

The Narrative Construction in Chinese Pipa Performance: A Musical Analysis of *Huai Yin Ping Chu* from the Ping Hu School

Du Jiazhen, Colleen Wong, Chiu Ming Ying

Faculty of Music and Performing Arts, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia, Baoji
University of Arts and Sciences

Corresponding Author Email: colleen@fmsp.upsi.edu.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i5/25355> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i5/25355

Published Date: 16 May 2025

Abstract

In music performance, practice-led research methods focus on exploring and generating new knowledge and understanding through music performance activities. Music narrative is a new way and approach among the diversified analytical methods since the second half of the 20th century. Under the practice-led research paradigm, through the textual interpretation and performance practice of the narrative works of traditional Chinese pipa, the audience can gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural connotations of the works through the representational narrative discourse, thus strengthening the audience's understanding of the connotations of pipa's Ping Hu school, and rebuilding their knowledge of the music of the Ping Hu School. This article takes one representative works of the Ping Hu School, *Huai Yin Ping Chu* (淮阴平楚) as examples. Taking music narrative as the starting point, from the perspective of analysis and practice, it deeply analyzes the structure, emotion and intention of the works, and uses a series of technical performance treatments to convey the story and literary connotation of the work. The purpose is to shorten the distance between the performers and the audience on the stage, so that the audience can deeply participate in the interpretation of the work based on synesthesia. This research attempt from a new perspective provides exploratory research for the audience to deeply understand the storytelling and humanistic nature of the work from a practical perspective. Ultimately it helps to deepen a new performance research methods and bring the distance between listeners and performers closer.

Keywords: Music Narrative Performance, Ping Hu School, Pipa Performance, Interpretation, *Huai Yin Ping Chu*

Introduction

The pipa schools were formed around the 1860s (about the middle of the Qing Dynasty) to the 1950s (the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949). Each

school of pipa has its characteristics due to its different stylistic characteristics and themes in the works, techniques and expressions in performance, and the performers' interpretation. It includes five primary traditional schools, named Wuxi School (无锡派), Pudong School (浦东派), Ping Hu School (平湖派), Chongming School (崇明派) and Shanghai School (上海派) (Pei, 2008).

The Ping Hu School originated today in Ping Hu City, Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province (浙江省嘉兴市平湖市). The specific founding year is currently unknown. According to research in Chinese academic circles, the earliest record of the Ping Hu School was in 1895. This year, Li Fangyuan (李芳园), the fifth-generation descendant of the Ping Hu School, edited, compiled, and published *Thirteen Daqu Pipa Scores of the Northern and Southern Schools* (南北派十三套大曲琵琶新谱), which has marked the establishment of the artistic style of Ping Hu School Pipa (Chen & Gao, 2023). This edition is the first musical score compiled in the form of pipa music, and includes thirteen sets of pipa music, such as *Yu Lun Pao* (郁轮袍), *Huai Yin Ping Chu* (淮阴平楚), and *Sai Shang Qu* (塞上曲). Most of these pieces of music are created against the background of actual historical events in ancient China, with twists and turns in their plots, relaxed emotions, and rich philosophical stylistic characteristics. These music pieces have been classic repertoire of the Ping Hu School.

The 20th century marked a transformative period for Chinese pipa, shifting from tradition to modernity. In the first half, the five traditional schools influenced each other, promoting the growth of pipa (Qiao, 2014). However, in the latter half, advances in transportation and communication reduced regional distinctions (Shi, 2021). Pei Yaqin notes that, since the 1980s, economic changes led to students learning from diverse teachers, enhancing their understanding of various schools but diluting the distinct techniques of each (Pei, 2008, p.32).

Since the mid-20th century, the Ping Hu School has faced challenges in development and preservation, with concerns voiced by prominent figures like Yang Shaoyi and Chen Yinxuan about the risk of its traditions fading. Despite its recognition as a key lineage in pipa history and inclusion in China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Ping Hu School continues to struggle with maintaining its legacy, affecting both its future and the broader pipa tradition (Chen & Gao, 2023).

Recent scholarship reveals significant endeavours by exponents and researchers to bridge developmental gaps historically affecting the Ping Hu School, yet it remains marginalized within mainstream pipa performance arenas (Cui, 2021). The Ping Hu school's sustainability and evolution have been provisionally secured under national intangible cultural heritage status (Shi, 2021). Initiatives spearheaded by Yang Shaoyi, a seventh-generation exponent, at the Xi'an Conservatory of Music in 1958 marked the commencement of formal academic transmission and development of the Ping Hu School (Chen & Gao, 2023).

Not only do performance students ignore traditional Ping Hu School music, but it is also difficult for audiences to choose traditional music as an object of appreciation. On the one hand, the Ping Hu School is rooted in the elegance of the literati. The literati music appreciated by intellectuals is incompatible with the changing music needs of the times, and listeners avoid it (Shi, 2016). On the other hand, the stylistic characteristic of Ping Hu School music's dense decorative tones is also a shortcoming. Excessive decorative techniques affect

the smoothness of the music melody, making it difficult for listeners to grasp the main melody (Tang, 2024). Consequently, the characteristics of the literati music of the Ping Hu School is concealed under the gorgeous technique of the notation, which even deepens the audience's misunderstanding of the essence of the school.

The ongoing disconnect between the inherent stylistic characteristics of the Ping Hu School and the audiences' understanding poses a substantial threat to the Ping Hu School's viability. This gap not only diminishes the school's cultural presence but also gradually estranges it from the public, posing challenges to its survival on the modern stage.

Literature Review

As one of the traditional Chinese pipa schools, Ping Hu School music not only possesses a unique musical style in terms of artistic expression but also exhibits profound literary qualities. Academic research on the literary nature of Ping Hu School Pipa works mainly focuses on the title and the storytelling nature of the works, exploring how these elements convey cultural and literary ideas through the titles and musical content.

Firstly, Ping Hu School Pipa works are defined as cultural works. Yang Shaoyi (2015) views Ping Hu School Pipa art as a cultural product of the Li family school from a historical materialist and dialectical perspective, asserting that its classic pieces possess deep cultural stylistic characteristics and artistic value. Yang points out that Li's works depict characters and express emotions through scenic descriptions, establish artistic imagery, and pursue spiritual communication between performers and listeners. This approach inherits the artistic expression techniques of traditional Chinese literary figures, such as Qu Yuan (Yang, 2015). This theory provides a foundation for academic research on Ping Hu School, emphasizing its intellectual and cultural significance and showing that Ping Hu School works are not merely musical compositions but are also artistic expressions carrying rich cultural meanings.

Secondly, the titles of Ping Hu School pieces reflect their literary significance. Qian Tiemin (1986) explored the historical development of titles in pipa works and argued that Li Fangyuan's use of titles in Ping Hu School works innovated upon tradition reasonably (p.22). Han Shude further evaluated Li Fangyuan's use of titles, acknowledging that although controversial in academic circles, this practice added positive literary value to the works (Han, 1994). Sun Liwei emphasized that the titles of Pinghu School Pipa works are closely linked to their musical content and emotional expression, creating distinct titling features and highlighting the pieces' literary and vivid musical imagery (Sun, 2002). These perspectives suggest that the titles of Ping Hu School pieces are not merely identifiers but also crucial means of conveying the music's spirit and emotion.

Thirdly, the literary nature of Ping Hu School pieces is also evident in their storytelling aspect. The martial pieces often narrate historical stories or folk legends, demonstrating strong narrativity. Ge Meilin (2004) pointed out that Ping Hu School's martial pieces enhance the literary narrative of the works by portraying historical stories or folk legends (Ge, 2004). Liu Yanyan further explained the composition methods of the martial pieces, suggesting that these works develop their storylines like chapter-based novels or dramatic scenes. They extract conflicts and emotions from historical stories, forming unique musical structures and expressions (Liu, 2008). This discussion demonstrates that Ping Hu School's piece enriches its

musical performance and carries strong literary elements in its narrative content, enabling it to tell complex social and historical stories through music.

The literary nature of Ping Hu School is profoundly reflected in its pieces' titles and storytelling aspects. These studies reveal the cultural value and artistic features of Ping Hu School pieces and offer new perspectives on how traditional Chinese music integrates with literary ideas.

Huai Yin Ping Chu is also known as Shi Mian (十面) or Shi Mian Mai Fu (十面埋伏). The piece was first included in Hua Qiuping's Pipa Score in 1818. Moreover, later versions of the piece were published by various schools, but each version differed in its sections and titles. Li Family Score Huai Yin Ping Chu has eighteen periods and is a classic masterpiece in Wu Qu.

More research on Huai Yin Ping Chu of the Ping Hu School is needed. The author searched with the keyword title and found two relevant research studies. Firstly, the author explored the performance techniques of Huai Yin Ping Chu in the author's thesis published in 2014 and gave an overview of the Ping Hu School pipa art (Du, 2014). Secondly, Meng Qingxin (2020) argued that taking Huai Yin Ping Chu as an example explores the particularity of the Ping Hu School playing technique (p.107).

The literature review shows that although Huai Yin Ping Chu represents the Ping Hu School Wu Qu style, research is relatively scarce. The known research is all conducted from the perspective of technique, and it urgently needs the attention of the academic community.

Methodology

Practice-led research refers to original investigative research aimed at acquiring new knowledge through practical activities and their outcomes (Hefce, 2005). This article employs music performance practice within a practice-led research paradigm to explore the narrative and literature elements of six selected works from the Ping Hu School. It starts by using the perspective of music narrative to analyze these works, integrating the performance techniques of the Ping Hu School with the performer's interpretation process to convey both the literary stylistic characteristics and performance language to the audience. The research is structured into two phases:

Phase one involves selecting the piece, establishing the theoretical perspective, interpreting the stylistic characteristics of Ping Hu School. In phase two, theory is applied to performance practice to address the second research question. This phase combines theoretical insights with performance, emphasizing the practical application of research results to enhance music performance. The performer is regarded as a researcher, and from the perspective of music narrative, the roles of composer, performer, and audience collectively shape the presentation of the musical work (Cone, 1974).

Analysis of Huai Yin Ping Chu

Shi Mian Mai Fu first appeared in *Hua Qiuping's Pipa Score* in 1818. The title is derived from an ancient Chinese military strategy, the *Shi Mian Mai Fu*, which used various hidden weapons and traps to exhaust the enemy and achieve victory. Given its applicability across different

eras, Li Fangyuan renamed it *Huai Yin Ping Chu* in the Ping Hu School edition to better portray the heroic image of Han Xin, the commander of the Han army.

This piece depicts the famous Chu-Han Contention (206-202 BCE), a large-scale war for supremacy between Xiang Yu, the King of Western Chu, and Liu Bang, the King of Han. This war ultimately resulted in Xiang Yu's defeat and Liu Bang's establishment of the Han Dynasty, *Huai Yin Ping Chu* features grand and majestic musical emotions, suggesting it narrates from the victorious perspective of Liu Bang.

Narrative Interpretation

The titles serve as part of the narrative text and are pre-compositional narrative materials used by the composers to depict the heroic image of Xiang Yu through Wu Qu styles. Title text is an essential component of traditional Chinese instrumental music. Li Minxiong (1997) mentioned Chinese National Instrumental Music, like other art forms, reflects real life, revealing people's emotions, thoughts, and feelings through musical imagery. Titles, such as titles, and explanatory text in national instrumental music actively help the audience understand the content reflected in the music (p.77).

The title primarily narrates explicit storylines. *Huai Yin Ping Chu* focuses on the victorious side, describing the historical fact of the Han army using the ten-sided ambush formation to defeat the Chu army (Table 1.1 shows the title structure of *Huai Yin Ping Chu*). Each segment of the music corresponds to the titles. Note that whether a piece has a textual title does not determine if the music is programmatic. Instead, the ability to integrate literary concepts into the musical work is a critical criterion for determining if the music possesses programmatic characteristics (Pan & Tong, 2016). Pieces' titles and musical content are highly unified, seamlessly blending the musical ideas with their artistic expression.

Table 1.1

Narrative analysis of the title structure of Huai Yin Ping Chu

Huai Yin Ping Chu		
Sections	Sub-titles	Narrative Structure
1	<i>Lie ying</i>	Prelude
2	<i>Fen yin</i>	
3	<i>Jun gu</i>	
4	<i>Zhang hao</i>	
5	<i>Fang pao</i>	
6	<i>Chui da Kai men</i>	Pre-Battle
7	<i>Dian jiang</i>	
8	<i>Pai zhen</i>	
9	<i>Zou dui</i>	
10	<i>Mai fu</i>	Engagement
11	<i>Xiao zhan</i>	
12	<i>Haixia da zhan</i>	
13	<i>Baiwan jun sheng</i>	
14	<i>Bie ji</i>	Post-Battle
15	<i>Wu jiang</i>	
16	<i>Zhingjun zou kai</i>	
17	<i>Zhujiang zheng gong</i>	
18	<i>Shouzhen hui ying</i>	

Lisa mentioned that understanding a music work means grasping the meaning of the sonic symbols, with the title and name of the piece being the primary influences on this understanding (Lissda, 1988). *Huai Yin Ping Chu* consists of eighteen independent sections, each piece has titles for its independent sections that explicitly convey the composer's intended content, setting up the narrative thread through the movement titles. The content of each segment and the music's interpretation of the titles reveal that both pieces draw on the realistic techniques of traditional Chinese opera and serial novels. *Huai Yin Ping Chu* develop progressively according to the stages and scenes of war (Cui, 2021).

The titles *Huai Yin Ping Chu* serve as literary markers of the musical imagery, vividly depicting the intense and grand scenes of war and rich emotional undertones. While the pieces exhibit a documentary form, their narrative techniques endow the music with dramatic and artistic qualities. The music forms a cohesive structure through the interplay of storytelling and musical techniques. This interaction creates a harmonious and unified structural force (Li & Yan, 2014).

Performance Analysis of Huai Yin Ping Chu

Huai Yin Ping Chu takes historical events as its starting point, using the pipa as the medium to incorporate the distinctive playing techniques and musical style of the Ping Hu School. The piece creates a cohesive structure through the interplay of narrative elements and musical techniques, achieving a harmonious unity of form and content (Li & Yan, 2014). The narrative structure and musical storyline build the interpretation of this piece. This section will explore,

from the performer's perspective, how to convey the narrative essence of the work through technique and interpretive expression.

Prelude Analysis

The first part, the prelude, includes five segments: *lie ying* (列营), *fei ying* (分营), *jun gu* (军鼓), *zhang hao* (掌号), and *fang pao* (放炮). These segments depict various aspects of the grand pre-war scenes and serve as the introduction in musical terms, similar to the exposition in Western music.

The formation of the *lie ying* segment acts as an introduction, beginning with free rhythm and using the *fo lun* (佛轮) technique to simulate drum sounds (Figure 1.1). The piece opens with high-pitched horn calls and intense war drums, creating a dramatic scene. Since piece opens in free rhythm, the performer can vary the density of rhythms and repetition of motifs (Meng, 2020). The performer should pay special attention to the gradual acceleration of tempo and the alternating modes to highlight the instability of the music. This instability accentuates the spectacular scenes of drumbeats, the clamor of voices, and the clash of cavalry and weapons, vividly bringing the battlefield to life.

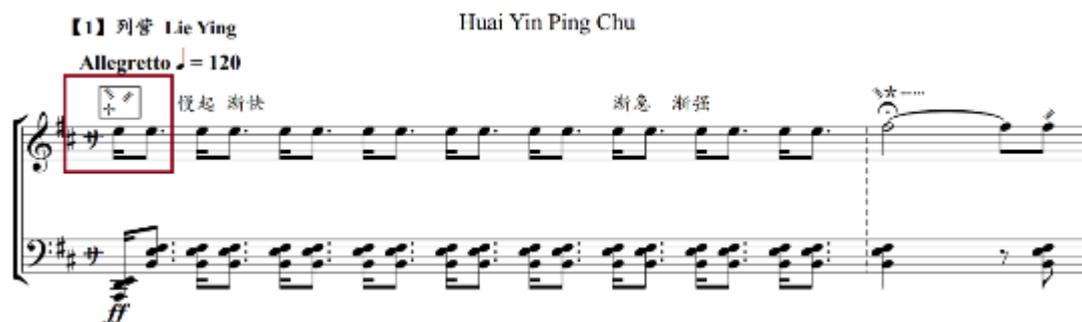


Figure 1.1. *Fo lun* (佛轮) technique simulating drum sounds

The *fen yin* section enhances the musical imagery, beginning with the *lun mian ban* (轮面板) technique (Figure 1.2), which requires the performer to use the *lun zhi* (轮指) technique on the soundboard, a distinctive feature of the Ping Hu school, after using the *shuang tan* (双弹) technique to simulate the striking of war drums, with a brisk rhythm that gradually accelerates, highlighting the might of the army (Jiang, 2013). The sound of war drums is effectively mimicked by the *Shuang tan* technique, portraying the scene as drums being struck. Performers should note the gradually increasing tempo to underscore the entire solemn atmosphere within the camp.



Figure 1.2. *Lun mian ban* technique simulating striking war drums

The *zhang hao* segment uses the *yao zhi* (Figure 1.3) technique to depict the horn sound approaching from a distance. The performer takes control of the dynamics, gradually increasing from soft to loud sound, illustrating the scene of ancient military commanders assembling and issuing orders before a great battle.

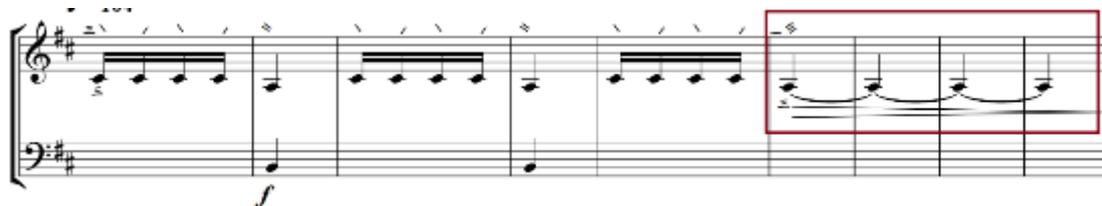


Figure 1.3. *Yao zhi* technique simulating horn sound

In the *Fang pao* segment, the Ping Hu school uses the *jia sao* (Figure 1.4) technique on the open fourth string to simulate the booming of war drums, followed by the roar of cannons. This indicates that all preparations for battle are complete.



Figure 1.4. *Jia sao* technique simulates the booming sound of drumming.

To sum up, each of the five segments in the prelude has a complete and independent narrative structure. Based on the storyline and the arrangement of melodic material, literary titles serve as markers of musical imagery. The performer narrates the prelude to the battle using various Ping Hu school techniques, particularly sound imitation techniques and control over motifs and rhythms. These techniques effectively portray the alternating scenes of war preparations, such as the three rounds of drumming and the clash of cavalry and weapons, enabling the listener to imagine the grand war scenes vividly. The resounding and powerful pipa tones fully capture the tense and solemn atmosphere on the eve of battle.

Pre-Battle Analysis

The second part, the pre-battle theme, includes four segments: *chui da kai men* (吹打开门), *dian jiang* (点将), *pai zhan* (排阵), and *zou dui* (走队). The music melodies in this section are primarily derived from the prelude. During this part, the rhythm becomes more pronounced, incorporating many lyrical plucking techniques, giving the pipa melody a narrative and vocal quality. Additionally, the arrangement of techniques in the pre-battle theme emphasizes the orderly and solemn nature of the army, highlighting its majestic and imposing presence (Du, 2014).

Chui da kai men section introduce the thematic segment (Figure 1.5), representing the music played before significant ceremonies in ancient military camps. The right-hand techniques employed include *chang lun* (长轮), *dai lun fo* (带轮拂), and *gou lun* (勾轮), with the rhythm alternating between 3/4 and 2/4 time. Performers should focus on the endurance of the *lun zhi* technique and maintain a robust speed to convey the lyrical and dignified singing

quality of the music, emphasizing the music of the narrative segment's solemnity and grandeur.



Figure 1.5. Thematic of chui da kai men segment

The *dian jiang* (点将) segment consists of forty measures and eighty beats, characterized by a steady and stable rhythm. This segment captures the tense yet slightly lively atmosphere of selecting soldiers for battle. The segment features densely packed thirty-second note tremolos, with each eighth note accompanied by harmonic tones in the *zhi* note (the *zhi* note corresponds to key G in the Western music system, called the *zhi* note in traditional Chinese pentatonic scale). The monotonous rhythmic pattern and repetition create a sense of order and tension in the music (Cui, 2023). When performers execute the *feng dian tou* (凤点头) technique (Figure 1.6) and the *gou da* (勾打) technique, the Ping Hu School edition requires performers to use the flesh of the thumb rather than the nail to achieve a rich, full-bodied sound (Du, 2014).



Figure 1.6. *Feng dian tou* technique simulate the tense atmosphere of assembled soldiers

The *pai zhen* segment employs the *zhe shao* (遮扫) technique, requiring performers to play at a moderate tempo. In contrast, the *zou dui* segment uses the *zhi fen* (遮分) technique to depict the soldiers' strong, rhythmic steps.

To sum up, the narrative strategy of the second part mirrors that of the first part, utilizing a single-movement suite form. Based on the storyline and the arrangement of melodic material, literary titles serve as markers of musical imagery. The seamless integration of various Ping Hu school techniques with the narrative of pre-battle preparations is evident. The pre-battle music is rhythmically more pronounced and incorporates numerous lyrical plucking techniques. Performers should emphasize the lyrical and vocal quality of the pipa

melody while maintaining control over the fixed rhythms to showcase the army's solemnity and orderliness, thereby conveying its imposing and majestic presence.

The Engagement Analysis

The third part, the battle, is the core segment of the entire piece, encompassing four sub-segments: *mai fu* (埋伏), *xiao zhan* (小战), *hai xia da zhan* (垓下大战) and *bai wan jun sheng* (百万军声).

The *mai fu* segment is a crucial part of this piece. *Mai fu* segment conveys the mysterious and tense atmosphere of the battlefield, utilizing techniques such as *hua fo* (划拂) and *chang lun* (长轮) to depict the gathering and formation of the army. The Ping Hu School employs techniques like *hua fo* and *change lun* (Figure 1.7), requiring the performer to control the dynamics and rhythm from slow to fast, allowing the music to halt abruptly at the right moments. This combination of techniques paints a vivid picture of the army stealthily assembling at Gaixia, preparing for the surprise attack on the Chu forces, creating a sense of imminent battle and silence (Du, 2014).



Figure 1.7. *Fo lun* technique simulates army stealthily assembling

The *xiao zhan* (小战) segment portrays the initial skirmishes between the Chu and Han armies (Jiang, 2015). In this segment, the last note of each phrase is the first note of the next. The third eat utilizes the right-hand *sha* (煞) (Figure 1.8) technique paired with the rich sound of the third string, mimicking the clashing sounds of cavalry and weapons.



Figure 1.8. *Sha* technique mimics the sound of a battle

The *gai xia da zhan* segment represents the climax of the entire piece, illustrating the battle at its most intense. The right hand employs techniques such as *jiao xian* (绞弦), *fo sao*

(拂扫), and *ti* (提), complemented by the left-hand techniques *tui* (推) and *la* (拉). The *ti* technique (Figure 1.9) makes the melody fast and powerful, with transitions between phrases mimicking the sound of horse hooves, giving the rhythm a dynamic quality. This segment is challenging for performers, requiring control over various linked techniques while highlighting the grandeur of the battle.



Figure 1.9. *Ti* technique simulating horse hooves

The *bai wan jun sheng* segment reaches the peak of the piece, focusing on the full-scale confrontation between the two armies. The sounds of combat, shouts, and the clash of weapons fill the air, evoking scenes of dust and chaos. When performing techniques such as *jiao* (绞) and *tui la* (推拉) on two strings, the performer modulates the intensity from solid and fast to weak and slow, then back to strong and fast, with a relatively free rhythm and repeated scattered notes.

To sum up, the third part is the centerpiece of the entire composition, depicting the fierce battle between the Chu and Han armies with a clear narrative structure. This section is also technically demanding, featuring numerous challenging techniques and combinations. Successfully performing this part requires a deep understanding of the narrative and solid technical skills, presenting a significant challenge to the performer.

The Post-Battle Sections Analysis

The fourth part, post-battle, includes five sections: *xiang wang zhan bai bie ji* (项王败阵别姬), *wu jiang* (乌江), *zhong jun zou kai* (众军奏凯), *zhu jiang zheng gong* (诸将争功) and *shou zhen hui ying* (收阵回营). The musical narrative covers the portrayal of Xiang Yu's tragic heroism upon his defeat and the triumphant return of Liu Bang's victorious Han army.

The *Xiang wang zhan bai bie ji xiang* segment alternates between duple and triple meter, with a sorrowful melody depicting Xiang Yu's complex emotions of despair before his suicide. The first part uses the *ban lun* (半轮) technique on the string, followed by *tiao* (挑) to create harmonics, and the second part mirrors this technique on the string, culminating in a double *tiao* to end abruptly (Figure 1.10). Performers should pay attention to the variation in finger rolling rhythm and the descending, slowing melody to emphasize Xiang Yu's defeat.

【14】 项王败阵别姬 Xiǎng Wáng Bāi Zhēn Bié Jī
♩ = 80 Adagio

Figure 1.10. *Lun zhi* technique and alternating duple and triple meter portray Xiang Yu's defeat

The *wu jiang* section accentuates the tragic atmosphere, describing Xiang Yu's emotional turmoil and heroic yet doomed end. *Wu jiang* segment vividly portrays Xiang Yu desperation as his beloved has died, his army is in disarray, and his mind is chaotic. Performers must ensure clear, crisp sound production with full volume and intensity, linking seamlessly to the subsequent section, fully expressing the hero's tragic character.

The *Zhong Jun Zou Kai* section maintains a lively rhythm, shifting the listener from the sorrowful scenes to a joyful and triumphant mood. This sharp contrast is essential in highlighting the transition from defeat to victory. The *Zhu Jun Zheng Gong* segment continues the joyful atmosphere, capturing the victorious army's jubilant celebrations. The final three phrases slow down, preparing for a smooth transition to the concluding section.

The *Shou zhen hui ying* section serves as the epilogue of the entire piece. Though rhythm is chemically free and resembles a recitative style, it still maintains a sense of structure, incorporating *chang lun*, *sao*, and bounces in a slightly varied slow performance (Figure 1.11). This section depicts the triumphant return of the Han army to their camp, with performers needing to prepare for a grand finale by striking the fourth string decisively to end the entire piece.

Figure 1.11. Techniques combination: *chang lun*, *sao*, and *tan tiao*

Results and Discussion

From a narrative perspective, this study interprets *Huai Yin Ping Chu* from the Ping Hu School, revealing the piece's unique narrative content and emotional expression in performance. The research finds that Ping Hu School pipa performances emphasize technical proficiency and the storytelling and literary aspects of the music, aligning with the study's hypotheses and expectations.

Firstly, through analysis of the selected pieces, it is evident that many traditional pipa compositions are closely associated with historical events, figures, or literary themes. The titles of these compositions directly correlate with their musical imagery. For example, pieces like *Huai Yin Ping Chu* vividly depict scenes from the Battle of Gaixia in 202 BC, each from different perspectives.

Secondly, the study reveals a close relationship between narrative compositions and technique. Specifically, Ping Hu School pipa employs refined performance techniques to achieve its musical narrative effects. These techniques serve not only as means of musical expression but also as vehicles for narrative content. Widely used in Ping Hu School pipa performances, these techniques help to narrate stories through subtle tonal variations and rhythmic intricacies.

Thirdly, the article demonstrates that the narrative performance capability of Ping Hu School pipa music depends on performers' profound emotional understanding and meticulous expressive abilities. While techniques form the foundation, the key to endowing Ping Hu School pipa with narrative ability lies in performers' deep emotional experience of the works. Musical compositions contain complex emotions and intentions, and performers must understand these emotions deeply to convey them accurately.

References

- Almén, B. (2003). Narrative archetypes: A critique, theory, and method of narrative analysis. *Journal of Music Theory*, 47(1), 1-39.
- Almén, B. (2017). *A theory of musical narrative*. Indiana University Press.
- Anonymous. (1989). *Music and Dance Volume, Editorial Committee of the Encyclopedia of China*. Encyclopedia of China Publishing House.
- Auer, L. (1982). *My Violin Playing Method* (Situ, H., Trans.). Beijing: People's Music Publishing House. (Original work published 1980).
- Borgdorff, H. (2012). The production of knowledge in artistic research, in M. Biggs & H. Karlsson. *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 44-63
- Burnham, S. (1999). *How Music matters rethinking music*. Oxford University press.
- Cai, Y. N. (2015). *Comparative exploration of traditional Pipa music Wen Qu and Wu Qu* [Master's thesis, Guizhou Normal University]. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=IQz6UQjnwp-sLHHmIXZ7W__dszJwshAn3t8-1_PtMc31niwoZ-a83L1TDzDYjj-MXIZ1GrVUguE_f8g3dlilmpAFSSuRJvosrWevYgPjQzxOjUZTIU0zdO1KxQbc8zTjz6iof1XOUMlxnDIQ2QJ_nQ==&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS
- Candy, L. (2006). Practice-based Research: A Guide. Online at [http://www. Creativity and cognition.com/resources/PBR%20Guide-1.1-2006.pdf](http://www.CreativityandCognition.com/resources/PBR%20Guide-1.1-2006.pdf)
- Chen, D. C., & Che, W. L. (2013). How does music narrate? A study of music narrative modes in the last thirty years. *Journal of People's Music*, (01), 64-69.
- Chen, M. L. (2020). *An exploration into the version of Pipa's classic work Ba Wang Xie Jia and its relationship with its transformations* [Master's thesis, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, Shang Hai, China]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27319/d.cnki.gsyyy.2020.000199doi:10.27319/d.cnki.gsyyy.2020.000199>

- Chen, X. N. (2019). Ancient Chinese literati music and the development of music culture. *Song of the Yellow River, (08)*, 29-30. <https://doi.10.19340/j.cnki.hhzs.2019.08.020>
- Chen, Y. X., & Gao, X. R. (2023). Guarding the School and Continuing the Tradition: A Review of the Project of Ping Hu School Pipa Art Performance Talent Training. *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music, 3*, 160-172. <https://doi.10.16504/j.cnki.cn11-1183/j.2023.03.005>
- Cheng, X. G. (2020). The relationship between different pipa schools and Wen Qu and Wu Qu: Taking the Ping Hu and Pu Dong schools as examples. *Art Appreciation, (29)*, 51-52.
- Cone, T. E. (2011). *The Composer's Personality Voice* (He. X. & Yang, Y. D. Trans.). East China Normal University Press. (Original work published 1974).
- Cui, X. J. (2021). A review of the development of the Ping Hu Pipa in the national intangible cultural heritage. *ART APPRECIATION, 13*, 19-21.
- Cui, X. J. (2023). The virtual reality and harmony of Wang School's performance of Huai Yin Ping Chu. *Music Creation, (03)*, 151-161.
- Dong, S. T. (2017). *The exploration of pipa performance techniques of the Ping Hu School* [Master's thesis, Ningxia University, Gan Su province]. Ningxia University. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=9w9hjsx65dQSm4SE8B9WiNmC0shJ4---FPwemyAX6pl60LCCecN7eVRKjKGFpgUa1IFM-Tm5idcdq2XtPBmWqd52hfaxDlyLYnvrilEcB7sUhbPQK-SUiE_LBfBNFhVD2Fdf-Gr6OeaWkp3qItTThQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS
- Du, J. Z. (2014). *The analysis of the art and performance techniques of the pipa of the Ping Hu School* [Master's thesis, Xi'an Conservatory of Music, Shann Xi province]. Xi'an Conservatory of Music. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=3IEynGI71r9Y5ZEEUotgzWEUF9v4JYLYI-Bse3zE8roUaynDmW9OuHm-bqHB6xIXUQbzV86Fq5qnWQ_gS5O1rDOIExpHdGBF2kAA5eUD1vA6CljbmSfdzExhKumOzStEhXUoc-1oD1R73qatiHQqA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS
- Feng, S. (2004). Source, Flow and Fusion, Topics on Chinese Pipa Schools. *Journal of Si Chuan Conservatory of Music, (02)*, 14-19.
- Gao, F. X. (2019). Reflections on the international frontiers and domestic status of music performance research: Including the national symposium on music performance research. *Music Research, (05)*, 49-57.
- Gao, Y. N. (2020). Cultural stylistic characteristics of traditional pipa performance techniques in the context of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Contemporary Music, (04)*, 112-113.
- Ge, M. L. & J. Y. (2004). The forms and characteristics of pipa's Wu Qu. *Journal of Ning Bo University, (05)*, 110-112.
- Gopal, M. (2017). The Silk Road, a Cultural Thread Connecting Asia. *Economy, Culture & History Japan Spotlight Bimonthly, 56-59*. <https://doi/10.27312/d.cnki.gshsu.2022.002095doi:10.27312/d.cnki.gshsu.2022.002095>
- Green, L. (2006). Creative writing as practice-led research. *Australian Journal of Communication, 33(2-3)*, 175-188.
- Han, C. (2014). Formation and classification of modern pipa schools. *Song of the Yellow River, (11)*, 106-108.
- Han, M., & Liu, Z. Y. (1989). *Quotations from World Musicians* (pp.239-240). China Overseas Publishing House.

- Han, S. D., & Zhang, Z. N. (1994). The modern history of the Chinese pipa. *Journal of Sichuan Conservatory of Music*, (01), 24-32. <https://doi.10.15929/j.cnki.1004-2172.1994.01.004>
- Hannula, M., Suoranta, J., & Vadén, T. (2014). Artistic research methodology. Narrative, *Power and the Public*, 27(3), 17-22.
- Hawkins, B., & Wilson, B. (2017). A Fresh Theoretical Perspective on Practice-Led Research. *International journal of art & design education*, 36(1), 82-91.
- Hefce. (2005). Rae 2008 guidance on submissions: annex B. Accessed thirteen, June 2013. <https://rae.ac.uk/pubs/2005/03/rae0305.doc>
- Jiang, W. (2023). on Musical Characteristics and Performance Techniques of Huai Yin Ping Chu [Master's thesis, Shanghai Normal University, Shang Hai]. Shanghai Normal University. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27312/d.cnki.gshsu.2023.001853doi:10.27312/d.cnki.gshsu.2023.001853>
- Kong, L. X. (2023). An analysis of the connection between the interpretation of humanistic feelings and artistic techniques in pipa Wen Qu: Taking Hua Yanjun's Zhaojun Goes Beyond the Great Wall as an example. *Tomorrow Fashion*, (06), 23-25.
- Lan, X. Y. (2023). The performance interpretation of Huang Huwei's violin works under the perspective of music narrative [Master's thesis, Shanghai, China] East China Normal University. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27149/d.cnki.ghdsu.2023.001826doi:10.27149/d.cnki.ghdsu.2023.001826>.
- Levinson, J. (2004). Music as narrative and music as drama. *Mind & Language*, 19(4), 428-441.
- Li, B. J., & Li, X. F. (2010). Social Identity Transformation of Folk Artists and Its Impact - From the Five Earliest Folk Artists Introduced to Xi'an Conservatory of Music. *Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music*, (01), 26-31.
- Li, M. X. (1997). *Introduction to National Instrumental Musi*. Shanghai Music Publishing House.
- Li, M. & Yan, X. X. (2014). Structural analysis of the pipa piece Shi Mian Mai Fu. *Music Life*, (11), 20-23.
- Li, X. T. (2016). *An analysis of the performance techniques and artistic characteristics of the Wang school Wenqu* [Master's thesis, Central Conservatory of Music]. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=axnrJTP8flwX2UjgnLgOz0Lox7ZkwBYNOUaLqMps_o4_H4DxpJQX3my_NZ0sAszzgg_D1j-kE5SIhbn5RCdm3DCuA717U1o39mF_Ulgt1GeQx3UEGbHiFiAxCoaPIGLt1RsUDqmi2Hf5GqzYU_s3w==&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS
- Lin, S. C. (1997). Foreword. In Shanghai Music Publishing House (Ed.), *A Collection of Famous Chinese Pipa Music* (p. 1). Shanghai Music Publishing House.
- Lissa, S. (1988). On musical understanding (Part 2) (Y. Yu, Trans.). *Music Research*. (2), 89-92.
- Liu, D. (1996). Commentary on the piece. In D. Liu (Ed.), *Collection of Traditional Pipa Music by Liu Dehai* (p. 67). Shanxi Education Press.
- Liu, D. H. (1995). Pipa Schools. *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music*, (01), 58-61. <https://doi.10.16504/j.cnki.cn11-1183/j.1995.01.010>
- Liu, J. (2022). The Practical Application of Music Narrative in Hybrid Electronic Music [Master's thesis, Shanghai Conservatory of Music]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27319/d.cnki>.
- Liu, J. Y. (2015). On the relationship between the titles and musical expression of Ambush from Ten Sides and The King Doffs His Armor. *Contemporary Music*, (22), 106-107.
- Liu, S. (2009). *Art of Pipa Performance*. People's Music Publishing House.

- Liu, L. R. (2023). *Zhang Hongyan delivered a speech at the opening of the Pinghu Pipa Art Performance Talent Training Project* [Graph]. Centre Conservatory of Music News online resource.
- Malterud, N. (2012). Artistic research – Necessary and challenging. In Information, *Nordic Journal of Art and Research*. <http://www.khib.no/media/800946/Nina-Malterud-Artisticresearch-necessary-and-challenging.pdf>
- Maus, F. E. (1991). Music as narrative. *Indiana theory review*, 12, 1-34.
- Maus, F. E. (1997). Narrative, drama, and emotion in instrumental music. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55(3), 293-303.
- Maus, F. E. (2005). Classical instrumental music and narrative. In J. Phelan & P. J. Rabinowitz (Eds.), *A companion to narrative theory* (p. 466). Blackwell Publishing.
- Maus, F. E., Guck, M. A., Fisk, C., Maus, F. E., Webster, J., Warren, A., & Cone, E. T. (1989, January). Edward T. Cone's *The Composer's Voice: Elaborations and Departures*. In *College Music Symposium*, (29), 1-80.
- McNamara, A. (2012). Six rules for practice-led research. *Journal of Writing and Writing Programs*, 2012(S14), 1-15.
- Meng, Q. X. (2020). Exploration of pipa performance techniques of the Ping Hu School. *Art Research*, (02), 106-108.
- Miller, S. S. (2015). *The Social Network: Narrative Theory as a Vehicle for Musical Performance* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, America]. <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/19438>
- Millward, J. A. (2005). Uyghur art music and the ambiguities of Chinese silk roadism in Xinjiang. *The Silk Road Journal*, 3(1), 9-15.
- Nattiez, J. J. (1990). Can one speak of narrativity in music? *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 115(2), 240-257.
- Nicholls, D. (2007). Narrative theory as an analytical tool in the study of popular music texts. *Music and Letters*, 88(2), 297-315.
- Pei, Y. (2008). Thoughts on the division of pipa musical genre in China. *Journal of People's Music*, 2, 30-33.
- Pei, Y. Q. (2008). Reflections on the division of pipa schools in China. *People's Music*, (02), 30-33.
- Penner, N. (2020). *Storytelling in opera and musical theater*. Indiana University Press.
- Penny, J. (2014). Reflections on practice-led research methods and their application in music performance research. *Malaysian Journal of Music*, 3(2), 84-92.
- Ren, H. X. (1994). A preliminary exploration of the aesthetic thoughts in the Ping Hu School of Pipa art. *Symphony (Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music)*, (01), 47-49.
- Ren, W. L. (2019). *Research on the influence of traditional pipa genres on the development of modern pipa* [Master's Thesis, Shanxi Normal University, Shan Xi Province]. Shanxi Normal University. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27287/d.cnki.gsxsu.2019.000950doi:10.27287/d.cnki.gsxsu.2019.000950>
- Shen, H., & Lin, S. (1983). *Yang zheng xuan pipa notation*. Beijing: People's Music Publishing House.
- Shi, Y. (2016). A Review of research on the art of pipa of the Ping Hu School over the past thirty years. *Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music*, (01), 134-139.

- Shi, Y. (2021). A study on the inheritance of modern Jiangsu pipa genre from the perspective of inheritance mode. *Hundred Schools in Arts*, 5, 125-131.
- Su, B. Y. (2011). The combination of form and spirit and reality in pipa performance. *Ethnic Art Studies*, (02), 58-61. <https://doi.10.14003/j.cnki.mzysyj.2011.02.018>
- Sullivan, G. (2009). Making space: The purpose and place of practice-led research. *Practice-led research, research-led practice in the creative arts*, (2), 41-56.
- Sun, L. W. (2002). on *Pipa culture* [Master's thesis, Fu Jian Normal University, Fu Jian province]. Fu Jian Normal University. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=Y2wviAwYlnI2263qntqyDyWT3vNVAPUzIIEAMeyDF-Gfb3Ecc_0axxDbvkg9h1Alu7a-vWT8_LwI7KpZnd6X_-Oz2yUYvoPgeN_M9MNqujrbe7gV4OIPM6MUUsXjIm0ztQpgeYB79FYEpq3CttmOIQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS
- Tang, X. F. (2012). *Investigation report and reflections on the survival status of the traditional Pipa Ping Hu School* [Master's thesis, Central Conservatory of Music, China]. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=JTjHPEokuYQdqoIS_fwVAID-41QR2uGdHuSpXPTzaAH1wt4EDv7uxa5JxxQGQzbOic7VtP2NFwiojnYCVj8YTY7X6oCjxM_yPVCibGT_F_8tLFzDElJmVsZrpArUwajs76JTYxvY8Pgc_HLL_Q-2hA==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS
- Wang, F. J. (1992). Simplicity is beauty: Views on some issues in folk music performance. *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music*, (03), 3-6.
- Wang, X. J. (2016). The development history and artistic characteristics of pipa Wu Qu. *Song of the Yellow River*, (19), 109-110. <https://doi.10.19340/j.cnki.hhzs.2016.19.086>
- Wang, X. J. (2017). A study on the virtual and real in pipa performance. *Northern Music*, (01), 51-52.
- Wang, X. Q. (2013). *The Art of Speech: An Introduction to the Theory of Musical Narrative*, People's Music Publishing House.
- Wang, Y. (2018). *The Marginalization of Regional Pipa Schools in Contemporary China*. *Asian Musicology*, 34(2), 65–79.
- Wang, Y. P. (2020). *Research on Yang Dajun's performance score of Yang Chun Gu Qu* [Master's thesis, Central Conservatory of Music, Bei Jing, China]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27669/d.cnki.gzhyc.2020.000006doi:10.27669/d.cnki.gzhyc.2020.000006>
- Wang, Z. (2005). *Analysis of Famous Pipa Pieces*. China Music Publishing House.
- Wu H. J., & Sun, L. W. (2014). An overview of the development of pipa art in China in the 20th century. *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music*, (04), 35-43. <https://doi.10.16274/j.cnki.cn12-1280/j.2014.04.005>
- Wu, H. J. (2015). Exploring the development of pipa art in 20th century China, *Chinese Musicology*, (02), 130-134+139. <https://doi.10.14113/j.cnki.cn11-1316/j.2015.02.015>
- Wu, H. J., & Sun, L. W. (2014). Overview of the development of Chinese pipa art in the 20th century. *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music*, (04), 35-43. <https://doi.10.16274/j.cnki.cn12-1280/j.2014.04.005>
- Wu, R. (2008). *The study of the five major schools of pipa in Jiang Nan district* [Master's thesis, He Nan University, He Nan province]. He Nan University. https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=3IEynGI71r_VLcx_dti7PA8Hg-GcS83b8E9nw4QYNuZ4N15Eqy3bpsITW_o-nlGm8iwvr5Q_mUM4_xkGCbe-K9lukuZWHnRyOdBdY7LDWWxCEShbfF82zTCHXXXfy6Ys1MPmI9X24rxP-pTxec6zpQ==uniplatform=NZKPTlanguage=CHS

- Xu, R. Y. (2020). Inheritance and development of the pipa art of Ping Hu School - A longitudinal view of the strengths of multiple versions from the artistic characteristics of Yu Lun Pao. *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music, (03)*, 60-78. <https://doi.10.16274/j.cnki.cn12-1280/j.2020.03.006>.
- Xu, R. Y. (2020). The inheritance and development of the Ping Hu School, looking at the advantages of multiple notations from the artistic characteristics of Yu Lun Pao. *Journal of Tianjin Conservatory of Music, (03)*, 60-78. <https://doi.10.16274/j.cnki.cn12-1280/j.2020.03.006>
- Yang, S. S. (1990). *Intangible Cultural Heritage Ping Hu School*. China Federation of Literary and Art Publishing House.
- Yang, X. D. (2011). A Comparison of Three Schools of Sai Shang Qu: Ping Hu School, Wang School, and Pudong School. *Popular Literature and Art, (06)*, 99.
- Yao, Y. (2019). An analysis of the artistic style of pipa Wu Qu: Taking Shi Mian Mai Fu as an example. *Song of the Yellow River, (12)*, 28-32. <https://doi.org/10.19340/j.cnki.hhzs.2019.12.016>
- Yuan, J. F. (1987). *Chinese folk instrumental music*. Shanghai Music Publishing House.
- Yuan, J. F. (1987). *National Instrumental Music*. Shanghai Music Publishing House.
- Yuan, J. F. (2000). *Introduction to Traditional Chinese Music*. Shanghai Music Publishing House.
- Zhang, H. Y. (2016). Thoughts on the gap issue in pipa performance. *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music, (04)*, 43-45+58. <https://doi.10.16504/j.cnki.cn11-1183/j.2016.04.003>
- Zhang, H. Y. (with Li, J. Z.). (2021). *Ancient scores and modern translations: Thirteen Pipa Suits of the Ping Hu School*. Central Conservatory of Music Press.
- Zhang, Q. T. (2021). *A comparative study of Ping Hu School pipa music Ping Sha Luo Yan and Chaozhou music pipa music Ping Sha Luo Yan* [Master's thesis, China Conservatory of Music]. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27654/d.cnki.gzgyc.2021.000015doi:10.27654/d.cnki.gzgyc.2021.000015>
- Zhang, Y. (2023, April 19). Learning and transcending genres is the responsibility and mind of musicians in this era. *China Art Newspaper, A2*.
- Zhang, Y. (2023, May 29). Retrospect and inheritance, pay homage to the Ping Hu School with excellent style and rhyme. *China Art Newspaper, A4*.
- Zhang, Y. Y. (2022). *On the phonetic beauty and its expression of the traditional pipa text piece Wu Lin Yi Yun* [Master's thesis, Shanghai, China]. Shanghai Normal University. <https://link.cnki.net/doi/10.27312/d.cnki.gshsu.2022.002095doi:10.27312/d.cnki.gshsu.2022.002095>.
- Zhang, Y. Y. (2022). *Phonological beauty and expression of pipa's traditional Wen Qu Wu Lin Yi Yun* [Master's thesis, Shanghai Normal University, China].
- Zhao, J. (2017). The formation and characteristics of pipa artistic style of Ping Hu School. *Journal of Zhejiang Art Vocational College, (03)*, 93-99. <https://doi.10.15965/j.cnki.zjys.2017.03.015>
- Zhao, Z. W. (2018). Reflections on the inheritance and development of pipa art in the post-genre era. *Music Composition, (09)*, 191-192.