

# The Development of Ethnic Music in the Digital Age

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**Abstract:** With the continuous development of science and technology, the digital era has come, which has had a profound impact on various fields. Ethnic music, as an important part of China's traditional culture, is also facing the challenges and opportunities of the digital era. This paper mainly discusses the development status quo, influence, challenges and opportunities of folk music in the digital era, with a view to providing certain reference for the inheritance and development of folk music in China.

**Keywords:** Digital era; Folk music; Development status; Challenges; Opportunities.

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## 1. Introduction

Ethnic music is an important part of China's traditional culture, carrying a wealth of information about history, culture and folklore. In the digital era, the development of ethnic music is both greatly promoted and faced with many dilemmas. On the one hand, digital technology provides a new platform and means for the dissemination, creation and performance of folk music, enabling it to spread more widely and reach the hearts of the people; on the other hand, in the pursuit of innovation and development, folk music is also faced with the contradictions and challenges in terms of tradition and innovation, and marketisation and commercialisation. The research in this paper has important theoretical and practical value for understanding the development law of folk music in the digital era, coping with challenges and grasping opportunities. Through in-depth exploration of this field, we are expected to contribute to the prosperity of folk music in China.

## 2. Impact of the Digital Era on Folk Music

### 2.1. Changes in Communication Mode

#### 2.1.1. Popularity of network platforms

In the digital era, the popularity of online platforms has had a profound impact on the development of folk music. Firstly, the network platform provides a broader communication channel for folk music and breaks the time and space limitations of traditional communication methods. In the past, ethnic music mainly relied on traditional ways of dissemination such as live performances and physical records, which were limited by geography and time. However, in the digital era, ethnic music can be rapidly spread to all over the world through online platforms for more people to understand and appreciate. Secondly, the popularity of online platforms has revolutionised the way ethnic music is created and performed. Music producers can make use of digital music technology to combine ethnic music with modern music elements to create more music works with contemporary characteristics. At the same time, the network platform also provides a stage for musicians to display their talents, and many folk musicians have become popular through the network platform, which has led to the development of folk music. In addition, the popularity of online platforms has

broadened the audience of folk music. The young generation comes into contact with folk music on online platforms and becomes interested in it, thus increasing the popularity of folk music among young people. At the same time, the wide dissemination range of online platforms has made folk music go out of the country, and it has been noticed and loved by international friends. However, the popularity of online platforms also brings certain challenges. Among many musical works, ethnic music faces fierce competition, and how to highlight its characteristics and attract listeners has become a major problem. In addition, the excessive pursuit of marketisation and commercialisation may lead to ethnic music losing its traditional flavour and falling into the predicament of imitation and following the trend. Therefore, in the process of using online platforms to promote ethnic music, attention should be paid to maintaining the essential characteristics of ethnic music, inheriting and promoting ethnic culture [1].

In conclusion, the popularity of network platform provides new opportunities and challenges for the development of folk music. It is necessary to seize the opportunity to promote the innovative development of ethnic music, while paying attention to overcoming the negative impacts of commercialisation, and inheriting and promoting ethnic music culture.

#### 2.1.2. Promotion of Social Media

In the digital era, the promotion of social media has had a profound impact on the development of ethnic music. First of all, social media provides a brand new communication channel for ethnic music, enabling musical works to spread rapidly around the world. Through platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and Jitterbug, ethnic musicians can interact with their fans in real time and share musical works and the stories behind them, thus increasing the popularity and influence of their works. Secondly, social media promotion promotes the diversification of ethnic music styles. On the platform, musicians can try to combine ethnic music with modern pop elements to create works that meet the tastes of contemporary listeners. This kind of cross-border cooperation not only injects new vitality into ethnic music, but also makes traditional music closer to the life of young people [2]. In addition, social media also provides financial support for the heritage and development of ethnic music. Through crowdfunding and online performances, musicians can raise the funds needed to create and promote ethnic music, thus providing a guarantee for the inheritance and development of

traditional music. However, social media promotion also poses certain challenges. In the pursuit of popularity and commercial interests, some musicians may over-pursuing innovation and neglecting the transmission of the essence of traditional folk music. In addition, market competition is fierce, and some musical works may cater too much to the public taste, resulting in the gradual loss of the uniqueness of folk music.

To sum up, the promotion of social media brings opportunities and challenges for the development of folk music in the digital era. While enjoying the convenient conditions brought by social media, musicians should maintain their reverence for traditional music and keep exploring the road of innovation and development of ethnic music, so that more people can understand and love ethnic music [3].

## **2.2. Innovation of Creation and Performance Methods**

### **2.2.1. Application of digital music technology**

In the digital era, the application of digital music technology has had a profound impact on the development of folk music. Firstly, digital music technology provides new possibilities and means for the creation of folk music. Through computer software and audio processing tools, music creators can experiment and innovate music more flexibly, combining traditional ethnic music elements with modern music styles to create unique musical works. Secondly, digital music technology has played an important role in promoting the dissemination of ethnic music. Through the popularity of online platforms and social media, ethnic music can be spread more quickly and widely. People can easily access and share ethnic music wherever they are through music sharing websites, social media and online music platforms. In addition, digital music technology has brought new forms and experiences to the performance of folk music. Music performers can enrich their performances with audio effects and multimedia technologies to provide audiences with a more powerful and immersive musical experience. Through the combination of live music and electronic music, ethnic music can show more innovation and vitality on stage [4]. However, the application of digital music technology also brings some challenges. On the one hand, over-reliance on technology may cause ethnic music to lose its traditional characteristics and purity. Music creators and performers need to find a balance between innovation and inheritance to maintain the core values and uniqueness of folk music. On the other hand, the development of digital music technology has also brought up the issue of music copyright protection and originality. In the era of digitalisation, the copying and dissemination of music has become exceptionally easy, which brings new challenges to the protection of the rights and interests of music creators.

To sum up, digital music technology has played an important role in promoting the development of folk music. It provides new possibilities and opportunities for the creation, dissemination and performance of ethnic music, and at the same time brings challenges and problems. Therefore, the music industry and relevant departments should actively respond to the changes in the digital era, strengthen the protection and innovation of folk music, and promote the prosperity of folk music.

### **2.2.2. The Rise of Cross-border Co-operation**

In the digital era, cross-border cooperation has become a

major trend in the development of folk music. Through the fusion with different art forms, folk music breaks the boundaries in the traditional sense and realises more extensive innovation and development.

First of all, the digital era has provided ethnic music with rich resources for cross-border cooperation. The popularity of online platforms has made it easy for musicians to cross the geographical limitations and collaborate with musicians from all over the world. This kind of cross-border cooperation includes not only exchanges between different ethnic music, but also fusion with pop music, classical music, electronic music and other forms of music. This diversified cooperation makes ethnic music renewed vitality and brings a new listening experience to the listeners [5]. Secondly, the digital era has promoted the innovation of ethnic music creation and performance methods. Musicians have begun to use digital music technology, such as sampling and mixing, to make innovative adaptations of traditional folk music. This kind of adaptation not only preserves the unique flavour of folk music, but also gives the works a modern sense, making them more in line with the aesthetic needs of contemporary listeners. In addition, digital technology has also brought new possibilities for live performances of folk music, such as virtual reality (VR) music performances and augmented reality (AR) music interactions, which bring an immersive music experience to the audience. Finally, cross-border cooperation helps to enhance the international influence of folk music. In the context of globalisation, national music has successfully attracted the attention of international audiences through its fusion with other music forms. For example, China's national musicians have used modern music elements to innovate traditional national music, making their works shine on the international stage and making positive contributions to the exchange and integration of the world's music culture.

In conclusion, in the context of the digital era, cross-border cooperation has become an important trend in the development of folk music. Through fusion with other art forms, folk music continues to innovate, expanding the space for development and enhancing international influence. We have reason to believe that in the future, ethnic music will glow more brightly in the cross-border cooperation in the digital era [6].

## **2.3. Expansion of Audience Groups**

### **2.3.1. Acceptance of the young generation**

In the digital era, the acceptance of ethnic music by the younger generation has increased significantly. First of all, the popularity of the Internet and mobile devices makes it easier for young people to access various types of music, including ethnic music. They can easily discover, enjoy and share ethnic music works through music apps, social media and video platforms. This convenient access has changed the way they perceive and appreciate music, making them more open and accepting of different types of music. Secondly, the younger generation's focus on ethnic music is different from the traditional. They are not only concerned about the music itself, but also the cultural stories and connotations behind the music. They explore and understand the history, traditions and values of different ethnic groups through music, thus increasing their interest in and identification with ethnic music. This pursuit of cultural depth makes them more willing to deeply understand and pass on ethnic music. In addition, the digital era has provided a broad space for the innovation of ethnic music. The younger generation of music creators and

performers create unique music styles by fusing modern music elements with traditional folk music. They make use of digital music technologies, such as sampling, remixing and electro music, to bring new life and vigour to folk music. This innovation not only attracts the attention of young audiences, but also injects new impetus into the dissemination and development of ethnic music [7].

In summary, the acceptance of ethnic music by the younger generation in the digital era has increased significantly. They are exposed to various types of music through the Internet and mobile devices, and have a strong interest in the cultural stories and connotations behind the music. At the same time, the digital era has provided a broad space for the innovation of folk music, giving it a new vigour. This positive attitude and participation will bring more possibilities and opportunities for the development of folk music.

### **2.3.2. Internationalised Scope of Communication**

In the digital era, the popularity of the Internet and the development of information technology provide new opportunities for the dissemination of folk music. Firstly, through various online platforms, such as music websites and social media, folk music can be quickly spread around the globe, breaking down geographical and language barriers. This enables more international audiences to access and understand our national music, promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Secondly, the digital era has provided a platform for the international exchange of folk music. Musicians and creators can communicate and cooperate with musicians and enthusiasts from all over the world through the Internet, and jointly create music works with international influence. Such cross-border cooperation not only enriches the expression of folk music, but also enhances its competitiveness in the international market [8]. In addition, the digital era provides space for the diversified development of ethnic music. On the network platform, ethnic music can be fused with other types of music to create new music styles and genres. At the same time, the audience can choose and appreciate ethnic music in a personalised way according to their own preferences and needs, further promoting the development and innovation of ethnic music.

To sum up, the digital era provides a broad space and opportunities for the international dissemination of folk music. However, to make full use of these opportunities, it is also necessary to strengthen the protection and inheritance of folk music, enhance its market competitiveness, and cultivate more folk music talents. Only in this way will folk music be able to bring out new vigour and charm in the digital era.

## **3. Challenges of Ethnic Music in the Digital Era**

### **3.1. Conflict Between Tradition and Innovation**

In the digital era, folk music faces the conflict between tradition and innovation. Traditional folk music represents history and cultural inheritance, emphasising national characteristics and uniqueness, while the innovation brought by the digital era implies the adaptation, fusion and diversification of traditional music forms. This conflict is reflected in the following aspects:

Firstly, in terms of music creation and performance, traditional folk music emphasises basic skills and unique techniques, while music creation in the digital era pays more attention to the application of electronic technology and modern elements. This kind of innovation makes folk music

present new styles and expressions, but at the same time, it also triggers the concern of some traditional music workers about excessive innovation, which they think will lose the essence and characteristics of folk music [9]. Secondly, in terms of dissemination methods, traditional folk music relies on live performances and traditional media dissemination, while folk music in the digital era can achieve wider dissemination through online platforms and social media. This innovation allows more people to come into contact with folk music, but it also brings about an impact on the traditional performance market and concerns about the commercialisation of music. Finally, in terms of audience, while traditional folk music usually has a fixed group of listeners, folk music in the digital era is able to attract a wider audience, especially the younger generation. This innovation makes folk music more energetic and attractive, but at the same time, it also triggers some people's concern about the inheritance of traditional music culture.

To sum up, the development of folk music in the digital era faces the conflict between tradition and innovation. How to achieve innovation while maintaining traditional characteristics and how to adapt to the market demand while inheriting and protecting traditional music have become the difficult problems that need to be solved for ethnic music in the digital era [10].

### **3.2. Pressure of Marketisation and Commercialisation**

In the digital era, marketisation and commercialisation have had a profound impact on the development of folk music. First of all, marketisation and commercialisation have brought huge development opportunities. With the rise of digital music platforms, ethnic music works have been able to spread more widely and reach more audiences. At the same time, commercial performances and cross-border cooperation have provided new living space for ethnic music, enabling it to take its place in the market economy. However, marketisation and commercialisation have also brought many challenges. In the pursuit of economic benefits, some creators and performers of folk music may excessively pursue commercial hotspots and neglect the traditional characteristics and connotations of folk music. In addition, under the background of marketisation, competition in the ethnic music market is fierce, and some works of lower quality may gain attention through commercial means, thus affecting the healthy development of ethnic music. At the same time, marketisation and commercialisation may lead to over-commercialisation of folk music. In order to cater to the tastes of the market and the audience, some folk music may pursue popular elements too much in composition and performance, resulting in the gradual loss of the traditional characteristics of folk music. In addition, commercialisation may cause ethnic music to fall into the predicament of 'commodification' and reduce its artistic value [11]. Facing the pressure of marketisation and commercialisation, we need to find a balance in the development of folk music. On the one hand, we need to promote folk music by market means to increase its popularity and influence; on the other hand, we need to stick to the traditional cultural connotation of folk music and maintain its uniqueness. At the same time, the government and relevant departments should strengthen the supervision of the folk music market and cultivate a good market environment to ensure the healthy development of folk music in the process of marketisation. In addition, we

should also pay attention to ethnic music education and cultivate more ethnic music talents. By strengthening the popularisation and inheritance of folk music, more people will understand and love folk music, which will provide a constant impetus for the development of folk music. At the same time, ethnic music creators and performers are encouraged to maintain the spirit of innovation, combine modern aesthetics and market demand, and create more characteristic ethnic music works to promote the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

In conclusion, in the digital era, marketisation and commercialisation are both opportunities and challenges for the development of folk music. We need to actively deal with market competition, while at the same time adhere to the traditional connotation of ethnic music, to achieve the sustainable development of ethnic music in the context of marketisation [12].

### **3.3. Dilemma of Protection and Inheritance**

In the digital era, the dissemination and development of folk music face many new challenges and opportunities. However, behind all this, we cannot ignore the dilemma of the protection and inheritance of ethnic music.

Firstly, with the development of digital technology, the traditional performance forms and creation methods of ethnic music have been greatly impacted. Many traditional music performance skills and production techniques are in danger of being lost. Young people are more inclined to use digital devices to create and appreciate music, which has challenged the value and status of traditional music. Secondly, the pressure of marketisation and commercialisation has also brought great distress to the heritage of folk music. Driven by commercial interests, some folk music has been over-packaged and commercially promoted, losing its original artistic value and national characteristics. This phenomenon not only makes the connotation of folk music weakened, but also has an adverse effect on its inheritance and development. In addition, the preservation of folk music in the digital era also faces many difficulties. Although digital technology has provided a broader platform for the dissemination of ethnic music, it has also brought new challenges to the protection of music copyright. Music piracy and infringement on the Internet are commonplace, which brings great economic losses to creators and performers of ethnic music and seriously affects their creative motivation [13].

In general, the development of folk music in the digital era faces many new challenges and dilemmas. We should pay attention to these problems and take effective measures to protect and inherit our folk music culture. At the same time, we should also actively explore the development path of folk music in the digital era, so that folk music can be revitalised in the new era.

## **4. Opportunities for Ethnic Music in the Digital Era**

### **4.1. Possibilities of Innovative Development**

Under the digital era, the development of folk music has ushered in unprecedented opportunities. Firstly, digital technology provides a brand new means and platform for the creation and performance of folk music. Music producers can create unique musical works by combining elements of ethnic music with modern popular music through digital music technology. Meanwhile, the popularity of online platforms

and social media allows ethnic music works to spread rapidly and reach a wider audience. Secondly, the digital era provides a diversified space for the development of ethnic music. On the basis of traditional music, ethnic music can integrate modern elements to form various new music styles. For example, combining ethnic instruments with modern electronic instruments to create ethnic music with a modern sense; or fusing ethnic music with rock, pop and other music styles to form crossover music works. This diversification not only enriches the connotation of ethnic music, but also makes it more attractive and competitive [14]. In addition, the digital era has also promoted the international exchange of ethnic music. Through channels such as international music festivals and online music platforms, ethnic music can go out of the country and be known by listeners around the world. This kind of international communication helps to enhance the international status and influence of folk music, and provides a broader stage for the inheritance and development of folk music.

To sum up, in the digital era, the development of folk music is full of innovation and opportunities. Only by seizing the opportunities of the development of the times and constantly exploring the innovative development road of folk music can folk music shine more brightly on the stage of the new era.

### **4.2. Platform for Internationalised Communication**

In the digital era, the development of the Internet and modern communication technology provides an unprecedented platform for internationalised exchanges of folk music. Firstly, through social media and music sharing platforms, ethnic music works can be rapidly spread around the world, exposing more international audiences to China's rich ethnic music culture. For example, famous ethnic musicians have released their musical works through social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, attracting a large number of international fans and enhancing the international influence of ethnic music [15]. Second, the rise of online music education and communication platforms has also provided new ways for the dissemination and development of ethnic music. International music students and enthusiasts can use these platforms to learn Chinese folk instrument playing skills, understand the theoretical knowledge of folk music, and even communicate with Chinese folk musicians online. For example, some domestic conservatories and music education institutions have launched international online music courses that have attracted many international students. In addition, international music festivals and competitions provide important opportunities for ethnic music to be showcased and exchanged. By participating in these events, ethnic musicians can have in-depth exchanges with their international counterparts and showcase the charm of Chinese ethnic music, as well as learn and borrow from the musical cultures of other countries and regions to promote the innovation and development of ethnic music. For example, Chinese national instrumentalists have won good results in world music competitions, which not only enhances the international status of national music, but also promotes the dissemination of national music on the international stage.

To sum up, the digital era has provided a convenient platform for international exchanges of folk music, enabling the spread and development of folk music on a global scale. In the future, we expect to see more ethnic musicians making

use of these platforms to promote the internationalisation of ethnic music, so that the world can better understand and appreciate the charm of Chinese ethnic music.

### 4.3. Room for Diversified Development

In the digital era, the development of ethnic music has ushered in a diversified space. Firstly, the application of digital technology provides new possibilities for the creation and performance of folk music. Through technologies such as electronic music and sampling, ethnic music can incorporate modern elements and form a unique musical style. At the same time, digital tools have made music creation more convenient, encouraging more young musicians to explore and innovate in folk music. Second, the popularity of the Internet and social media has provided ethnic music with broader dissemination channels. Through these platforms, ethnic music can reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation. This not only helps the spread of folk music among the young population, but also injects new vigour into traditional folk music. In addition, the international exchange platform also enables folk music to go out of the country and learn from and integrate with world music, further enriching its connotation. Finally, the digital era has provided new ideas for the inheritance and protection of folk music. Through digital technology, ethnic music can be preserved in the form of digitisation, so that it can be protected from the influence of time and environment. At the same time, digital means can also be used in the education and research of folk music, helping more people to understand and master the skills of folk music. In addition, digitisation can also promote cross-border cooperation between folk music and other art forms, thus expanding its expression and connotation.

To sum up, the digital era provides a diversified space for the development of folk music. Under the background of this era, ethnic music is inherited in innovation and promoted in development, constantly adapting to the needs of the times and showing a strong vitality and charm.

## 5. Conclusion

In the digital era, ethnic music faces unprecedented opportunities and challenges. Through innovation and integration, ethnic music can not only maintain its unique cultural charm, but also renew its vitality in new fields. Digital technology provides a brand new platform and means for the creation, dissemination and education of folk music, enabling it to transcend the limitations of time and space and reach a wider audience.

However, we must also recognise that the protection and inheritance of folk music still faces many challenges in the digital era. On the one hand, with the impact of modern popular culture, folk music may gradually lose its original cultural soil and audience base. On the other hand, the rapid development of digital technology has also brought about problems such as copyright protection and cultural homogenisation. Therefore, we need to promote the development of folk music while focusing on the protection and inheritance of its cultural connotations, so as to ensure that the uniqueness and diversity of folk music can be continued.

In order to achieve this goal, the government, the music industry and all sectors of society should work together. The

government can introduce relevant policies to support the digital protection and dissemination of folk music; the music industry should actively explore the combination of folk music and modern technology, and create more musical works with a sense of the times and national characteristics; and all sectors of the society should raise their awareness of the value of folk music and actively participate in the protection and inheritance of folk music.

In conclusion, in the digital era, the development of ethnic music needs our common attention and support. Only through innovation and cooperation can we ensure that ethnic music continues to be inherited and developed in the new era, so that its unique cultural charm can shine on the world stage.

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