

An Ecomusicology of Shaanxi Erhu based on “*Lan Huahua Ballade*”

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ABSTRACT

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Ecomusicology is a type of comprehensive study that attempts to use ethnomusicology or an anthropological lens to study music or the nature of sound (sonic), which is related to human social and cultural habits as well as the relationship to nature or the environment. Shaanxi erhu, otherwise known as “*Qin pai erhu*”, is a specific erhu music school with its special playing skills, strong regional characteristics formed through Shaanxi music style, adaption and creation based on Shaanxi local music elements including folk songs from north area and operas from Guan Zhong area. This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis and understanding about Shaanxi erhu and its performance practice by studying the influence of north Shaanxi ecology and environment on Shaanxi erhu based on the representative work “*Lan Huahua ballade*”. The outcome of the study has instructional significance in erhu music pedagogy and, to some extent, helps heighten environmental awareness. In addition, a comprehensive understanding and analysis about Shaanxi erhu provide necessary references for future scholars and erhu players.

Contribution/Originality: This study is one of very few studies which have investigated the ecomusicology of Shaanxi erhu. It provides an in-depth understanding of its performance practices by examining the influence of northern Shaanxi’s ecology and environment, with a focus on the representative work “*Lan Huahua Ballade*”.

1. Introduction

Ecomusicology, also known as ecocritical musicology, was defined by Allen (2014) as the examination of the intricate interrelations among music, culture, and nature. This field addresses both textual and performative musical and sonic phenomena as they pertain to ecological and environmental contexts. In addition, Titon (2013) explained the

definition by describing ecomusicology as, “*the study of music, culture, sound and nature in a period of environmental crisis.*” Ecomusicology is a multifaceted and intricate concept encompassing a wide range of components. It is essential to distinguish ecomusicology from both musicology and ethnomusicology, as the former subsumes both fields while extending beyond their scope. Ecomusicology is neither solely musicology nor ethnomusicology, but rather encompasses elements of both (Allen & Dawe, 2015). This is due to the intricate nature of the key concepts involved—music and sound, culture and society, nature and environment—where the resulting insights should transcend the mere aggregation of these elements. Given the complexity of these terms, ecomusicology can also be viewed as the critical study of the relationship between music/sound and the environment. Furthermore, it represents an interdisciplinary approach, merging music and sound studies with environmental and ecological sciences (Allen, 2014). Allen (2014) noted that the earliest references to ecomusicology can be traced back to Gardiner’s (1832) publication, which explicitly explored the relationship between music and nature. As a trailblazer in the study of soundscapes and acoustic ecology, Schafer (1993) is often credited with introducing the term “ecomusicology” in his work *Troup*.

Since the 1970s, research on ecomusicology has garnered significant attention in North America, driven by growing academic concern for environmental issues. Its early manifestations can be traced to the works of influential figures such as composer R. Murray Schafer (Schafer, 1977). Ecomusicology initially served as a framework for examining the intricate, multifaceted, and enduring relationships between organisms and their physical environments (Allen, 2011). However, it has recently developed into a combination of “ecocriticism” and “musicology” (Allen, 2011). Ecocriticism looks at cultural products that imagine and portray human-environment relationships (Buell, 1995). Scholars in the field of ecomusicology often concentrate on analyzing the intricate relationships between organisms and their environments, employing interpretive, political, and critical methodologies. For instance, ecocritics delve into the subtexts of diverse media—ranging from literature to film and advertising—to foster awareness and engagement with environmental crises. Moreover, they critically examine their own interpretive and political perspectives to ensure reflective and rigorous inquiry (Garrard, 2004). Musicology, as the other part of ecomusicology, is basically any field that is related to music such as historical musicology, ethnomusicology, and other related interdisciplinary fields. The inclusion of musicology in increases the broadness of ecomusicology by bringing together fields that do not usually interact. This kind of broadness in turn makes a big contribution in the sense that scholars can have more flexibility to combine diverse disciplines in ecocritical studies of music. Therefore, ecomusicology can provide us with a whole new perspective to look at old problems in music and culture.

This study seeks to apply an ecomusicological approach to the examination of Shaanxi erhu, offering readers a novel perspective on this traditional instrument. More specifically, the study revolves around the representative Shaanxi erhu work “Lan Huahua ballade” and considers Shaanxi erhu music through the lens of nature and environment. The aims of this research are stated as follows:

- i. To investigate the stylistic formation of Shaanxi erhu music from an ecomusicological perspective by studying the Loess Plateau region.
- ii. To analyze the representative works of Shaanxi erhu music “Lan Huahua Balla” and their relation to the historical and cultural background of Shaanxi.

The findings of this study will hold instructional value for music pedagogy while also contributing to the enhancement of environmental awareness. In addition, a comprehensive understanding and analysis about Shaanxi erhu can provide necessary references for future scholars and erhu players.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The erhu

According to [Xi \(2017\)](#), early documentation and related literature on the erhu can be traced back to works such as Yuan Shi of the Song Dynasty (1310), Xu Xu Lu of Nanzi (1621), and Wang Yiyuan Zhiyan (1526). Throughout the history of Chinese music, the Erhu holds a prominent position. It is not only a key representative of traditional Chinese musical culture but also an integral part of the Chinese national instrument ensemble ([Thrasher, 2008](#); [Zhang, 2016](#)). Its distinctive timbre and emotional expressiveness have established it as one of the most iconic instruments in Chinese music, earning it widespread admiration and respect from music enthusiasts ([Yung, 1997](#)). The erhu is one of the most famous Chinese traditional musical instruments, which is a two-stringed bowed instrument ([Thrasher, 2008](#)). It is occasionally referred to as the Southern Fiddle, although this designation is relatively uncommon ([Baidu Baike, 2024](#)). In the Western world, erhu is known as the Chinese violin or a Chinese two-stringed fiddle ([Thrasher, 2008](#)). Typically, the erhu is played while the performer is seated, with the small cylindrical soundbox resting on the left hip, the spike extending vertically upward, and the bow held horizontally ([Huehns, 2000](#)). A key distinguishing feature of the erhu, as compared to other instruments in the huqin family of traditional bowed string instruments, is the positioning of the bow hair between the two strings ([Lu, 2011](#)). The erhu produces sound by utilizing both sides of the bow hair ([Qiao, 2000](#)). When playing the A string (the outer string), the performer pushes the bow away from the body, whereas bowing the D string (the inner string) requires pulling the bow inward ([Ma, 2025](#)). The erhu can be used as either a solo instrument or an accompaniment in small ensembles and large orchestras by various ethnic groups of China ([Wan, 2025](#)). Since it is such a versatile instrument that the erhu is used in both traditional and contemporary music arrangements, such as in pop, rock and jazz ([Qiao, 2000](#)). However, the descriptions of the instruments of the erhu family had been extremely rare until the late Qing Dynasty ([Ma, 2025](#)).

The history and development of the Erhu have been the subject of extensive research and discussion by numerous scholars and experts. Among these, Shen Kuo's account in Mengxi Pen Talk stands out as one of the most renowned ([Qiao, 2010](#)). Additionally, various scholarly works, including *The History of Chinese Music and Traditional Chinese Musical Instruments*, provide comprehensive analyses and in-depth discussions on the Erhu's historical evolution, development, and manufacturing processes ([Qiao, 2000](#)). According to [Xi \(2017\)](#), early records and related literature on the erhu trace back to works such as Yuan Shi from the Song Dynasty (1310), Xu Xu Lu of Nanzi (1621), and Wang Yiyuan's Zhiyan (1526). However, based on the records of the Chen family (1601), the origin of the erhu and its repertoire can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty. [Chen \(1993\)](#) notes that it first emerged in the northern part of the Xi'an region, where it was initially referred to as the Western Qin Dynasty. [Zhang \(2005\)](#) noted that the earliest records and literature on the erhu emerged in 1310, with references found in the Song papers and other rized this progression into three distinct stages: the "initial stage," the

“flourishing period,” and the “new exploration period,” providing a thorough summary of the achievements and defining characteristics of each phase.

2.2. Shaanxi erhu

Shaanxi erhu, also known as Qinpai erhu, is type of erhu playing style native to Chinese province of Shaanxi (Lu, 2011). Shaanxi is renowned as the cradle of Chinese civilization (Baidu Baike, 2025). It was in this province, particularly in the city of Xi’an, that the legendary Silk Road commenced, forging a vital link between the East and the West (Baidu Baike, 2025). The globally renowned Terracotta Army, discovered in the nearby city of Lintong, stands as a testament to the power and grandeur of the ancient Qin Dynasty (Wang, 2017). The cultural diversity of Shaanxi is another notable feature (Baidu Baike, 2025). The Shaanxi province boasts a rich mosaic of cultures, encompassing the Han, Hui, and various other ethnic minorities, each contributing to its vibrant cultural heritage. In addition to its historical and cultural importance, Shaanxi is renowned for its stunning natural beauty (Baidu Baike, 2025). The province features a diverse landscape, from the scenic Qinling Mountains to the vast and arid Loess Plateau (Nie, 1960). Hua Shan, one of China's five sacred mountains, offers exhilarating hikes with breathtaking views (Feng, 2003). For a tranquil retreat, the captivating Hukou Waterfall on the Yellow River provides an idyllic escape.

The performance style of Shaanxi erhu is deeply intertwined with the region’s local history, culture, and environment, making it an exemplary case for exploring ecomusicology (Lu, 2011). In 1959, Lu Rirong, an erhu instructor at Xi’an Conservatory of Music, presented his compositions *Capriccio on the Theme of Qin Opera* and *Mi hu Tune* at the “Shanghai Spring” National Erhu Competition (Qiao, 2010). His performance garnered extensive acclaim and played a pivotal role in introducing the Shaanxi style, also known as the “Qin pai” style, to a broader audience (Ma, 2025). It was adapted and composed by drawing on the musical elements from the northern and central regions of Shaanxi, seamlessly integrating them into the distinct Shaanxi musical style (Lu, 2011). Jin (2009) argued that the Shaanxi erhu is intimately connected to its surrounding environment, both in terms of regional characteristics and its development and evolution over time.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach. Content analysis can be employed for exploratory research, theory development, hypothesis testing, or applied research. Additionally, it serves purposes of description and inference. Smith (2000) suggest that content analysis is a key method for analyzing qualitative material. While it primarily focuses on verbal content, it can also be applied to nonverbal material. For this study, content analysis will be the sole methodology employed. Content analysis is a method used to systematically and objectively extract relevant information from a body of material by identifying specific characteristics (Krippendorff, 2018).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) highlight that qualitative research entails gathering data from a wide range of empirical sources, such as case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, artifacts, and productions, in addition to observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts. This study analyzes the Qin pai erhu within the framework of ecomusicology and historical contexts, with the findings emerging as a result of the research.

3.1. Data Collection

In this study, three types of data are collected. First, the formation and characteristics of local music are examined from the perspective of ecocriticism, analyzing ecological environmental data from the region of the Loess Plateau in northern Shaanxi, where the ecological environment has been significantly degraded. Secondly, ecological data from the Loess Plateau in northern Shaanxi are collected to identify common features in the Shaanxi erhu musical style, following an analysis and comparison of the data. The third type of data is derived from ethnography, where folk song “Lan Huahua Ballade” from northern Shaanxi is studied and observed to explore how Shaanxi's local culture influences the Shaanxi erhu.

3.2. Data Analysis

The data analyzed in this section is relatively complex, as the geographic data encompasses various intricate elements, including historical and natural environmental factors. One challenge lies in obtaining accurate information from historical texts, as early records found in ancient books may contain archaic characters, making it difficult to preserve their original meaning. The analysis process was primarily conducted through score analysis.

In score analysis, the focus is placed on three key aspects: the examination of music scores from representative works spanning different periods, from the formation of the Qin pai erhu at Xi'an Conservatory of Music to the present; the study of Shaanxi opera scores; and the analysis of folk song scores from northern Shaanxi. These aspects will be analyzed using the methods outlined in Music Analysis Course (Qian & Qian, 2003), Introduction to Opera Music (Chen, 1993), Folk Instrumental Music (Cheng, 1993), along with a self-reflexive approach.

4. Findings

4.1. Ecocritical aspect of Shaanxi erhu

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary academic field that explores the connection between literature and the environment, emphasizing how human culture, especially literature, mirrors, shapes, and engages with nature and environmental concerns (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). Similarly, Estok (2001) highlights that Lawrence Buell, in *The Environmental Imagination*, defines ecocriticism as the examination of the relationship between literature and the environment, conducted with a dedication to environmentalist praxis. The central focus of ecocriticism is to analyze human culture through literature, engaging in cultural critique to explore how human cognition, cultural practices, and social development influence, and often shape, human attitudes and behaviors toward the natural world (Wang, 2002). Music, as a cultural phenomenon, possesses a degree of intrinsic independence. However, its creation and reception are inherently shaped by a specific historical context and regional environment (Liu & Li, 1996).

4.1.1. *The ecology of Loess Plateau*

The Loess Plateau in Northern Shaanxi, China, is characterized by a distinctive cultural milieu shaped by its unique geography, historical context, and the traditional ways of life

of its residents (Feng, 2003). This region, renowned for its vast loess hills and profound ravines, has nurtured a culture marked by resilience and a profound connection to the land (Nie, 1960). The Loess Plateau is renowned for its cave dwellings, referred to as "yaodong," which are excavated into the region's soft loess hillsides (Feng, 2003). These dwellings offer natural insulation, effectively mitigating the harsh conditions of both cold winters and hot summers. This distinctive architectural form represents a direct response to the plateau's unique geological characteristics, influencing the organization of local communities (Liu et al., 2007).

The Loess Plateau is both the most densely concentrated loess region and the largest loess area in the world. It has the least vegetation coverage and the most serious water loss and soil erosion among the four major plateaus in China (Wang, Fan, Qin, & Wang, 2012). Additionally, it is one of the regions in the world with the most fragile ecological environment. In addition to climate change, the primary factors contributing to vegetation degradation on the Loess Plateau include anthropogenic activities such as the conversion of land for cultivation, deforestation, and overgrazing. Thus, the alterations in vegetation on the Loess Plateau are predominantly driven by human-induced production and development.

The soil on Loess Plateau is rich in minerals and easy to cultivate, so the Loess Plateau is also an important factor for the emergence and development of primitive agriculture (Liu et al., 2007). Only with very simple farming tools, even without needing to use the iron plow, people can dig the soil to plant and harvest (Nie, 1960). The continuous large-scale agricultural development in the Loess Plateau area of Northern Shaanxi from Tang and Song dynasties to Ming and Qing dynasties was just established based on this specific natural ecological environment (Cao, 2008). According to Huang (2012), Northern Shaanxi, from the warring states period (BC475 –BC221) to the early Western Han dynasty (BC206), was based on animal husbandry. At that time, this area was a place with abundant water and grass and one of the important origins of army horses for the Western Han dynasty government. During the reign of Emperor Han Wu (BC156 - BC87), the government implemented the "Immigration for Consolidating Frontier Defense" policy, when a lot of poor people moved from eastern Shaanxi to the region of Northern Shaanxi. To solve the food supply problem, the government encouraged the poor to reclaim land in the areas where water resources are abundant. As a result, Northern Shaanxi became a semi-grassland and semi-farmland region.

Between the Western Han dynasty (209 BC–9 BC) and the Eastern Han dynasty (25 AD–220 AD), a span of nearly 30 years marked by frequent warfare led to significant population movements (Cao, 2008). A substantial number of inhabitants from Northern Shaanxi migrated to the Guanzhong region (Huang, 2012). Simultaneously, Northern Shaanxi came under the control of northern nomadic groups, effectively transforming the area into a predominantly nomadic zone (Xu, 2006). By the time of the Sui dynasty (581–618), a significant concentration of nomadic groups had settled in the region, resulting in Northern Shaanxi's complete transformation into a predominantly pastoral area (Xu, 2006). By the Song dynasty (960–1279), Northern Shaanxi had evolved into a key frontier region in the northwest, where the central government stationed a considerable military presence (Qiao, 2000). The government established a substantial military presence and implemented a policy of agricultural warfare, which led to the transformation of the region from a predominantly pastoral economy into an agricultural one (Cao, 2008). During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the extent of livestock farming in Northern Shaanxi gradually diminished, leading to the expansion of

agricultural land (Huang, 2012). However, due to the adverse effects of the natural environment, the region's water conservancy conditions progressively worsened (Tang & Ma, 1988). Owing to the region's challenging transportation conditions, Northern Shaanxi saw limited influxes of people, primarily restricted to times of war, border defense, and resettlement. As a result of these historical shifts, the area has gradually developed into one of the most impoverished regions in China (Zhang, 2004).

4.1.2. The influence of ecological environment on Shaanxi erhu music

Music, as a cultural phenomenon, maintains a distinct autonomy. However, its creation and reception are inextricably linked to historical contexts and regional environments (Liu & Li, 1996). The unique natural geography and the prolonged historical development of Northern Shaanxi have contributed to the emergence of a rich, diverse, and vibrant musical culture in the region. In the historical alternation of several thousand years, Northern Shaanxi of the Loess Plateau has formed the symbiotic and interlaced regional characteristics of agriculture and animal husbandry. Therefore, under the influence of land use mode, Northern Shaanxi has formed a strong folk style and a simple and honest character. According to Lv (2004), Northern Shaanxi culture is a regional subculture formed in the long history of Chinese national culture and the long confrontation between the agricultural culture in the central plains and the northern grassland culture, which takes the native agricultural culture as the main body, integrates the nomadic culture and at the same time fuses various cultural factors and characteristics. In the north of China, the terrain is dominated by undulating plateaus and flat plains, and the weather is mostly sunny, which nourish the forthright and rough artistic temperament of the people in the north. The melodies with many ups and downs and the open and unrestrained music style in the Northern music are the true portrayal of this temperament in art (Ma & Deng, 1995).

Shaanxi erhu is a specific erhu music school with its special playing skills, strong regional characteristics formed through Shaanxi music style, adaption and creation based on Shaanxi local music elements including folk songs from north area and operas from Guanzhong area (Xi, 2017). The music of Northern Shaanxi, including Northern Shaanxi folk songs, Northern Shaanxi Daoqing, Northern Shaanxi Yangko and so on, and these music styles are bold and generous and plain and interesting. Because of historical reasons and the serious damage of the geographical environment, people's lives are very tough, which makes people here sing in a "shout" voice to communicate. This is because if they don't use this style of singing and performing, their voice will not be able to be transmitted in the thousands of ravines.

The geographical environment influences individuals' personality, psychology, and emotional states, which can subsequently be expressed through music. Geographical factors primarily shape the lives of those residing in a particular region, leading to distinct lifestyles, customs, and social atmospheres that reflect the unique characteristics of the area. The region confronts major environmental issues, such as soil erosion and water scarcity. The region of northern Shaanxi has been subject to thousands of years of soil erosion and ecological degradation, resulting in a landscape characterized by rugged mountains and valleys, with yellow dust pervasive in the atmosphere. Inhabitants live and cultivate the land on the hillsides, and due to the persistent scarcity of rainfall, they have little option but to adapt to the harsh climatic conditions. This challenging living environment inevitably imparts a certain melancholic quality to the region's musical style.

The poverty of the loess plateau, the uneasiness of the natural environment, the mixed existence and the consanguinity of the race have become the complicated factors for the formation of Xin Tianyou(信天游), a kind of Shaanxi local melody as folk song of Northern Shaanxi. Xin Tianyou is also known as Shun Tianyou. Its music features free rhythm, high and long sound, which can best represent the style of Northern Shaanxi folk songs. Xin Tianyou is a song where the singer sings about people and things around you, especially your own pessimistic situation through their own feelings. This kind of songs are suitable to express personal feelings. When singing, the singers combine real voice with overtone falsetto. The music style of this kind of songs is loud and unrestrained, and its ups and downs of music feature echoes the geomorphology of Northern Shaanxi.

4.2. Musicological aspect of Shaanxi erhu

4.2.1. History of Shaanxi erhu

The Shaanxi erhu, or Qin pai school of erhu playing is a cultural product after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, which was founded by Professor Lu Rirong in 1951 (Lu, 2011). When he was accepted to the University in 1951, his teacher You Damin, transferred from Shanghai. Back then erhu was just set as an independent major, so they were lack of practice materials. Teacher You used local materials and music materials from Shaanxi to create his own work 'The bank of Wei River', which can be said to be the first 'Qin pai erhu' work. After graduation, Professor Lu stayed as the second erhu teacher of Xi'an Conservatory of Music. In the process of experiencing life in the countryside at that time, professor Lu accidentally found that the music composed and adapted with the tone of Shaanxi folk opera was deeply loved by the public. Therefore, this became an important reason for his successive creation, because music cannot be separated from the public and only works that can be understood and liked by the public are considered as good works. Therefore, the adaptation and creation of local music in Shaanxi has become an important direction for me. After this, he started writing exercises, including the "20 Works of Mei Hu Tones", and the "Shaanxi Opera Theme Capriccio" created together with the famous cellist Zhao Zhenxiao, after sorting through the theme music of Qin Qiang opera as well as the "Mei Hu Tone" created based on the music melody of Mei hu opera in eastern Shaanxi. The latter two works were first introduced to the public by professor Lu at the first all-China conference on erhu teaching materials and were highly praised by the experts at the conference. In addition, newspapers at that time, including Xinmin evening news and Wenhui paper, called this style "Shaanxi erhu style school" or "Qin pai erhu". Today, the art colleges and universities nationwide also selected these two works as compulsory subjects in the major of erhu performance.

Due to the migration of nomadic ethnic groups and the ongoing integration of Han culture, a distinctive and raw musical style with strong local characteristics has emerged in northern Shaanxi. The musical traits of the Qin pai school are defined by its expressive, deep, and rich tones, often evoking a wide range of emotions, from melancholy and introspection to joy and exuberance. This style also includes unique techniques and embellishments that set it apart from other regional erhu traditions. As a result of its robust connection to the local Shaanxi music style, Qin pai has become the most prominent erhu school in contemporary China. In fact, it boasts numerous performers and outstanding works. As the most representative musical form of northern

Shaanxi, the region's folk songs play a crucial role as one of the primary musical materials in the composition of Shaanxi erhu music.

4.2.2. *Social context of Shaanxi erhu*

Jin (2009) argued that the Shaanxi erhu is intricately linked to its regional context, reflecting both its environmental characteristics and the evolution of its development. In terms of the natural environment, the musical content of Shaanxi erhu compositions has its origins in local folk songs and opera music from the Guanzhong region and northern Shaanxi. Furthermore, the distinct musical styles of these works are deeply influenced by the local natural environment. The aforementioned factors have thus become a fundamental source for shaping the regional musical style of the Shaanxi erhu.

Northern Shaanxi is renowned for its lively folk music and dance, which vividly express the hardships and joys of life on the plateau. The music is characterized by high-pitched singing and fast rhythms, often accompanied by traditional instruments such as the *suona* (a Chinese double-reeded horn) and various percussion instruments. A notable example of the region's cultural expression is the Ansai waist drum dance, a dynamic and energetic performance typically seen during festivals and significant community events.

As far as the social environment is concerned, the Shaanxi erhu, at the end of the 1950s, came into the spotlight in erhu music circles. This period was the era of erhu music vocabularies, skill exploration and expansion, which has been developed for more than 60 years. It was also the period when rapid changes occurred in political, economic and cultural aspects of the new China. The changes in the social environmental also played an important role in the formation and development of the Shaanxi erhu.

The Shaanxi erhu has gained cultural significance in Northern Shaanxi through its profound integration with the region's folk music traditions. It not only accompanies the songs but also serves as a symbol of the area's cultural identity. Its inclusion in performances of Northern Shaanxi folk songs plays a key role in preserving and promoting these traditions. The fusion of the Shaanxi erhu with Northern Shaanxi folk music reinforces a strong sense of regional identity.

4.2.3. *Musical representative work of Shaanxi erhu: Lan Huahua Ballade*

Lan Huahua is a well-known folk song of Northern Shaanxi because of its simple, easy-to-sing rhythms and storytelling lyrics. In the 1950s, this piece of work spread all over the country after being sung by a number of singers and gradually became a household name as one of the representative works of Northern Shaanxi folk songs. The erhu work "Lan Huahua Ballade" emerged in this long tradition of regional culture. Based on the subject and plot, Shaanxi famous composer Guan Ming created the erhu solo "Lan Huahua Ballade" in 1981 in Shaanxi province, which received the second prize in the Music and Dance Performance (first prize was vacant), and this song was first performed at the Xi'an people's theatre in December 1981. Since then, it has become an important piece of work in erhu teaching, competitions and concerts throughout China, and has been recognized as one of the representative pieces of erhu works of Shaanxi style.

Only the first four paragraphs were extracted from the original work. The song “Lan Huahua” was created based on the real people and real stories in Northern Shaanxi and the original song has eight lyrics and songs, each of which has the same melody. The song’s rhythm develops as the story unfolds and is divided into the Moderato- Adagio - Allegro - rock board (摇板) – Andante. The first Moderato describes the kind character image of the protagonist as shown in Figure 1, the second Adagio describes the forced marriage and the helpless crying of Lan Huahua as shown in Figure 2, the third describes the protagonist’s resolute character, the fourth Yaoban describes her brave escape, emotional tension and intense as shown in Figure 3 and the last paragraph describes Lan Hua hua’s success in marriage escape as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 1: The first paragraph of Lan Huahua



Source(s): Author’s own work

Figure 2: The second paragraph of Lan Huahua



Source(s): Author’s own work

Figure 3: The second paragraph of Lan Huahua



Source(s): Author's own work

Figure 4: The third paragraph of Lan Huahua



Source(s): Author's own work

The erhu solo “Lan Huahua Ballade” with the music as the theme music material, uses erhu, an instrument that is most similar to human’s voice, to describe such a love story. Through the building of the beautiful, kind, very naive, simple peasant girl image of Lan Huahua and revelation of her love tragedy, it shows her strong character of having the courage to fight against the feudal forces. The repertoire is divided into Moderato - Allegretto- loose plate (grief and anger) - Adagio - Yaoban(escape) 摇板 - Adagio (theme recurrence). In the theme of the music section, the author used the original folk melody, which is not only the penetrating theme of the whole song, but also the first theme to depict the mission image of Lan Huahua. The G key is used, and the soprano 2 of the main melody is just the characteristic overtone pitch of the string instrument, which is consistent with the falsetto singing of soprano 2 in the original song. In bars 7 and 8, “Huihuayin” 回滑音 and mordent (波音) are used, which are consistent with the grace notes in the original vocal singing. This composition selected the Northern Shaanxi folk

song “Girl Carrying Water” as the second theme, lively little allegro music full of youthful vitality. The dynamic development of the sixteenth note is the small climax of this paragraph, in which the music full of vigor and vitality has been fully developed in the “variation with flowers” (加花变奏) unique to Chinese folk instrumental music.

After switching to the F key, it uses the special melody of “*Jin la man chang*” (紧拉慢唱) of Chinese opera, and the performance of “song-like” becomes the highlight of this paragraph. This aims to highlight the ebullience and stretch the passionate tone, and sublimate the character of the protagonist Lan Huahua. The appearance of *sanban* 散板 describes the mood of grief of the protagonist after hearing the news that landlord Zhou wanted to force her to marry his son, and makes the dramatic conflict of the music unfold at this point. The melody of music changes from the high note 2 (section170) to the second tone 7 (section174), which continuously stays on A tone using downslide tone. The technique of continuous pause in Chinese drama music is also adopted here to describe the grief and anger of the characters.

Adagio “Carrying into the Zhou family” is the most important part of the whole song, which is composed of four levels, describing the sad sobs, helpless resentment, emotional catharsis and the final unwilling to yield character of Lan Huahua after she was forcibly taken away by the landlord.

With four different melodies of the theme, the author describes the Lan Huahua’s helpless crying, unfairness and the helplessness to her own fate after she was carried into Zhou’s house. In the end, she chose to run away because this was the only way to survive in the case of the cathartic wail of grief and the final agony of grief. In this section, the author used the general rule of traditional Chinese folk instrumental music, which is “changing the head but not the end” and “connecting the head to tail”. In the above examples, we can see that in such a way of creation, the last level is the theme melody played by the accompaniment part. Because no examples are included here, only the main melody of erhu can be seen.

Figure 5: The fourth paragraph of Lan Huahua



Source(s): Author’s own work

5. Conclusion

The main idea of this research is to study Shaanxi erhu from an ecomusicological perspective. More specifically, in this paper we have looked at the different factors that had a critical role in the formation of Shaan xi erhu, such as ecological environment, nature and social context. We also introduced the representative work of Shaanxi erhu, Lan Huahua, to demonstrate the musical characteristics of Shaanxi erhu music. Through this discussion, the relationship between Shaanxi erhu music and the life of the local people is closely related because it is a way for the local people to express and convey thoughts and feelings. Different natural environment gives people different feelings, thereby forming different thoughts and feelings; Different humanistic environment (social environment) will form different music style. Music, as the most simple and straightforward expression of human beings on the surrounding natural environment and social environment, is naturally influenced by its environmental changes. The style of Shaanxi erhu music in Shaanxi province is greatly influenced by the changes of natural environments on the Loess Plateau.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study did not involve human participants, interviews, or any activities requiring ethical approval. Therefore, ethical clearance was not applicable to this research.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and affirm that no potential conflicts exist concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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