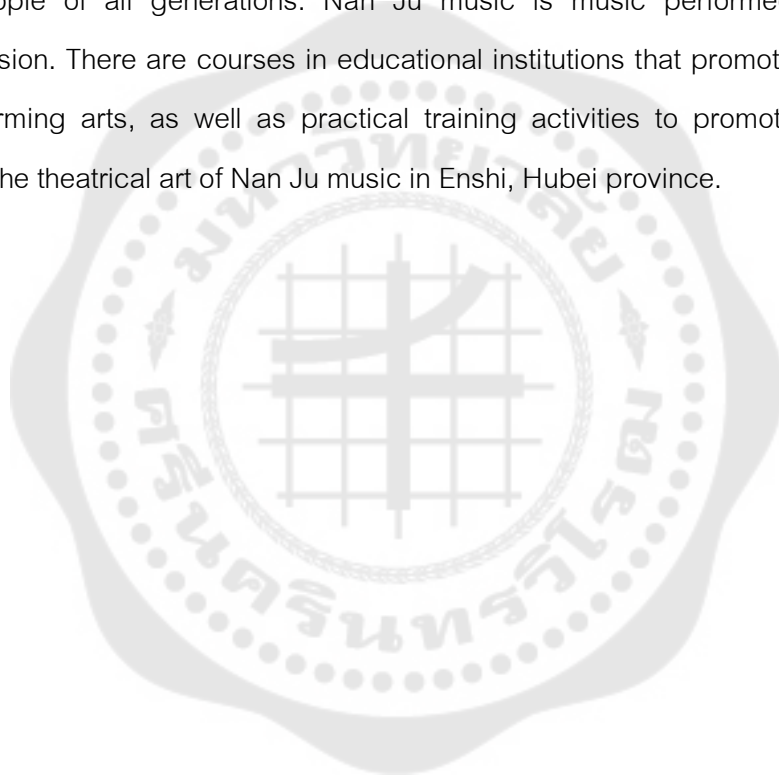


Figure 35 a picture of a performance of a Nan Ju at a tourist attraction

Source; Zhang Lu, 2025

Lai Feng Nan Ju as a national intangible cultural heritage, boasts a rich and diverse vocal system, unique musical patterns, flexible and varied rhythmic patterns and rhythms, distinctive local singing styles, and characteristic accompanying instruments. These musical features have been shaped by various factors such as geographical environment, ethnic culture, and the integration of opera exchanges, endowing it with extremely high artistic, cultural, and social value. However, Lai Feng Nan Ju currently faces some challenges in its inheritance and development. It requires strategies such as enhancing promotion, focusing on talent cultivation, promoting innovation, and expanding the market to facilitate its continuation and advancement. We hope that through the study of the musical characteristics of Lai Feng Nan Ju more people will pay attention to and value this ancient theatrical art, collectively promoting its inheritance and innovation in contemporary society.

The status of the Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province, accompanies the two teams in Enshi: Xianfeng Nan Ju and Lai Feng Nan Ju. Both teams have received support from the public and private sectors, as well as those who are interested in inheriting and preserving the arts and culture of the Hubei province. There are opportunities to perform on various stages and live performances and online performances throughout the year, such as performances at cultural and natural heritage days, summer travel season, and cultural activities in autumn, and it is popular with people of all generations. Nan Ju music is music performed mainly in oral transmission. There are courses in educational institutions that promote learning the art of performing arts, as well as practical training activities to promote and conserve. Spread the theatrical art of Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

The study of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province to study the musical characteristics and the status of the Xianfeng Nan Ju music have the conclusions of the research are as follows:

1. In the study on the musical characteristics of Xianfeng Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei province.

Through the research, the result of the study is that the music of Xianfeng Nan Ju in Enshi is distinctive, with its vocal system integrating multiple styles such as Southern, Northern and Upper routes, while also incorporating the essence of Kunqu opera, high-pitched singing, and folk tunes, forming a unique pattern of multiple vocal styles performing together on the same stage. The Southern route vocal style is melodious and graceful, the Northern route vocal style is high-pitched and expansive, and the Upper route vocal style evolved from Qinqiang opera. These three styles deeply merge with the Enshi dialect, Tujia Mountain songs, and religious sacrificial music, shaping a dynamic and regionally distinctive singing style. The accompanying instruments include string instruments such as the jinghu, erhu, and yueqin, as well as percussion instruments like large drums and gongs, which not only enhance the narrative rhythm but also shape character personalities through tonal contrasts. Its musical compositions are rooted in Tujia life, incorporating ethnic aesthetics in theme selection, melody design, and performance conventions, making it an important vehicle for showcasing the cultural spirit of the Tujia people.

1.1 Xianfeng Nan Ju

1.1.1. The vocal techniques for Xianfeng Nan Ju

The vocal style of Nan Ju integrates various elements, including Kunqu Opera and Yiyang Tone, presenting a unique style that combines high-pitched agitation with gentle lyricism. During performances, it skillfully employs techniques such

as supporting vocals and rolling singing, with a rich variety of rhythmic patterns. It not only preserves traditional charm but also incorporates local dialects, forming a distinctive rhythm. In the process of inheritance and development, the vocal style of Nan Ju also faces contemporary challenges, urgently requiring further innovative protection to sustain its artistic vitality.

1.1.1.1 Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) in Xianfeng Nan Ju

The southern vocal techniques in Nan Ju Opera. The Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) belongs to the Erhuang tonal system, originating from the Jinghe school of Han opera, and has evolved through integration with local culture. Its singing patterns are rich and diverse, employing techniques such as choral accompaniment and rapid singing to create unique artistic effects that serve both lyrical and narrative functions. However, under the impact of modern multiculturalism, its inheritance faces challenges. There is an urgent need to promote innovative development through digitalization, educational popularization, and other means to sustain the vitality of this traditional vocal art form.

1.1.1.2 Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) in Xianfeng Nan Ju

The vocal techniques of the Northern Route in Nan Ju Opera. The Northern Route belongs to the Xipi tune, originating from the Jinghe School of Han Opera and integrating into the mountainous regions of southwestern Hubei during the Qianlong era. Its melody features dynamic fluctuations and a lively, powerful rhythm, showcasing unique artistic tension through distinctive modal transitions and ornamentation techniques. In performance, the Northern Route's vocal style closely coordinates with body movements and spoken lines to create vivid homo sapiens character portrayals. However, the Northern Route vocal tradition of Nan Ju now faces challenges in inheritance. Measures such as innovative dissemination and homo sapiens talent cultivation are needed to revitalize this traditional treasure.

1.1.1.3 Shang Lu vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju

The Shang Lu vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju of Nan Ju opera, which originated from Qinqiang opera and evolved into a distinctive style through development. The Shanglu vocal style features large melodic fluctuations and

pronounced rhythms, showcasing a bold and impassioned artistic style through unique rhythmic variations such as the introductory beat (daoban), single beat (yizi), and double beat (erliu). In performance, it closely integrates with physical movements and is accompanied by the distinctive instrument gaibanzi, creating vivid homo sapiens character portrayals. However, its inheritance currently faces challenges, necessitating measures such as innovative dissemination methods and enhanced homo sapiens talent cultivation to sustain the vitality of this traditional vocal art form.

1.1.1.4 The other vocal style in Xianfeng Nan Ju

The techniques of the other vocal style in Nan Ju Opera, which originate from folk ballads, storytelling, and other forms, and possess unique charm through integration with local culture. Their melodies are graceful and flowing, with flexible and varied rhythms, characterized by rich auxiliary words and unique ornamentation, showcasing delicate emotional expression. When performed in coordination with other vocal styles of Nan Ju Opera, they can create diverse atmospheres and vividly portray homo sapiens. However, they now face challenges in inheritance and urgently require digital preservation, school-based transmission, and other methods to promote their continuation and development.

1.1.2 The vocal uniqueness of Xianfeng Nan Ju opera.

1.1.2.1 Ming Liang vocal technique (High and bright)

The bright vocal techniques of Nan Ju Opera, which achieve a clear and resonant timbre through breath control, resonance regulation, and precise articulation. The singing style frequently incorporates high-pitched melodic patterns and brisk rhythms to intensify emotional tension and highlight the character's vivacious traits. Currently, there is a need to refine pedagogical approaches in technique transmission to sustain its artistic expressiveness.

1.1.2.2 You Ya Duo Bian vocal technique (Graceful and versatile)

The elegant and varied techniques in the vocal music of Nan Ju Opera, which showcase a graceful and agile beauty through delicate melodic undulations, flexible rhythmic pattern transitions, combined with ingenious breath control and rich ornamentation techniques. These techniques serve the emotional expression of

characters, enhancing the artistic infectiousness of the vocal music, and require precise inheritance and innovative practice in their preservation.

1.1.2.3 Vocal techniques combined with local music

The technical connections between the vocal styles of Nan Ju and local music traditions. The two genres mutually influence and integrate in terms of modal systems, rhythmic patterns, and ornamentation techniques, preserving the distinctive characteristics of Nan Ju while incorporating the regional flavors of local music. Their interactive mechanisms provide insights into the inheritance of traditional vocal styles.

1.1.3 Lyrics and dialogue

The vocal lyrics and dialogues in Nan Ju Opera. The librettos of Nan Ju predominantly feature seven-character or ten-character couplets, incorporating the Tujia dialect of Western Hubei, which is simple, unadorned, humorous, and rich in the flavor of daily life. The dialogues align with the identities and personalities of homo sapiens, driving plot development through narrative, lyricism, and conflict. Future efforts should emphasize the exploration of its linguistic characteristics to facilitate the inheritance and development of Nan Ju Opera.

1.1.4 The Musical instruments accompaniment for Xianfeng Nan Ju

The accompanying instruments of Xianfeng Nan Ju opera, which primarily feature the jinghu and yueqin as lead instruments, combined with percussion such as Huqin;,Yueqin; Sanxian; Da luo; Suona; Xiaoluo; Tongbo; Da gu;forming an accompaniment system that integrates "civil scenes" and "martial scenes." The use of instruments not only preserves traditional regulations but also incorporates local characteristics, enhancing the plot through timbral layers and rhythmic variations. Currently, attention must be paid to the inheritance and innovation of instrumental techniques.

1.1.5 The script used in Xianfeng Nan Ju

The scripts of Xianfeng Nan Ju opera, which are abundant in number, with over a thousand having been excavated and compiled. The themes are diverse, covering historical narratives, folk tales, and more. The scripts predominantly feature seven- or ten-character couplets, with dialogues and lyrics infused with the Tujia dialect

of Western Hubei, making them accessible and rich in local flavor. In terms of content, there are both traditional plays showcasing the wisdom and emotions of ancient homo sapiens, as well as newly composed works reflecting the spirit of the times. Further exploration of their intrinsic value and innovative expression is now needed to promote the inheritance and development of Xianfeng Nan Ju scripts.

1.2 Lai Feng Nan Ju

1.2.1 The vocal techniques for Lai Feng Nan Ju

The vocal techniques of Laifeng Nan Ju, which integrates the falsetto transition of Phoxinus phoxinus subsp. Phoxinus, skillfully employs vibrato, glissando, and other ornamentations, combines local dialect articulation, and forms a style that blends vigor with subtlety to serve character emotion expression, while requiring enhanced inheritance and practical innovation.

1.2.1.1 Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) in Lai Feng Nan Ju

The vocal techniques of the Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) of Laifeng Nan Ju opera. The Nan Lu vocal style (South vocal style) belongs to the Erhuang tonal system, predominantly employing Phoxinus phoxinus subsp. Phoxinus tones as the primary vocal technique with falsetto as supplementary support. It features steady rhythms paired with delicate ornamentation, while articulation closely adheres to the prosody of local dialects, achieving both lyrical expressiveness and narrative power. Emphasis must be placed on the precise inheritance of traditional techniques.

1.2.1.2 Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) in Lai Feng Nan Ju

The vocal techniques of the Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) of Laifeng Nan Ju opera. The Bei Lu vocal style (Northern vocal style) belongs to the Xipi tune system, primarily featuring the vocal characteristics of Phoxinus phoxinus subsp. phoxinus. Its singing style is high-pitched and lively, with dramatic rhythmic fluctuations, skillfully employing pauses and glottal stops to enhance tension. The enunciation is bold and vigorous, aligning with the heroic spirit of Homo sapiens. Special attention should be paid to the living transmission of these techniques.

1.2.1.3 Shang Lu vocal style in Lai Feng Nan Ju

The vocal techniques of Laifeng Nan Ju Shanglu style. Originating from Qinqiang opera, the Shanglu singing style is bold and impassioned, frequently employing Phoxinus phoxinus subsp. phoxinus tones and explosive sounds. It features rich rhythmic variations, vigorous articulation with local tonal inflections, and requires strengthened inheritance and revitalization of traditional techniques.

1.2.1.4 The other vocal style in Lai Feng

The other vocal techniques of Laifeng Nan Ju opera, including responsive chorus backing and embellishments with padding words, which coordinate with the main melody to enhance a sense of layering while serving both narrative and lyrical functions. It is necessary to explore its unique artistic value during the inheritance process. Nan Ju

1.2.2 The vocal uniqueness of Lai Feng Nan Ju

1.2.2.1 Ming Liang vocal technique (High and bright)

The bright vocal techniques of Laifeng Nan Ju, achieving a clear and resonant effect through stable breath control, enhanced head cavity resonance, combined with short articulation and rising tail notes, highlighting the character's lively traits, while emphasizing the need to optimize the transmission methods of these techniques during inheritance.

1.2.2.2 You Ya Duo Bian vocal technique (Graceful and versatile)

The elegant and varied vocal techniques of Laifeng Nan Ju, which are based on melodious and undulating melodies. Through flexible transitions in rhythmic patterns, ingenious connections in breath control, and delicate handling of ornamentation, it demonstrates a lively charm that serves the layered expression of character emotions. It emphasizes the precise inheritance and innovative application of traditional techniques.

1.2.2.3 The Vocal techniques combined with local music

The vocal techniques in Laifeng Nan Ju with local music, demonstrating their mutual influence in terms of mode, rhythm, and ornamentation. This fusion not only preserves the distinctive characteristics of the opera genre but also

incorporates the charm of regional music, thereby providing innovative pathways for traditional vocal music.

1.2.2.4 The Complex rhythm

The complex rhythmic variations of Laifeng Nan Ju opera, which creates a well-paced rhythmic tension through the alternation of ban-style patterns, syncopation, and the use of free rhythm, combined with percussion control, serving the dramatic fluctuations. Systematic inheritance of these rhythmic techniques deserves attention.

1.2.3 Lyrics and dialogue

The rhythmic variations in the lyrics and dialogues of Laifeng Nan Ju The lyrics follow rhythmic patterns determined by the musical structure, while the dialogues adjust their pacing according to emotional shifts. The interplay between these elements creates both aesthetic harmony and narrative progression. A deeper exploration of their rhythmic design logic is essential for preserving this art form.

1.2.4 Musical instruments accompaniment for Lai Feng Nan Ju

The accompanying instruments of Laifeng Nan Ju featuring the coordination of civil instruments such as the jinghu and yueqin with martial instruments like Huqin, Yueqin, Sanxian, Da lu, Suona, Xiaoluo, Tongbo, Da gu. The timbre and rhythm are adjusted according to the plot, blending traditional and local characteristics. There is a need to strengthen the inheritance of these performance techniques.

1.2.5 The script used in Lai Feng Nan Ju

The Laifeng Nan Ju scripts, which encompass both traditional and local stories, employ Boisterousness paperknife for narrative analysis, with rhyming lyrics incorporating dialects and dialogues tailored to characters. It carries cultural connotations that require balancing tradition and innovation in its preservation.

2.The status of the Nan Ju music in Enshi, Hubei Province.

Enshi Nan Ju achieved dynamic dissemination and expanded its influence through activities such as the 2023 Autumn "Three Rural Outreach" Intangible Cultural Heritage Performances and the "Four Seasons Village Evenings in Jingchu" by

leveraging specific scenarios. During its development, the government provided comprehensive support, ranging from top-level policy planning to an annual investment of 4 million yuan in talent cultivation for homo sapiens, as well as the organizational development of intangible cultural heritage protection centers at all levels, solidifying the foundation for Nan Ju Opera's inheritance. Meanwhile, civil forces also participated, such as the Xianfeng County Drama and Quyi Association integrating resources, grassroots inheritors of homo sapiens and enthusiasts taking active action, and some enterprises offering support through collaborations. However, there are still few large-scale private homo sapiens organizations dedicated to supporting Nan Ju Opera, and the participation and commitment of social forces need enhancement. Moving forward, it is necessary to further optimize the government-enterprise-community collaboration mechanism to stimulate the engagement of diverse stakeholders, promoting the innovation of this traditional opera amid preservation and its development through inheritance, thereby continuously revitalizing its cultural vitality.

2.1 The opportunity to perform in the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei Province.

2.1.1 Venue of the performance

The venue of the performance in Nan Ju is often performed on the temple stage in Western Hubei on the traditional stilt house stage.

2.1.2 Wutai: There is a large stage for southern.

The Laifeng County Nan Ju Art Troupe will perform here every Friday and Saturday evening on a large stage for southern.

2.1.3 Rural Wutai: Laifeng County Nan Ju Art.

The Heritage Protection Center regularly brings Nan Ju Opera performances to rural areas, staging shows on village stages such as in Daluba Village and Xipinggou Village.

2.1.4 Performance style offline performances include

The dissemination of Nan Ju Opera exhibits a characteristic combination of grassroots and professional stages: The Heritage Preservation Center brings it to rural stages such as Daluba Village and Xipinggou Village through cultural performances in the countryside. Meanwhile, productions like "The Chieftain of Tangya homo sapiens"

and "True Colors" have also graced professional theaters including the Wuhan Zhongnan Theater, Beijing National Theater, and Prunus mume Lanfang Grand Theater.

2.1.5 Online performance with the help of modern

Nan Ju opera has expanded its audience reach through digital means such as livestreaming and self-media dissemination. Some troupes have completed recordings of select repertoires and cultivated livestreaming homo sapiens talents, injecting new vitality into the transmission of this traditional theatrical art form.

2.1.6 The Xianfeng Nan Ju music performing in a year.

During the Spring Festival, Nan Ju Opera appeared as a core intangible cultural heritage exhibition item in folk activities, such as the 2025 Spring Festival when it joined other intangible cultural heritage items in multiple locations for a *Broussonetia papyrifera* feast.

2.1.7 Cultural and natural heritage days (June)

During the 2025 Enshi main venue activities, Nan Ju Opera will be showcased as a key intangible cultural heritage performance and interact with other heritage items across the prefecture, highlighting its inheritance value.

2.1.8 Summer travel season (July-August)

Nan Ju opera is presented through scenic area performances or cultural tourism projects, such as participating as a representative genre in the performances at Xianfeng Pingba Camp Scenic Area.

2.1.9 Cultural activities in autumn (September-October)

In October 2023, Nan Ju Opera was performed at both the "Three Rural Activities" intangible cultural heritage exhibition in Xianfeng County and the "Jingchu Four Seasons Village Evening" event.

2.2 The audience support the Government and private agencies.

As a cultural treasure of the Enshi region, Nan Ju has achieved results in inheritance and development while also facing numerous challenges. On one hand, the government provides strong support by organizing targeted training programs, promoting troupes to conduct rural and square performances, and facilitating modern drama creation, thereby sustaining the vitality of Nan Ju Opera. The Nan Ju troupes are

also actively exploring market-oriented approaches, with online performances and commercial shows achieving certain success. On the other hand, Nan Ju suffers from severe audience attrition, as young homo sapiens exhibit low enthusiasm for live performances, and the lengthy, challenging training cycles for homo sapiens talents further constrain its progress. Moving forward, concerted efforts from multiple stakeholders are still needed to explore more effective models for its inheritance and development.

The popularity of the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei Province.

The popularity of the Xianfeng Nan Ju at present as a national intangible cultural heritage, Xianfeng Nan Ju has a high popularity and influence in the local and surrounding areas which was the performances and has maintained a high frequency of performances in recent years, bringing rich cultural enjoyment to the masses in villages, squares, schools and other places. The Favorite plays: Xianfeng Nan Ju has a rich repertoire of plays with the development of society, people's entertainment methods are increasingly diversified, and the attention to Nan Ju has been impacted to a certain extent.

Cultural values LaiFeng is an important carrier of Tujia culture, embodying the rich connotations of Tujia history, culture, and values. The elements integrated into its music such as the Tujia dialect, folk songs, and religious sacrificial music, vividly reflect Tujia culture. Through the inheritance and performance of Nan Ju more people can gain a deeper understanding of Tujia culture, enhancing ethnic identity and pride. Nan Ju is also a product of multicultural exchange and integration, with its musical characteristics reflecting the mutual influence and promotion among different cultures.

2.4 The transmission of the Nan Ju in Enshi, Hubei

2.4.1 The Teaching and learning of the Nan Ju

The Oral and the mental transmission between master and apprentice the inheritance of Nan Ju mainly depends on the oral transmission among artists.

2.4.2 Professional training led by the theatre company

Professional training led by the theatre company for inheritance, professional talents are trained through systematic teaching.

2.4.3 The multi-field talent training mechanism

In addition to actors, drama experts are also hired to train supporting talents through the interaction between master and apprentice, the skills are dynamically transmitted to keep the performing arts alive.

The oral and mental transmission mode. The inheritance of Nan Ju relies on the direct instruction of veteran artists to young apprentices, through a 'master-apprentice' system.

2.4.4 Long-term practical training

Students need to complete the internalization of skills in the interaction between master and apprentice through repeated imitation and correction. Second, the guaranteed system of master-apprentice inheritance

Theater platform support Taking the Xianfeng County Nan Ju Art Inheritance and Protection Center as the carrier, the troupe provides regular practice scenes for the inheritance of master and apprentice through activities.

2.4.5 Cross-border talent integration

Based on master-apprentice inheritance, experts in the field of drama are introduced to train supporting talent.

2.4.6 Intergenerational relay mechanism

Young students take the responsibility of continuing skills in the master-apprentice inheritance and promote the development of Nan Ju through innovative play rehearsals. The content and subject matter Exploring local culture focusing on real-life themes, the play and the artistic expression and performance Integration and the language style optimization.

2.4.7 Communication and promotion

With the help of new media technology: relying on virtual performances, online live broadcasts and other new media technologies with carry out diversified activities in Focusing on real-life themes, the play the national intangible cultural

heritage, boasts a rich and diverse vocal system, unique musical patterns, flexible and varied rhythmic patterns and rhythms, distinctive local singing styles, and characteristic accompanying instruments. For will pay attention to and value this ancient theatrical art, collectively promoting its inheritance and innovation in contemporary society.

3. Discussion

Enshi Nan Ju Opera, as a highly representative local opera genre in Western Hubei, carries the cultural memory and artistic wisdom of multiple ethnic groups such as the Tujia and Miao peoples. Its origins can be traced back to the Rongmei Tusi era during the Kangxi reign of the Qing Dynasty. Through the integration of "Ba melodies," "Chu tunes," and external theatrical elements, it gradually took shape, centering on three major vocal styles: Southern, Northern, and Upper supplemented by other vocal style tunes such as Kunqu and Gaoqiang, forming a unique musical system known as "Three-Pot Stew." The repertoire covers a wide range of themes, including historical narratives and folk tales, with lyrics and dialogues infused with Western Hubei dialects, exuding a strong sense of everyday life.

In performance, Enshi Nan Ju emphasizes craftsmanship and the interplay of realism and abstraction, blending bold, unrestrained movements with delicate and expressive charm. It features a complete array of role types, incorporating martial arts, acrobatics, and face-changing stunts, while its makeup and styling adhere to ethnic traditions.

In modern society, despite challenges such as audience decline and generational gaps in transmission, Enshi Nan Ju has leveraged national intangible cultural heritage protection policies to achieve creative transformation and innovative development. By producing new works like *True Colors* and *Lady of the Tangya Tusi*, which blend contemporary spirit with ethnic characteristics, collaborating with professional institutions to train talent, and organizing activities such as "Opera Goes Rural" and "Opera in Schools," it has revitalized its presence. Furthermore, through new media platforms like short videos and live streaming, it has expanded its reach. Today,

Enshi Nan Ju shines brightly on the cultural stage of the new era, continuing to showcase the unique charm of western Hubei's regional culture.

In summary, the artistic characteristics of Enshi Nan Ju are comprehensively manifested through multiple dimensions such as historical context, vocal systems, repertoire creation, performance art, and inheritance and development. Tracing its historical origins, Enshi Nan Ju originated during the Rongmei Tusi era in the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty, nurtured and developed through the integration and collision of Ba and Chu cultures. Over centuries of evolution, it has formed a unique artistic character. Its developmental journey is not only a history of the evolution of opera art but also a vivid portrayal of ethnic cultural exchange and integration in western Hubei which is consistent with and related to Zeng Jie (2010. p.) studies on A Preliminary Study on the Musical Characteristics of "Nan Ju" in the Tujia Ethnic Region of Western Hubei.

In terms of vocal systems, Enshi Nan Ju centers around three major vocal styles: Nanlu (southern route), Beilu (northern route), and Shang Lu vocal style (upper route)-while incorporating elements from Kunqu, Gaoqiang, and other vocal traditions, forming a distinctive musical system known as "Sanxianguo." The Nanlu style is delicate and lyrical, adept at expressing sorrowful and lingering emotions; the Beilu style is vigorous and lively, suitable for conveying passionate and joyful moods; the Shang Lu vocal style is bold and unrestrained, embodying the regional characteristics of eastern Sichuan. The flexible application of these vocal styles gives Nan Ju a unique musical expressiveness, enabling it to vividly portray diverse characters and enhance dramatic atmospheres.

In repertoire creation, Enshi Nan Ju covers a wide range of themes, including historical narratives and folk tales. The librettos are written in accessible language, rich with Western Hubei dialects and colloquialisms, exuding a strong sense of local life and regional flavor. These works are not only crystallizations of artistic creation but also concentrated reflections of the local people's lifestyles, values, and aesthetic tastes, holding significant cultural research value.

In contemporary society, Enshi Nan Ju faces dual challenges of inheritance and development. By creating new works such as *Original Character* and *Lady of the Tangya Tusi*, it achieves an organic fusion of traditional art and modern themes. Collaborations with professional institutions to cultivate talent inject fresh vitality into the genre, while the use of new media platforms expands its reach and broadens its audience. These initiatives not only reflect Enshi Nan Ju's innovative spirit of keeping pace with the times but also demonstrate its robust vitality in the new era.

With its profound historical heritage, unique artistic charm, and resilient cultural vitality, Enshi Nan Ju has become an important symbol of culture in Western Hubei. Its artistic characteristics are not only a precious legacy of traditional opera culture but also provide valuable insights for the inheritance and development of contemporary opera art. In its future development, Enshi Nan Ju will undoubtedly continue to innovate while staying true to tradition, shining brightly and making greater contributions to promoting China's outstanding traditional culture.

In summary, the status of Enshi Nan Jus is comprehensively reflected through multiple dimensions including inheritance ecology, innovative practices, dissemination pathways, talent cultivation, and policy support.

Nan Ju was prioritized as a national intangible cultural heritage, its traditional survival environment continues to face challenges from modern cultural and entertainment trends. In the offline performance market, the audience exhibits a pronounced aging trend, with younger generations showing low awareness and engagement, leading to a sustained decline in the traditional theater audience. However, with the advancement of cultural-tourism integration strategies, Nan Ju Opera has found new avenues for survival in scenic spot performances and folk festival activities. For instance, live performances at sites like the Tangya Tusi City Ruins not only enrich the cultural tourism experience but also provide a stable platform for Nan Ju Opera.

In terms of innovative practices, Nan Ju fosters a dialogue between tradition and modernity through repertoire innovation. In recent years, new productions such as

True Colors and Lady of Tangya Tusi have emerged as standouts. These works retain the traditional vocal styles and performance conventions of Nan Ju Opera while incorporating contemporary themes and multimedia technologies. For example, True Colors portrays the story of national moral exemplar Zhang Fuqing through Nan Ju artistry, while Lady of Tangya Tusi blends elements of Tujia folk songs and hand-waving dances with Nan Ju performances, achieving cross-disciplinary breakthroughs in artistic expression. These innovations have not only earned professional accolades but also attracted younger audiences.

The expansion of dissemination pathways has been pivotal in overcoming geographical limitations. Traditional "opera outreach to rural areas" activities annually cover hundreds of villages in Western Hubei, maintaining cultural ties with grassroots communities. Meanwhile, on short-video platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, clips of classic Nan Ju arias and behind-the-scenes footage have amassed over 100 million views, cultivating an online fanbase through the "intangible cultural heritage + livestreaming" model. Additionally, participation in national opera festivals and international cultural exchanges has gradually elevated Nan Ju Opera from a regional art form to national and even global stages, enhancing its cultural influence.

Policy support has provided a solid foundation for the protection and advancement of Nan Ju Opera. National and local governments have allocated special intangible cultural heritage funds for scriptwriting, equipment upgrades, and heritage base construction. The "Opera in Schools" initiative incorporates Nan Ju into aesthetic education curricula, nurturing potential future audiences.

Overall, Enshi Nan Ju Opera presents a complex contemporary landscape marked by both opportunities and challenges. While demonstrating vitality through innovation, dissemination, and policy support, sustained efforts are still required in market cultivation, talent reserves, and traditional preservation. Only through multi-stakeholder collaboration and targeted measures can Nan Ju Opera achieve creative transformation and innovative development in the new era, establishing itself as a model for the inheritance of China's outstanding traditional culture which is consistent with and

related to Mao Qian (2013. p.) studies on The Exploration of the Living Inheritance Model of Folk Arts in Enshi Prefecture.

Enshi Nan Ju is a local traditional opera of the Enshi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hubei Province, and one of China's national intangible cultural heritages. Reflecting on Enshi Nan Ju can bring significant benefits and advantages across multiple dimensions, including cultural inheritance, artistic development, and social value.

4.Suggestion of the study

Implications of the Study

Nan Ju integrates elements such as the dialect, folk customs, and religious beliefs of Western Hubei. The paper can analyze its connection to regional culture (e.g, its interplay with the Tujia Hand-Waving Dance and Nuo Opera) from sociological, anthropological, and artistic perspectives, revealing the uniqueness and diversity of local culture. It fills research gaps in this field, particularly on the fusion of ethnic minority theater with Han culture, demonstrating academic innovation.

The musical characteristics of the Chinese opera may change depending on the context of the performance. Those who want to study must understand the principles of musical accompaniment that can demonstrate the musical aesthetic that reflects the characteristics of the performers with many songs and shows the diversity of musical culture.

The language used to perform, and sing can have many local languages. The importance of meaning should be studied to use it in the correct interpretation of the performance.

Recommendations for the future research

1. There should be research on the Chinese opera music accompanying the performance of the song. In various faculties on the route of contact and using linguistic principles as the main point of connection of musical culture.

2. Ethnic music used to accompany the performance of the Chinese opera and be able to express the ethnic identity of China should be studied.

3. Modify the research area Consider the status of interest in the transmission of the Chinese opera music to accompany the performance for the direction of conservation, improvement and further development of musical arts and culture.



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