

# **THEORY AND PRACTICE OF INTEGRATING CHINESE FOLK SONGS AND JAZZ MUSIC: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON MUSICAL ONTOLOGY AND INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** This study explores the possibilities and practical approaches for integrating Chinese traditional folk songs with jazz music. Under globalization, Chinese folk songs face challenges of inheritance and innovation, while jazz—an inclusive and improvisational global musical language—offers opportunities for modernization and international dissemination. Using jazz big-band arrangements, the study selects two representative folk songs, *Jasmine Flower* and *A Little River Flows*, analyzing the use of techniques such as reharmonization, rhythmic adaptation, modal interchange, and big-band orchestration to create new artistic repertoire.

**Method:** The study first reviews the historical development and artistic features of Chinese folk songs and jazz, establishing the historical necessity and cultural value of their integration. It then conducts comparative analysis of melody, harmony, and rhythm from a musical-ontological perspective. Based on these differences, it proposes technical strategies—modal grafting, rhythmic reconstruction, reharmonization, and jazz big-band orchestration—to transform contrasts into creative potential. This framework is tested through detailed arrangement analyses of the two selected folk songs.

**Findings:** Results show that such cross-cultural integration revitalizes traditional folk songs and enriches Chinese jazz with distinct national cultural characteristics. The practice enhances the international influence of Chinese music, offers diverse references for future preservation and development of folk songs, and expands the repertoire for the sinicization of jazz.

**Conclusion:** The study provides a systematic theoretical and practical roadmap for integrating Chinese folk songs with jazz, elevating the field from artistic experimentation to academic inquiry. Concert evaluations of the arranged works demonstrate that this integration strengthens cultural soft power, supports the national intangible cultural heritage strategy of “creative transformation and innovative development,” and brings new life to both traditions.

**Keywords:** Chinese Folk Song, Jazz Music, Musical Integration/Fusion, Intercultural/Cross-Cultural, Arrangement/Adaptation

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## INTRODUCTION

Chinese folk songs, as a treasure in the cultural and artistic repository of the Chinese nation, have accumulated thousands of years of history, carrying rich cultural information and national sentiment. With their unique primitive and vernacular nature, they are deeply rooted in the cultural soil of the Chinese nation, becoming a spiritual link connecting history and modernity, the individual and the collective. The primitive nature of folk songs imbues them with vibrant vitality, as every melody and lyric reflects the subtleties and spiritual outlook of social life in different eras. Their vernacular nature shapes the soul of the folk songs, making them closely linked to specific regional cultures and becoming a vivid carrier of regional context. The dialect rhythms and delicate embellishment techniques rich in regional characteristics not only greatly enrich the artistic expressive power of folk songs but also evoke a strong sense of national cultural belonging and identity in the listener's heart.

However, like all traditional cultural forms, Chinese folk songs also face the dual challenge of inheritance and innovation in the process of historical development and social change. In today's context of diverse global cultural clashes and the vigorous development of modern music culture, the living space of Chinese folk songs is being squeezed, and their inheritance and development face severe challenges. On the one hand, changes in modern lifestyles have led to the gradual loss of the social soil on which traditional folk songs depend for survival, and their inherent dissemination methods are struggling to adapt to the needs of modern society. On the other hand, the younger generation's exposure to and understanding of traditional folk songs are decreasing, and their awareness of the artistic value and cultural connotation is gradually fading, leading to a shrinking audience for folk songs and a clear lack of vitality in their inheritance.

Therefore, how to creatively transform and innovatively develop Chinese folk songs in the context of the new era, allowing them to radiate new vitality while retaining their national cultural roots, has become an important issue before us. The inheritance and development of folk songs cannot merely remain at the level of theoretical research; they need to actively move towards stage practice, showcasing their historical depth, national spirit, aesthetic value, and unique charm in performance. At the same time, the innovative development of folk songs should not only be reflected in the reform of performance forms but also in keeping up with the times in terms of themes and content. Composers and performers need to deeply explore and reflect new themes of contemporary social life, creating excellent folk song works that reflect the spiritual landscape and aesthetic pursuits of contemporary people. As is widely sung, the Jiangsu folk song *Jasmine Flower*, its success lies in innovating and adapting it using new arrangement techniques and performance forms while respecting the traditional folk melody, enabling it to move from a regional folk song to the entire country and even the world, becoming a classic work with contemporary vitality.

### 1) National Strategy and the Necessity of Innovation

In the context of the new era, the Chinese government has elevated the protection and inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) to the level of a national strategy. The core policy emphasizes "creative transformation and innovative development" (People.cn, 2024), aiming to strengthen cultural identity and confidence. Consequently, this study actively utilizes new arrangement techniques and integrates jazz performance forms for innovative adaptation. This methodological approach responds directly to the national mandate by exploring cross-cultural musical dialogue, injecting new impetus into the modernization of Chinese folk songs, and demonstrating a pathway for regional folk songs to achieve national and global recognition.

### 2) Jazz Music as a Universal and Adaptive Medium

Unlike the intrinsic local nature of Chinese folk songs, jazz music, which originated in the early 20th century in African American communities in the United States, demonstrates powerful global dissemination. Jazz is characterized by improvisation, syncopated rhythm, chord

extensions, and the blues scale, enabling it to transcend cultural boundaries and spread throughout the world. Furthermore, jazz's historical proclivity for musical style integration and innovation has led to the emergence of numerous genres such as Latin Jazz, Afro-Jazz, and Fusion Jazz. This multicultural musical style provides a broad and accommodating framework for the adaptation of Chinese folk songs. Crucially, the institutional perception of jazz in China has undergone a critical transformation, moving from the initial "decadent sound" to a complex art form officially recognized by the government in 2005 (Wang, 2022). This official sanction—marked by the establishment of jazz education at institutions like the Shanghai Conservatory of Music—provides the necessary institutional opportunity for systematic and academic integration attempts.

### **3) Research Goals and Value**

This study is firmly based on a global cultural perspective, aiming to deeply analyze the theoretical foundation and methodology for the integration of Chinese folk songs and jazz music. The central methodology involves elucidating the intrinsic connection and differences between the two musical traditions and subsequently exploring effective technical strategies for utilizing jazz elements. This action is designed to inject new vitality into the localization and development of Chinese jazz, simultaneously providing theoretical concepts for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese folk songs in a modern context.

## **LITERATURE REVIEWS**

Systematic academic research focusing specifically on the integration of Chinese folk songs and jazz music is currently recognized as being in its nascent stage. This review serves to critically examine existing research and to delineate the specific, unique contribution of this study.

### **1) Current Status of Chinese Folk Song Research: Policy-Driven Development Focusing on Inheritance, Protection, and Innovative Development**

Academic research on Chinese folk songs revolves primarily around two major, complementary themes: inheritance/protection and innovation/development (Zhou, 2008). Concepts vital to this field, such as "living protection" and the role of "inheritors," are closely aligned with the national ICH protection policy (Pishu.cn, 2023). The theoretical contributions of prominent scholars like Tian Qing have influenced the formulation of the ICH Law, and policies like "ICH into campus" have been successfully institutionalized (Shanghai Conservatory of Music, 2023)30. This trajectory confirms that the protection of Chinese folk songs has progressed beyond mere academic interest and has been elevated to a grand cultural strategy driven by national policy. Simultaneously, the academic community has explored various pathways for the modern adaptation of traditional folk songs. Cai (2012) discussed multiple modes of modernization transformation for traditional music, analyzing folk song adaptation as a path to innovation in a modern musical context. Furthermore, Meng (2020) focused on contemporary New Folk Song creation, asserting that new folk songs must reflect the spirit of the times and resonate with contemporary emotional experiences to achieve a successful modern transformation of the traditional genre.

### **2) Current Status of Jazz Research in China: Cognitive Transformation from "Foreign Import" to "Localization"**

The historical development of jazz in China has been tumultuous, characterized by periods of acceptance and rejection, notably its disappearance after being labeled the "decadent sound". A decisive turning point occurred in 2005 with the establishment of jazz education at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, representing the official recognition of the genre by the Chinese government and subsequently shedding its prior image as "decadent music". Wang Linfeng's doctoral dissertation systematically analyzed this transformation, highlighting that this recognition enables Chinese musicians to clearly understand the genre's history and current

status, thereby viewing jazz as an effective systematic tool for cross-cultural dialogue and the potential "saving of traditional Chinese music" (Wang, 2022). This official acceptance of jazz has provided the political and academic legitimacy required to pursue systematic fusion methodologies, directly enabling the realization of the national ICH strategy for folk song innovation.

### **3) Commentary on Existing Integration Practices: Practice Precedes Theory, Theory Lags Behind**

Notwithstanding the recognized lack of a systematic theoretical framework, the practical field of Chinese folk song and jazz integration has already witnessed the emergence of several successful artistic cases. Significant examples of these pioneering efforts include Kong Hongwei's "Golden Buddha Jazz," which integrates Silk Road themes; Cui Jian's "Silk Road Jazz," which features a cross-cultural dialog between the Suona and the saxophone (Zhang, 2018); and the innovative interpretation of The Purple Bamboo Melody (《紫竹调》) by the Shanghai JZ All-Stars Jazz Big Band (Xu, 2019). These performances, all involving jazz adaptation of Chinese folk songs, have garnered attention from national media and have been highly appreciated by the younger generation, who frequently share the videos and describe the fusion as "high-level," "pleasing to the ear," and "special" on social media. However, the continued observation that "practice precedes theory, theory lags behind" mandates that academia must provide a systematic, operable theory and methodology for integration. Accordingly, this study shifts its primary focus from broad, macro discourse to the theoretical validation of micro-practice.

## **BASIS FOR CASE SELECTION: REPRESENTATIVENESS, STRUCTURE, AND CULTURAL SYMBOLISM**

This study intends to validate the theoretical framework for Chinese folk song-jazz integration through the rigorous analysis of specific and contrasting cases. The selection of *Jasmine Flower* and *A Little River Flows* as arrangement cases is based on their significant value in providing cultural representativeness, structural contrast in music, and maximizing the opportunity to verify the robustness (鲁棒性) of the research strategies. The contrasting structural natures of these two songs were deliberately chosen to serve as an ideal "double verification" structure for the theoretical model.

### **1) *Jasmine Flower* : International Symbol, Structural Simplicity, and the Testing Ground for Functional Reharmonization**

The Jiangsu folk song *Jasmine Flower* was selected as the first case due to its irreplaceable cultural symbolism and the simplicity of its musical structure.

#### **1.1) Cultural Symbolism and International Dissemination Power**

The history of *Jasmine Flower* dates back to the Qing Dynasty, and it has long surpassed its regional origin to become the most representative Chinese music symbol internationally. Its circulation overseas began as early as the late 18th century, and its inclusion by Italian composer Puccini in the opera *Turandot* solidified its reputation as "China's musical business card to the world" (Li, 2017). The jazz adaptation of this specific international symbol allows the study to directly demonstrate the practical value of the fusion strategy in enhancing the international influence of Chinese music and supporting the national cultural strategy.

#### **1.2) Structural Simplicity and Technical Challenges**

From an ontological perspective, the melody of *Jasmine Flower* is characterized by being simple, regular, and highly pentatonic, with harmony predominantly utilizing simple triads. This "clean" structure provides the maximum creative space necessary for the application of complex jazz techniques, specifically reharmonization and rhythmic reconstruction. The case is instrumental in verifying how to employ the strong functional harmonic vocabulary of jazz

to inject a modern "Swing" groove and color without compromising its fundamental "Oriental charm", making it key to testing the effectiveness of a functional jazz fusion strategy.

## 2) *A Little River Flows* : Regional Difference, Modal Characteristics, and the Potential for Aesthetic Reconstruction

The selection of the Yunnan mountain folk song *A Little River Flows* serves to provide a fusion model that contrasts sharply with *Jasmine Flower* in terms of region, structure, and aesthetic imagery.

### 2.1) Regional Representativeness and the Imagery of "Oriental Serenade"

*A Little River Flows* originates from Mitu in Dali, Yunnan, and stands as a typical representative of the Western mountain folk song genre. Arranged and adapted by Yin Yigong in 1947, it is celebrated for its ethereal, distant, sincere, and pure lyrical imagery, earning it the designation of the "Oriental Serenade". It was included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List (Midu Folk Songs) in 2011. Its pronounced regionality and profound emotional depth make it an ideal vehicle for practicing cross-cultural aesthetic imagery reconstruction (Li, Su. (2020)).

### 2.2) Modal Structure and the Coherence with Cool Jazz

From the perspective of musical ontology, the melody of *A Little River Flows* is highly pentatonic, naturally lacking chromaticism and functional leading tones, exhibiting open intervals and a contemplative imagery. This specific structural characteristic is found to align highly with the aesthetic tendency of Modal Jazz. Consequently, this case aims to verify how to employ Cool Jazz techniques (Levine, M.), such as the Dorian mode and non-functional harmony, to successfully retain its intrinsic "ethereal" imagery while simultaneously imbuing it with a calm, modern jazz sensibility, thus expanding the scope of the study's modal fusion strategy.

**3) Conclusion : The Validation Value of Contrasting Cases for the Theoretical Framework**  
 The structural simplicity and regularity of *Jasmine Flower*, contrasted with the ethereal and modal characteristics of *A Little River Flows*, establish an optimal "double verification" structure based on musical ontology. The analysis of *Jasmine Flower* validates the capacity of strong functional jazz techniques to revitalize and activate a classic melody. Conversely, the analysis of *A Little River Flows* validates the superiority of modal jazz techniques in preserving the specific "flavor" (韵味) and "imagery" (意境) unique to regional folk songs. This deliberate comparative analysis ensures that the resulting fusion theoretical framework is systematic, comprehensive, and robust, providing a powerful empirical foundation that directly supports the technical adaptation practices detailed in the following chapter.

**茉莉花**  
**Mòlìhuā - Jasmine Flower**      Chinese Folk Traditional

Adagio

好 一 朵 美 丽 的 茉 莉 花      芬 芳 美 丽 满 枝 檀 又 香 又 白 人 人 跨

好 一 朵 美 丽 的 茉 莉 花

芬 芳 美 丽 满 枝 檀 又 香 又 白 人 人 跨

让 我 来 将 你 摘 下 送 给 别 人 家

茉 莉 花 呀 茉 莉 花

Figure 1 Examples 1 *Jasmine Flower* origin



Figure 2 Examples 2 Little River Flowing origin

## ARTISTIC RESEARCH AND ARRANGEMENT PRACTICE

This chapter details the practical application of the theoretical framework proposed in the preceding sections. Through the detailed analysis of the two representative Chinese folk songs, this section elucidates the specific technical execution and aesthetic considerations involved in the fusion practice, thereby validating the closed-loop research model where theory guides practice and practice informs theory. The analysis demonstrates the creative harmonization and transformation of two fundamentally distinct musical languages to achieve a cross-cultural musical form that retains the essence of the folk song while exhibiting the vitality of jazz.

**1) Case Analysis I: *Jasmine Flower* — Dialogue Between Jiangnan Melody and Swing Jazz**  
 The Jiangsu folk song *Jasmine Flower* is recognized for its beautiful, fluid melody, simple pentatonic structure, and typical Gong mode characteristics. Its original version is rhythmically stable, often in a 2/2 or 2/4 meter, and embodies a "neutral and peaceful" (中正平和) aesthetic. The objective of this adaptation was to preserve the core melodic beauty while utilizing jazz rhythmic and harmonic vocabulary to infuse a "Swing" groove and modern color.

**1.1) Creative Approach and Fusion Strategy: Rhythmic Reconstruction and Reharmonization**  
 The core fusion strategy for *Jasmine Flower* centered on rhythmic reconstruction and reharmonization to achieve the cross-cultural transformation of musical ontology. Rhythmic Reconstruction: The first step involved converting the stable rhythm of the original 2/2 or 2/4 meter into the 4/4 meter framework necessary to accommodate the jazz big band's rhythmic groove. The essence of this technique involved redistributing rhythmic units, converting the stable notes into a Swing rhythm characterized by syncopation and backbeat accents. This action fundamentally activates the melody's internal vitality, allowing the originally "internal" melody to acquire the tension and dynamic movement associated with a jazz groove.

Reharmonization (Harmonic Reharmonization): Complex jazz functional chords (such as seventh, ninth, and eleventh chords) were applied to the original pentatonic melody (Levine, 1995). The principle guiding reharmonization was strictly defined: utilizing color tension notes (Tensions) to increase harmonic richness and tension without forcefully altering the melodic center or destroying the inherent "Oriental charm".

Orchestration and Timbre Layering: The arrangement employed the full complement of a jazz big band (brass, saxophones, rhythm section). Notably, a string quartet was integrated to intertwine with the brass section. This layering strategy was specifically implemented to

acoustically simulate the clear and graceful timbre of traditional Chinese instruments, particularly in the high register, achieving a cross-cultural dialogue at the level of timbre.

### 1.2) Musical Example Analysis and Theoretical Validation: Application of Color Tensions

**A. Rhythmic Conversion Analysis:** The ontological analysis of the rhythmic conversion shows the transformation from the original 2/2 (or 2/4) meter to 4/4. Through the precise redistribution of rhythmic values, the melody's previously stable notes are converted to a Swing character. For example, the rhythm in the third measure is precisely syncopated and placed on the up-beat, and the introduction of syncopation in the fourth measure ensures that the "neutral and peaceful" melody acquires a new dynamic groove. This rhythmic deconstruction and reconstruction serves as the musical ontological basis for the successful transition from a Jiangnan folk melody to Swing Jazz.



Figure 3 Example 3: Original third and fifth bars of Jasmine Flower



Figure 4 Example 4: Third and fifth bars of Jasmine Flower after rhythmic reconstruction

**B. Application of Color Tensions (Tensions) in Reharmonization:** The adaptation uses a sequence of complex jazz chords, such as, to harmonize the melodic skeleton. These chords are rich in color tension notes. The theoretical basis for this chord selection centers on the relationship between the melodic note and the chord's tension note constituents. The application of the ninth (9th), where the melodic note E acts as the 9th of the chord, softens the harmonic sound, creating an aesthetic effect of suspension and transparency. The application of the fourth or eleventh (4th/11th), such as in (suspended fourth) and, creates bright, expansive, and mysterious tonalities. In the, the 4th replaces the 3rd, effectively weakening the chord's functional resolution tendency and imparting a modal (Modal) character to the timbre. Ultimately, the precise application of these color tension notes (9, 11, 4) successfully transforms the simple folk melody into an expansive and modernly mysterious piece, achieving the fusion and elevation of aesthetic imagery from a cross-cultural perspective without compromising the folk song's "Oriental charm".



**Figure 5** Example 5: Harmony of the first four bars of the original *Jasmine Flower*, with melody notes often on the 1st and 3rd degrees of the chords



**Figure 6** Example 6: Four bars of *Jasmine Flower* after reharmonization, with melody notes often on the 9th, 11th, and 4th degrees of the chords

**Figure 7** Examples 7 Big Bang Jazz Orchestration and Intertwining Application of Timbre in *Jasmine Flower*

## 2) Case Analysis II: *A Little River Flows* — Aesthetic Reconstruction of Yunnan Folk Song and Cool Jazz

*A Little River Flows*, a Yunnan mountain folk song, is structurally highly pentatonic, notably lacking chromaticism and leading tones. This structure results in an ethereal and peaceful aesthetic. The adaptation strategy for this piece favored Cool Jazz and Modal Jazz techniques to intentionally preserve its inherent ethereal and contemplative quality.

### 2.1) Musical Ontology Deconstruction and Modal Reconstruction

**A. Core Modal Selection:** The critical first step in achieving cross-cultural fusion was placing the melody of *A Little River Flows* within the Dorian mode (Levine, 1995). The D Dorian mode was selected for its high congruence with the open intervals inherent in the pentatonic melody. The primary chord was established as, which is a typical Modal Jazz technique (Monson, 1996), designed to enrich the tonal color while simultaneously weakening the tendency toward functional harmonic resolution, thereby immersing the listener in the modal atmosphere and aesthetic imagery of the song.

**B. Rhythmic Syncopation:** To transform the slow tempo (Rubato) aesthetic imagery of the folk song into a Modern Jazz Swing groove, the original melody's rhythm necessitated syncopation. This involved cutting the long notes of the original melody into irregular

groupings of eighth notes and sixteenth notes. This treatment successfully introduced motion and a jazz sensibility to the melodic line, making it conform to the rhythmic characteristics of Bebop vocabulary.



Figure 8 Example 8: Main melody rhythm of Little River before adaptation



Figure 9 Example 9: Main melody rhythm of Little River after syncopated treatment in the adaptation

## 2.2) Innovative Harmonic Framework and Modality Practice

The adaptation adopted the classic **AABA modal framework** structure, reminiscent of *So What*, and incorporated the technical application of Non-Functional Harmony (Levine, 1995).

**A. Structural Tension: Chromatic Side-Slipping:** The B section was established as the core point of structural tension. The modal center instantly shifted (Chromatic Planing or Side-Slipping) to the modal region. This sudden transposition by a minor second generates a high degree of structural contrast, representing a classical practice of the Miles Davis modal jazz style.

**B. Internal Tension: Pedal Point Chords:** Within the sustained area of the A section, the chord (Levine, 1995) was introduced. The bass note D remained static (Pedal), while the upper chord formed a **Tritone relationship** with the bass D, successfully generating strong harmonic friction (Friction).

**C. Ultimate Momentum: Tritone Dominant Substitution:** To achieve a powerful and decisive return to at the conclusion of the B section, a **Tritone Dominant** substitute chord, was employed. The in creates a specific voice leading resonance with the preceding modal center, thereby combining the elements of chromatic side-slipping with functional resolution.

**The Little River Flows**  
**小河淌水** Arr Yuan Yi Qin

**A** D-11

**A** D-11

**A** D-11

**B** E♭-11

**A** D-11

**A** D-11

**Figure 10** Score Example 10: Innovation of the harmonic framework and Modality practice in Little River

### 2.3) Big Band Orchestration Layering and the Art of Contrast

The arrangement fully utilized the extensive resources of the jazz big band configuration to achieve sophisticated layering and contrast in timbre, functional roles, and dynamics. The chord configurations employed dense and rootless chords in the saxophone section. Functional layering was meticulously planned, with the trumpet section specifically dedicated to executing syncopated accents and high tension notes. Timbre and dynamic contrast were achieved through the strategic switching between mutes and open bells, allowing for precise control of emotional fluctuations throughout the piece.



**Figure 11** Examples 11 Big Band Jazz Weaving, Layering, and Contrast in Little River Flowing

### 3) Practice Evaluation Results

The final adapted works were assessed through a public concert performance, followed by a quantitative survey ( $N=85$ ) and qualitative semi-structured interviews ( $N=12$  with formal musical backgrounds).

Table I below presents the quantitative results:

**Table I** Quantitative Results of Fusion Work Practical Evaluation ( $N=85$ )

Abstract Concept	Operational Indicator	Mean	SD
Artistic Aesthetic Quality	Structural Integrity	4.02	0.61
	Jazz Technique Application	3.75	0.88
	Emotional Expression	4.31	0.49
Cultural Connotation	Folk Song Identifiability	4.55	0.35
	East-West Balance	4.10	0.55
	Cultural Congruence	4.48	0.42
Acceptance	Overall Satisfaction	4.25	0.51
	Recommendation Intention	4.15	0.58
	Innovation Perception	3.90	0.70

The quantitative data clearly show that the indicators "Folk Song Identifiability" (Mean=4.55) and "Cultural Congruence" (Mean=4.48) received the highest scores. This outcome provides direct validation that the adopted fusion strategy—preserving the core pentatonic melody while applying jazz reharmonization only to subsidiary structures—achieved high acceptance and cultural recognition among the audience. The high score confirms that successful cross-cultural fusion must prioritize the ontological stability and immediate recognizability of the source cultural element (Chinese folk song).

However, the lowest relative score was assigned to "Jazz Technique Application" (Mean=3.75), which also exhibited the largest standard deviation (SD=0.88), indicating considerable variance in listener perception regarding the complex technical elements of the arrangement.

The qualitative interview data illuminated a critical artistic conflict. While general audience satisfaction with "Emotional Expression" (Mean=4.31) was high, with one respondent noting the ability to detect a "subtle melancholy and poetry" supported by the jazz color (A11), professional listeners raised structural critiques. These experts argued that the rhythmic essence of jazz was compromised in the adaptation process. For instance, one interviewee stated that the "Swing feel was sacrificed" in order to accommodate the inherent regularity of the folk song, resulting in music that sounded more like "classical music with jazz chords" rather than authentic jazz groove (B03).

This contradiction reveals a fundamental limitation of the current fusion model: the rhythmic regularity characteristic of Chinese folk music genres appears to conflict directly with the rhythmic complexity and syncopated essence (the rhythmic ontology) central to the jazz aesthetic. The necessity of achieving ontological stability for cultural acceptance may have inadvertently compromised the rhythmic authenticity required for technical jazz recognition. This finding establishes a crucial technical challenge that future research must address: achieving an optimal rhythmic balance between cultural recognizability and strict jazz authenticity.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

### 1) Summary of Theoretical Contribution and Practical Value

This research successfully elucidated a systematic theory and practical roadmap for the fusion of Chinese folk songs and jazz music. Through a detailed analysis grounded in music ontology, this study confirmed the commonalities between the two music genres in terms of emotional expression and inherent improvisational potential, establishing a clear bridge for cross-cultural integration. The key achievement of this research lies in constructing a strategic theoretical framework capable of transforming the structural differences between the two music genres into creative artistic potential. This systematic roadmap has successfully elevated the field of folk song and jazz fusion from a scattered collection of artistic practices to a domain of rigorous academic inquiry. Practical evaluation via a large-ensemble arrangement concert confirmed that this cross-cultural music fusion not only injects new vitality into traditional folk songs but also imbues the development of Chinese jazz with a unique national cultural essence. This successful integration provides a viable pathway to enhance China's international influence and cultural soft power, actively supporting the national strategy of "creative transformation and innovative development" for Intangible Cultural Heritage.

### 2) Outlook

#### 2.1) Future Research Directions

Based on the limitations of this study and the issues identified during the practical evaluation, we propose the following three specific future research directions:

#### 2.2) Exploring the Balance of Rhythmic Ontology: Application of Polyrhythms and Odd Meters

Given the criticism from some professional audience members regarding the conflict between the traditional Swing Feel and the rhythmic regularity of folk songs during the practical evaluation, future research should focus on resolving the deeper contradictions between the rhythmic ontology of jazz and the rhythmic characteristics of Chinese folk songs. It is suggested to move beyond the confines of traditional \$4/4\$ Swing and explore more flexible and open jazz subgenres, such as Latin Jazz, Fusion, or experiment with the jazzification of folk songs under Polyrhythm or Odd Meter. This approach will help retain the folk song's

charm while providing a more complex rhythmic framework, enhancing the improvisational groove and modern feel of the works.

### 2.3) Expanding the Scope of Fusion Subjects: Challenging Regional Music Genres

This study primarily focused on Han Chinese folk songs with relatively regular structures. Future research can shift the focus to regional music genres with grander structures and richer improvisational components to expand the breadth of the fusion model. For instance, adapting the Xinjiang Twelve Muqam or Mongolian Long Song, which are more rhythmically and structurally complex, into jazz. These genres possess unique ontological characteristics in melody, mode, and rhythm, posing more stringent challenges to jazz rhythm, harmony, and improvisational treatment. Concurrently, this will better test the universality of the "Ontological Partition" fusion model proposed in this study.

### 2.4) Deepening the Application of Jazz Techniques: Form and Timbre Ontological Transformation

Future research can deepen the focus from a purely harmonic level to the level of Form. For example, studying how to apply the structural framework of specific jazz forms (such as Rhythm Changes or Blues Form) to the transformation of Chinese folk songs, thereby utilizing the folk song themes as the new core for improvisation and achieving re-innovation of classic jazz form structures. Furthermore, in-depth research should be conducted on the Timbre Ontological Transformation of traditional Chinese instruments (such as Erhu, Guzheng) within the context of jazz improvisation. Exploration should focus on utilizing playing techniques and electronic effects to enable the timbre of traditional instruments to better integrate into the jazz ensemble structure and improvisational dialogue.

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