

Cultural Inheritance and Technical Innovation of Mongolian Plucked Instruments from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of the Quintet "Daru Laga under the Blue Sky"

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Abstract

Contemporary Mongolian instrumental compositions exhibit a developmental trend characterized by the integration of traditional cultural heritage with modern compositional techniques. Plucked ensemble music, as a vital vehicle for ethnic chamber music, plays a pivotal role in the creative transformation and innovative evolution of traditional folk music. "Under the Blue Sky: Darulagha" is a representative original Mongolian-themed plucked quintet featuring a unique five-part instrumentation comprising liuqin, three pipas, and zhongruan, seamlessly blending Ordos Mongolian folk culture, traditional musical elements, and contemporary compositional approaches. This study transcends conventional technical analyses by examining three core dimensions: innovations in modern compositional techniques, systematic interpretation of cultural significance, and refined multi-part performance execution. It systematically examines the work's tripartite structure, innovations in ethnic modes, and the application logic of aleatory music techniques, while uncovering its embedded Mongolian wedding customs and nomadic spiritual essence. Drawing on practical ensemble performance experience, the study establishes core performance methodologies for technical control, timbral integration, and multi-part musical dialogue. This research enriches the theoretical framework of Mongolian plucked chamber music, providing robust theoretical and practical foundations for in-depth research and global dissemination of similar ethnic instrumental works, thereby facilitating the preservation and innovative development of ethnic music within the international artistic landscape.

Keywords: Creative techniques; cultural heritage; perspective of intangible cultural heritage; plucked instrument quintet; "Under the Blue Sky: DaRuLaGa"

1. Introduction

With the professionalization, modernization, and internationalization of China's ethnic chamber music, instrumental works rooted in regional ethnic cultures and folk traditions have become the core driving force behind the innovative development of traditional folk music. Yu Ping & Wang Guanghui (2022) noted in their paper "Analysis of Combinations 'and the Disciplinary Construction of Chinese Folk Dance (Part II)" that Mongolian music holds a significant position within China's ethnic minority music system due to its unique modal characteristics, rhythmic patterns, and profound cultural heritage. In recent years, numerous composers have endeavored to integrate traditional Mongolian musical elements with Western

modern compositional techniques, breaking away from the conventional approach of merely replicating melodies. This has resulted in a substantial body of instrumental works that combine ethnic depth with contemporary artistic qualities, effectively promoting the living inheritance and iterative innovation of Mongolian traditional music.

The plucked string quintet "Under the Blue Sky: Darulaga," composed in 2017 by Li Channing—a doctoral graduate in composition from the Central Conservatory of Music and faculty member at Inner Mongolia Arts University—won an award at the Central Conservatory's National Traditional Instrumental Music Competition that same year. Regularly performed and promoted by professional ethnic orchestras, this work stands as an innovative classic of contemporary Mongolian-themed plucked chamber music. Departing from conventional ensembles like pipa or ruan quartets, it features a unique five-part vocalization system comprising a high-pitched liuqin, three mid-range pipas, and a low-mid-range zhongruan, achieving comprehensive coverage across the high-, middle-, and low-frequency ranges of Mongolian plucked instruments. This creates rich sonic layers, filling a critical gap in the repertoire of Mongolian-themed plucked quintets within Chinese chamber music.

In terms of creative philosophy, the work abandons the traditional Mongolian instrumental music's grand narrative model centered on grassland landscapes and nomadic life. It takes the Ordos Mongolian wedding headdress "Darulaga" as its core cultural symbol, integrating folk aesthetics, humanistic emotional depth, and modern musical composition. The work preserves traditional musical elements such as the Mongolian pentatonic Yutiao mode, Surden rhythm, and long melodic phrases, while incorporating innovative techniques like the modern ternary form structure, polyphonic textures, and aleatory music composition, achieving a harmonious balance between preserving traditional cultural heritage and advancing contemporary artistic innovation.

Current academic research on this work primarily focuses on fundamental performance techniques and superficial artistic characteristics, adopting relatively narrow perspectives that lack in-depth exploration of the underlying logic of modern compositional techniques, the metaphorical connotations of cultural symbols, and collaborative performance strategies for polyphonic ensembles. The work's academic and social dissemination value in the innovation and preservation of ethnic music remains inadequately elucidated. Building upon master's-level research findings, this paper extends the study by focusing on compositional techniques, cultural context, and ensemble performance practice—to transcend the limitations of singular technical analysis. The study connects cultural background with musical analysis and performance practice. This work not only deepens existing scholarship but also provides references for the analysis and performance of similar works for contemporary Mongolian plucked-string chamber music composition, performance, and international dissemination.

2. The Origins of the Work's Creation and Its Cultural Connotation System

2.1 Creative Background and the Composer's Creative Philosophy

Composer Li Channing possesses both a solid foundation in Western composition techniques and a profound accumulation of traditional Chinese folk music creation. He has long dedicated himself to innovative research on integrating China's traditional art culture, regional folk customs, and modern symphonic composition techniques. In recent years, his creative focus has centered on the innovative preservation of Mongolian grassland music culture, aiming to revitalize the contemporary artistic vitality of traditional grassland music through modern, standardized compositional language.

The creative inspiration for "Under the Blue Sky: Daruga" stemmed from the composer's field research on traditional Mongolian wedding customs in Ordos. During the investigation, the



intricate craftsmanship, luxurious materials, and profound emotional significance of the Daruga—specific ceremonial headdress for Mongolian brides in Ordos—deeply moved the composer artistically. Departing from conventional grassland cultural themes, this work employs folk handicraft accessories as its focal point, achieving a musical transformation of material folk culture. Zhao, Y. (2024). A study on the formation logic of Ordos Mongolian women's traditional costume characteristics based on affair theory. The dissertation notes that the Daruga is the most elaborate and representative ceremonial headdress in Ordos Mongolian traditional attire, comprising an band, rear ornament, side pendants, tassels, and other components inlaid with precious materials such as red coral, agate, turquoise, and silver. Its exquisite craftsmanship and symmetrical aesthetic design exemplify the exceptional mastery of traditional Mongolian folk handicrafts.

In Ordos 'traditional folklore, the Darulaga is not merely a decorative item for wedding ceremonies but also the most important dowry for Mongolian women during marriage. In the ancient era when grassland transportation was isolated, women who married far from home found it difficult to return; thus, the exquisite head ornaments became a spiritual anchor for their longing for their homeland and concern for their loved ones, endowing these seemingly cold handicrafts with warm humanistic sentiment. The composer integrated the crisp clinking sounds of the ornaments' beads and jade, the graceful dance movements of grassland maidens, and the vast grassland landscapes into his musical composition, blending folk aesthetics, humanistic emotions, and natural scenery. This approach transcended the traditional Mongolian instrumental music's singular expression of grandeur and heroism, creating a nuanced, layered artistic expression that harmonizes scenery, objects, and emotion.

2.2 A Hierarchical Cultural Content System for the Work

"Under the Blue Sky: Darraga" is not merely a simple reproduction of traditional Mongolian musical melodies, but rather a multifaceted ethnic chamber music piece that integrates material folk culture, nomadic spiritual traditions, and humanistic emotional dimensions. Its cultural content exhibits a clear three-tiered structure, the very foundation of the work's distinctive artistic charm.

The first layer embodies the material and folk cultural essence. Utilizing musical language as its medium, the work transforms the visual and dynamic beauty of the Dara Laga headdress—a Mongolian intangible cultural heritage craft—into an auditory art form. The piece's punctual textures, crystalline overtones, and layered rhythms vividly recreate the crisp clinking of beads and jade within the headdress and the swaying motion of its tassels in dance poses. This achieves a visual musical representation of Mongolian costume and craft culture, leveraging artistic works as a medium to expand the dissemination channels for Ordos' lesser-known folk accessory traditions and promote the preservation and popularization of ethnic traditional craftsmanship.

The second layer embodies the cultural essence of grassland nomadism. The work fully inherits the core aesthetic characteristics of Mongolian nomadic music, using the traditional pentatonic Yudiao mode as its tonal framework while incorporating distinctive Mongolian musical elements such as the Surden rhythm and cohesive long-form melodic phrases. Through interwoven high and low vocal parts and dynamic combinations of rhythmic density, it evokes the vast, ethereal, and profound natural landscape of the grasslands, embodying the traditional nomadic philosophy of harmony between humans and nature, and reflecting the musical character of Mongolian grassland culture.

The third layer embodies the cultural connotation of humanistic emotions. The work uses traditional Mongolian wedding scenes as an emotional vehicle to construct a dual emotional dimension. On one hand, it vividly portrays the lively scenes of grassland maidens celebrating their weddings with singing and dancing, creating a festive and enthusiastic folk atmosphere; on the other hand, it subtly conveys the tender and profound longing of Mongolian women who marry far

from home and miss their homeland. This dual emotional expression transcends the traditional Mongolian music's singular aesthetic focus on rugged grandeur, endowing the work with sincere and gentle humanistic warmth.

3. In-depth Analysis of Modern Creative Techniques in Artistic Works

Yuan Yuan (2024). In her essay titled "Wang Jianmin's Erhu Rhapsody: Telling China's Stories and Narrating Ethnic Chapters," she discusses the innovative development of contemporary ethnic instrumental music, emphasizing that its core lies in the organic integration of traditional ethnic musical genes with Western modern compositional techniques, rather than superficial melodic patchwork or element accumulation. "Under the Blue Sky: Daraga" builds upon the traditional musical characteristics of the Mongolian people, establishing a modern compositional framework that combines a "traditional cultural core with a modern structural framework." This paper employs musical form analysis to conduct an in-depth examination of the work's tripartite structure, the transformation of ethnic modes, the polyphonic texture composition, and the innovative application of aleatory music techniques, thereby clarifying its artistic innovation value in the field of ethnic chamber music composition.

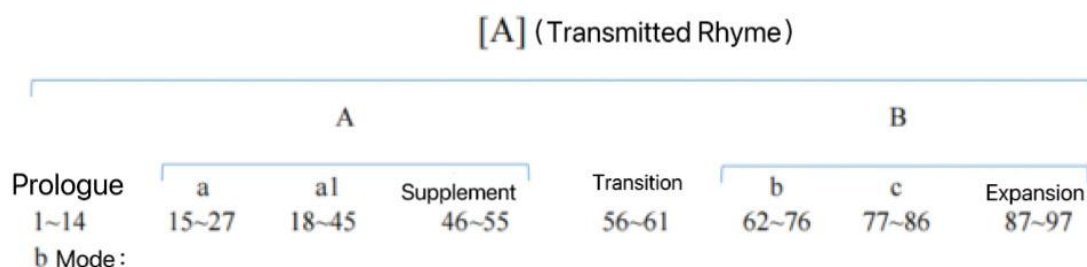
3.1 Innovative Application of the Parallel Three-Part Structure

The work employs a standard ternary parallel form structure, divided into three functional sections: Section A (introduction), Section B (lyricism), and Section C (expression). Each section is clearly defined and logically coherent, breaking away from the fragmented and improvisational patterns characteristic of traditional folk music. Grounded in the unified pentatonic Yu mode, the composition creates rich musical contrasts through variations in rhythm, tempo, harmony, and texture, establishing a complete musical progression of "introduction–development–climax–conclusion."

Section A (measures 1–97) serves as the thematic exposition, centered on the B minor mode. The section comprises an introduction, two parallel musical phrases, and transitional phrases, featuring a expansive and lingering rhythm dominated by a punctual texture. Grounded in the traditional Mongolian Surden rhythmic motif, it conveys a rich grassland folk character and introduces the core musical theme for the first time. In its phrase structure, the section draws inspiration from the fluid, continuous phrasing of Mongolian long songs, minimizing the rigid structural divisions characteristic of Western traditional music, thereby allowing the music to develop naturally and align with the free-spirited aesthetic of grassland music.

Figure 1

Structural diagram of the plucked instrument quintet "Daru Laga Under the Blue Sky" [Part A]



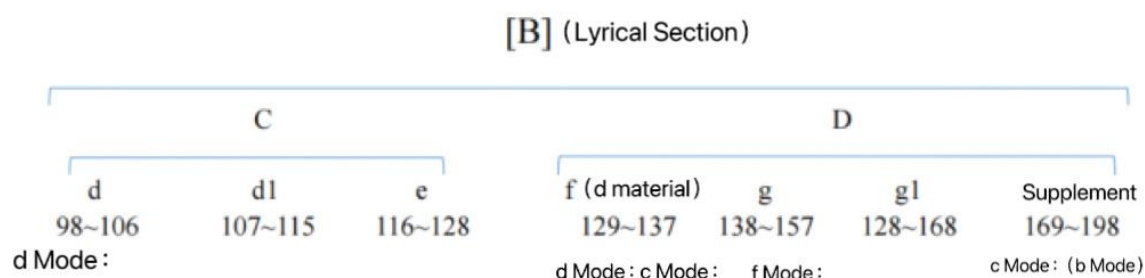
Note. Performed by Author (2026).



Section B (measures 98–198) constitutes a contrasting lyrical development section, shifting to the D minor key. Compared to Section A, this section features a significantly faster tempo and more complex harmonic functions, replacing the punctuated melodic texture of Section A with a linear melodic structure. Through polyphonic octave layering and harmonic filling techniques, it creates a warm and delicate lyrical atmosphere. The section employs a triadic contrast structure, achieving progressive emotional development through repeated modulations and return to the original key, resulting in richly layered musical expression that forms a striking artistic contrast with the simple, pure grassland character of Section A.

Figure 2

Structural diagram of the plucked instrument quintet "Daru Laga Under the Blue Sky" [Part B]

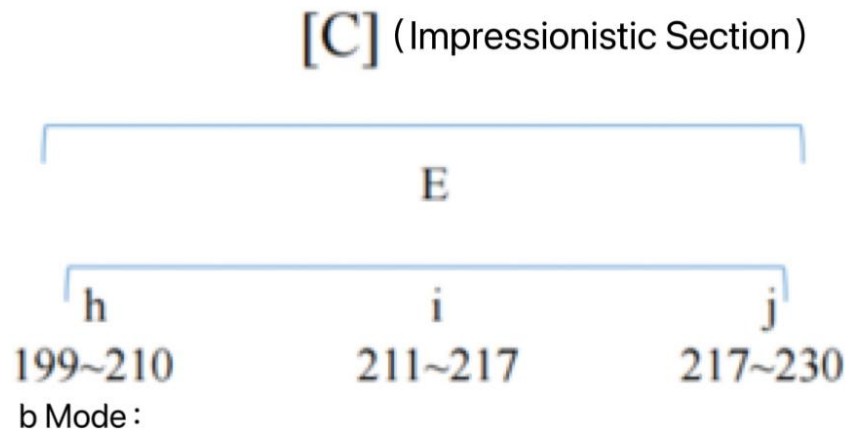


Note. Performed by Author (2026).

Section C (measures 199–230) serves as a free-flowing concluding passage, returning to the core B minor mode and establishing tonal coherence throughout the piece, thereby enhancing its overall musical unity. This section breaks away from traditional compositional constraints of fixed measures and rhythms by innovatively incorporating modern aleatory music techniques, allowing free variations in pitch and dynamics across all voices. Through random collisions of high-pitched clusters and dynamic changes in volume from distant to close, it evokes the vastness of a wind-blown grassland, elevating the artistic conception through expansive musical language and combining traditional Mongolian musical materials with aleatory techniques.

Figure 3

Structural diagram of the plucked instrument quintet "Daru Laga Under the Blue Sky" [Part C]



Note. Performed by Author (2026).

3.2 The Modern Transformation of Ethnic Modes and Rhythms

Modes and rhythms serve as the core symbolic carriers of ethnic music. Traditional Mongolian instrumental works predominantly employ a single fixed mode, featuring simple harmonic structures and monotonous rhythmic variations, resulting in limited artistic expressiveness. "Under the Blue Sky: Darulaga" adopts the most representative pentatonic Yudal mode of the Mongolian tradition as its core compositional framework, adapting traditional Mongolian modal materials within a contemporary compositional framework while preserving the essence of traditional modes.

Figure 4 explained in terms of modal design, the work transcends the traditional limitation of single-mode composition in grassland music. Building upon the B-Dur mode, it achieves seamless transitions between multiple modes—including D-Dur, C-Dur, and F-Dur—through skillful modulation and transposition techniques. This results in rich tonal layers and musical tension, creating greater tonal contrast. Moreover, all modal variations are grounded in the traditional Mongolian pentatonic scale system, consistently preserving the distinctive characteristics of ethnic music and achieving an organic integration of traditional charm with contemporary richness.

Figure 4

Measures 15–21 of the Plucked Instrument Quintet "Daru Laga Under the Blue Sky" Performed by Li Chaning

Note. Photograph provided by Mr. Li Chaning and reproduced with permission.

In terms of rhythmic design, the work inherits the classic rhythmic motif of the Mongolian Surden folk rhythm—"longer beginning, shorter end"—which permeates the entire piece, preserving the unique rhythmic beauty of grassland folk music. It also incorporates the characteristic 6/8 compound time signature of modern chamber music, creating alternating variations in rhythmic density and tempo. The layered structure—comprising the slow, punctual rhythm in Section A, the smooth, linear rhythm in Section B, and the free, improvisational rhythm in Section C.expands the rhythmic language of traditional Mongolian instrumental music of traditional ethnic music, endowing the work with modern rhythmic flexibility and achieving an innovative development of traditional ethnic rhythmic language.

3.3 Innovative Integration of Polyphonic Textures with Chance Music Techniques

Han, J. (2023). Modern French music in dialogue with Mongolian folk songs: A performance study of F. Angelès's China Theme Fantasy—The Beautiful Grassland, My Home (Master's thesis, Taiyuan Normal University).The dissertation highlights that the single linear melodic texture represents a fundamental structural limitation in traditional Mongolian instrumental composition, whereas modern ethnic chamber music centers on multidimensional and three-dimensional textures.The work employs a unique five-part ensemble configuration featuring the liuqin, three pipas, and zhongruan,forming a layered polyphonic texture.

Figure 5 explained in terms of texture arrangement, the high-pitched liuqin establishes the core melodic line with its bright and transparent tone, guiding the overall musical direction; the three medium-pitched pipas layeratively execute the thematic melody and provide harmonic

embellishment, enriching the musical mid-range auditory layers; the low-pitched zhongruan delivers stable bass support, solidifying the overall harmonic framework. Each vocal part is clearly defined yet harmoniously integrated, creating a three-dimensional auditory effect characterized by "clear high notes, full mid-range tones, and profound low bass." Building on this foundation, the work innovatively employs polyphonic techniques such as supporting counterpoint, harmonic superposition, and rhythmic displacement and overcoming the structural monotony inherent in traditional grassland music's single-melodic composition.

Figure 5

Measures 98–104 [B] of the Plucked Instrument Quintet "Daru Lhaga Under the Blue Sky" Performed by Li Chaning

Note. Photograph provided by Mr. Li Chaning and reproduced with permission.

Figure 6 explained the innovative application of C-section aleatory musical techniques stands as the most prominent feature of this modern composition and represents a pioneering attempt in Mongolian-themed plucked instrument works. Unlike traditional folk music, which adheres to fixed scores and performance conventions, the aleatory passages break free from rigid rhythms and standardized notes, allowing performers to freely adjust dynamics and tempo according to the overall musical atmosphere. The random interplay of polyphonic sounds captures the natural, spontaneous beauty of grassland breezes. This avant-garde compositional approach perfectly embodies the vast and evocative imagery of the grasslands, achieving a cross-disciplinary fusion of traditional folk themes with Western modern compositional techniques.

Figure 6

Measures 217–210 [B] of the Plucked Instrument Quintet "Daru Lhaga Under the Blue Sky"
 Performed by Li Chaning

The musical score is for a quintet of plucked instruments. The first system (measures 217-210) shows the LIU QIN playing a melodic line starting on a high note, while the PIPAs play a rhythmic accompaniment. The ZHONG RUAN is silent. The second system (measures 211-214) shows a more complex texture with all instruments playing. The PIPAs have a prominent role, with PIPA 1 and 2 playing a fast, repetitive pattern. The LIU QIN and ZHONG RUAN provide harmonic support.

Note. Photograph provided by Mr. Li Chaning and reproduced with permission.

4. Practical Application of Multi-Part Collaborative Performance and Refined Technical Interpretation

The artistic value of compositional techniques is ultimately realized through precise performance interpretation. The unique five-part structure and diverse modern compositional techniques of "Under the Blue Sky, Da Rula Ga" impose exceptionally high demands on performers' technical mastery, timbral integration, and multi-part coordination abilities. Unlike the personalized expression of solo performances, instrumental ensemble music embodies the principle of "harmony in diversity" —preserving each instrument's distinctive timbre while achieving cohesive ensemble sound. Drawing on the work's compositional logic and extensive stage rehearsals and performance experience, this article establishes a refined multi-part performance framework across three dimensions: layered control of right-hand core techniques, left-hand timbral refinement, and collaborative ensemble dialogue.

4.1 Hierarchical Control and Timbre Adaptation of Right Hand Core Techniques

The right-hand playing techniques in the piece primarily include plucking, finger rolling, sweeping, and hybrid sweeping—corresponding respectively to the piece's punctual texture, linear melody, and climactic emotional passages. The layered and differentiated application of these techniques creates a rich and diverse auditory landscape, precisely aligning with the work's emotional fluctuations and artistic conception.

The plucking and lifting technique serves as the core technique in presenting the theme of Section A, playing a central role in recreating the folk aesthetic ambiance. The punctate sounds produced by these techniques mimic the crisp texture of colliding pearls or jade in Daru head ornaments, which is crucial for shaping the work's folk character. In ensemble performances, differentiated control across sections is essential: The first pipa carries the core melodic theme, executed with light string contact and force applied at the front edge of its soundboard, resulting in a clear, transparent tone that aligns with the dynamic beauty of the swaying ornaments; the second and third pipas, along with the zhongruan accompaniment section, uniformly employ the double-lifting technique, producing balanced, soft tones that minimize volume disparities between sections and achieve seamless integration of multiple sound sources. All sections adhere to a 6/8 time signature, highlighting the distinctive rhythmic charm of Mongolian folk music and highlighting the traditional rhythmic character of the work in Section A.

The rolling finger technique serves as the core foundation for expressing the linear melody in Section B, achieving the artistic breakthrough of "connecting points into lines" in plucked instruments. The lyrical melody of Section B is constructed through the overlapping rolling finger techniques of the liuqin and pipa, creating a prolonged and soft linear sonic texture. During performance, it is essential to maintain uniform rolling finger density and consistent dynamics, avoiding sudden volume changes and noise interference. The high-pitched liuqin rolling fingers produce clear and sustained tones that support the main melody, while the pipa rolling fingers deliver warm, restrained tones that serve as a tonal foundation. Their octave superposition yields a rich, mellow auditory effect, expressing the lyrical character of the passage. The alternating use of plucking and rolling finger techniques organically combines punctual dynamism with linear continuity, enriching the dynamic layers of musical expression.

The sweeping strumming and mixed sweeping strumming techniques are primarily employed in the allegretto climactic sections of the piece to depict the vibrant and festive atmosphere of a grassland wedding filled with singing and dancing, representing the most technically demanding segment for ensemble performance. Full-part sweeping strumming requires consistent technical standards: expanding the string contact area, applying focused and steady force to achieve a rich yet clear tone while avoiding loose or insubstantial timbre. For dynamic markings on the score, the actual performance involves moderately reducing volume, adjusting extremely strong or strong dynamics to medium-strong or medium-weak levels—thus preserving the musical tension of the climactic sections while preventing audio clutter caused by overlapping strong passages across multiple voices. Mixed sweeping strumming demands precise control of rhythmic accents; the high-pitched liuqin employs forceful and penetrating sweeping strumming, while the pipa part enhances musical dynamism through rhythmic accents. The combination of these two techniques creates a multi-layered, enthusiastic folk celebration scene.

4.2 Artistic Interpretation of Left-Hand Timbre Refinement Techniques

The left-hand fingering technique is central to enhancing the timbre and emotional depth of plucked instruments, and it is also key to shaping the distinctive character of Mongolian music. The composition primarily employs two left-hand techniques—strumming and overtones—which respectively serve to enrich the emotional expression in lyrical passages and elevate the artistic conception in the concluding sections, aligning seamlessly with the work's overall emotional structure and compositional logic.



The vibrato technique permeates the lyrical long notes in Section B, serving as the core technique for creating the warm and delicate character of Mongolian grassland music. Given the distinct melodic roles of each voice part, vibrato control requires differentiated treatment: the accompaniment employs subtle, light vibrato with gentle string vibration, softly enhancing the tone of long notes without overshadowing the primary melody; the core melody of the first pipa utilizes extensive vibrato to enrich harmonic layers and amplify the melody's lyrical depth and emotional impact. During ensemble performance, all performers must maintain consistent vibrato frequency and amplitude, precisely coordinating with right-hand finger rolling and string rolling techniques to avoid technical misalignment or rhythmic discordance, ensuring harmonious integration of multi-voice long notes and endowing the grassland music with its distinctive, lingering charm.

The overtone technique serves as the core performance vehicle for the C-section, an accidental musical passage, playing a pivotal role in elevating the work's artistic conception. The concluding section employs an interplay of three-pitch overtones and arpeggio textures from the pipa to evoke the ethereal ambiance of a star-studded night sky over the grasslands and the distant whisper of wind, demanding exceptional performance precision. During execution, the left hand must precisely locate the overtone points to ensure pure, transparent tones free from interference; upon plucking the strings, the right hand should swiftly lift the fingers to preserve ample overtone resonance. The remaining voices provide gentle accompaniment, accentuating the ethereal and lingering timbre of the overtones. Through a harmonious blend of solid and ethereal sound effects, the performance achieves a seamless emotional transition from vibrant folk scenes to the expansive poetic imagery of the grasslands, faithfully capturing the composer's original intent of expressive creation.

4.3 Multi-partite Fusion Coordination and Musical Dialogue Mechanism

The core artistic value of the quintet plucked instrument lies in the symbiotic collaboration among multiple vocal lines. The work's three-dimensional polyphonic texture demands performers to transcend the isolated soloistic mindset, cultivating an integrated auditory perception and a sense of collaborative dialogue—a key innovative aspect that distinguishes this study from traditional single-technique analyses.

First, the balanced integration of tonal layers. The Liuqin, pipa, and zhongruan each possess distinct tonal characteristics: the Liuqin is bright and clear, the pipa is warm and full-bodied, while the zhongruan is deep and substantial. During ensemble performance, the tonal balance must be dynamically adjusted according to the section's function: in Section A (the folk scene segment), the distinctive timbres of each instrument are emphasized to enrich auditory depth; in Section B (the lyrical segment), instrumental tonal differences are minimized, with unified playing techniques and string-playing logic achieved for optimal tonal harmony; in Section C (the expressive segment), the contrast between ethereal high notes and resonant low tones is highlighted to create a vast, three-dimensional musical space.

Second, the dynamic dialogue and seamless transitions between vocal parts. The composition extensively employs compositional techniques such as thematic continuation, mutual resonance, and layering, demanding exceptional real-time interaction and seamless coordination from performers. In the thematic transition sections, immediately after the conclusion of the first pipa melody, the liuqin part precisely carries forward the melodic line with unified breathing and synchronized rhythm, achieving seamless part transitions and a smooth musical progression. Within the free-rhythmic aleatory passages, performers dynamically adjust dynamics and sound density in response to the overall musical atmosphere, employing synchronized breathing and eye contact to create a layered, lingering musical effect that maintains rigorous musical logic and overall coherence.

Third, the unified expression of overall rhythm and emotion. Ensemble performance requires all performers to share a unified understanding of the work's cultural essence and emotional trajectory, maintaining consistent breathing rhythm and emotional intensity. In celebratory and vibrant passages, each voice part exhibits tight rhythms and rich emotional depth, evoking a lively folk atmosphere; in gentle and lyrical sections, the performance is relaxed and unhurried, highlighting delicate humanistic sentiments; in the expressive concluding passages, the performance is ethereal and lingering, achieving a perfect fusion of technical skill and artistic conception. Through meticulous collaborative performance by all members, the work's artistic narrative—encompassing its folk storytelling, emotional expression, and artistic elevation—is fully realized.

5. The Artistic Value and Social Communication Significance of the Work

5.1 Innovative Academic and Artistic Value

The plucked quintet *Under the Blue Sky: Daru Laga* demonstrates several distinctive features in the creation and performance of contemporary Mongolian chamber music. In terms of instrumentation, the work adopts a five-part ensemble consisting of liuqin, three pipas, and zhongruan. Compared with more common plucked ensemble settings, this combination expands the range and timbral contrast of the ensemble and creates a clearer division between melodic, harmonic, and bass functions.

In terms of compositional technique, the work combines Mongolian musical materials with contemporary compositional methods. Traditional elements such as pentatonic modal writing, folk rhythmic patterns, and long melodic lines are retained, while modern structural organization, polyphonic texture, and aleatory passages are also incorporated into the composition. These techniques increase the textural variation and structural flexibility of the work while maintaining its ethnic musical character.

From the perspective of performance practice, the piece places relatively high demands on ensemble coordination, especially in tone balance, rhythmic synchronization, and interaction among different parts. Based on the structural characteristics of the work, this study summarizes several practical issues related to rehearsal and ensemble performance, including timbral adjustment, articulation control, and coordination between leading and accompanying voices. These observations may provide references for the performance and study of similar plucked ensemble works.

5.2 Folk Culture Preservation and Its Value in International Communication

As an exemplary vehicle for the living preservation of ethnic minority folk culture, "*Under the Blue Sky: Daruga*" holds significant value for social dissemination and cultural inheritance. Centered on the lesser-known Ordos Mongolian Daruga headdress culture and wedding customs, the work transforms these niche intangible cultural heritage elements into accessible artistic expressions through musical artistry. By transcending the geographical limitations inherent in traditional folk traditions, it facilitates widespread dissemination of Mongolian traditional handicrafts and wedding customs through stage performances and academic research, thereby enhancing public awareness and ensuring the living preservation of ethnic minority intangible cultural heritage.

Meanwhile, the works balance ethnic cultural characteristics with contemporary public aesthetic demands, possessing exceptional artistic appeal and stage presentation value. They can be widely applied in professional stage performances, university ethnic music education, and ethnic cultural promotion and education. Against the backdrop of global artistic integration, such ethnic instrumental compositions—combining the profound heritage of China's traditional culture with modern international artistic standards—effectively facilitate the international dissemination of



Mongolian musical culture and even China's ethnic music traditions, showcasing the unique charm of China's ethnic minority cultures on the global art stage.

Furthermore, through in-depth analysis of the works, this paper summarizes an innovative development path for ethnic instrumental music characterized by "cultural empowerment—technique innovation—precise interpretation," providing replicable practical experiences for the contemporary innovative preservation of traditional ethnic music. This contributes to the sustainable development of China's ethnic music through both inheritance and innovation.

6. Conclusion

Under the Blue Sky: Daru Laga is a contemporary Mongolian plucked ensemble work based on Ordos Mongolian cultural materials. Through the use of modern compositional techniques and multi-part ensemble writing, the work combines traditional musical elements with contemporary chamber music language. Its three-part structure, modal design, polyphonic texture, and aleatory passages reflect the composer's attempt to explore new approaches to Mongolian instrumental composition while retaining recognizable ethnic musical characteristics.

In addition to its musical structure, the work also reflects aspects of Mongolian folk culture, particularly wedding customs and the symbolic meaning associated with the Daru Laga headdress. These cultural elements are integrated into the musical design of the piece and contribute to its expressive character. At the performance level, the coordination between different instrumental parts, balance of timbre, and control of ensemble texture are important aspects of the interpretation of the work.

Based on previous studies, this paper examines the relationship between compositional technique, cultural context, and ensemble performance practice in Under the Blue Sky: Daru Laga. Through analysis of the musical structure and performance characteristics of the work, the study discusses several features of contemporary Mongolian plucked chamber music and its development in recent years.

For contemporary ethnic instrumental composition, the use of traditional musical materials together with contemporary compositional approaches remains an important direction for further exploration. Works such as Under the Blue Sky: Daru Laga provide examples of how traditional cultural elements may continue to be presented within modern chamber music contexts.

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