

Literacy Transmission for the Tuba Playing Techniques of the Chinese Folk Song “Ga Da Mei Lin”

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ABSTRACT

By exploring the literacy transmission practices to perform Mongolian music on the tuba, this study aims to provide insight into part of the process of adapting a traditional folk song, Ga Da Mei Lin, of China, for tuba performance. It explores the ways Mongolian long-song techniques like breath control, glissando, and rhythmic flexibility are translated through the tuba by situating their study within an ethnomusicological framework that considers the integration of oral tradition and musical literacy. The study underscores the necessity of a dual approach of oral transmission and notation-based formal instruction in conservatory contexts to ensure both cultural authenticity and technical precision in the performance of Ga Da Mei Lin. These findings demonstrate how this hybrid pedagogical model enhances folk music teaching, contributes to the transmission of Mongolian cultural heritage, and facilitates the expressive potential of the tuba in conveying Mongolian folk aesthetics. This research demonstrates the multifaceted, inherent collaboration between folk and contemporary music, adding to both cross-cultural aspects of music education and modern brass performance practice.

Key words: Literacy, Transmission, Tuba, Folk Song, Ga Da Mei Lin

INTRODUCTION

The tuba is the biggest brass instrument and comes in three types: embouchure, round, and mouthpiece, sometimes known as a sousaphone. The latter two are commonly employed in marching bands and wind ensembles because their design allows for more mobility and projection in outdoor situations (Moore, 2016). The tuba has three primary components: the horn mouthpiece, the tube body, and the mechanical portion. The mechanical part usually has a piston valve mechanism, and most tubas have four to six pistons. In symphonic contexts, rotary valves are more popular. The major function of these pistons is to vary the length of the air column within the tube, which affects the pitch. This mechanism enables the tuba to generate various sounds, making it a versatile instrument across several musical genres (Currie & MacLellan, 2019; Campbell, 2014).

The tuba's deep, rich, and resonant tone makes it an important bass instrument in orchestras and ensembles. Its bass register produces a rich and robust sound, offering a solid harmonic foundation for groups. In contrast, its upper register is quite soft and warm, enabling expressive and lyrical passages. While the tuba was historically employed for harmonic accompaniment, modern composers have begun to explore its melodic possibilities, including it in solo performances and symphonic pieces that showcase its

wide dynamic range and expressive skills (Backus, 1976; LoPresto, 2003).

Musical literacy transmission is critical to maintaining and developing instrumental methods, notably the adaption of Western brass instruments for traditional Chinese music. The tuba, developed in Germany in 1835, has evolved significantly from a fundamental orchestral instrument to a soloistic and expressive voice in various musical styles. One of the most visible examples of this adaptation is Ga Da Mei Lin, a piece that blends Mongolian traditional themes into tuba performance (Hou & Seekhunlio, 2023; Fan & Chuangprakhon, 2024). Understanding the literary transmission of tuba playing skills in this setting reveals important insights into how traditional folk music might be incorporated into modern instrumental practice.

Ga Da Mei Lin is a well-known Mongolian folk song about Ga Da Mei Lin and his fellow herders' brave resistance to repressive feudal powers in the early twentieth century. This song, with its strong ethnic identity and melodic complexity, has been widely altered across musical genres, including choral, symphonic, and instrumental arrangements (Guocheng et al., 2022). The tuba, an instrument with deep and resonant tone characteristics, is an excellent choice for portraying the song's strong and expressive spirit (Lau, 2007). However, playing Ga Da Mei Lin on the tuba necessitates specialist methods that capture the intricacies of

Mongolian folk music, such as breath control, tone shaping, glissando, vibrato, and rhythm manipulation.

This study investigates how tuba playing methods are taught and evolved to maintain the artistic authenticity of Ga Da Mei Lin while broadening its interpretive possibilities. It also examines how oral tradition, notation, and current educational approaches aid in transferring musical literacy among tuba players. Finally, it examines performance methods to illustrate how the adaption of Chinese folk music enriches tuba performance and promotes cultural continuity.

Research Question

- How is musical literacy transmitted in tuba performance techniques for the Chinese folk song Ga Da Mei Lin, and how does it contribute to the preservation of its traditional musical elements?

LITERATURE REVIEW

General Knowledge of the Tuba

The tuba is the largest brass instrument, with origins dating back to the serpent and ophicleide before being modernized in 1835 by Johann Gottfried Moritz and Wilhelm Friedrich Wieprecht. Initially created for military bands, the tuba quickly acquired popularity in orchestras due to its broad range, rich tone, and adaptable playing skills. Adolphe Sax’s further improvements resulted in the Saxhorn family, which influenced tuba design and integration into symphonic music. Instrument-making advances over time enhanced the tuba, and John Philip Sousa introduced variations like the sousaphone to accommodate marching bands (Bibu et al., 2018; Montagu, 2017).

In symphonic and band contexts, the tuba acts as the harmonic and rhythmic foundation, integrating effortlessly with other instruments to improve overall sound quality. Despite its low-pitched, deep, and rich tone, the tuba is adaptable, replacing or supplementing other brass instruments such as the euphonium and trombone. Composers from various musical periods, from Romanticism to Modernism, have employed the tuba’s expressive capabilities to shape dramatic and atmospheric elements in their compositions. While the tuba was previously disregarded as a solo instrument, its distinct tone and dynamic range make it an essential component of symphonic and wind ensembles (Allen, 2011; KNOX, 2003; Marchenko et al., 2021).

In symphony orchestras, the tuba is carefully placed in the brass section, generally with trombones and double basses, to emphasize bass frequencies and mix with the group. The basic orchestral brass section normally consists of four French horns, three trumpets, three trombones, and one tuba. Although only one tuba is normally employed, its excellent projection and strong musical presence eliminate the need for additional tubas. Large-scale orchestral works like Wagner’s *Ring Cycle* and Holst’s *The Planets* employ several tubas to generate dramatic effects. Today, the tuba is a staple of symphonic and band music, adding depth, resonance, and

harmonic support to the orchestral sound while also appearing in solo performances (Gienow-Hecht, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2011).

General Knowledge of Chinese Folk Songs

Chinese folk songs are an important element of the country’s oral culture, developed collaboratively by the working class and passed down through generations. These songs, which frequently rhyme, serve as both artistic and historical documents of social life, labor, and emotions. Chinese folk songs have their roots in productive labor, religious rituals, and emotional expression, with early versions appearing in ancestor worship, totem worship, and shamanic traditions. Before becoming formal musical traditions, these songs originally supported daily activities and spiritual events (Shi & Nicolas, 2023).

Chinese folk songs originated during the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE) when the *Book of Songs* (Shijing) was produced, marking the first collection of Chinese folk music. Throughout history, various dynasties contributed to the evolution of folk songs, ranging from the *Chu Ci* (Songs of Chu) of the Spring and Autumn Period to the Yuefu (Music Bureau) folk songs of the Western Han Dynasty. Folk songs flourished under the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), while the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE) brought sarcastic ballads and operatic influences. Folk songs were used to depict class struggles and ethnic discrimination throughout the Yuan and Ming Dynasties (1271-1644 CE), and by the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1368-1912 CE), they had taken on democratic and progressive themes, emphasizing societal changes and ambitions (Shun & Boonsrianun, 2023; Yue & Seekhunlio, 2023).

In current times, Chinese folk songs have evolved to reflect historical and political events. Folk songs expressed resistance and national pride during the Anti-Japanese War (1937-1945). Following the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, folk songs played an essential role in cultural rehabilitation, encouraging national unity and ideological themes. Following China’s Reform and opening up (after 1978), folk music evolved further, including new elements while retaining its traditional spirit (Chang, 2007). Today, Chinese folk songs are an important cultural asset, embodying the country’s numerous ethnic traditions and socioeconomic transitions over time.

Research Theory

The application of ethnomusicology theory to the literacy transmission of tuba playing techniques in Ga Da Mei Lin provides a complete view of how cultural traditions, oral transmission, performance practice, and cross-cultural adaptation influence musical learning and interpretation. Exploring the song’s historical and cultural context allows us to trace its evolution from a Mongolian oral tradition to a contemporary tuba adaptation, examining how traditional playing techniques, melodic structures, and rhythmic patterns are preserved and reinterpreted through instrumental performance (Tang, 2021; Wang, 2022). Finally, adopting

ethnomusicological theory helps preserve Chinese folk music while expanding the tuba's creative and expressive function in folk music performance, developing a better knowledge of cultural legacy and musical adaptability.

METHODOLOGY

The study of literacy transmission for tuba playing techniques in the Chinese traditional tune Ga Da Mei Lin involves qualitative research methods. This process ensures a thorough grasp of how traditional Mongolian musical components are modified for tuba performance and how knowledge of these techniques is kept and passed down. The research framework is divided into the following main components:

The Ethnomusicological Approach

The research follows the ethnomusicology concept, which examines Ga Da Mei Lin's historical, cultural, and musical features. This included:

Historical analysis

This entails going into the origins, evolution, and adoption of Ga Da Mei Lin, which began as a Mongolian long-story folk song and has since evolved into a full-fledged tuba sound.

Creating a cultural home

This method involved investigating if oral history and folk artistry have influenced the tuba's articulation, phrasing, and breathing practices.

Data Collection

Data collection included the following methods:

- Archival investigation of folk song materials and their transformation from vocal to tuba instrument composition.
- Interviews with folk musicians and professional tuba players to better understand the cultural preservation of musical skills.
- A literature survey on ethnomusicology, brass performance, and Mongolian folk music research.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study focuses on the Literacy Transmission of Tuba Playing Techniques for Ga Da Mei Lin. Using certain concepts and theories, the researcher selectively investigates data directly related to tuba abilities, musical features, and educational transfer. This focused method guarantees that the analysis is tightly matched with the study's thematic focus, drawing on research resources exploring the intricacies of articulation and breath control and including Mongolian musical components in tuba performance. This method gives a thorough grasp of how old skills are conveyed and adapted to new musical practices.

RESULTS

The Impact of Oral Tradition and Musical Literacy on Tuba Performance

The transmission of tuba playing skills for Ga Da Mei Lin is heavily impacted by oral tradition and cultural literacy, reflecting the larger ethnomusicological framework of Mongolian folk music. Mongolian folk songs are traditionally handed down by auditory transmission, with singers learning by listening, mimicking, and rehearsing under the supervision of experienced musicians. This kind of instruction has been tailored to the tuba's brass performance skills, requiring artists to comprehend concepts like breath control, glissando, and rhythmic flexibility. According to the research, oral tradition remains important in learning folk music performance in conservatory settings, even when integrated with formal notation-based teaching. Musicians who play Ga Da Mei Lin on the tuba often listen to traditional Mongolian singing methods, especially long-song approaches, to grasp the piece's expressive demands.

Technical Modifications for Tuba Performance

Tuba players must master specialized breath control techniques, tone-shaping strategies, and articulation abilities in order to accurately reflect Mongolian traditional music. The research discovered that lengthy breath support is essential for maintaining the smooth and broad melodic lines that distinguish Ga Da Mei Lin. This method is reminiscent of the Mongolian long-song tradition, in which musicians generate prolonged notes with controlled tremolo. Furthermore, flexible air handling is required for implementing quick dynamic changes, notably in sections representing war scenes and movement. The research discovers that experienced performers use innate breath control tactics, such as brief breaks or tempo adjustments, to regulate airflow while preserving rhythmic integrity (Figure 1).

Lip skills, in addition to breath control, are essential for portraying the emotional and cultural depth of a song. Tuba players use tone shaping to create a deep, resonant sound in the lower register, reflecting Mongolia's grasslands' expanse. In contrast, the upper register portrays Ga Da Mei Lin's heroic image with a brighter, more concentrated tone. The research also emphasizes vibrato as an expressive technique, mirroring the emotional inflections seen in Mongolian



Figure 1. Technical changes in the use of wind
Source: Nian Xian

singing traditions. Furthermore, glissando techniques, often utilized in Mongolian music, allow for seamless transitions between notes, giving authenticity to the performance (Table 1).

Rhythmic Interpretation and Performance Practice

In Ga Da Mei Lin, rhythmic performance involves a blend of open rhythm and accurate rhythmic articulation. According to the research, performers often use free rhythm approaches in portions depicting natural landscapes or contemplative times, reflecting Mongolian folk singing’s rhythmic flexibility. In contrast, parts depicting combat or resistance need a sturdy and strong rhythmic approach, with exact articulation and metrical precision adding to the piece’s dramatic intensity. The study shows that we teach rhythmic literacy audibly, through imitation and listening, and visually, through notation and conductor signals.

The study also shows how important it is to know how to read music notation when playing the tuba, especially when it comes to understanding expressive marks like crescendo (*Jian Qiang*), diminuendo (*Jian Ruo*), and *ritardando* (*rit.*). These marks shape performers’ dynamics and pace, enabling them to interpret the work with technical perfection and emotional depth. However, musicians highlight that, although notation serves as a structural underpinning, the final interpretation is based on a knowledge of Mongolian folk music aesthetics, which is best acquired via auditory instruction and cultural immersion (Figure 2).

The Effects of Literacy Transmission on Cultural Preservation and Education

The transmission of musical literacy plays a crucial role in preserving Mongolian musical history and enhancing the expressive potential of the tuba as a folk instrument. Traditional oral transmission methods and modern notation-based instruction have helped performers create an authentic and technically advanced style in Ga Da Mei Lin. Furthermore, adapting folk music to brass instruments has sparked an interest in ethnic music education, with institutions including folk aspects in brass performance instruction (Figure 3).

The Embodiment of National Heroes’ Spirituality

The Tuba Concerto Ga Da Mei Lin’s national heroism is shown in its musical elements, literacy transmission, and artistic group traits. First, Ga Da Mei Lin promotes herders’ concerns, which are expressed in the music’s usage of Mongolian traditional tones. The heroic theme always concentrates on the solo tuba, representing Ga Da Mei Lin’s heroic nature. The other instrumental groups show the herds-men’s reliance on and support for him, and the main theme is always accompanied.

Second, Ga Da Mei Lin’s literacy transmission is critical to increasing its aesthetic effect. The story of Ga Da Mei Lin’s insurrection and sacrifice spread among herds-men through oral traditions, eventually producing the Mongolian long narrative poem “Ga Da Mei Lin.” This poem passed

Table 1. Technical considerations in literacy transmission for tuba playing techniques in ga da mei lin

Category	Details
Performance Posture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Standing: Feet shoulder-width apart, maintaining a relaxed but upright posture to ensure optimal breath control.- Sitting: Forward posture on the front third of the chair, ensuring the instrument’s weight is evenly distributed for stability and comfort.
Breathing Methods and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Abdominal breathing technique allows deep inhalation and controlled exhalation to support sustained notes. Breath consistency exercises help maintain even tone quality, especially in long notes and dynamic changes.
Articulation and Fingering Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The euphonium-style piston mechanism requires musicians to develop finger dexterity through scale and arpeggio exercises. Different articulations are tested for clarity and tone depth, with preference given to rounded, fluid articulation that enhances lyrical expression.
Tone Adjustment and Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lip tension, breath support, and embouchure control directly influence the timbre and projection of the tuba. Tone-shaping techniques must align with Mongolian folk aesthetics, ensuring that the instrument captures the spirit of the narrative.



Figure 2. Playing technical Jian Qiang and Jian Ruo
Source: Nian Xian



Figure 3. Adapting folk music to brass instruments
Source: Nian Xian

down through generations, became an important tool for cultural transmission, ensuring that Ga Da Mei Lin's heroic actions and principles were thoroughly embedded in Mongolian legacy. The long narrative poem Ga Da Mei Lin was published in People's Literature in 1950, broadening its appeal and contributing to its national spread. Ga Da Mei Lin developed into a multidimensional cultural icon through literature, music, dance, art, cinema, and television, exhibiting how the aesthetic object and its reception vary over time. However, the essential concept of heroism stays constant. The Tuba Concerto Ga Da Mei Lin is one of several creative re-creations that helped to maintain and spread Ga Da Mei Lin's legacy. The composer incorporates Mongolian musical components and literacy transmission methodologies, employing a narrative-free creative framework to musically convey the revolt and showcase the valiant spirit of the Mongolian people.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Literacy Transmission for the Tuba Playing Techniques of the Chinese Folk Song "Ga Da Mei Lin" is a powerful example of how traditional music may be successfully adapted and taught within modern performance procedures, particularly on a Western instrument such as the tuba. This procedure entails conserving the folk melody's cultural integrity and augmenting it with the skills of modern brass instruments (Ping et al., 2024). The tuba adaptation of Ga Da Mei Lin is essential for educational settings since it introduces pupils to the combination of traditional Mongolian music and Western brass skills. This adaptation requires an in-depth mastery of the original song's melodic and rhythmic patterns and the technical requirements of tuba playing. Music instructors use this composition to educate pupils about breath control, articulation, tonal adaptability, and emotional expression, all necessary for performing folk songs on the tuba (Henochoicz, 2008; Fulin & Panyanan, 2024).

Students, for example, learn to maintain the tuba's deep, resonant tones by taking lengthy breaths, as is typical of Mongolian singing. They also practice articulation techniques like glissandos and legatos to emulate the original song's vocal accent. This helps preserve the song's ethnic identity but also aids in understanding the tuba's expressive powers, as indicated in current brass teaching (Purser, 2005). By including Ga Da Mei Lin in the tuba repertoire, educators and performers help to preserve and transmit distinct musical traditions to future generations of artists. This method entails extensive documentation of playing skills, performance notes, and contextual information, frequently aided by multimedia tools that integrate audio, video, and written analysis (Guocheng et al., 2022; Zhang & Bhengsri, 2024). This holistic method helps students grasp the complexities of Mongolian music and the tuba's versatility.

Furthermore, this adaptation encourages brass music writers and arrangers to experiment with new sounds and expressions. It encourages musicians to stretch the limits of standard tuba sounds by experimenting with approaches that represent the song's cultural and historical relevance (Chen & Sensai, 2024). Performing Ga Da Mei Lin on the tuba at

concerts and contests demonstrates the performer's technical abilities and promotes awareness of Mongolian music and its flexibility. Such performances broaden the audience's musical horizons and increase respect for cultural variety in music (Huang et al., 2024). Furthermore, capturing and disseminating these performances on internet channels allows the piece to reach a worldwide audience, increasing its exposure and influence.

Modern China transmits musical abilities through a rich combination of historical heritage and new inventions. Traditionally, Chinese music education mainly relied on oral transmission, with competence gained via hearing and mimicking under the supervision of experienced performers (Yu & Choatchamrat, 2024). This strategy retained the integrity and artistic purity of traditional musical genres. However, with the incorporation of Western educational systems, there has been a movement toward using notation-based instruction in addition to traditional methods (Zhuang & Pan, 2022; Qiu et al., 2024). This hybrid technique is now widely used in China's conservatories and music schools, allowing for a more thorough musical education that includes Chinese and Western music theories and practices.

Digital technology has further revolutionized music education in China, providing more access to various musical genres and materials. Students may now examine ancient Chinese musical works and current compositions thanks to online platforms and digital archives (Leung, 2021). This technological transformation democratizes music education and encourages an innovative culture in which classical Chinese music is constantly altered to appeal to contemporary listeners (Zhang, 2024; Sun et al., 2024). Furthermore, the worldwide cultural interchange enabled by modern technologies enhances Chinese musical practices by bringing new approaches and views that contribute to the dynamic growth of the Chinese musical environment.

In conclusion, the study on literacy transmission for the tuba playing techniques of the Chinese folk song "Ga Da Mei Lin" indicates a deep integration of Mongolian folk traditions with Western brass performance, enhancing educational practices and the more prominent musical environment. This study shows that combining old auditory teaching methods with modern notation-based training works well by looking closely at oral traditions, technological changes, and cultural nuances. It demonstrates the tuba's ability to communicate prosperous cultural sentiments while remaining technically precise. Ga Da Mei Lin's continual adaptation and performance in various venues preserves its historical relevance while promoting its inventive potential, ensuring that this rich cultural legacy stays dynamic and relevant in modern musical debate and education.

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