



# Analysis of the Performance Techniques and Style of Yan Zongbai's Bamboo Flute Music

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**Abstract.** This article delves into the unique techniques and musical style of bamboo flute performer Yan Zongbai. By analyzing his performance methods, mastery of timbre, and selection of tracks, his outstanding achievements in the field of bamboo flute performance were revealed. Yan Zongbai's music style blends traditional and modern elements, presenting creative and infectious performances. This article aims to provide bamboo flute enthusiasts and music researchers with a deep understanding of this outstanding performer, while exploring the development trends of bamboo flute performance art.

**Keywords:** bamboo flute performance, Yan Zongbai, techniques, music style, mastery of timbre Overview of Yan Zongbai

## 1 Introduction

Yan Zongbai, a famous Chinese bamboo flute performer, is currently the executive director of the Chinese Flute Society and a researcher at the Chinese Flute Culture Research Institute. He also serves as the vice president of the Shanxi Flute Society, executive director of the Chinese Flute Culture Communication Center, and a researcher at the Liu Sen School Research Association of Chinese Flute. He started learning bamboo flute at the age of ten. In 1973, he was admitted to Yuncheng Cultural and Art School and majored in bamboo flute. He then joined the Yuncheng Puju Troupe in 1980. [1] In his artistic practice, he created the variable pitch bamboo flute, adding rich layers to the art of flute performance. Years of artistic exploration have led him to delve into the techniques of bamboo flute performance, extensively absorbing the characteristics of different schools, and forming a unique musical expression with unique personality and performance style. [2]

## 2 Differences and Similarities between the Music Styles of Northern Jin and Southern Jin

Both southern and northern Shanxi belong to the Northern style. Therefore, the music style is also similar to the personality of northerners, straightforward. This style embodies passionate, rugged, and heroic musical emotions. The inspiration for these pieces mainly comes from traditional Chinese opera, especially Bangzi opera. They have some commonalities, all of which have a bold and unrestrained style, with a high and passionate melody. When playing these pieces of music, it is necessary to fully express the rich emotions within oneself in order to better showcase the characteristics of the Northern style of music. These pieces of music are usually played using bangdi, emphasizing the high pitched timbre of bamboo flute to showcase the loud and clear timbre of bangdi. This timbre has the effect of inspiring fighting spirit, inspiring people's emotions, and generating extremely strong tension. The rhythm of northern music is usually fast, with large undulations and a strong sense of jumping. This cheerful and bright expression directly touches the heart. [3]

### 2.1 Jinbei

The representative creators of Jin Bei style music are Mr. Feng Zicun and Mr. Liu Guanle; Especially Feng Zicun, who broke the history of the status of bamboo flute accompaniment, was the first to bring his bamboo flute solo to the stage of history. He was able to play the flute against the wind in the presence of four or five levels of wind, which earned him another title - "Blowing through the Sky" and was ultimately unanimously recognized as one of the Four Great Masters of North and South China; Its music is mostly adapted and processed based on the tunes of the Northern Jin Errentai, such as "Happy Encounter", "Five Bangzi", etc. The Northern Jin style music emphasizes strength and ferocity, Its musical structure often employs three to four variations of "original" and "variation" techniques, with a slow to fast "steady, skillful, and lively" pattern, mainly pursuing exciting and enthusiastic musical effects. Both require a strong breath to push the tip of the tongue towards the ceiling of the upper jaw, and a strong "Tatata..." sound should be emitted in the mouth; The auditory sensation of his music is extremely bold and unrestrained; And its sliding tone often starts from the tube tone, emphasizing the word "momentum". Their music often has concise materials, clear levels, complete structure, simple techniques, and concentrated emotional summaries, which can achieve good artistic effects.

### 2.2 Jinnan

The representative creator of Jinnan style music is Yan Zongbai. Yan Zongbai was born in Yuncheng, Shanxi and has been working in the Puju Troupe. Influenced by these factors, his music is mostly based on retrospective re creation of Puju Qupai, Puju Opera, and various operas in central and southern Shanxi. Just grab a small melody line and add his understanding of Puju music and Shanxi opera music to create a solo piece.

The music is mostly composed of "Meihu Tune" (hazy tune) and "Bowl and Bowl Tune", which have a high and soft beauty, a kind and sorrowful melody, and are extremely distinctive. Due to the fact that their music is often inspired by traditional Chinese opera tunes, it is important to keep in mind the principle that "silk is not as good as wood, and wood is not as good as meat" when practicing their music. [4] This means that when practicing their music, one needs to sing more and repeatedly to understand and express one's feelings, in order to better perform Yan Zongbai's Jinnan style music. So when playing Jinnan style music, it should be more gentle and beautiful than playing Jinbei style music, with a touch of Shanxi's "mountain music", "folk songs", "opera", and "Puju".

### **3 Performance Techniques of Yan Zongbai's Bamboo Flute Music**

**Rubbing Tone and Lower Position Rubbing Tone:** In the commonly used techniques of bamboo flute fingers, the upper position Rubbing Tone (i.e. using Rubbing Tone on the fifth and sixth holes) is commonly used. The speed of Yan Zongbai Rubbing Tone Rubbing is relatively slow, and its slower Rubbing Tone can better depict the soft and beautiful artistic conception depicted in the music; In Yan Zongbai's music, there is not only the kneading of the upper and lower positions, but also the kneading of the lower positions (i.e. using kneading on the second and third holes). This technique greatly tests the flexibility of the right hand, the familiarity with the bamboo flute finger holes, and the sensitivity to pitch perception. Otherwise, if you press too much on the sound quality, it will be dull, and if you press too little on the sound quality, it will be too explosive, and it will not match and be disconnected from the picture depicted in the music. [5]

**Qi Chong Yin:** Qi Chong Yin is similar to Qi Zhenyin in that it changes the sound quality by increasing the amount of air used, making the music more lively and emotionally rich; But Qichong sound is more powerful than Qizhen sound, and even the throat and oral cavity are involved in the force. Moreover, the musical expression of Qichong sound is more intense than that of Qizhen sound, and the feeling it expresses is more like human speech. One of the major difficulties in practicing qichong notes is that it is difficult to control the power point and power of the qichong notes. If the power is small, the strong feeling of the qichong note cannot be blown out, which tends to be more like an qizhen note. However, if the power is too strong, it can lead to the opposite effect of the music presentation, even blowing out the notes.

**Direct Tone:** Direct Tone is an original technique created by Yan Zongbai, inspired by the piano. Because the pitch of the piano is fixed, every note played is crisp and with excellent accuracy. Yan Zongbai particularly pursues this clean and sharp beauty, and even achieved this beauty in bamboo flute, thus establishing this technique; The skill of direct pronunciation requires very strict basic skills, whether it is qi, fingers, or tongue. This technique emphasizes: a fast and accurate use of qi, a steady use of fingers, and a quick release of tongue. Every step should not make any mistakes, otherwise the sound produced will be vague and lose this clean and sharp beauty; This technique is

not only frequently used in Yan Zongbai's music, but also a frequent figure in modern music, indicating that Yan Zongbai's ideas are very forward-looking.

The above are the commonly used and unique techniques in Yan Zongbai's music. To play Yan Zongbai's Jinnan style music well, the above techniques are the most basic requirements. Each point of each technique must be controlled very well, not to the point, otherwise it will lose the most soul characteristic of Jinnan style music.

## **4 Analysis of the Performance Style of Flute Music in Northern and Southern Jin**

### **4.1 Jin Bei Style "Five Bangzi"**

The Five Bangzi "was originally a popular instrumental tune in North China and was used as a transitional music in the " Errentai ", named" Bangzi ". Flute performer Feng Zicun organized and processed it, adding a bold and passionate personality to the music. The melody is beautiful, lively, passionate, and optimistic, expressing people's praise for a better life. It is one of the representative songs of the northern bangdi. The entire piece is repeated four times in total, using a typical melody embellished variation structure. The last three paragraphs are all variations on the theme of the first paragraph. And in the music, techniques such as staccato, floral tongue, smooth, and vibrato are used to modify the melody, and the speed of each segment is gradually accelerated, making the development of the music rich in layers and changes, full of driving force to move forward, showcasing the unique charm and strong local colors of the art of bangdi performance. The motivation for the entire piece is to continuously change the pitch between the leaning notes and the core, as well as the decorative marks between the leaning notes and the core. If a sliding note is used between the leaning notes and the core, it will make the transition between the sliding notes and the core smoother, and this will have a more ethnic flavor and better showcase the unique performance art of Bangdi. Later, the front leaning notes and the back leaning notes will be used together, making this piece rich in local music characteristics.

The speed of the first paragraph (1-36) is Adagio, and a large number of accent embellishments (smooth notes) are used to modify the leaning and core tones. The first paragraph is divided into two sections. The first section (1-16) consists of four four four bar phrases in one sentence, with a concise melody and clear rhythm. The last three sentences are formed by variations from the first sentence, and although there are changes in pitch, the framework of the phrases remains unchanged. The second segment (17-36) is an extended segment, which is a parallel variation of the first segment and does not contain any new musical materials. Part of the music has the characteristics of language and is full of singing, from which one can feel the cheerful and optimistic temperament of the northern people. The music uses a lot of techniques commonly used in northern Jin, such as flower tongues, smooth notes, and continuous calendar notes. This piece uses the F key bangdi to play, with a tube tone of 2. The F key bangdi is precisely suitable for the high, clear, and enthusiastic characteristics of northern Jin, and requires high explosive power from the performer, It requires a good explosive force to make the high notes of the piece produce a lively and joyful feeling, but it is

particularly important to pay attention to the basic principle of "strong but not dry, weak but not empty" when playing.

The second paragraph (37-72) has a slightly faster speed and stronger intensity. Adding flowers to the first melody and changing the long sentence at the end to a straight tone effect of one note per beat will make the melody more solid and powerful. The second paragraph consists of three segments. The second segment is the variation of the first segment, while the third segment is the addition of flowers to the melody of the second segment of the first segment. The addition of staccato and floral tongue sounds in the second paragraph makes the music humorous and witty.

The third paragraph (73-108) is light, fluent, and lively, with a second variation. The main motivation for this variation is the straight tone effect of each beat in the second paragraph, and the straight tone is added to make the melody more solid and powerful. The third paragraph consists of three segments, with playing techniques ranging from easy to difficult.

The fourth paragraph (109-144) is the fastest section of the song, with a two bar introduction at the beginning and a short ending at the end, extending the length of the piece. The performance techniques in this section provide a lot of improvisation space for the performer, and the performer should choose to add or remove decorative notes based on the regional style. This paragraph presents a fixed pitch, and the performer can play the fixed pitch into a different sound effect based on the actual situation, which can create a novel experience for the audience. It is the most lively part of the entire song, using flying fingers to reflect the enthusiasm of Bangzi opera. This section is the most representative of the "stable, skillful, and lively" characteristics of the duet music.

The mode of 'Five Bangzi' is a seven tone clear music mode, which has bright colors and demonstrates its unique stability, fully in line with the bright and colorful melody of Bangzi in North China.

#### **4.2 Jinnan style "Aunties in the Loess Land"**

The Aunties of the Loess Land "is a work adapted and recreated by Yan Zongbai based on Yuncheng folk songs. The music is played on an E-key bamboo flute, with a tube tone of 6. The E-key bamboo flute does not have the same explosive sound as the G-key bangdi, nor is it as warm as the C-key qudi, with a high and gentle tone. It depicts the lively scene of mothers and aunts working in the fields on the loess plateau, chatting and singing while working, and laughing while driving the carriage. The song utilizes a large number of pronunciations, upper and lower kneading notes, floral tongue, and qichong notes. It also uses a large number of direct notes in Adagio, and innovatively combines pronunciations with pronunciations in the later Allegro to imitate the cheerful laughter of mother-in-law. Due to the fact that the song is a tube style 6, it requires extrThis piece is mainly composed of the national seven tone clear music Shang mode, with the two three tone groups of Shang mode coming from the Yi mode and the Yu mode, respectively, with mixed mode colors. This piece is composed of two parts. The first part is characterized by passionate and joyful expression terms, and the speed is allegro, which has the major color of Shang mode; And the second part of the expression term is enthusiastic and friendly, with a speed of Adagio, which has a minor color in the commercial mode. The first part of the piece starts with a Shang tone and adopts

a sanyin, which combines the two to make the beginning of the piece solid and powerful.

The rhythm of the first paragraph (1-30) in the first part is simple and clear, with the rhythm of the third bar as the motivation. Afterwards, there is continuous change and development around the motivation. For example, the rhythm and melody of the tenth and twelfth bars are all based on this motivation, just like the scene of mother-in-law sitting together talking, with clear emotions of asking and answering.

There is a transitional sentence (30-32) between the first and second segments (33-58), which allows the first segment to better reach the second segment. The second section consists of two phrases. The motivation of the first phrase is the two notes 2 and 6, which are constantly changed and rhetorical. For example, the melody of the 37th and 40th bars both changes the two notes 2 and 6, and the use of transitional glides makes the connection between the two notes soft and the lines smooth; Sentence 1 and Sentence 2 also have transitional sentences, making the transition between the sentences smoother. The material for Sentence 2 mostly comes from the 15-18 bars of the first paragraph, and uses a straight transitive glide. This glide is often used in large glides, such as in the music, where the glide from 6 in the small character group to 3 in the small character group. This glide makes it easier for the listener to hear the pitch in the glide. It imitates the lively sound of gongs and drums, using a large amount of percussion to reflect the clear and crisp sound of gongs and drums. The following "4" uses kneading and spitting to imitate the lively scene of gongs and drums. When playing the first paragraph, the tongue movements should be small and powerful, highlighting the characteristics of the loud, clear, and flexible sound of gongs and drums; When playing the following sixteenth notes, special attention should be paid to ensuring that the volume of each note is equal and the duration of each note is averaged.

The last paragraph (229-266) is not played on a flute, but is a concerto of an aluminum plate qin (a pitched percussion instrument) and a small military drum (a pitch less percussion instrument). The aluminum plate qin's melody and motivation are reproduced in the second paragraph of the second part, which depicts the lively scene of the mother-in-law. The aluminum plate qin's sound is spacious, and the author wants to use the aluminum plate qin to spread their stories to further places. Finally, it stops on Shang Yin 2 and ends the song. The core requirement of Yan Zongbai's Jinnan style music is to have light and flexible pronunciation, and to play his music with extremely rich emotions.

## **5 The Connotation and Influence of Yan Zongbai's Baidi Music Performance**

Playing Yan Zongbai's music requires solid basic skills, and Yan Zongbai has high requirements for basic skills because his music often combines multiple elements of basic skills to create other unique timbre and rhythm characteristics. Therefore, playing Yan Zongbai's music requires solid basic skills as support; Although Yan Zongbai has not attended a music academy for a day, he has been in the Puju Troupe for decades, so his requirements for pitch are particularly high, even no less than Wang Ciheng. Especially in Yan Zongbai's music, he mainly uses tube pitch 6 and tube pitch 3. When

playing his music, he not only needs to proficiently use his fingering skills but also needs to blow the pitch of the half hole accurately. Yan Zongbai is particularly strict with the pitch requirements of the half hole of the second and fifth holes; Not only that, Yan Zongbai also has a particularly high demand for enunciation, not only because of Yan Zongbai's personal habits, but also because enunciation is the soul of northern music. [6] No matter which northern music is played, enunciation should be strong in grain, with clear grain, and fingers should be flexible to match with the tongue well, without being sloppy. If the sound blown out contains ambiguity, it will make people feel a feeling of being messy, To achieve the essence, especially in Yan Zongbai's music, one should pay special attention to it. Some northern music pieces require a large tongue movement in their articulation, but Yan Zongbai's Jinnan style music requires a small tongue movement in their articulation, and the sound quality of the uttered sound should not be too strong, but should be small and flexible. [7]

When playing Yan Zongbai's music, having solid basic skills is only a basic condition. To perform his Jinnan style music well, it is necessary to bring in strong emotions and have a rich experience of living in rural areas. [8] Most of his music depicts music that is close to and praises the working people in rural areas, not only using a large number of Puju elements, but also common folk songs and ballads, and quoting many traditional Chinese operas such as percussion music To play Yan Zongbai's music well, it is necessary to listen to Puju more and experience its charm and characteristics, as well as try to gather folk customs and gain more experience, in order to showcase the simple and honest feeling of folk culture; The core point of practicing his music lies in carefully experiencing the melody and humming more. Yan Zongbai has been humming repeatedly while composing, and the advantage of doing so is that he can not only memorize the music quickly, but also effectively incorporate emotions into the music. This is exactly what Yan Zongbai often says: "Silk is not as good as wood, wood is not as good as meat." The human voice is the best tool for conveying emotions, only when singing well, Only on the flute can one play well, and how to sing can one play on the flute. The changes in strength that are involuntarily added during singing can be reflected on the flute, and only in this way can this work be perfectly displayed.

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