



# Research on the Evolution of Music Education in the Historical Changes of Gulangyu Island

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## Abstract

In the long history of Gulangyu Island, music education has served as a core element of cultural development, evolving from its initial embryonic stage to a brilliant golden period, and now to a phase of inheritance and innovation in the new era. This paper aims to conduct an in-depth discussion on this topic, analyzing the potential impact of the interplay between foreign and local cultures during the early stages of music education. It will reveal how music education can achieve a deep integration with community culture, gradually forming a unique music education system. Furthermore, the paper will examine the inheritance and evolution of music education in Gulangyu in the new era, with the goal of outlining the historical progression of music education in the region. This exploration highlights the significance of music education in the development of local culture and provides valuable insights and inspiration for future practices in music education.

## Keywords

Gulangyu Island; Music education; Historical changes; Cultural development; Inheritance and innovation

The music education in Gulangyu has gone through the stage from initial exploration to flourishing development, to inheritance and innovation in the new era. In this process of evolution, music education not only carries the historical memory and generation inheritance of local culture but also becomes an important force to promote social progress and mutual learning of civilizations. However, the research on its systematic evolution is still weak. Its unique development process, rich practical experience, and the characteristics and laws displayed in different historical stages need to be deeply explored and summarized.

## 1. Early Sprouting of Music Education in Gulangyu

Gulangyu, a bright pearl inlaid on the southeast coast, is closely connected with the historical changes of the island in its sprout and development of music education. Dating back to the mid-19th century, Gulangyu, as a port of commerce, ushered in the influx of Western culture, providing a unique opportunity for music education to sprout on this land. During this period, Western missionaries and merchants set foot on Gulangyu Island one after another. They not only brought commodities and wealth, but also spread Western culture and education concepts on this land. Among them, music education, as an important part of Western culture, also took root and sprouted in Gulangyu. For example, Western missionaries founded a missionary school on Gulangyu Island. He not only included music lessons in the curriculum, but also personally taught his students Western music theory and techniques. He brought Western Musical Instruments such as pianos and violins for students to experience and learn firsthand. Under his careful guidance, the students gradually mastered the essence of Western music and were able to play beautiful music. In these schools, western music knowledge has been systematically taught, and a group of early musical talents have been cultivated. They have learned Western music theories and techniques, and integrated this knowledge with the

local musical traditions of southern Fujian, injecting unique local characteristics into the music education of Gulangyu (Hao, 2024).

There are rich folk music resources in southern Fujian since ancient times, such as Nanqu and Jinge. This kind of traditional music form has been inherited and developed in Gulangyu, and has blended with western music culture, jointly shaping the unique music culture landscape of Gulangyu. Specifically, Nanqu, with its melodious melody and soulful singing style, is deeply loved by the people of Gulangyu Island. In the process of inheritance, Nanqu artists in Gulangyu retained the traditional singing skills and repertoire but also integrated new elements and performance forms, which made Nanqu full of new vitality. Jinge, with its cheerful rhythm and vivid performance form, has become an integral part of the community music activities in Gulangyu. The singing of the song has not only enriched the cultural life of the islanders but has also become an important way for them to express their feelings and exchange ideas.

With the introduction of Western music culture, Gulangyu's music culture has become more diversified. Western music education emphasizes the combination of theory and practice, the cultivation of music skills, and the mastery of music theory. On the other hand, traditional music education in southern Fujian pays more attention to the inheritance and performance of music and emphasizes the emotional expression and community function of music. The blend of Chinese and Western music makes the music education in Gulangyu not only have the rigor of western music, but also have the unique charm of southern Fujian music. In this context, some families began to attach importance to music education, forming a musical family, they learn music themselves, but also actively participate in community music activities, creating a strong atmosphere for music education in Gulangyu. In addition, Gulangyu also began to hold various concerts, showing the charm of Western music works, and promoting the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western music. At the concert, Gulangyu residents were exposed to the latest Western music works, and it also provided a platform for local musicians to showcase their talents. The holding of the concert further promoted the development of music education in Gulangyu.

## 2. The Golden Age of Music Education in Gulangyu

In the first half of the 20th century, music education in Gulangyu deepened its integration with the community culture and gradually formed a unique music education system, which cultivated many musical talents for the island and the wider society.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in view of the social stability and significant economic growth of Gulangyu, both missionary schools and local schools actively adjusted their teaching strategies and significantly strengthened the music curriculum. They introduced advanced teaching concepts and methods and committed themselves to the systematization and specialization of music education. Church schools have not only increased the number of hours of music courses, but also hired professional music teachers to provide students with more in-depth and comprehensive music education. Local schools also incorporate music education into the formal curriculum system, focusing on cultivating students' music literacy and practical ability. At the same time, Gulangyu's profound community culture provides high-quality soil for music education and breeds a rich and colorful music ecology. Various music associations and bands have sprung up, such as "Gulangyu Music Association", "Island Band", etc., which provide residents with a variety of music activities, such as concerts, music festivals, music competitions, etc., and become important practice places for music education. Community activities not only exercise students' musical skills but also let them feel the charm of music and the importance of teamwork in practice, which greatly promotes the popularization and deepening of music education (Happy Diamond Music Studio, 2019). During this golden period, music education in Gulangyu gradually formed a unique system. Music educators actively explore teaching methods suitable for local students and combine western music theory with southern Fujian music tradition to create unique music teaching materials and courses. For example, they have compiled teaching materials that integrate Chinese and Western music elements, such as the Gulangyu Music Course, which not only contains the basic knowledge of Western music but also integrates the melody and rhythm of southern Fujian music. They also set up music courses with local characteristics, such as southern opera performances and Jin song singing, so that students can feel the charm of local music in learning.

In the first half of the 20th century, Gulangyu not only achieved remarkable development in economic and social aspects but also emerged a group of outstanding musicians and music educators in the field of music. They have made outstanding achievements in music creation and performance, adding infinite glory to the music industry of Gulangyu and even the whole country. They are more committed to the promotion and popularization of music

education and have made outstanding contributions to the training of musical talents and the development of music education. Among them, renowned musicians such as Yin Chengzong and Xu Feiping have made remarkable contributions to music creation and performance, showcasing their exquisite skills and profound artistry. Their music works not only integrate the elements of Chinese and Western music but also deeply explore the unique charm of southern Fujian music, creating a series of music works with local characteristics and the spirit of The Times. For example, Yin Chengzong's "Yellow River" Piano Concerto, which is the first large-scale piano concerto since the founding of New China, is also a milestone in the history of Chinese piano music creation. Inspired by Xian Xinghai's Yellow River Cantata, the work was co-written and adapted by Yin Chengzong and five other veteran musicians (Shuai et al., 2014). The piano Concerto "Yellow River" takes the form of a suite and is divided into four movements, namely "Yellow River Boatman's Song", "Ode to the Yellow River", "Yellow River Anger" and "Defend the Yellow River". The work combines the techniques of Chinese and Western music, showing not only the grandeur of the Yellow River and the heroic struggle of the Chinese people, but also the unique charm of piano music. His works are not only widely spread in Gulangyu Island, but also have a profound influence across the country, becoming a treasure in the treasure house of Chinese music. In addition to their outstanding achievements in music creation and performance, these musicians and music educators are also actively involved in music education. They are well aware of the importance of music education in cultivating talents and promoting social progress, so they spare no effort to pass on the charm of music to more residents. They hold concerts, lectures, music competitions, and other activities, providing residents with a rich variety of musical experiences and learning opportunities, and inspiring the love and pursuit of music across the island. In addition, musicians are committed to the popularization and deepening of music education. They reach out to schools, communities, and villages to provide music education services to residents of all ages and levels. They write textbooks, make lesson plans, and spread the seeds of music in every corner. With their efforts, music education in Gulangyu has gradually formed a unique system and cultivated batches of outstanding musical talents, laying a solid foundation for the golden age of music education in Gulangyu (Wang et al., 2014).

### **3. Inheritance and Development of Music Education in Gulangyu in the New Era**

Entering the new era, music education in Gulangyu has shown new vitality and style in its inheritance and development. The music education in this period not only carries the historical accumulation, but also glows with new glory under the background of the new era, and becomes an important part of Gulangyu culture.

The inheritance of Gulangyu music education in the new era is the continuation and promotion of its profound historical heritage. In the long historical changes, Gulangyu has formed a unique tradition and system of music education, and its valuable experience and resources have been further explored and utilized in the new era. Music educators dig deep into the essence of southern Fujian music culture and integrate it into modern music education so that students can not only master modern music knowledge and skills but also deeply appreciate the charm and connotation of local music. For example, Gulangyu Music School introduced traditional southern Fujian Musical Instruments such as erhu and pipa into the classroom, allowing students to experience and play them by themselves, deepening their understanding and love of local music culture (Yuan et al., 2021). The school also offers a course on the history of Minnan music, which explains the origin, development, and characteristics of Minnan music, so that students can have a more comprehensive understanding of the profound heritage of local music.

With the progress of society and the development of science and technology, the ways and means of music education are constantly updated and changed. Music educators in Gulangyu actively introduce advanced teaching concepts and methods and use modern scientific and technological means to enrich teaching content and forms, making music education more vivid, interesting, and effective. For example, using virtual reality technology, students can experience live performances of different musical styles and broaden their musical horizons. The school has also established a digital music library, where students can access rich music resources anytime and anywhere through electronic devices for independent learning and research. In addition, they also focus on cultivating students' innovative thinking and practical ability and encourage students to show their personality and talent in music creation and performance. Gulangyu Music School regularly holds student music creation competitions, providing students with a platform to display their original works and effectively stimulating their creative passion. At the same time, the school also cooperates with local cultural institutions to jointly organize music festivals and concerts to provide students with more practical opportunities and display platforms (Y. X et al., 2020).

In the context of the new era, music education in Gulangyu also pays more attention to the connection and service with society. Music educators actively organize students to participate in various social music activities, such as

community concerts, public welfare performances, etc., in order to exercise students' practical ability and bring beautiful music enjoyment to society. For example, the teachers and students of Gulangyu Music School often participate in the community's cultural activities and bring wonderful performances to the residents, strengthening the connection between the school and the community. At the same time, they also pay attention to the combination of music education and tourism culture, using music to show the unique charm of Gulangyu, attracting many tourists to come to enjoy and learn. Some tourist attractions in Gulangyu regularly hold music-themed activities, such as the "Gulangyu Music Festival", which attracts a large number of tourists and also provides a stage for students to show their talents.

The inheritance and development of Gulangyu music education in the new era also benefit from the extensive support and deep concern of the government and all sectors of society. The government has increased the investment in music education, and also provided rich educational resources, creating more superior teaching conditions for schools. In recent years, the government has invested in the construction of Gulangyu Concert Hall. This modern music hall not only has advanced sound equipment and a comfortable auditorium but also provides a high-quality performance and practice place for teachers and students, which greatly improves their music experience and learning effect. The government has also issued a series of relevant policies to encourage music schools in Gulangyu to carry out in-depth cooperation and exchanges with music education institutions at home and abroad. The policy not only promotes the sharing of educational resources but also injects an international element into music education in Gulangyu, enhancing its educational level and international influence. Through cooperation with internationally renowned music education institutions, the school has introduced advanced teaching concepts and methods, and further enriched the teaching content and forms. In addition, all sectors of society have also given high attention and support to the development of music education in Gulangyu. Some local businesses and foundations have established music Education development funds, which provide financial support for the school, facilitate educational innovation and international exchange, improve teaching facilities for the school, and provide more learning and development opportunities for teachers and students. Local companies have also established close cooperation with music schools in Gulangyu, co-hosting events such as music competitions and music festivals, providing students with more practical opportunities and display platforms, as well as opportunities to communicate and interact with professionals in the industry, thereby broadening their musical horizons and career development paths. Finally, the development of music education in Gulangyu also benefits from the support of some well-known musicians and artists. They are often invited to Gulangyu to give lectures and teach, bringing valuable artistic experience and guidance to the teachers and students of the school. The arrival of the artists not only inspired the students' love and pursuit of music art, but also injected new vitality and inspiration into the music education of the school. Their guidance and suggestions have played a positive role in promoting the quality and level of music education in Gulangyu (Zhuang et al., 2024).

#### **4. Conclusion**

In summary, the historical transformation of music education in Gulangyu is a rich and multifaceted developmental process that bears witness to the convergence and clash of Chinese and Western cultures, as well as the pivotal role of music education in the development of local culture. From the early sprouting phase to the glorious golden age of the first half of the 20th century, and on to the inheritance and development in the new era, music education in Gulangyu has continuously adapted to the changes of the times, forming a distinctive educational system. Throughout this process, music educators in Gulangyu have explored and innovated courageously, contributing significantly to the cultivation of outstanding musical talents and the preservation and development of Minnan music culture. In the future, music education in Gulangyu will continue to shine under the backdrop of the new era, injecting new vitality into the prosperity and development of local culture, and contributing more "Gulangyu sounds" to the diversity of world music.

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