



Du Mingxin's Musical Legacy: National Identity Through the Red Detachment of Women

Wang Zhen^{1*}, Tepika Rodsakan² and Surasak Jamnongsarn³

^{1,2,3} Faculty of Fine Arts, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand

^{1*}E-mail: zhen_colour@163.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9695-1216>

²E-mail: tepika@g.swu.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0001-0279>

³E-mail: surasakja@g.swu.ac.th, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1050-8639>

Received 18/03/2025

Revised 01/04/2025

Accepted 20/05/2025

Abstract

Background and Aim: Du Mingxin's The Red Detachment of Women merges Chinese revolutionary themes with Western compositional techniques, offering a distinctive model for expressing national identity through music. By analyzing the piano suite adaptation of the ballet, this study explores how Du's compositions serve as both artistic representations of Chinese cultural memory and influential contributions to the modernization of Chinese piano music.

Materials and Methods: A qualitative approach was adopted, integrating literature review, historical investigation, music ontology analysis, and expert interviews. This comprehensive methodology enables a detailed evaluation of stylistic traits, thematic content, and national identity construction within Du Mingxin's works.

Results: Findings reveal that Du's music effectively blends folk-based melodic materials, pentatonic modes, and ethnic timbral imitations with modern compositional frameworks. The Red Detachment of Women stands as a cultural symbol, embodying revolutionary history, regional heritage, and collective memory. Its artistic and educational significance has contributed to the shaping of national identity and cultural resilience in both domestic and international contexts.

Conclusion: Du Mingxin's compositions exemplify the fusion of Chinese and Western music, reinforcing ethnic identity through innovation and cultural preservation. His works extend beyond musical aesthetics to function as pedagogical tools and national narratives. This research highlights the enduring relevance of Du's music in fostering cultural confidence and advancing Chinese music in the global arena.

Keywords: Du Mingxin's Musical; The Red Detachment of Women; Ethnic Identity

Introduction

Currently, the composition of Chinese composers is deeply influenced by Western compositional techniques and theories, leading to a trend of neutrality in the expression of national identity symbols. Many musical works lack distinct national and regional characteristics, making it difficult to reflect the spiritual essence of traditional Chinese culture. Some compositions excessively pursue technical brilliance in both creation and performance, neglecting the conveyance of Chinese national sounds and the narration of Chinese stories. Consequently, there are relatively few composers who can truly embody national elements and convey the authentic voice of China in their works.

Against this backdrop, this study focuses on Du Mingxin and his representative work, the suite of The Red Detachment of Women. The main research questions include: What are the thematic and stylistic characteristics of Du Mingxin's musical compositions? How does his music contribute to the construction of ethnic identity? What impact has his music had on society and the nation?

There are several significant reasons for undertaking this research.

From the perspective of musical composition, Du Mingxin successfully integrates Chinese revolutionary themes with Western musical techniques, offering valuable insights for the development of Chinese piano music. The Red Detachment of Women conveys powerful spiritual energy through its innovative use of nationalized melodies, rhythms, and harmonies, making its compositional techniques worthy of in-depth analysis.

From the perspective of ethnic identity, Du Mingxin's works demonstrate a strong sense of national recognition. By skillfully blending Chinese and Western musical elements, his compositions possess both international expressiveness and deep roots in Chinese culture. They evoke resonance with the nation's destiny, highlighting the importance of exploring how his music contributes to the construction of ethnic identity.





In addition, The Red Detachment of Women has achieved remarkable success in fostering national identity and driving musical innovation, offering rich cultural, economic, theoretical, and educational value. Studying Du Mingxin's musical creations helps uncover the deeper value of his works, providing meaningful insights for the development of Chinese music and the advancement of social culture. Furthermore, it promotes the growth of China's music industry, enhancing the unique charm of Chinese music on the global stage.

Although many studies have explored Du Mingxin's technical innovations and compositional style, less attention has been paid to the cultural and ideological functions of his music, particularly the way it constructs national identity, transmits revolutionary historical memory, and fosters educational transformation. This research addresses this critical gap by examining how Du's music not only reflects historical context but also serves as a dynamic cultural tool that shapes identity and advances national narratives.

Therefore, this paper seeks to examine Du Mingxin's artistic career and compositional features, analyze the construction of national identity in The Red Detachment of Women, and explore the cultural, economic, theoretical, and educational value of his works. Through this comprehensive study, the research aims to provide new perspectives on the fusion of Chinese and Western musical elements and highlight the broader significance of music as a medium for cultural preservation and identity formation in modern China.

Objectives

1. To examine Du Mingxin's life, background, and artistic characteristics of music creation.
2. To construct a national identity through the analysis of Du Mingxin's musical composition, The Red Detachment of Women piano suite.
3. To explore the cultural, economic, theoretical, and educational value of Du Mingxin's musical compositions.

Literature Review

Du Mingxin is a prominent figure in modern Chinese music, recognized for his ability to integrate traditional Chinese musical elements with Western compositional techniques. His works, particularly The Red Detachment of Women, play a vital role in ethnic identity construction and the development of Chinese piano music. While much research has explored his compositional style and technical innovations, studies on how his music contributes to national identity and cultural memory remain insufficient. This review synthesizes existing scholarship on his creative background, artistic characteristics, cultural significance, and contributions to music education, laying a foundation for this study.

1. Du Mingxin's Life and Musical Influences

Du Mingxin's musical career was shaped by his historical and cultural environment, particularly his exposure to Chinese revolutionary ideology and Western music training. Scholars have noted that his education at Chongqing Yucai School and later studies in the Soviet Union provided him with a strong foundation in Western classical music (Xu, 2006). His experiences during the War of Resistance Against Japan and the Chinese Civil War further deepened his connection to nationalistic themes, which became a defining characteristic of his compositions (Liu, 2011). This background allowed Du to develop a distinct compositional voice, combining patriotic themes with international musical techniques (Wang, 2015).

2. National Artistic Characteristics in Du Mingxin's Music

Du Mingxin's compositions are marked by their strong national identity, achieved through the use of pentatonic scales, folk melodies, and instrumental imitations. His approach aligns with broader trends in 20th-century Chinese music, where composers sought to balance traditional elements with Western structures (Li, 2018). His ballet The Red Detachment of Women is particularly significant for its integration of Chinese folk music, rhythmic motifs, and orchestration techniques derived from Western ballet (Tang, 2019). Scholars have analyzed how his use of Hainan folk melodies, such as The Waters of Wanquan River





Are Clear and Pure, enhances the regional authenticity of the work while embedding it in a national historical narrative (Liu, 2007).

Additionally, his adaptation of the ballet into a piano suite further showcases his innovative fusion of Chinese and Western musical techniques. This transformation maintains the emotional depth and thematic integrity of the original ballet while expanding its reach within piano repertoire and music education (Du, 1977).

3. Music as a Vehicle for Cultural Memory and National Identity

Recent studies have applied cultural memory theories to analyze Du Mingxin's role in preserving national identity. Assmann (2011) emphasizes that music serves as a medium for collective memory, shaping historical consciousness and group identity. Du's The Red Detachment of Women exemplifies this function by transforming historical revolutionary narratives into an enduring cultural symbol (Liu, 2007). His compositions align with Mao Zedong's directives on revolutionary art, emphasizing that music should serve the people and the socialist cause (Mao, 2002). By integrating local musical traditions with national revolutionary themes, Du's music contributes to the formation and transmission of national identity. Cao Ning (2019) highlights how Du Mingxin recontextualized Hainan folk songs, embedding them within a broader revolutionary and nationalist framework. This process not only preserves ethnic musical traditions but also elevates them to a national cultural symbol, reinforcing collective identity through musical storytelling.

4. The Role of Du Mingxin's Music in Music Education

Du Mingxin's compositions have been widely incorporated into Chinese music education, serving as a pedagogical tool for both technical training and cultural identity reinforcement. His piano suite The Red Detachment of Women is extensively used in conservatory training, providing students with exposure to Chinese folk motifs within a Western classical framework (Liu, 2011). Researchers have emphasized that his works bridge traditional Chinese music and modern compositional techniques, making them valuable for both historical study and practical performance training (Xu, 2009). Furthermore, Liu (2011) describes Du Mingxin's teaching philosophy as one that nurtured a new generation of musicians, emphasizing a fusion of national heritage and innovation. His role as an educator at the Central Conservatory of Music allowed him to pass down Chinese compositional traditions while encouraging students to engage with contemporary global music trends.

5. Gaps in Existing Research

While previous studies have examined Du Mingxin's stylistic features, gaps remain in understanding the international dissemination of his works and their role in constructing a global Chinese cultural identity (Xu, 2009). Additionally, there is limited research on interdisciplinary approaches, such as applying music narrative theories to analyze how his compositions construct national identity. Future studies should explore how digital media and globalization influence the reception and adaptation of Du Mingxin's works in contemporary cultural contexts.

6. Conclusion

Existing literature establishes Du Mingxin's importance in shaping national identity through music, particularly in The Red Detachment of Women. His blending of Chinese folk traditions with Western techniques has reinforced cultural memory and provided a foundation for modern Chinese piano music. However, further research is needed to investigate the global reception of his works, their role in contemporary music education, and their potential adaptations in digital and multimedia formats.

Conceptual Framework

This study explores how Du Mingxin and his music contribute to the construction of ethnic identity. The research objectives include the composer and his music, ethnic identity, and value contributions. The study employs methods such as musicological theoretical analysis, interviews, and historical document review, with a theoretical foundation rooted in cultural identity and identity theory. Through comprehensive synthesis and analysis, it examines the characteristics of Du Mingxin's musical style, the relationship

between his music and national identity, and the multidimensional value of his works. The framework of this study is shown in Figure 1:

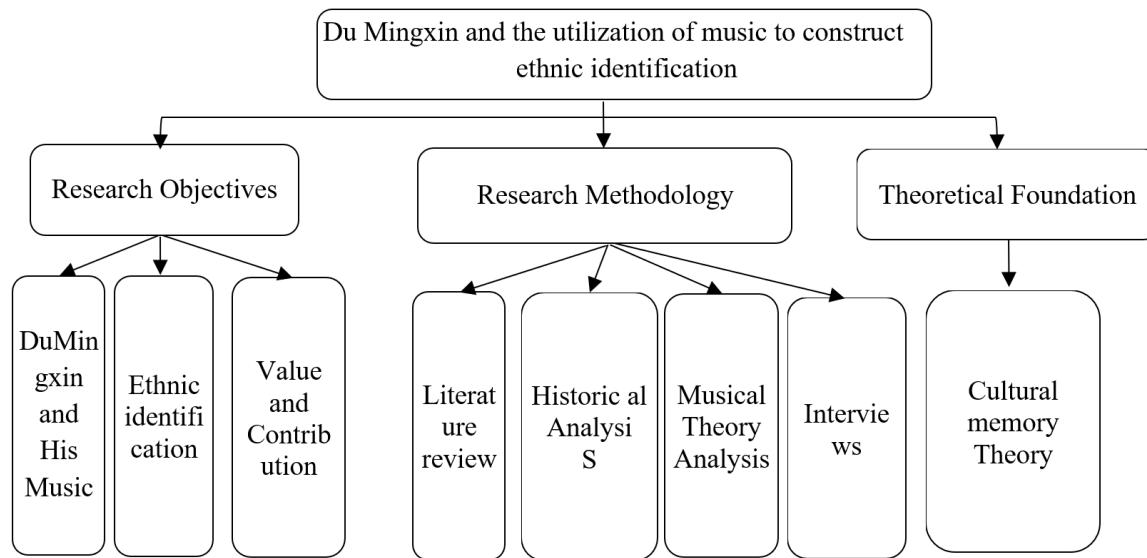


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Note: Constructed by the researcher

Methodology

1. Literature Review Methodology:

The author visited the libraries of the Central Conservatory of Music and Tsinghua University, collecting materials through literature, music scores, journal papers, and books. The collected data were categorized by Du Mingxin's biography, work analysis, and national identity to identify gaps in previous research and suggest new directions for study.

2. Historical Analysis Methodology:

The study traces the musical historical context of The Red Detachment of Women piano suite, conducts field research at revolutionary sites, and analyzes its stylistic features, such as melody and rhythm, in conjunction with the music score. The uniqueness and commonality of the work are compared with contemporaneous pieces to explore its value and significance.

3. Theoretical Analysis Methodology:

Theoretical Analysis: Using cultural memory and identity theory, this method analyzes the era-specific memories and ethnic cultural elements in Du Mingxin's compositions, combining his life experiences and the socio-cultural background to reveal the cultural connotations and spiritual values behind his works.

4. Interview Methodology:

Interviews were conducted with Du Mingxin's students and music experts to understand his creative characteristics, social contributions, and the cultural significance of his works. Additionally, exchanges with music professors at Chinese universities explored the impact of his compositions on contemporary society and their educational value in university settings.

Results

Objective 1. Aims to explore the life and musical compositions of Du Mingxin, analyze how his works reflect the historical context of modern China, and examine the impact of his compositions on the development of Chinese music. The specific research objectives include:

1. Life and Early Experiences: Du Mingxin (1928–present) is one of the most important cross-century composers in the history of music in New China (Figure 2), and he is originally from Qianjiang, Hubei (Xu, 2006). By examining Du Mingxin's life, particularly his experiences during the War of Resistance Against Japan, the Chinese Civil War, and the founding of the People's Republic of China, this study aims to understand the background and motivations behind his musical compositions.



Figure 2 Du Mingxin

(Source: https://baike.so.com/gallery/list?ghid=first&pic_idx=1&eid=5839793&sid=6052624)

2. Evolution of Musical Composition: This study analyzes Du Mingxin's transition from early piano performance to later composition, examining the stylistic changes in his works across different historical periods. Particular focus is given to how he integrated elements of traditional Chinese music with Western compositional techniques.

3. Social and Cultural Impact of His Works: By studying Du Mingxin's representative compositions, such as *The Red Detachment of Women* and *The Mermaid*, this research explores how these works responded to the social and political demands of their time. Additionally, it examines their significance and influence in the history of Chinese music.

4. Educational Contributions to Music Composition: This study investigates Du Mingxin's teaching career at the Central Conservatory of Music, analyzing how he nurtured a new generation of musicians through both education and composition, thereby contributing to the development of music education in China.

Research Finding 1:

Du Mingxin's musical career began during the War of Resistance Against Japan at Chongqing Yucai School, where he studied under renowned composers such as He Luting and Ren Guang, establishing a solid foundation in music. His father's sacrifice in the Battle of Shanghai profoundly shaped his patriotic sentiments, which were vividly reflected in his early works, such as *Who Deserves the Highest Merit*.



During his studies in the Soviet Union, Du Mingxin was exposed to world-class music composition and performance, significantly broadening his artistic vision and laying the groundwork for his later career as a composer.

Du Mingxin's musical career evolved from piano performance to composition. His early works, such as Boatmen's Song of the Jialing River, reflect his initial exploration of traditional Chinese musical elements. During his studies in the Soviet Union, he composed works like The Cowherd and the Weaver Girl and Festival Overture, demonstrating his mastery of Western compositional techniques. Upon returning to China in 1958, he took on the composition of the ballet The Mermaid in collaboration with renowned composer Wu Zuqiang (Liu, 2011). Together, they later created the music for The Red Detachment of Women, successfully blending Chinese traditional music with Western ballet forms to develop a distinctively Chinese musical style.

Du Mingxin's works held significant propagandistic and educational value within their historical and political contexts. The Red Detachment of Women, for instance, became one of the Eight Model Operas. Liu Yi, in her study of the music in The Red Detachment of Women, describes its composition as "characterized by clear, elegant, and majestic melodies, concise and refined orchestration techniques, and a rigorous yet fresh and graceful musical style with a strong romantic quality" (Liu, 2007).

As a long-time professor at the Central Conservatory of Music, Du Mingxin trained numerous influential musicians, including Xu Peidong and Shi Fu. His compositional work extended beyond stage music to encompass symphonic works, film scores, and piano concertos, providing rich learning materials for future generations. His piano suite, New Century Children's Piano Suite, particularly highlights his commitment to music education and his contributions to nurturing young musicians.

In May 1942, Comrade Mao Zedong presided over the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art, delivering significant remarks on the role of literature and art. Mao explicitly emphasized that literature and art should serve the broadest masses of people, resonating strongly among individuals in the cultural, artistic, and educational fields. In his speech, Mao stated that the goal of literary and artistic work was to "study the relationship between art and the broader revolutionary cause, ensure the correct development of revolutionary literature and art, and enable revolutionary art to better assist other revolutionary efforts, thereby defeating our nation's enemies and completing the task of national liberation" (Mao, 2002). This speech set new standards for artistic work at the time and charted the course for the development of Chinese literature and art.

Du Mingxin's musical compositions were profoundly influenced by the era in which he lived, skillfully responding to the social, political, and cultural demands of his time. He achieved a unique balance between tradition and innovation, making significant contributions to the development of Chinese music. His works are diverse in content and distinctive in style, blending traditional Chinese elements with Western techniques, embodying both national identity and modernity. In doing so, Du laid the foundation for the expression of national identity through music.

Du Mingxin's creation chronology as Table 1:

Table 1 Du Mingxin's creation chronology

Period of Creation	Place of Creation	Title of work	Genre	Evaluation
The 1940s	Chongqing Yucai School	Who contributes the most	Song	First composition, reflecting strong patriotic enthusiasm
The 1940s	Chongqing Yucai School	A New Mountain Song	Song	Showcased early creative talent
In the 1940s (after the victory of the	Shanghai	Jialing River Boatmen's Song	Song	This piece, influenced by the style of Sichuan folk songs, exemplifies the application of



Period of Creation	Place of Creation	Title of work	Genre	Evaluation
War of Resistance Against Japan)				national musical elements in composition.
The 1940s (Chinese Civil War period)	Shanghai	1. Salary Is a Big Treasure 2. Nostalgic Melody	Song	Including both satirical and lyrical songs, it gradually incorporates elements of national music.
The 1950s	The Soviet Union	The Cowherd and the Weaving Maid	Orchestra	The broad influence of the world's first-class artistic vision reflects the national theme.
The 1950s	The Soviet Union	Festival Overture	Orchestra	Rigorous structure, widely praised
The 1950s	The Soviet Union	1. Piano Solo 2. Violin Solo	Chamber music	Show off personal composition techniques.
The 1950s	The Soviet Union	A Black Girl Is Singing	Song	Excellent vocal music creation during my study abroad
In 1958	Beijing	Fish Beauty	Dance music	In collaboration with Wu Zuqiang, Dance of the Waterweeds became a classic that has been passed down.
In 1964	Beijing	The Red Detachment of Women	Ballet	In collaboration with Wu Zuqiang, Shi Wanchun, and others, it became a red classic in music.
In 1975	Beijing	The Red Detachment of Women	Piano suite	Adapted the ballet into a piano suite.
From the late 1970s to the 1980s	Beijing	1. Youth Symphony 2. Youth Waltz 3. The Goddess of the Luo River	Symphony	Transitioned from ballet to symphonic composition, showcasing the diversity of his artistic style.
The 1980s	Beijing	1. Fly, Military Flag 2. Ode to the Water Town	Symphony	Showing the mature symphonic techniques
The 1980s	Beijing	1. The Mysterious Wind 2. The Peony Fairy	Dance music	Exploring a broader range of artistic themes
In the late 80s	Beijing	1. The Great Wall 2. The Yang Family Female Generals	Symphony	The combination of national culture and historical themes
In the late 80s	Beijing	1. In the Name of Revolution 2. The Lost Years 3. The Fields 4. Washing Xinghai 5. A Farewell to Cambridge 6. Li Siguang	Film and television music	Film and television music expands the music creation genre.
In the early 21st century	Beijing	1. Spring's Harvest 2. Dedicated to Gulangyu	Piano Concerto	Works dedicated to different regional cultures
In the early 21st century	Beijing	New Century Youth Piano Suite	Piano suite	Creating for the new generation of piano learners, and showing the educational significance

Objective 2. By analyzing the artistic characteristics of Du Mingxin's The Red Detachment of Women, this study aims to explore how his musical composition contributes to the construction of ethnic identity. Specifically, it includes:

1. Prototype of the Work and Historical Background: The prototype of The Red Detachment of Women is the Women's Detachment of the Second Independent Brigade, Third Regiment of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, established in 1931 during the Land Revolution period. It was a subordinate armed force of the Red Third Regiment in the Qiongya Soviet area, consisting mainly of young rural women, with Pang Qionghua as the first commander. Apart from a few male comrades, all members were female soldiers. They were brave in battle, primarily tasked with guarding government offices, watching prisoners, and conducting mass propaganda. When necessary, they also assisted in major combat operations and were deeply beloved by the people. Liu Wenshao, in a research study, pointed out that "In June 1931, they assisted the Red Army in repelling the Nationalist attack, and the name of the Red Detachment of Women spread throughout Qiong Island. In 1932, during the Nationalist encirclement and suppression, the women's detachment protected the evacuation of government offices. Later, due to the Red Army's defeat, they were forced to disband" (Liu, 2007). The Red Detachment of Women represents a revolutionary spirit of fighting against feudalism and oppression, and advocating for gender equality, which continues to inspire later generations.

Initially, Wu Zuqiang, Du Mingxin, and others composed the music for the ballet on the piano, laying a foundation for subsequent orchestration (Figure 3). In 1975, Du Mingxin adapted the music from the model opera ballet The Red Detachment of Women into a piano suite. Based on the original piano score, he selected seven key segments from the ballet: Women's Detachment Drills, Red Guards' Dance with Five-Inch Daggers, Qionghua Joins the Army, Army and Civilians as One Family, The Happy Female Warriors, Changqing's Martyrdom, and Brave Advance. These were restructured into a complete piano suite. The suite incorporates several central musical themes from the ballet, including the Women's Detachment Theme, the Hong Changqing Theme, and the Wu Qinghua Theme. The composer skillfully employed polyphonic piano textures to integrate the scenes and musical language of each segment into a cohesive, multidimensional whole, capturing the spirit of the original ballet (Tang, 2019). As a result, the piano suite The Red Detachment of Women is both powerful and inspiring, ensuring its enduring legacy.



Figure 3 depicts the ballet The Red Detachment of Women.
(Source: <https://jiuyingzhi.com/antiquephotos/178.html>)

2. Analysis of the Artistic Characteristics of the Piano Suite, The Red Detachment of Women:

(1) Use of Chinese Pentatonic Modes: Du Mingxin, with his professional expertise in composition, masterfully fused Western traditional compositional techniques with Chinese folk music

materials, seamlessly incorporating them into the tonal music of the piano suite *The Red Detachment of Women*. For example, in the coda section of measures 61–63 in *Women's Detachment Drills*, Du Mingxin employs a pentatonic melody (Figure 4). The performer's right hand plays the pentatonic melody, while the left hand predominantly features arpeggios, enhancing the music's sense of urgency and compactness. In *Army and Civilians as One Family*, Du draws on the theme melody from the folk song *The Waters of Wanquan River Are Clear and Pure*. In the first eight measures, the music incorporates triple-octave ornamental arpeggios, with the chords progressing in octave unison and overlapping with trills. This effectively highlights the pentatonic character of the piece (Figure 5).



Figure 4 Measures 61–63 of Women's Detachment Drills.

(Source: Du, 1977)



Figure 5 The thematic melody of *The Waters of Wanquan River Are Clear and Pure*.

(Source: Du, 1977)

Through the use of pentatonic melodies, Du Mingxin enriches their works with both cultural depth and artistic innovation, contributing to the development of a uniquely Chinese piano repertoire. By drawing from folk traditions and weaving them into Western piano techniques, these compositions become a bridge between tradition and modernity, reinforcing the identity of Chinese piano music on the global stage.

(2) The Application of Traditional Folk Melodies: Traditional folk melodies, commonly referred to as folk music, are musical works that have been passed down orally among the laboring masses over long periods of history. In the piano suite *The Red Detachment of Women*, traditional folk melodies are seamlessly integrated into the music. For example, in *Army and Civilians as One Family*, the primary melody is derived from *The Waters of Wanquan River Are Clear and Pure*, while elements of the Li ethnic group's tune *Song of Wuzhishan* are also incorporated. Through a simple, natural, and slow-moving melody, the piece conveys the Li people's heartfelt admiration and support for Chairman Mao and the Red



Army, evoking sincere and touching emotions. Listeners can sense the unique historical and cultural characteristics of the Li ethnic group in Hainan through the music.

While composing the piano suite, Du Mingxin resided on Hainan Island, absorbing numerous features of Hainan's folk music. By creatively arranging and adapting these folk melodies, he deeply intertwined the piano work with traditional Chinese culture. As a result, the piano suite *The Red Detachment of Women* reflects the essence of folk music and serves as a piano music form rooted in the characteristics of traditional melodies (Cao, 2019). This approach not only enhances the emotional impact of the work but also fosters a strong resonance with audiences, allowing them to connect with the cultural and historical richness it represents.

(3) Imitation of Ethnic Instrument Timbres: Many piano composers have explored the practice of imitating the tonal qualities of traditional ethnic instruments, such as the ethereal and fluid guqin, the melancholic and distant xiao, or the bold and resonant pipa. For instance, in Du Mingxin's piano suite *The Red Detachment of Women*, the piece *Red Guards' Dance with Five-Inch Daggers* demonstrates such efforts. By employing ethnic harmonic intervals, such as minor seconds, the piano imitates the timbre of the suona (a traditional Chinese wind instrument). Meanwhile, the chords played by the left and right hands emulate the rhythms of small cymbals and tanggu (a small hall drum), vividly conveying an intense and dynamic musical emotion. Similarly, in the introduction to *Army and Civilians as One Family*, Du Mingxin bases the composition on the A gong mode and pentatonic characteristics. The right hand sustains a high-octave tremolo, convincingly mimicking the sound of a bamboo flute. This effectively paints an auditory picture of the serene and clear waters of the Wanquan River, transporting the listener to a tranquil and harmonious setting.

Du Mingxin's effort to simulate the timbres of traditional ethnic instruments on the piano enriches the musical expression of *The Red Detachment of Women* piano suite, making it more vivid and captivating. This innovative technique not only enhances the narrative depth of the music but also deepens its connection to Chinese cultural heritage.

3. Cultural Memory and National Identity: Cultural memory is a key concept in the field of cultural studies, introduced in the 1980s by German scholar Jan Assmann. Its theoretical foundation lies in Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory. Building on Halbwachs' ideas, Assmann divided memory into two categories: communicative memory and cultural memory. Du Mingxin traveled to Hainan multiple times for fieldwork, immersing himself in the life of the Li ethnic group and collecting folk music materials. In the *Red Detachment of Women* suite, the theme of "Military and Civilian Unity" incorporates the melody of the Hainan Li folk song *Wuzhishan Song*, blending Hainanese folk music and dance rhythms. This fusion creates a connection between regional culture and national identity. His compositions have promoted the sustainable development of ethnic minority music, preserving cultural memories within the context of cultural confidence. From vivid memory to archives and then to the canon, this process is one of re-framing and re-contextualizing. Memory's continuity depends on the persistence of social relationships and frameworks, and frameworks emphasize the importance of selection (Assmann, 2011). Du Mingxin chose the framework of Hainan Li ethnic folk songs and restructured it, thus ensuring the continuation of the memory represented by the musical text.

Research Finding 2:

Du Mingxin's *The Red Detachment of Women* extracts representative scenes from the ballet and incorporates national musical elements such as the pentatonic scale and folk melodies, integrating historical narratives with cultural identity to create a unique cultural symbol. Through the piano, the work merges traditional Chinese music with modernity, reenacting revolutionary history and reinforcing shared historical consciousness and emotional identity, thereby contributing to the construction of a collective Chinese ethnic identity. The work's cultural memory function is sustained through teaching and performance, fostering national cultural confidence and facilitating its dissemination in a globalized context, making it a crucial vehicle for national identity. Du Mingxin's *The Red Detachment of Women* piano suite not only portrays

revolutionary history and national spirit through musical composition but also promotes the formation and transmission of national identity through its artistic characteristics and cultural memory construction.

Objective 3. Aims to explore the cultural, economic, theoretical, and educational value of Du Mingxin's musical compositions.

Research finding3:

1. Cultural Value: The Red Detachment of Women musically portrays the revolutionary stories of the Hainan Red Detachment, preserving the revolutionary spirit and promoting red culture. Additionally, it serves as a national cultural dialogue medium in international exchanges. Xu Chun pointed out in a study that “when artists engage in artistic creation, they often go through a challenging process of affirmation, negation, and an even more difficult negation of the negation. This is an uneven process of gestation, requiring them to make difficult choices between history, social reality, and personal ideals. The stylistic orientation of an artwork may change or deviate during a certain period or phase, but its integration with the times is indispensable—it must align with reality and merge with the era” (Xu,2009).

As the Red Detachment of Women became integrated into the flourishing cultural industry and deeply connected with tourism, it not only conveyed progressive social ideologies but also enhanced China's international cultural standing. Du Mingxin adapted the ballet music into piano works, blending Western techniques with Chinese national elements to create a uniquely Chinese piano music style, pioneering a new artistic direction. The composition's powerful melodies and grand momentum vividly portray the heroic spirit of the Red Detachment of Women, inspiring people to uphold their beliefs, evoke memories of revolutionary history, and strengthen national cohesion.

2. Economic Value: Du Mingxin's Red Detachment of Women has achieved remarkable success in the cultural industry. Since its debut, the ballet has been performed over 50 times annually, becoming a classic in the repertoire of the National Ballet of China. Since the 1960s, it has been staged more than 5,000 times both domestically and internationally, solidifying its status as a legendary work in Chinese music history.

In 2018, Sanya launched a large-scale immersive performance, Red Detachment of Women, with a total investment of 1.224 billion yuan and covering an area of 179 mu (approximately 11.93 hectares) (Figure 6). The performance utilizes the natural mountain landscape as a backdrop and integrates film technology with high-tech light and shadow effects to vividly recreate the revolutionary scenes of the 1930s. This production successfully merges red culture with tourism, injecting new vitality into the local tourism economy through revenue streams such as ticket sales, dining, and shopping. Additionally, various locations have incorporated Red Detachment of Women-related historical sites and memorial halls into their tourism itineraries, further driving the development of the local tourism industry and related sectors.



Figure 6 Hainan Red Detachment of Women Memorial Hall
(Source: Photographed by researcher)



3. Theoretical Legacy of Compositional Philosophy:

Through an analysis of Du Mingxin's reflections on the national form of music, scholars have summarized the characteristics of Chinese national music form in two key aspects: first, the principle of composing in a style rooted in Chinese national music; second, the goal of creating music that meets the needs of the people. The development of new musical forms necessitates both the inheritance of traditional musical resources and the incorporation of Western compositional techniques and theories.

Du Mingxin's student, Liu Sola, remarked that his music cannot be classified solely by era or school. Composing within a style that blends realism and romanticism, Du's music bears the imprint of a turbulent life yet remains pure, without distortion or rigidity. His melodies flow naturally, driven by an unwavering childlike sincerity, independent of literary language, forming a unique beauty of their own (Liu, 2011). Therefore, the creation of new national music forms must be grounded in the existing musical heritage, drawing from tradition while integrating Western compositional techniques, in pursuit of a distinctive modern musical culture.

4. Ideological and Educational Value:

Du Mingxin's works integrate national elements with a "fusion of Chinese and Western" style, reflecting the characteristics of Chinese music and revolutionary spirit while holding significant educational value. By analyzing his melodies, harmonies, and orchestrations, students can broaden their creative vision and enhance their understanding of emotional expression and dramatic tension. Works such as *The Red Detachment of Women* help students grasp the narrative function of thematic motifs, while his interdisciplinary compositions strengthen their ability to understand cross-disciplinary art. Du Mingxin's works are widely applied in university music education. Through pieces like *The Red Detachment of Women*, students learn about national melodic styles and symphonic orchestration techniques, while piano works such as *Dance of the Waterweeds* are used for technical training and emotional expression. His revolutionary-themed music serves as an important representation of red culture, helping students understand the revolutionary spirit and historical context. Du Mingxin's works play a crucial role in fostering national cultural identity and artistic innovation, contributing to the inheritance and development of Chinese music education.

Discussion

This study confirms that Du Mingxin's music plays a crucial role in constructing ethnic identity, particularly through his fusion of Chinese folk traditions and Western compositional techniques. *The Red Detachment of Women* exemplifies this blend, using pentatonic scales, folk melodies, and orchestration techniques to create a work that is both nationally distinctive and modern. His approach preserves traditional musical elements while making them accessible within a contemporary framework (Liu, 2007). Additionally, the findings highlight music as a medium for cultural memory and national identity. *The Red Detachment of Women* serves as a musical representation of revolutionary history, reinforcing collective historical consciousness. By incorporating Hainan folk music, Du Mingxin successfully transforms regional cultural expressions into a broader national narrative, strengthening their cultural significance (Cao, 2019). His compositions go beyond simple cultural representation; they transform regional idioms into collective memory and shared emotional experience.

From a comparative perspective, Du Mingxin's compositional philosophy demonstrates a more structurally integrated approach to the fusion of East and West than some of his contemporaries. Unlike composers such as Xian Xinghai, who often juxtaposed traditional melodies with Western harmonic frameworks, Du Mingxin systematically embedded folk materials within Western forms like ballet and symphonic movements. This allowed for a more seamless integration, where national themes and Western techniques co-existed within a unified musical language. His work reflects not only a continuation but also a creative evolution of Chinese modern music composition.

The study also underscores the educational value of Du Mingxin's compositions, particularly in music training and cultural education. His works are widely used in Chinese conservatories, helping





students develop both technical proficiency and an understanding of national musical traditions. This reinforces his influence on shaping future generations of musicians and promoting the integration of Chinese musical heritage in modern pedagogy. His music offers a model of how artistic creation can retain cultural roots while engaging with global forms, making it particularly valuable in an era of increasing cultural hybridity.

Finally, this study confirms that Du Mingxin's works contribute to the continuity of national identity through music, ensuring that historical and cultural narratives remain relevant. His emphasis on "writing music for the people" echoes the ideological values of his era while pointing toward a sustainable future for Chinese national music. The continuing performance, adaptation, and study of The Red Detachment of Women across generations reinforce its role as a vital link between musical form, historical experience, and national consciousness.

However, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, this study primarily focuses on Du Mingxin's influence within the context of mainland China; comparative analyses with overseas Chinese composers or broader Asian musical movements were not addressed. Second, many of Du's original manuscripts, interviews, and recordings remain inaccessible to non-Chinese speakers, presenting a language and cultural barrier that limits international scholarly engagement. Future research could address these limitations by expanding the geographic scope and incorporating cross-cultural musicological frameworks to further examine the global relevance of Du Mingxin's legacy.

Conclusion

Compared to existing research, this study contributes to the scholarly understanding of red music not merely as a form of ideological propaganda but as a dynamic medium of cultural memory, national identity construction, and music education. Du Mingxin's works—especially The Red Detachment of Women—serve as a case study in how music can function as both artistic innovation and ideological pedagogy.

1. This research deepens theoretical discussions of red culture and national identity by contextualizing Du Mingxin's musical creations within historical, cultural, and aesthetic frameworks.
2. It systematically analyzes the structural integration of Western compositional techniques and Chinese national elements in his works, offering new insights into the modernization of Chinese music.
3. By examining the application of Du's compositions in conservatory settings, this study reveals their significance not only for performance but also for curriculum design and national cultural literacy.
4. It expands existing literature on musical cultural memory by highlighting how Du's music translates regional folk idioms into collective national narratives, contributing to a broader understanding of cultural continuity in post-revolutionary China.

Recommendations

1. Theoretical Recommendations

Deepening the Study of the Cultural Value of Red Music: This research advocates for the construction of a theoretical framework that links Red Music to national cultural narratives, emphasizing its role in ideological dissemination and cultural memory formation. A multidisciplinary approach—integrating musicology, cultural studies, and history—should be adopted to enrich the theoretical discourse. Promoting Policy Support for Red Classics and National Music Education: The works of composers such as Du Mingxin should be incorporated into higher education curricula. Additionally, efforts should be made to encourage performances, exhibitions, and academic discussions, fostering the integration of Red Classics and national music education at both foundational and advanced levels.

2. Practical Recommendations

Interdisciplinary Research on Du Mingxin's Works: A cross-disciplinary perspective should be adopted to analyze his compositions, incorporating historical studies to explore their reflection of social transformations and applying psychological approaches to examine how his musical language influences listeners' emotions and cultural identity.





Expanding Practical Applications of His Works: Digital technologies should be leveraged to adapt his compositions into multimedia concerts, enhancing their presence in international cultural exchanges. The fusion of Chinese and Western musical elements in his works can be further explored to strengthen the global impact of Chinese national music.

By integrating theoretical and practical approaches, this study provides direction for the expansion and application of research on Du Mingxin, highlighting the cultural value and practical significance of his musical compositions.

References

Assmann, J. (2011). *Cultural memory and early civilizations: Writing, remembrance, and political imagination*. Cambridge University Press.

Cao, N. (2019). *A study on the adaptations of The Red Detachment of Women*. Doctoral dissertation, Hubei Normal University.

Du, M. (1977). *Piano solo suite of the revolutionary modern ballet The Red Detachment of Women*. People's Music Publishing House.

Li, X. (2018). The integration of Chinese folk music and Western compositional techniques: On Du Mingxin's musical compositions. *Music Research*, 1, 1-12.

Liu, L. (2011). *A study on the piano suite, The Red Detachment of Women*. Doctoral dissertation, Henan Normal University.

Liu, W. (2007). A historical review of my composition, The Red Detachment of Women. *Military History*, 3, 70-73.

Liu, Y. (2007). *A musical exploration of the piano suite The Red Detachment of Women* [Doctoral dissertation, Southwest University].

Mao, Z. (2002). *Collected writings on literature and art*. Central Literature Publishing House.

Tang, J. (2019). A study on Chinese piano music adapted from ballet music elements. *Journal of Sichuan Institute of Culture and Arts & Hubei University of Science and Technology*, 39, 1-14.

Wang, Z. (2015). *A study on the compositional style of Du Mingxin*. Doctoral dissertation, Music Composition Department, Qufu Normal University.

Xu, C. (2006). *Ideals, infinity, and eternity: The creation and analysis of Du Mingxin's piano works*. Doctoral dissertation, Qufu Normal University.

Xu, C. (2009). On the era style and era significance of Du Mingxin's piano music. *The Grand Stage*, 4, 53-60.

