

Cite as:

Li Ya [李亚] and Yin Xiang [尹翔]. 2019. Playing Jiangnan Sizhu as a Social Game: An Evening of Beautiful Music. *AEMR-EJ*, 3: 52-56.

PLAYING JIANGNAN SIZHU AS A SOCIAL GAME: AN EVENING OF BEAUTIFUL MUSIC

Abstract

This review combines fragments of Li Ya's thesis on "Ensemble Tradition and Cultural Interpretation of *Jiangnan Sizhu*"¹ and the project of "Reviving Sonic Memories from the Past: Historically Informed Performance in *Jiangnan Sizhu*", which took place in Shanghai on 20th March, 2019.

Jiangnan sizhu (江南丝竹) refers to the ensemble music played by musical instruments considered being made of silk and bamboo in the Yangtze Delta, including the south of Jiangsu Province, West Zhejiang Province, and Shanghai. This area is called Jiangnan. In terms of the applications and functions, there are two types of traditional silk and bamboo music in the Jiangnan area, of which one is the ritual performance, another is playing for entertainment. In Shanghai, some people play *sizhu* (丝竹) music in their daily life and call it "bexiang sizhu" (白相丝竹) in Shanghai dialect, which means having fun. *Jiangnan sizhu* is played as an ensemble music in tea houses, cultural activity centres in street communities and at home.

The project of "Reviving Sonic Memories from the Past: Historically Informed Performance in *Jiangnan Sizhu*" is based on the thesis of Li Ya [李亚]. Her thesis explored the cultural contexts of playing *Jiangnan sizhu* in Shanghai and analysed the behavior of performers and important factors forming musical features of *Jiangnan sizhu* in order to reveal hidden interpersonal relationships in the musical context. What is particularly important is her understanding of the Shanghai dialect, including "ge jiasheng" (哏家什, which means playing some musical instruments together) and "tan tou" (摊头, places where people play *Jiangnan sizhu*). This is necessary in exploring the aesthetic concepts of the *Jiangnan sizhu* performers, a process of culturally recognizing interpersonal communication and social interaction.

This review is insofar dedicated to this thesis as well as to the event that was supported through the preceding research on local musical knowledge and cultural concepts of *Jiangnan sizhu*.

Keywords

Jiangnan sizhu, social interaction, cultural environment, structural analysis, interpretation of terms

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¹ Li Ya [李亚]. 2018. Ensemble tradition and Cultural Interpretation of *Jiangnan Sizhu*. *Music Research*, 5: 84 – 92. [江南丝竹的“合乐”传统及其文化阐释, 《音乐研究》2018年第5期, 第84-92页]. The modified excerpts provided here, were translated by Gisa Jähnichen.