

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE HARP (KONGHOU) AND ITS MUSIC: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. Konghou, a traditional Chinese musical instrument similar to the Western harp, was introduced to China via the Silk Road during the Qin and Han dynasties and flourished during the Sui and Tang dynasties. Over time, however, the Konghou gradually faded into obscurity during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Thanks to the dedication of instrument artisans, the Konghou was revived after being lost for over three hundred years. With this revival, the Konghou music has experienced significant development, and in recent years, exceptional performances have emerged, capturing the public's attention. This article examines the development of Konghou music from a sociological perspective, exploring its cultural and societal role. It also highlights the instrument's resurgence and the growth of Konghou music in contemporary performances. The goal of this research study is to explore the future trends of the Konghou, promote its cultural significance, and bring Chinese music culture to the global stage.

Keywords: *Konghou, Chinese harp, Chinese traditional musical instrument, Chinese plucked string instrument, progressing trend*

Introduction

“Konghou” or the Chinese harp is a traditional Chinese plucked stringed instrument that was once categorised as one of the most well-known music instruments from the ancient Chinese history (Liu, 2022; Zhang, 2019). However, this music instruments went into disappearance from the society at around the 14th century. This therefore leads to the loss of the performance techniques for Konghou (Wang and Siriwongsuwan, 2024). For a long time, musicians learned about the Konghou primarily by drawing information from surviving frescoes and historical documents. After enduring thousands of years of transformation, the Konghou has reemerged on the modern musical stage with renewed vitality and an innovative spirit. Accompanying this revival, Konghou music has achieved notable advancement in both technical proficiency and its position within contemporary musical practice (Ye, 2025). This study conducted extensive research through the collection and examination of a wide range of scholarly literature. Following a careful review and analysis, ten key studies were identified as providing essential theoretical insights that form the foundation of this analysis. These works have played a central role in shaping the direction of this study and informing the arguments presented herein.

Drawing on the discipline of sociology, this article examines the development of Konghou music by analyzing the social factors that have influenced its evolution. The discussion is organized into three principal sections. The first section investigates the

social and historical context underlying the revival of Konghou music, illuminating the conditions that facilitated the reemergence of both the instrument and its repertoire. By exploring these social backgrounds, this section seeks to explain how the Konghou was reintegrated into modern musical culture after centuries of decline. This study also analyzes the influence of various social factors on the development of Konghou music, with particular attention to historical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic dimensions. It considers how different historical periods and cultural transitions have shaped both the composition and performance practices of Konghou music, as well as its status within the broader framework of Chinese music. This discussion highlights how the interaction of diverse social forces has contributed to the present form of Konghou music, while also addressing the challenges and opportunities encountered in its progression.

This research then further evaluates the current state of Konghou music within the context of social development. It explores how modern cultural, artistic, and technological dynamics shape the contemporary demands placed upon Konghou music and its practitioners. By assessing the current landscape, this section identifies areas for further growth and offers a forward-looking perspective on potential directions for sustained development. Moreover, it discusses strategies to ensure that Konghou music remains relevant and continues to flourish in an era of rapid cultural transformation. Overall, this article aimed to present a comprehensive sociological analysis of the development of Konghou music. By examining the complex interplay between social factors and musical evolution, this study seeks to deepen understanding of the cultural significance of the Konghou and its music. Through this exploration, the research aspires to contribute to the revitalization and continued advancement of the Konghou as an enduring element of Chinese cultural and musical. Fortunately, at the beginning of the last century, the Chinese people's excavation and inheritance of traditional culture, as well as the reform and improvement of traditional musical instruments, ultimately led to the flourishing of bamboo culture (Liu, 2019).

Materials and Methods

This study was framed within the qualitative narrative inquiry paradigm. Rather than pursuing standardized quantitative data, the research delved into the developmental trajectory and cultural significance of the konghou within the traditional Chinese music system. Focus was placed on individual narratives to examine how intersecting socio-cultural dynamics, historical contexts, and aesthetic shifts influenced the instrument's evolution, decline, and contemporary revival. Compared with traditional text-based historical research, technological developments in instrument making, shifting musical aesthetics, and lived human experiences were synthesized within this framework, thereby addressing empirical gaps that textual sources alone cannot reconstruct. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select key cases and historical events. Rather than pursuing statistical representativeness, cases yielding rich informational value were targeted to address the core research questions. Accordingly, pivotal events across the historical trajectory of the konghou were examined, encompassing its introduction, peak, and eventual decline, as well as modern revival efforts such as its structural restoration, reconstruction, and pedagogical institutionalization. Priority during sample selection was given to primary sources with direct practical experience and firsthand involvement, while secondary accounts and unverified online materials were excluded to ensure high alignment with the research objectives.

The empirical data for this study were derived from two primary sources. The first comprised the researcher's direct practical engagement in performance, orchestral practice, and field observation, through which experiential insights into the physical structure, performance techniques, and contemporary stage presentation of the konghou were obtained. The second core source consisted of expert interviews and oral history accounts provided by Professor Zhao Guangyun. As a leading authority in konghou restoration and transmission, primary narrative data regarding technical aspects of instrument reconstruction, observations on field developments, and practical challenges encountered in preserving this tradition were provided through his accounts. To complement these accounts and enhance research rigor, secondary evidence was incorporated, including images of archaeological artifacts, historical music treatises, and contemporary organological monographs. By triangulating individual oral narratives with objective historical artifacts, recall bias was minimized and the credibility of the findings was strengthened.

Results and Discussion

The influence of social background on the revival of Konghou music

Konghou is a product of the Silk Road, with a history that predates the Silk Road itself. It is considered a subspecies of the ancient harp that originated in Mesopotamia (He, 2021). Historically, the Konghou occupied an important position in the musical culture of ancient China. However, due to limitations in instrument design, public recognition, and historical circumstances (Wang, 2016), it gradually declined and eventually disappeared during a period of flourishing development for other Chinese musical instruments. After remaining silent for more than three centuries, the Konghou reemerged on the historical stage, rekindling both scholarly and public interest. In the early 1930s, the "Datong Music Club" in Shanghai began to study the restoration and development of chopsticks; Since the 1980s, several experts and technicians from Suzhou National Musical Instrument Factory, Shanghai National Musical Instrument Factory, Shenyang Conservatory of Music and other units have successively restored the bamboo chopsticks, and developed various modern modulation bamboo chopsticks on this basis. This not only fills the gap in China's orchestra, but also gives rise to a group of bamboo musicians (Zhu, 2019).

With the advancement of society, Konghou, the long lost for over three hundred years has begun to be rediscovered and reconstructed. The centuries of absence left an undeniable sense of loss for what had once been a vibrant musical tradition. In response, numerous Chinese music scholars devoted themselves to the revival of traditional instruments. Since the 1830s, many musicians have focused on reforming the Konghou's structural design in order to overcome its technical and performance limitations (Fan, 2021). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, under the direction of the Ministry of Culture and the Chinese Musicians Association, the "Konghou Reform Trial Production Group" was established (Cui, 2010). Through the encouragement of cultural authorities and the active collaboration of instrument makers and performers, remarkable progress was achieved in redesigning the Konghou's structure and refining its playing techniques. In 1982, Professor Zhao Guangyun of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music successfully developed the first double-string pedal-style fully modulated Konghou (*Figure 1*). This innovation allowed the instrument to perform all

tonalities and temporary diacritical marks, transforming it into a versatile instrument capable of solo, ensemble, and orchestral performance (Fan, 2021).



Figure 1. The first "double string pedal type" fully modulated Konghou.

Within the broader context of a flourishing musical culture, the Konghou has undergone a renaissance and reclaimed its rightful place in the history of Chinese music. The evolution of musical instruments often parallels the progression of musical expression, and in this regard, Konghou music has garnered unprecedented attention. Among the pioneers of modern Konghou performance, Professor Cui Junzhi played a particularly influential role. Drawing on techniques from instruments such as the harp and guzheng (a traditional Chinese plucked zither with movable bridges and a rich timbral range), while integrating timbral characteristics from other Chinese ethnic instruments and expressive elements from ancient Konghou music, Professor Cui developed a distinctive performance style that established the technical foundation for modern Konghou practice. In 1999, Ms. Cui Junzhi's book "The Heaven and Earth of Chopsticks" included a complete set of drumstick playing techniques. Its playing technique is based on the harp, and differs from the harp in terms of finger touch points, force control of finger movements, wrist movements, and pronunciation positions. It integrates with the unique playing techniques of traditional Chinese ethnic instruments, such as kneading, pressing, trembling, glissando, finger shaking, and overtones, forming a unique art of qin playing (Feng, 2024). On the basis of drawing on the basic playing techniques of the harp, the qin also has playing techniques such as continuous arpeggios with both hands, double and single crossed fingers, and hanging strings with large joints. In addition, the qin also has more diverse playing techniques such as string pressing, erasing, wheel playing, and scraping under the code, which are somewhat similar to the ancient qin techniques in China. Therefore, the bamboo flute is not only capable of playing Western style in the country Famous foreign songs can also be played with the effects of guqin, guzheng, erhu, and even drums, showcasing both the romance of Western instruments and the grandeur and beauty of classical Chinese instruments. This perfectly embodies the advantages of combining Chinese and Western styles on chopsticks (Wang, 2020).

The continuing development of Konghou music is closely tied to the instrument's structural and artistic evolution. In contemporary society, the growing demand for

Konghou music has inspired composers and performers alike to create and adapt an expanding repertoire. The proliferation of Konghou compositions reflects the public's pursuit of spiritual and aesthetic enrichment and underscores the profound influence of social, historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors on the revival and flourishing of the Konghou and its music. As an important component of traditional Chinese culture, ethnic music provides rich and comprehensive educational resources for all sectors of society. It helps students better understand traditional Chinese culture and appreciate the characteristics of various ethnic cultures (Su et al., 2024).

The influence of social factors on the development of bamboo music

Grounded in the disciplinary framework of sociology, the development of music is inherently linked to its broader social and historical context. The evolution of any musical form is shaped by the dynamic interaction between society, culture, and history. When supported by social and cultural influences, together with the driving force of socio-economic factors, music is able to reach a wider audience and achieve more sustained development. After being lost for three centuries, the Konghou successfully reemerged on the musical stage, a revival made possible largely through the influence of powerful social forces that provided essential support for its reconstruction, dissemination, and continued growth within the contemporary musical landscape.

Social and historical background

The development of musical instruments is inextricably intertwined with the evolution of instrumental music itself. For any emerging instrument, the influence and support of social and historical factors are indispensable to its growth and recognition. The emergence of the modern Konghou represents a significant social and historical milestone that laid a solid foundation for the subsequent development of Konghou music. Furthermore, the successful organization of the first Konghou Art Festival marked an important milestone in the instrument's modern history. This event played a pivotal role in fostering the diverse advancement of Konghou music and broadening its cultural and artistic influence.

The birth of modern Konghou

Since the twentieth century, the Konghou has attracted increasing attention from musicians, greatly contributing to its revival and renewed prominence. With the successful reintroduction of the modern Konghou, the instrument has infused new vitality into the development of Konghou music. Although its resurgence initially inspired great enthusiasm, many Chinese music scholars and practitioners at the time observed the instrument without a comprehensive understanding of its structure and performance potential. Consequently, few composers created original works specifically for it. The existing Konghou repertoire was largely limited to adaptations of ancient Chinese pieces, such as “Gao Shan Liu Shui” (High Mountains and Flowing Water), “Shi Mian Mai Fu” (Ambush from Ten Sides), “Mei Hua San Nong” (Three Variations on the Plum Blossom), and “Xi Yang Xiao Gu” (Flute and Drum at the Sunset). While these works highlighted the Konghou's unique timbre and diverse playing techniques, they also revealed the instrument's distinct aesthetic charm.

In the early 1980s, Professor Cui Junzhi composed the “Xiangfei Zhu” (The Fragrant Concubine's Bamboo), one of the earliest original solo works for Konghou. Drawing

inspiration from the third movement, *Xiangfei Drips Tears*, of the pipa suite “*Saishang Qu*” (Frontier Ballads), the composer reinterpreted the material in the form of a free-variation composition. The work is characterized by a refined and graceful melodic line that effectively evokes the serene atmosphere of late autumn. Set on the shores of Dongting Lake after rainfall, the “*xiangzhu*” (fragrant bamboo) stands upright and noble under the clear night’s dew, symbolizing purity and resilience. The study therefore encapsulates the refined qualities of bamboo and celebrates its moral virtue (Fan, 2021). In “*Xiangfei Zhu*”, nearly all major Konghou performance techniques are employed, granting the instrument a distinctive musical voice and expressive autonomy. Simultaneously, under the influence of prevailing social and historical conditions, both the adaptation of ancient Chinese repertoire and the creation of original compositions for the Konghou played a decisive role in advancing its artistic development. These efforts not only expanded the instrument’s expressive range but also attracted wider scholarly and public attention, thereby consolidating the Konghou’s position within modern Chinese music culture.

Successful Holding of The First Konghou Art Festival

In 20th-23th May 2013, the First Konghou Art Festival in China was held at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music (*Figure 2*). The event was organized by the Shenyang Conservatory of Music and the Chinese Ethnic Orchestra Society, with co-hosting support from the Conservatory’s Instrument Technology Department and the Konghou Professional Committee of the Chinese Ethnic Orchestra Society. The festival officially opened on the evening of May 20 at the Concert Hall of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Professor Liu Hui, a renowned vocalist and dean of the Conservatory, presided over the ceremony, while Mr. Liu Xijin, an eminent composer, president of the Chinese National Orchestra Society, and director of the organizing committee delivered the opening address (Li, 2013).



Figure 2. Performance scene of the first China Konghou art festival.

The festival officially opened on the evening of 20 May at the Concert Hall of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Professor Liu Hui, a renowned vocalist and Dean of the Conservatory, presided over the ceremony. Mr. Liu Xijin, an eminent composer, President of the Chinese National Orchestra Society, and Director of the Organizing Committee, delivered the opening address. During the event, two of the latest innovations of Professor Zhao Guangyun’s, namely the Xiangyun and Ruyi models of the portable, hand-held, semi-adjustable small Konghou were also unveiled. Although

these smaller instruments are not able to complete modulation like the large, pedal-style Konghou, their portability rendered them a practical and accessible alternative for performers. During the concert, students from the Shenyang Conservatory of Music performed both traditional Chinese works, including “Kangding Qingge” (The Love Song of Kangding) and “Xiao He Tang Shui” (Little River Flows Water), and some other Western-style pieces such as Iguazu. With the combination of Eastern and Western repertoires, the event has therefore drawn many attentions from audiences and critics alike. Following the festival, the modern Konghou entered a mature stage of development, and the concert marked a milestone in its artistic evolution. By overcoming the technical and structural constraints of its ancient form, the contemporary Konghou demonstrated remarkable versatility, capable of performing both traditional Chinese melodies and Western compositions with equal fluency. The success of the First China Konghou Art Festival not only established a refined performance platform for the instrument but also inspired a new generation of composers to create original works for the Konghou. This event thus played a pivotal role in advancing the instrument’s artistic diversity and promoting the sustained development of Konghou music.

Socio-cultural factors

In ancient times, cultural exchange flourished along the Silk Road; today, that spirit continues through the Belt and Road Initiative. With the continuous advancement of socialism with Chinese characteristics, China’s social and cultural development has entered a new stage of integration and prosperity. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the government has attached great importance to fostering cultural exchange between China and the rest of the world. Within this broader context, the evolution of the Konghou has been deeply influenced by the interaction of both Eastern and Western musical traditions. Notably, Wu Lin’s “Kong Gu You Lan” (Orchid in the Empty Valley) concert exemplified the successful collaboration between the Konghou and the Chinese National Orchestra, achieving a harmonious synthesis of timbre and style. Similarly, the “Hong Yun Shu Huai” (Fortune and Emotion) concert held at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music showcased the Konghou’s versatility through its integration with multiple art forms, including vocal music and Western instruments. These performances not only enriched the artistic expression of Konghou music but also reflected the ongoing cultural dialogue between China and the global community.

Integration of Konghou and Chinese ethnic culture

On June 13, 2014, the Kong Gu You Lan-Central Ethnic Orchestra Young Performer Wu Lin Konghou Special Concert (*Figure 3*) was successfully held at the National Centre for the Performing Arts. This event marked a new historical milestone in the development of the modern Konghou, signifying the emergence of a new generation of highly skilled performers, the initial establishment of an organized performer lineup, the creation of repertoire specifically composed for the Konghou, and the ongoing refinement of the instrument’s design and performance techniques. Together, these advancements positioned the Konghou as not only a treasured instrument within traditional Chinese music but also a respected voice in the global music scene (Ma, 2014). The concert featured the young Konghou performer Wu Lin, who collaborated with the Central Ethnic Orchestra, alongside guest performances by the Hongyun

Konghou Orchestra from the Shenyang Conservatory of Music. Rooted in traditional Chinese music culture, the collaboration between the Konghou and various Chinese ethnic instruments demonstrated a harmonious integration of timbre and form, reflecting both cultural continuity and innovation.



Figure 3. Concert of “Konggu Youlan” (Orchid in a Secluded Valley) by Wu Lin, a young harp player of the Central National Orchestra.
Source: Cosmopolitan (2022).

Among the major works performed were “Qingming Shang He Tu” (Along the River During the Qingming Festival) and “Luoshen” (The Goddess of the Luo River), which featured collaborations between the Konghou and the xiao (a traditional Chinese end-blown flute). The concert also included “Er Quan Ying Yue” (The Moon Reflected on the Second Spring), performed on the erhu, further showcasing the expressive potential of Chinese traditional instruments. Several contemporary composers contributed Chinese-style Konghou concertos, including “Ji Yue Tian” (The Letian Anthology), “Kong Gu You Lan” (Orchid in a Secluded Valley), and “Konghou Yin·Ri Yue Guang Hua” (Ode to the Konghou: Radiance of the Sun and Moon). These works played a significant role in promoting the preservation and innovation of China’s traditional music culture.

In addition, the duet “Dian Gui Ji” (Tales of Summoned Ghosts), performed by Konghou and harp, drew widespread attention for its successful fusion of Chinese and Western musical elements, symbolizing a new phase in the internationalization of Konghou music. Throughout the concert, diverse Konghou performance techniques, including glissando, vibrato, tremolo, overtone, and scraping were demonstrated extensively. These techniques not only echoed those found in traditional Chinese ethnic instruments but also revealed the instrument’s expressive versatility and tonal richness. The success of this concert reinforced the Konghou’s artistic maturity, demonstrating its capability to perform complex and large-scale musical works. The evolution of Konghou music has thus transcended its earlier focus on folk adaptations, emerging as a sophisticated art form characterized by technical innovation, aesthetic depth, and cultural significance.

Konghou and cultural exchange between China and foreign countries

On May 24, 2014, as part of the 5th Sino-Foreign Cultural Exchange Exhibition Series at the Shenyang Conservatory of Music, the Hongyun Shuhuai Konghou Special Concert was held at the Conservatory's Concert Hall (*Figure 4*). With the title of "Hongyun Expressing Thoughts on Konghou", the concert also served as a comprehensive thirty-year review of Konghou reform led by the Instrument Technology Department of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music. The event celebrated their past achievements, shared reform experiences, and envisioned the future development of the Konghou, marking an unprecedented period of prosperity for the Konghou profession (Wang, 2014). The concert opened with Hongyun Shuhuai, composed by Professor Xu Zhanhai with lyrics by Professor Zhao Guangyun. Performed jointly by the Hongyun Konghou Orchestra and the Vocal Department of the Shenyang Conservatory of Music, the piece demonstrated a refined fusion of ethnic instrumental music and Western vocal traditions, symbolizing a harmonious dialogue between cultures.



Figure 4. "Hongyun Expressing Emotions", the Konghou special concert performance scene, the 5th Shenyang international music and culture exchange exhibition.

As early as the previous century, composer Liu Xijin had created the Robe Xiu Roland Suite, inspired by Buddhist musical elements, and several movements from this suite were performed in grand ensemble form during the concert. Young composer Fei Cheng contributed adaptations of works such as "Yang Guang" (Sunlight), "Ye Huan" (Night Illusion), and "Qiu Ci" (Autumn Poem), while Liu Hui and Wang Yunfei presented their original compositions, including "He Ming" (Cranes' Call) and "Ling Zhi Jing" (Spiritual Realm), performed by Konghou ensembles. These performances showcased the technical sophistication and expressive versatility of the Konghou. In "Konghou Ji Jin" as if Konghou Collection, composer Fei Cheng skilfully integrated classical works from both China and abroad, incorporating Western instruments such as the violin and flute. This cross-cultural collaboration created a dynamic and vibrant musical atmosphere, culminating in the finale "Tian Yao Zhong Hua" (Heavenly Blessings upon China), a powerful joint performance between Konghou and vocal ensemble that brought the concert to its emotional peak. The program featured numerous new compositions and adaptations, blending narrative depth and emotional expressiveness while uniting ancient charm with contemporary aesthetics. Through a variety of performance forms, including solo, chamber, and full ensemble pieces, the concert highlighted the Konghou's technical innovation and artistic adaptability. Many

of the featured works were composed with specific pedagogical and artistic purposes, contributing to the development of new sound systems and performance techniques for the Konghou (He, 2014). Collectively, these achievements signified a new era of prosperity and artistic maturity for Konghou music.

Socio economic factors

With the continuous advancement of China's technological capabilities and the improvement of people's quality of life, the demand for spiritual culture has also grown. As a result, Konghou and its music have experienced a period of more prosperous and diversified development. Professor Zhao Guangyun has made significant contributions to the internationalization of Konghou as a musical instrument, securing multiple patents for its portability. These efforts laid a crucial foundation for Konghou's remarkable performance at the 13th World Harp Congress. At the same time, with the ongoing development of education in China and the improvement in student quality, a new generation of talented individuals has emerged—students who are not only capable of performing but also creating original works. Supported by robust socio-economic factors, Konghou music has continued to thrive and evolve.

Development of Konghou music under the guarantee of technological development level

From July 7 to 13, 2017, Professor Zhao Guangyun and the Hongyun Konghou Orchestra were invited to Hong Kong to participate in the 13th World Harp Congress (Figure 5). Although the Konghou and the harp share common historical origins, the Konghou has undergone centuries of transformation, developing its own distinct musical identity and cultural expression. At a congress deeply rooted in Western musical traditions, the presence of a Konghou ensemble imbued with Eastern charm undoubtedly captivated the attention of audiences worldwide. During the congress, the Hongyun Konghou Orchestra delivered a remarkable performance featuring classical Konghou works that embodied the rich ethnic and cultural characteristics of Chinese music. In addition, the ensemble presented a Western-style harp performance arranged by young composer Fei Cheng, which skillfully incorporated folk melodies from eleven different countries. This innovative fusion performance resonated deeply with both domestic and international audiences, earning enthusiastic acclaim from music professionals and enthusiasts alike. In recognition of Professor Zhao Guangyun's outstanding contributions to Konghou research, innovation, and the formal establishment of Konghou studies as an academic discipline, the organizing committee of the World Harp Congress presented him with the Gratitude Award. Upon receiving the honor, Professor Zhao expressed his pride, stating, "This is the glory of the Chinese people." This international recognition reflects not only the growing global appreciation for Konghou music but also the broader socio-economic and technological progress that has supported its modern revival. Through such milestones, the Konghou has successfully achieved international prominence, affirming its place as a vital bridge between Eastern and Western musical cultures.



Figure 5. Live performance of Hongyun Konghou Orchestra at the 13th World Harp Congress.

Development of Konghou music driven by high quality talents

On May 15, 2023, He Xie, a 2020 master's student in the Department of Folk Music at Shenyang Conservatory of Music, presented a Konghou concert titled *Ruo Ru · Chu Jian* (《若如·初见》 As If at First Sight) at the Small Theater of the Liaoning Grand Theater (Figure 6). Drawing upon his dual background in composition and Konghou performance during his undergraduate studies, He Xie established a strong artistic foundation for this event. The concert featured a series of captivating works, including “Yi Ni Wu Bu” (Following Your Dance Steps) for four Konghou instruments; “Shui Yun Qiu Lang” (Water, Clouds, and Autumn Waves) and “Wei Liang Feng Yu Ka Fei” (The Gentle Cool Wind and Coffee) for a fully converted Konghou; “You Meng” (Wandering Dream) for two Konghou instruments; and the “Konghou Concerto Na Lan Ci” (Poems of Nalan), first and second movements. Each performance demonstrated both the expressive versatility of the modern Konghou and the performer's refined technical mastery. The success of this concert underscores the growing importance of cultivating high-caliber performers in advancing the development of Konghou music. Supported by a stable socio-economic environment and driven by the artistic innovation of emerging talents, Konghou music continues to flourish and broaden its cultural influence in contemporary China.



Figure 6. Promotion poster for the concert of "Ruo Ru-Chu Jian".

The requirements of social development for the prosperity of Konghou music

With the continuous development of society, people are increasingly seeking the spiritual enjoyment offered by new musical instruments and innovative works. Driven by the dual progress of society and music, Konghou not only occupies a significant position in the music industry but also plays a unique social role. As a result, the advancement of society has set new requirements for the development and flourishing of Konghou and its music.

Specialization of Konghou education

Since Shenyang Conservatory of Music admitted independent students majoring in Konghou (formerly known as Konghou and Harp) in 1999, the Department of Chinese Music at the Central Conservatory of Music established the Konghou major in 2004, followed by the China Conservatory of Music in 2010 (which had been planned since 1985), and Sichuan Conservatory of Music, which planned to establish a Konghou sub-major in 2014 (He, 2014). In recent years, many comprehensive universities have also introduced Konghou majors, signalling growing attention to Konghou education. However, despite these advancements, Konghou remains less popular compared to other musical instruments. Therefore, there is a pressing need to vigorously promote and develop Konghou culture. This includes organizing social activities related to Konghou, hosting both professional and amateur competitions, and increasing the visibility of Konghou music. Such efforts will help expand its audience and facilitate the professional development of Konghou education. Additionally, Konghou education depends heavily on the support of Konghou music, requiring a steady influx of composers, performers, and music enthusiasts to create new works for the instrument.

Diversification of Konghou music

Currently, most of Konghou's music consists of adaptations of folk songs, transcriptions from other instruments, and original works. The genres mainly include folk songs, music pieces, and concertos, while the performance forms are typically solo,

ensemble, or group performances. Although Konghou music has gradually diversified, it still falls short of meeting societal needs. With the growing emphasis on the integration of Chinese and Western music in our country, the quality of Konghou music must be further improved. For modern Konghou to engage in equal dialogue with the world's ethnic harps, it is essential to continuously enhance the instrument's performance, expand the international scope of its repertoire, and strengthen the national flavor of its sound. Additionally, exploring more genres, musical forms, performance techniques, and potential instrument combinations is crucial (He, 2014). Since the revival of modern Konghou, there has been a shift from initial curiosity to a genuine appreciation for the instrument. This shift confirms that the development of Konghou and its music is an inevitable trend and signals that more individuals will contribute to the growth of the Konghou field. The growth of Konghou and its music is intrinsically linked, and the professionalization of Konghou education requires strong support from Konghou music. Similarly, the diversification of Konghou music depends on robust promotion through professional education. With the continuous deepening of innovative practices and the formation of joint forces among all sectors of society, the art of pottery can break through the shackles of development, rejuvenate and invigorate in modern society, continue to promote the inheritance of excellent traditional Chinese culture, and contribute to the diversity of world cultures (Wei, 2025).

Conclusion

After thousands of years of historical accumulation, Konghou has reemerged on the global stage with a renewed sense of purpose. It not only preserves the characteristics and advantages of the ancient Konghou, but also incorporates playing techniques from other instruments. With the maturation of the Konghou instrument and the refinement of its performance techniques, the form and content of Konghou music have evolved in a more diversified direction. From a sociological perspective, the social and historical context has laid the groundwork for the development of Konghou music, while social and cultural factors have played a positive role in its promotion, and socio-economic factors have provided critical support for its growth. Although Konghou music has reached a certain scale, its future lies in further diversification and internationalization. I am confident that more people will eventually witness the expansive journey of Konghou and its music. With the development of the times, modern chopsticks keep pace with the times. We can see the figure of chopsticks in many large-scale parties, which gradually gives the public a certain understanding and knowledge of modern chopsticks (Tong, 2021).

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Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest involving with any parties in this study.

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