

# **The Current Situation of Clarinet Performance of Chinese National Works in China**

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## **Abstract**

This article examines the current state of clarinet performance in Chinese national works, emphasizing the integration of traditional folk music elements into the repertoire and performance practices. Based on a systematic review of 40 academic documents from the past decade (2014–2024), the study categorizes existing literature into folk instrumental music, folk songs, opera music, and quyi, highlighting notable contributions and regional focus areas. Key works, such as adaptations of "Jasmine Flower" and "Horse Herding Song," demonstrate innovative approaches to blending Western clarinet techniques with Chinese musical aesthetics. However, the study identifies significant gaps, particularly the lack of comprehensive research on clarinet adaptations of folk music from Zhejiang Province and the absence of studies dedicated to clarinet quartets in this context. To address these gaps, the article proposes the development of a \*Clarinet Quartet Guidebook on Zhejiang Folk Songs\*, aiming to enrich the repertoire, promote regional folk traditions, and advance the cultural exchange between Chinese and Western musical practices. This work underscores the importance of preserving and innovating Chinese traditional music through modern instrumental expressions, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of China's cultural heritage in global musicology.

**Keywords:** Current Situation; Clarinet Performance; Chinese National Works; China

## **Introduction**

Folk song is created collectively by Chinese people of all ethnic groups in their long-term labor and social life, and is a short singing art that can most directly reflect the reality, can be generally mastered by the people and widely circulated. The People's Music Publishing House's 'Chinese Folk Songs' expresses China is a vast country with 56 ethnic groups. The unique Chinese traditional culture has nurtured the unique genres, forms, styles and contents of ethnic folk music, which has become the basis of Chinese folk music. Historically, different ethnic groups have gathered and lived according to geographical areas. Each ethnic group has not only its own customs and habits, but also its own distinctive language and special style of music. The Han nationality is the most populous ethnic group in China and lives in a wide range of regions. However, according to the different living areas, there are also different dialects and different styles of folk music, which are the treasures of traditional Chinese culture and the vivid embodiment of the people's life, thoughts, feelings, will and wishes. The 30-volume "Collection of Chinese Folk Songs", edited by the Ethnic and Folk Literature and Art Development Center of the Ministry of Culture, contains more than 30,000 folk songs with different characteristics from different regions. Therefore, the regional characteristics of

Chinese folk songs are an important feature of folk song style, which implies the unique musical personality of folk songs in a specific region. The different personalities of folk songs constitute different aesthetic effects and form a wide variety of regional style characteristics.

As the foundation of the development of singing art, folk songs originated from the bottom of society and are widely spread among the people. They have a strong sense of life, distinctive style and vivid artistic language, so folk songs can fully reflect the aesthetic, values and cultural outlook of a nation. In addition, as one of the cultural landscapes created by humans in the course of their historical evolution, folk song culture always has obvious regional differences, and separating such regional differences in the form of cultural districts is an important aspect of cultural geography research.

The origin of Zhejiang folk songs can be traced back to the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties. It has a long history and is a true portrayal of the labor life of the people living in the southeast coastal areas. Zhejiang is located on the coast of the East China Sea, with an area of more than 400,000 square kilometers and a population of more than 40 million. The provincial capital is Hangzhou. It has a very long history and culture, and is praised by tourists from all over the world. It is a good place with outstanding people and beautiful scenery. It is the main producer of green tea and bamboo. The famous Longjing tea comes from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, and its reputation has been well-known at home and abroad. Zhejiang Province belongs to the ancient Wu Yue land of my country and is the birthplace of ancient Chinese civilization. A large number of cultural relics have appeared in Yuyao, including a large number of production tools such as bone, stone, pottery, and wood. This is the famous cultural site Hemudu Cultural Site, which has a history of more than 7,000 years. This important physical object of unprecedented music culture shows that Zhejiang already had relatively complete music and folk instruments in ancient times. Various documents also record the regionality of Zhejiang's geographical environment and the diverse economic types, which have led to the unique style, rich content, and diverse forms of Zhejiang folk songs.

Zhejiang has rich folk song resources. Due to different environments, the content and methods of production are different, and the temperament of the people is also different. "According to music genre, it can be roughly divided into six categories: haozi, mountain songs, minor tunes, lamp tunes, lotus songs, and ritual songs. It has a strong Jiangnan charm and a distinctive music style.

a. Haozi

The labor songs sung by people during labor production have a rhythm and melody that are closely integrated with the rhythm of labor. While serving the production labor, they also have a certain entertainment function. Zhejiang has a complex topography and diverse labor production content, such as fishermen's songs on islands, quarrying songs in the southern Zhejiang mountainous area, water-carrying songs in the northern Zhejiang plain, osprey songs in rivers, streams and lakes, fiber-carrying songs in water network areas, and porter songs at commercial ports. Among them, the most distinctive are the "Zhoushan Fishermen's Songs" of the Zhoushan Islands and the "Haiyan Seawall Songs" of Haiyan.

b. Mountain songs

Mainly refers to folk songs sung by rural people for self-entertainment when working or resting in the mountains, lakes and rivers. The rhythm is relatively free and the melody is relatively relaxed. The styles of Zhejiang mountain songs can be divided into the Hangzhou-Jiaxing-Huzhou plain area and the hilly mountain area.

c. Minor Tunes

‘Jiangnan Minor Tunes’ and “Jiangsu and Zhejiang Minor Tunes” refer to the folk tunes of the towns and villages in the Wu dialect area centred on Suzhou and Hangzhou. The tunes of the minor tunes are smooth and pleasant, and are easily accepted by the working people. There are about 20 basic tunes of minor tunes that are popular in modern Zhejiang, such as “Wugeng Tune”, “Meng Jiangnu” and “Wuxi Scenery”.

d. Lamp tone, lotus

Songs and dances performed during folk customs and festivals. Lamp tones in Zhejiang Province are mostly local tunes from different places. Among them, the tea lamp tone "Tea Picking Lantern" and the flower lantern tune "Winter Plum Blossom" are the most local.

e. Ritual songs

Mainly refer to the three types of songs, namely wedding ceremonies, silkworm ceremonies and sacrificial songs, which are folk songs sung in certain folk ritual activities.

For a long time, most students of Western music have mainly practiced Western solo works. The author believes that it is very necessary to learn and practice ensembles, especially small chamber music, which can improve the ability to collaborate with others. There are a large number of students studying music all over the world. The work they will face in the future may require collaboration with others. Not everyone can become a soloist. The practice of ensembles can better help them improve their ability to collaborate with others and exercise and enhance their own musical accomplishment. In addition, whether it is a professional music college or an ordinary college, most students have spent more time practicing alone since they learned music, and they do not have enough time to cooperate with others. When practicing ensembles of Western music, they use more Western classical works and rarely use Chinese works. The author believes that it is very necessary for students in their own country to practice the works of their own country. As a part of Chinese culture, folk songs, a unique cultural vehicle from the folklore, are also a rare intangible cultural heritage, which originated from the life and spiritual world of the ancestors. It is a folk song that has been passed down by word of mouth in long-term production, life and practice, and has changed and developed with the environment and regional colors. With the progress of society and the impact of modern civilization, folk songs are gradually losing their national characteristics in terms of authors, singing, inheritance, development and protection, and are even endangered. Therefore, it is of great significance to explore and organize the folk song resources hidden in the folk, and to learn and inherit this intangible cultural heritage in the form of clarinet quartet performance.

## **The Current Situation of Clarinet Performance of Chinese National Works**

Chinese traditional folk music is mainly composed of four parts: folk instrumental music, folk songs, quyi music, and opera music. The researchers searched the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) with the theme of "Chinese clarinet works" and searched the literature on clarinet performance of Chinese folk music in the past ten years (2024-2014), and retrieved a total of 40 documents. Among them, there are 16 documents on clarinet performance of Chinese folk instrumental music works, 10 documents on clarinet performance of Chinese folk songs, 4 documents on clarinet performance of Chinese opera music works, and 2 documents on clarinet performance of Chinese folk music works. Among them, the documents on clarinet performance of Chinese folk songs are as follows:

Qi Xiaoyi (2024) exploring the inheritance and innovation of Wu Na's clarinet and piano adaptation of "Jasmine Flower". This article mainly describes the innovative adaptation of "Jasmine Flower" by composer Wu Na through the arrangement of clarinet and piano, retaining the melody essence of Jiangsu folk songs and incorporating modern music techniques and forms of expression. Through this adaptation, it not only shows the innovative inheritance of Chinese traditional culture in the global context, but also continues the Chinese traditional aesthetic conception contained in "Jasmine Flower". Through the ingenious musical structure and emotional transmission, this work reinterprets the elegance and restraint of the East in the Western musical language, enriches its cultural connotation, further enhances the influence of "Jasmine Flower" on the international music stage, demonstrates the creative expression of traditional culture in contemporary art, and reflects the deep integration of cultural connotation and innovative value.

Ma Jianfeng (2023) studied A Preliminary Study on the Origin and Development of Chinese Elements Clarinet Works. This article takes the origin of the Chinese clarinet as the starting point and tells the development history of the clarinet since it entered China in the early 20th century. The article divides Chinese clarinet works into three periods according to the creation of clarinet works. In the development of clarinet works with Chinese elements, many works are adapted from Chinese folk songs, such as "Why Flowers Are So Red Capriccio" adapted from "Why Flowers Are So Red", the theme song of the movie "The Visitor on the Iceberg". By the end of the 1980s, some creative changes had taken place in the Chinese elements of clarinet works. They were not limited to using traditional folk songs or folk tunes to create, but also used Western modern composition techniques to create after fully absorbing and integrating Chinese folk songs and opera tunes. Looking at the development of clarinet performance and Chinese elements clarinet works in China for more than a hundred years, it must be said that this is the witness of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Hu Rong (2017) studied Research on the Creation and Performance of Chinese Mongolian Clarinet Works (Master's Thesis, Guizhou Normal University). This paper takes "Horse Herding Song" as the research object and analyzes the embodiment and application of Mongolian music elements in the work. The clarinet solo "Horse Herding Song" is one of the works created by Mr. Wang Yan during his study at the Central Conservatory of Music (1962-1965). The inspiration for this work came from the author's experience of herders' life in the Mongolian Autonomous Region when he went to Qinghai and Gansu in 1952 to collect folk songs. This paper consists of three parts: the first part is an overview of Chinese clarinet national works, an overall analysis and description of the creation characteristics of Mongolian music and Mongolian clarinet works; the second part specifically analyzes the

creation background, structure and creation characteristics of the work; the third part analyzes the performance technique characteristics and performance style combined with the score, and makes a detailed analysis of the treatment of music in the work. The author hopes that the review and case analysis of the Mongolian clarinet in this article will provide some reference for future readers when playing Mongolian-style clarinet works.

Wang Xuezheng (2018) wrote the "Chinese language" and "Sinicization" of the Western wind instrument clarinet - Analysis of the nationalization process of clarinet art. The article takes the "Chinese language" and "Sinicization" of the clarinet as the title, and analyzes the nationalization of clarinet art from the budding of the nationalization consciousness of clarinet art and the nationalization practice of clarinet music creation and performance art. The author believes that with the prosperity of Chinese clarinet work creation, the nationalization consciousness and practice of clarinet art have gradually unfolded. Learning and drawing on the singing and performance art of Chinese folk songs and national instruments, expressing the technical elements of Chinese national style, has also become an important part of the creation and practice of clarinet music works. The application of national music vocabulary has promoted the nationalization process of clarinet performance art and expanded the performance techniques and musical expression of clarinet. The prosperity of musical language and the expansion of performance art brought about by the Chinese national music elements in clarinet works are world-class artistic achievements, which are contributions to the world of clarinet art. Therefore, in our research on clarinet art, we should absorb more of the essence of Chinese traditional music culture and make it take root and flourish in China. This will not only promote the "Sinicization" of clarinet art, but also use Western wind instruments as a carrier to allow our country's rich national folk music to go to the world and be understood by the world. At the same time, it will also achieve perfection in clarinet art.

Liu Yang (2018) wrote the nationality and aesthetic taste of Chinese clarinet music from Xin Huiguang's works. The article believes that Xin Huiguang's works always include nationality and aesthetic charm with national interest in each work, which has become a major feature of Chinese clarinet music. When creating works, the composer basically retains the style of the original song and slightly adds some new materials. The melody form of "Rondo" is close to the short-tune music of the Mongolian people, but the theme is quite similar to the Jiangsu folk song "What a Beautiful Jasmine Flower". It can be seen that Xin Huiguang has put a lot of effort into the nationalization of creation. Xin Huiguang is a witness to the nationalization of Chinese clarinet music and a great contributor.

Zhang Yu (2023) studied the development and teaching application of Chinese clarinet works. The article elaborates on the development of Chinese clarinet works and how to apply them in teaching, hoping to inspire the majority of clarinet practitioners and enthusiasts. The author believes that Chinese clarinet works are an indispensable part of Chinese traditional music culture. They not only have rich cultural connotations, but also have important artistic value in clarinet performance and teaching. Through the research and exploration of Chinese clarinet works, we can better inherit and promote Chinese traditional music culture, and also inject new vitality and impetus into the innovation and development of Chinese clarinet art.

Zhong Hua (2017) research on the creation of Chinese clarinet works from the perspective of history (Master's thesis, Northwest University for Nationalities). Based on the perspective of music history, this paper, based on music literature, combines the analysis of music ontology to analyze the origin of the clarinet, its development in my country, and the creation of Chinese clarinet music works. The author analyzes the representative works of Chinese clarinet in each period according to the period. Since it was introduced to China more than a century ago, domestic clarinet musicians still use the mainstream ideas of European professional clarinet to create and perform works for this Western musical instrument, mainly represented and benchmarked by Germany and Austria. In the process of their professional music creation, in order to make the sound full and round, while maintaining the purity of the timbre, they often use straight sound in playing. The selection of performance repertoire is also based on the principle of regular and smooth melody, and strictly follows a more rigorous form structure. Therefore, the basic skills and playing skills of the performers are required to be high, and the mouth shape should be smiling and fixed, and the fingers should be flexible and the pronunciation should be straight and accurate. Generally speaking, the performance requirements of the Western clarinet are in line with the development of Western classical music and its language and culture. However, my country's traditional music culture is closely related to language, and Chinese emphasizes the level and oblique voice cavity. Therefore, in addition to the use of "straight sound", a large number of "cavity sound" are also used. This method of sound production makes the sound change to a certain extent when pronouncing. At the same time, traditional folk music also pursues a variety of timbres, cavity sounds, and free beats, which are different from the aesthetic characteristics of Western classical music.

Wang Zhaoyuan (2022) wrote the Chinese application of clarinet performance - taking "Horse Herding Song" and "Pamir Sound" as examples. The article believes that the external expression of the meaning of the work by the music performance is presented through the various sound forms of its carrier. At the same time, the sound form of folk music (pitch, rhythm, melody, texture, etc.) is the direct carrier of national aesthetic emotions. It incorporates emotions into a certain sound relationship and is the counterpart of aesthetic form. Therefore, the author analyzes the performance correlation between the clarinet and Chinese nomadic music from three aspects: timbre, technique, and artistic expression. "Horse Herding Song" uses the simple Mongolian musical language and the lyricism of long folk songs to carry the beautiful hope of the embryonic stage of the Chinese development of clarinet art; "Pamir Sound" uses dazzling techniques and rich body language to mark the beginning of the integration and development of Eastern and Western music art. The Chinese application of clarinet performance is not to directly use Western performance techniques to present the musical symbols in Chinese works in a sonified way; instead, it is to learn and understand the characteristics of national culture and national art, and use national aesthetics and music performance psychology to analyze "meaning" and transform "form" externally, so as to build a bridge between musicality and expressiveness in the national development of Western instrumental music. This will fully tap the rich musical expressiveness of Western instrumental music in Chinese music works, and broaden the voice of Chinese national music art in the world.

Peng Tianming (2022) wrote the analysis of the style and performance of Chinese clarinet works. The article believes that Chinese clarinet works refer to new music works that contain Chinese traditional music materials and reflect the characteristics of Chinese traditional music, including original, transplanted and adapted. my country's clarinet education needs to pay attention to the teaching of national traditional culture. Creation and innovation must conform to the characteristics of the clarinet itself and be suitable for Chinese national culture. Promoting the adaptation and reference of folk songs and opera music is also to promote the inheritance and development of folk songs and opera music. Let the works understand the history and development process of national culture, integrate music into culture, become familiar with the characteristics of traditional Chinese music culture, master the performance techniques of Chinese national wind instruments, and at the same time strive to learn foreign clarinet creation and playing techniques, and integrate Chinese and foreign music cultures. Be able to skillfully use the traditional cultural heritage of the Chinese nation to interpret, form its own characteristics, and interpret Western clarinet works. This is the correct direction of teaching reform in Chinese clarinet teaching.

Ma Qian (2020) wrote an analysis of the artistic characteristics of clarinet music creation in New China. The article systematically discusses the development process, artistic characteristics, existing problems and development strategies of clarinet music creation in New China. First, in terms of the development process of clarinet music creation in New China, the author sorted out several important Chinese works from the time when the clarinet was introduced into China to the 21st century, and concluded that with the development of society, the creation of clarinet Chinese music has gradually shown different style characteristics. Second, in terms of the artistic characteristics of clarinet music creation in New China, the author comprehensively demonstrates the artistic characteristics of each type of creation method in clarinet music creation in New China by giving examples of typical works of transplanting or changing original music works, creating works based on folk music themes, and "original" music works. Third, in terms of the problems and development strategies of clarinet Chinese music creation, the author discusses the three problems of the small number of "fine" works, the lack of scale in the creation of works, and the lack of objectivity in the creation of works in the current clarinet Chinese music creation, and puts forward corresponding development strategies and suggestions. The author summarizes and analyzes typical works of different creative styles of clarinet in New China, sorts out the development trajectory of clarinet music creation in China, summarizes the artistic characteristics of clarinet music creation in New China, and provides theoretical supplements for related research; analyzes the creative ideas and performance content of clarinet Chinese music works, provides favorable assistance for learners, and shows the profound cultural heritage and charm of the Chinese nation, so that more people in the world can understand Chinese culture.

To sum up, we can find that the literature on clarinet playing of Chinese folk works is all about the analysis and teaching performance of a Chinese work, or the introduction of a large category of creative process based on the development of the Chinese folk clarinet. Except for the Mongolian region, there is no single article introducing the clarinet folk works and development in other provinces, nor is there a single article that takes folk songs as the main body to introduce the relationship between the clarinet and folk songs. There is no literature on clarinet quartet of Zhejiang folk songs, so I want to write a book "The Clarinet Quartet Guidebook On Zhejiang Folk Songs".

## Conclusion

The current state of clarinet performance of Chinese national works highlights the diverse integration of traditional Chinese folk music elements into clarinet compositions and performances, reflecting a rich interplay of cultural inheritance and artistic innovation. While literature has explored clarinet adaptations of folk songs, instrumental music, opera, and quyi, most studies focus on individual works or broad creative categories, with significant emphasis on specific regions like Mongolia. However, gaps remain in research addressing the development of clarinet works linked to folk traditions in other provinces, particularly Zhejiang. This lack of comprehensive exploration underscores the necessity of creating focused resources, such as a *Clarinet Quartet Guidebook on Zhejiang Folk Songs*, to bridge these gaps, enhance regional representation, and contribute to the broader nationalization and globalization of Chinese clarinet art.

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