

Ancient Rhythm in the Age of Acceleration: Nanyin as a Mediated Practice for Reconstructing the Order of Time

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Abstract:

Focusing on the "living fossil" of Chinese traditional music, Nanyin, this study investigates how individuals can reconstruct a positive temporal order amidst the accelerated time crisis. Employing a media archaeological perspective distinct from previous studies primarily examining new media technologies and human embodiment resistance, this study seeks novel avenues and inspirations by exploring people's utilization of traditional media. Qualitative research methods were adopted in this study, including ethnographic surveys combined online and offline, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 interviewees who listened and watched Nanyin deeply through screening. The findings reveal that Nanyin, through its special musical characteristics, visual performance and the overall temperament built by these, affects people's perception of time, guiding them from an accelerated, superficial and fragmented temporal state towards a slower-paced, profounder, and more durable temporal order. This influence is closely related to Nanyin's promotion of people's mental healing, meditative space creation and deep self exploration. At the end of the study, we discuss the limited role of Nanyin and it also inspires using traditional cultural to deal with problems of accelerating modernization.

Keywords: acceleration; media archaeology; media healing; meditative space; durable time; traditional culture

1. Introduction

With the rapid advancement of technology, societal transformations, and the fast pace of life [1], People nowadays experience a fundamental sense of disorganization and discomfort with

regards to time [2]. A feel of tension and fatigue consistently occurred within the temporal framework [3], which consequently contributes to the prevalence of psychological disorders among people. As the 2022 National Mental Health Survey Report released by the Chinese Academy of Sciences reveals that young people have emerged as a significant high-risk group for anxiety disorders and depression [4].

Under the circumstances, scholars are increasingly advocating to proactively regulate individual temporal rhythm, reconstruct a harmonious temporal order, and select a state of time conducive to self-development and overall well-being [5]. It is noteworthy that music practice exhibits distinctive characteristics in this context, especially traditional music, which demonstrates an unparalleled ability to address the temporal crisis [6,7]. As posited by Schopenhauer, musical time embodies living time, representing the quintessence of life's activities [8].

At 2023 Chinese Spring Festival Gala, the Nanyin (南音), one kind of traditional music of China, as a living fossil in the history, made its first national appearance to the largest national gala. The Nanyin program “all birds return to their nests” (百鸟归巢) garnered immediate recognition and won the award for having the highest cultural value among all programs in that Gala. On China's largest social media platform Weibo, the topic's read count and discussion intensity have reached tens of millions. People have commented, “It feels like experiencing a profound impact from distant times,” “It feels like time has slowed down,” “It's like having a conversation with oneself,” triggering a widespread reminiscence about the long-lost temporal order.

Nanyin as one of China's oldest surviving musical traditions, being included in UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2009. Scholar Zhang Zhentao has expressed admiration for Nanyin maintaining its slow-paced performances while creating an exquisite blend reminiscent of ancient music; this phenomenon has increasingly captured attention [9]. In recent years, elements of Nanyin have also frequently appeared in television dramas and variety shows. In the 2022, critically acclaimed television drama “Meng Hua Lu

(梦华录),” the female protagonist Song Yinzhang skillfully plays the Pipa (琵琶), a variant of Nanyin. The inaugural episode of the reality show derived from Hunan TV's popular variety program “Sisters Riding the Waves (乘风破浪的姐姐)” was filmed in Quanzhou, where the rich heritage of Nanyin thrives. On Bilibili, a prominent short-video platform, a captivating performance by singer Huang Ling singing Nanyin's enchanting piece “Implanted Garden (植入花园)” garnered tens of thousands of views, subsequently inspiring an increasing number of young individuals to share their own playing and singing Nanyin, thereby generating remarkable attention at a grand scale.

Confronted with the increasingly pressing temporal crisis of modernity and the resurgence of traditional music's power, we are compelled to ponder upon the role that traditional music plays in navigating through the pervasive temporality of modernity. Therefore, taking Nanyin as a case study—a genre originating from southern China but now gaining significant attention and popularity among people—we aim to explore how Nanyin can resist negative temporal influences and reconstruct a more harmonious temporal order. This study is expected to contribute to harnessing the generative potential of traditional culture for the refinement and advancement of modernity while also inspiring the transformation of traditional culture into a contemporary context. Finally, we also discuss the limitations inherent in such practices, enabling us to objectively evaluate the efficacy and influence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Time Order

Generally speaking, order can be categorized into natural order and social order. Natural time order is not subject to human will, while social time order is the outcome of various structural factors. The qualitative characteristics of time that scholars are concerned about lie in the realm of social time order [10], which serves as the foundation for this study's discussion. Scholars have eloquently articulated manifestations of poor time order, particularly through Rosa's critical theory of social acceleration—a representative figure from the Critical School—whose

work directly addresses the pain point surrounding modernity's temporal predicament [11]. Moreover, centered around accelerated time, undesirable temporal states such as “time drought,” “time shallowness,” and “time fragmentation” exacerbate the emergence of an unfavorable temporal order.

However, merely identifying these temporal issues is insufficient; thus, the academic community has recently shifted its focus towards counteracting the adverse effects of this undesirable temporal order [12]. This involves seeking specific tools and approaches to reconstruct a favorable temporal order [13]. Notably, relevant studies have revealed two main categories of practices: relatively moderate and relatively radical. Within the realm of relatively moderate practices, scholars have examined young people's “urban walking” behavior and discovered that by reducing action density per unit of time [14,15], disconnecting from electronic media, and prolonging time experiences, they can potentially escape from the exhausting rhythm of daily life [16] while constructing Lefebvre's concept of the “poetic moment” [17]. Additionally, other researchers have explored young people's engagement in “counter-social clock” behaviors wherein they recalibrate their own time rhythms through actions such as reversing, pausing, and delaying societal expectations [18]. Among the relatively radical practices, some scholars express concerns that digital technology's triggering of invisible exploitation in digital labor may lead to a detachment from digital applications among digital laborers [19,20]. This detachment is specifically manifested through behaviors such as node switching, spatial discipline, and interface closure. Additionally, scholars have focused on the physical gesture of “laying flat” among young people as a declaration of rejecting accelerated temporal structures [21,22]. However, these radical initiatives lack more effective ways to conceptualize resistance against acceleration and leave numerous complexities unresolved, and by disregarding these complexities, there is a risk of missing out on opportunities for negotiation and the discovery of new possibilities.

To sum up, current research on resistance acceleration primarily focuses on embodied practices, specifically the care of human bodily behavior itself. However, in terms of the level of “autonomy” in resistance, such a perspective on care is evidently inadequate. Therefore, it is

necessary to further expand our perspective to include the utilization of tools and media by individuals. Furthermore, existing research predominantly concentrates on digital media management techniques like escape or disconnection; nevertheless, it remains unexplored whether there are alternative media that can offer novel solutions and inspire valuable insights. This neglected aspect presents an important foundation for this study.

2.2. Time Description of Nanyin

The current academic discourse on Nanyin primarily centers around instrumentation and music literature. Although there is no explicit mention of the temporal aspect in relation to Nanyin, existing research has already unveiled its unique temporal allure. Chen's [23] study analyzes the expression of musical aesthetics in Nanyin, which is characterized by “subtle techniques and rhythmic emphasis,” “moderate and neutral ornamentation,” “diverse and balanced collaboration,” “music devoid of vulgarity and melancholy,” as well as “the ability to evoke emotions with humor.” Among the various Nanyin tunes, we can observe the inclusion of both ancient melodies like “Yangguan Sandie (阳关三叠)”, the Tang song “Liangzhou Song (凉州歌)”, and Song lyrics “Chang Xiangsi (长相思)”, as well as foreign Buddhist music such as the “Nanhai Zan (南海赞)”, which mostly adopt the ancient Chinese court and sacrificial music scale, the style of playing are elegant and solemn, gentle and soft, and slow and inner. In addition, scholars are especially concerned about the slow playing and singing of the Nanyin, and research has found that in the “Langjun ceremony” (郎君祭) of the Nanyin community, musicians play at an almost nonexistent pace—a deliberate rejection of fashionable fast-paced music—steadfastly adhering to traditional styles until the very end.

Table 1. Comparison of Nanyin and Other Musical Traditions

Feature	Nanyin	Other Traditional Genres
Tempo	Slow and deliberate	Varied (often faster)
Instrumentation	Pipa, Dongxiao, Sanxian	Broader range (e.g., Guqin, Guzheng)
Performance Style	Seated, minimalist	Varied (e.g., choreographed dances)

Psychological Impact	Temporal deceleration and harmony	Emotional intensity and storytelling
Cultural Role	Evokes historical and meditative states	Focuses on entertainment and ritualistic elements

2.3. Media Archaeology

Drawing upon existing research, this study adopts a media archaeological perspective to investigate individuals' utilization of obsolete media and explore the role played by these “old souls” in addressing contemporary problems .Media archaeology is a research paradigm that has emerged in the field of cultural studies in recent years, aiming to “archaeologically excavate” media that are considered old and obsolete, and reassess their significance and value today [24,25]. Perriault, perhaps the first scholar to propose and name the media archaeology approach, analyzes the relationship between the “function of use” and the “social reproduction” of visual and auditory media throughout history, discussing the connections between past technologies and contemporary forms. The current field of media archaeology primarily stems from “film archaeology” and “knowledge archaeology.” According to the film historian Elsaesser, any continuity we discover, or the connections we wish to emphasize, will only manifest through a process of “retrospect-expect.” This implies that we excavate the past retrospectively, contemplating present issues from a unique or pressing standpoint, in order to attain foresight and prescience. In addition, Michel Foucault's archaeological approach focuses on examining conditions under which discourse is produced rather than its content; this logic prompts us to contemplate why an outdated medium has been reclaimed and sustained.

In general, media archaeology is focused on the study of materiality, heterogeneity, and reproducibility [26]. Materiality emphasizes how descriptions of media's materials, forms, structures, and operations shape our bodies, senses, and perceptions. According to Sobchack [26], the qualification of specific qualities of media defines the essence of media archaeology as a concrete, instrumental, and epistemological method. Heterogeneity refers to the distinct role that alternative media play in differentiating themselves from mainstream narratives.

Reproducibility encompasses various connotations such as reproducing characteristics of earlier media within older mediums or replicating past times and memories with connections to the present. Essentially, Media archaeology is a “practice of resistance”, exploring alternative media in order to respond to and interpret our present situation.

For a long time, humanities research has been dominated by Saussure's structuralism and Derrida's post-structuralist theories, emphasizing the “linguistic turn” of language, discourse, culture, and related concepts. However, with the rise of postmodernism, it has become evident that the linguistic turn alone is inadequate in elucidating the transformations occurring in contemporary society. Consequently, neo-materialism has gained prominence by directing attention towards material phenomena, processes, and corporeal dimensions. In the process of Nanyin's spread, there is also the saying of “not telling the script (不讲本事)”, which refers to the fact that the script itself is not the most important part of Nanyin, and that what is more important is to penetrate the veneer of the script and construct a resonance “without an object”. In other words, when examining the contemporary popularity of Nanyin, emphasis is not placed on its obscure lyrics or indistinct pronunciation; rather, attention is directed towards its material components encompassing instruments, rhythms, and representations as well as their interactions within this context.

Therefore, based on existing research, this study using Nanyin as a case study to explore how it contributes to the construction of a harmonious temporal order. The key inquiries include: what are the mechanisms or elements through which Nanyin constructs its temporal order? How does this process unfold? What internal motivations drive this process? Ultimately, we will provide a dialectical and objective assessment of the temporal impact exerted by Nanyin. The study's focus on China and Nanyin holds significant importance. Firstly, China stands as one of the world's fastest-growing economies today, experiencing a noticeable and intense emergence of modern ailments. Secondly, China possesses a wealth of traditional culture that serves as both representative and inspirational in its utilization. Nanyin, as a newly emerging traditional cultural practice, effectively evokes people's senses of a benign temporal order. Therefore, this study holds substantial reference value and inspirational significance across

various fields such as media sociology, cultural studies, behavioral psychology, and philosophical thinking on modernity [27].

3. Methods

This study mainly utilized a ethnographic survey as well as in-depth interviews. The data collection period spanned from February 2023 to August 2023, totaling six months and yielding over 100,000 words of survey and interview data. The timing of this interview was chosen because the Chinese Spring Festival Gala is broadcast in February every year, and after the broadcast, the nation's discussion of Nanyin reaches a peak, so conducting interviews during this period is advantageous for thoroughly examining people's sentiments toward Nanyin and uncovering the shifts or developments in their perceptions. The research scope encompassed the Chinese Spring Festival Gala Nanyin programs, relevant media reports, interactive comments by mainstream media outlets, Nanyin videos and messages shared on social media platforms by influential self-media users with substantial readership and engagement, as well as significant offline Nanyin performances.

In order to further investigate the relationship between listening to and viewing Nanyin and the perception of temporal order, this study conducted in-depth interviews. Interview participants were recruited through two primary channels: one targeting users who commented on the Spring Festival Gala Nanyin video posted by the People's Daily account on the short-video platform Bilibili, and another targeting users in a large WeChat group dedicated to publishing and exchanging traditional culture. The selection criteria for interview subjects were based on their level of engagement with the topic of Nanyin, which was demonstrated through repeated statements or responses in comments. Initially, extensive private messages and conversations were conducted with eligible users, resulting in 20 individuals being identified for in-depth interviews based on data saturation principles. Each inter-view lasted between 40-60 minutes and focused on three key aspects: time perception, triggering mechanisms, and post-listening/viewing impacts.

The interviews primarily took place through online voice calls, and upon completion, the

interview data were promptly transcribed and organized into written form. Subsequently, the discrepancies and connections within the data were further analyzed and supplemented with additional information obtained through online text exchanges to clarify any ambiguous details. The age range of the interviewees in this study primarily focuses on individuals aged 18-40, indicating a growing youthful influence of Nanyin. Among them, there are 11 females and 9 males, resulting in a relatively balanced gender ratio. Moreover, the participants encompass a wide range of occupations. Detailed information about the interviewees is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographics of Interview Participants

Interviewee Code	Gender	Age	Job	Education Level	Region of Origin	Familiarity with Nanyin
S1	Male	21	Undergraduate Student	Bachelor's (Ongoing)	Southern China	Medium
S2	Female	32	Primary School Teacher	Bachelor's	Southern China	High
S3	Female	22	Kindergarten Teacher	Bachelor's	Northern China	Low
S4	Male	40	Media Reporter	Master's	Eastern China	High
S5	Female	20	Undergraduate Student	Bachelor's (Ongoing)	Southern China	Medium
S6	Male	27	Postgraduate Student	Master's (Ongoing)	Central China	High
S7	Female	29	Enterprise Employee	Bachelor's	Southern China	Medium
S8	Male	33	College Teacher	Master's	Eastern China	High
S9	Female	36	Nanyin Inheritor	Bachelor's	Southern	High

					China	
S10	Female	29	Television Director	Bachelor's	Central China	Medium
S11	Female	29	Middle School Teacher	Bachelor's	Northern China	High
S12	Male	39	Self-media Operator	Bachelor's	Southern China	Medium
S13	Female	24	Enterprise Employee	Bachelor's	Eastern China	Medium
S14	Male	27	Civil Servant	Bachelor's	Western China	Medium
S15	Female	18	Senior High School Student	High School	Southern China	Low
S16	Female	25	Professional Nanyin Player	Bachelor's	Southern China	High
S17	Male	28	Civil Servant	Bachelor's	Eastern China	Medium
S18	Male	20	Undergraduate Student	Bachelor's (Ongoing)	Southern China	Low
S19	Male	30	Film Worker	Master's	Southern China	Medium
S20	Female	34	Enterprise Employee	Bachelor's	Southern China	Medium

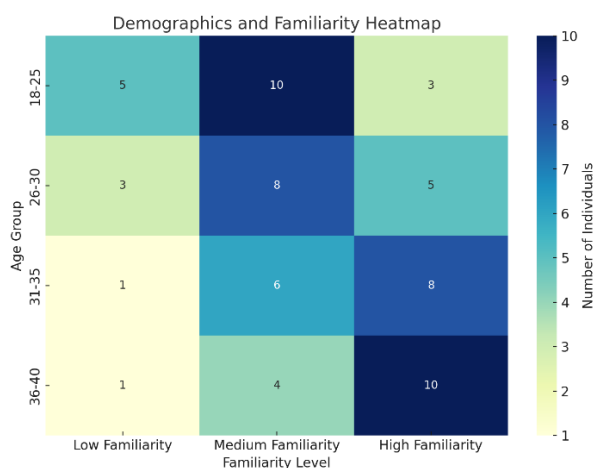


Figure 1. Demographics and Familiarity Heatmap

In figure 1, on the x axis is level of Nanyin familiarity (low, medium, high), and on the y axis is age group (18-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40). The darker the shade, the more individuals in a given category, and we see that as age increases, so does familiarity with Nanyin.

4. Results

4.1 The Musical Characteristics of Nanyin and its Temporal Deceleration

Sound is essentially a wave that stimulates the human auditory system by inducing regular vibrations in the air [28]. This process involves the propagation of an air wave through the ear canal to reach the eardrum and cochlea. The resulting vibrations are then transmitted to the basement membrane, where they are converted into nerve impulses. These impulses travel to the auditory cortex of the brain, leading to perception of sound. This series of steps enables transformation of sound wave amplitude and frequency into specific sensations such as pitch, timbre, and loudness. The earliest research on the impact of sound on individuals originates from studies on consumer experience, which revealed that playing music at a low volume induces relaxation in moods, while higher volumes increase excitement [29]. Composer Schafer has consistently advocated for the distinctiveness of sound and introduced the concept of “soundscape,” which emphasizes both the spatial domain formed by sound and its energetic qualities [30].

Subsequently, scholars have further emphasized the importance of understanding how

individuals perceive their surroundings within this domain and paying greater attention to subjective experiences [31]. Sound is non-directional but highly immersive, serving as an affective medium [32], that enables people to perceive intangible aspects such as order or chaos, excitement or calmness, and harmony or conflict [33]. Lefebvre, in his later years, also devoted significant attention to endeavors aimed at transcending the alienation of everyday life through music [34]. In his theory of rhythmic analysis, he posited that the human body serves as the foundation for such analysis and as a measure of value. The central challenge in rhythmic analysis lies in temporal regulation, namely enhancing one's sensitivity and understanding of time, environment, and the world by comprehending external rhythms and reclaiming a profound sensory experience capable of guiding rationality. Starting from these discussions on sound and rhythm will facilitate a deeper exploration into how Nanyin aligns with our perception of time.

The sound of Nanyin comprises the pure music played by instruments such as pipa (琵琶), dongxiao (洞箫), sanxian (三弦), erpai (二拍), and paiban (拍板), accompanied by vocal performances. The combination of these two types of sounds constitutes different types of performances: those featuring solely instrumental music are referred to as “Dapu (大谱),” while those incorporating lyrics sung by a vocalist are known as “Zhitao (指套).” However, regardless of whether it is dapu with lyrics or zhitao without lyrics, Nanyin tunes predominantly reside in the middle register, with occasional appearances of both the lowest and highest notes. In terms of tempo, although there exist various speed categories ranging from fast to slow, overall there is no particularly rapid music; even pieces characterized by stacked beats maintain an air of composure and elegance rather than haste. A notable example can be found in the initial section of “Yizhi Xiangsi (一纸相思),” where the first four words span four bars and can be played as fast as four minutes or as long as seven minutes [9].

The interviewee, who has extensive experience in teaching Nanyin for many years, expressed that:

The melodic pace of Nanyin is characterized by a deliberate slowness, which imparts a distinct

beauty and unique essence. While students in lower grades may initially imitate the style, those in higher grades are able to sing with an authentic flavor. Moreover, I often indulge myself with Nanyin music during my commutes; whenever I find myself caught in traffic or pressed for time, listening to a Nanyin brings solace and tranquility. (interviewee S2, March 2023)

The television director shares similar sentiments, as she developed an affection for Nanyin during her exploration of traditional culture. She articulates that:

Nanyin embodies a refined and tranquil elegance, resonating with the rhythm of life in bygone eras. However, even in contemporary times, listening to Nanyin has the power to instill serenity and tranquility within individuals. (interviewee S10, May.2023)

The Nanyin pipa has captivated an engineering college student, who remarked, Initially, I perceived Nanyin as a delightful auditory experience due to its languid tempo and my limited comprehension of its nuances. Consequently, it became the perfect accompaniment for writing assignments. However, upon discovering that there were instructors offering lessons in Nanyin pipa, I embarked on a journey to learn this art form. Subsequently, I would seek solace in serene environments where I could immerse myself in solitary practice sessions with closed eyes—a state that induced profound relaxation and immense pleasure. (interviewee S1, Feb-ruary.2023)

Based on the aforementioned interviews, it becomes evident that Nanyin's slow and medium-speed sound quality directly influences the temporal experience of individuals [35,36]. In situations characterized by impatience, restlessness, and busyness, Nanyin's auditory elements facilitate an escape from such predicaments, enabling a return to a stable and harmonious temporal order. It even shows a potential for what Lefebvre referred to as “supreme rhythm”, realizing the harmonious integration of mankind with their surroundings, time, and environment.

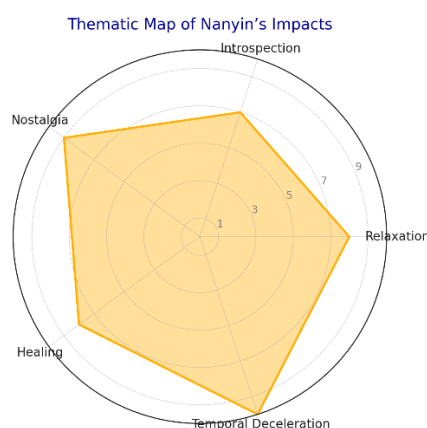


Figure 2. Thematic Map of Nanyin's Impacts

The figure 2, represents how Nanyin affects the individual experience by means of its effect on temporal perception and emotional state. The axes had higher scores in terms of participants' significance, which indicates Nanyin's function in creating tranquility, self reflection, and historical connection.

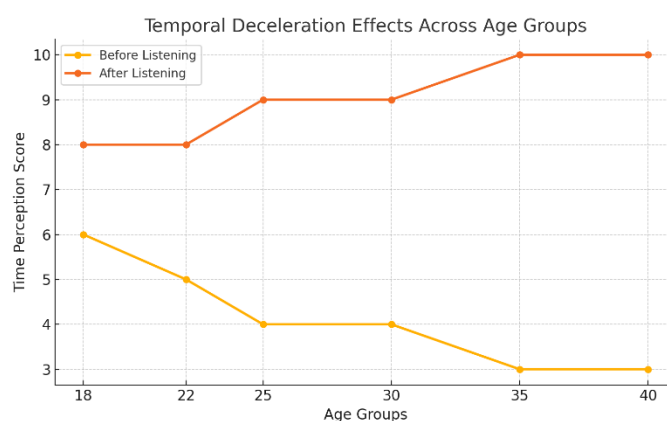


Figure 3. Temporal Deceleration Effects Across Age Groups

In the figure 3, the yellow line is the time perception scores before listening, while the orange line is after listening. The chart shows that Nanyin has a positive effect on people's feeling of time, with older people (35–40) being most benefited.

Table 3. Impact of Nanyin on Temporal Perception

Theme	Specific Effects	Supporting Quotes/Insights
Relaxation	Reduces stress and anxiety	"Nanyin brings solace and tranquility." (S2)

Introspection	Encourages self-reflection and mindfulness	"Nanyin is a means of engaging in introspective conversations." (S4)
Connection to History	Evokes nostalgic memories and historical links	"Hearing Nanyin is like an old man walking towards you." (S7)
Meditation	Facilitates deeper life contemplation	"Nanyin performances allow profound realizations and introspection." (S12)
Psychological Healing	Supports emotional and mental well-being	"Nanyin can effectively alleviate stress and worries." (S9)

4.2. The Visual Form of Nanyin and its Temporal Depth

The form of Nanyin reflects the structure of its performance, which primarily relies on the arrangement of specific symbols to create a visual impact. These symbols encompass both the performer and the instrument in Nanyin performances. The temporal order established through this process is closely intertwined with the evolving presentation of the performance image [37]. Similar to how a video editor can generate temporal tension through rapid screen switching, time also plays a significant role in Nanyin performances. Beyond mere visual perception, these symbols employed in Nanyin performances and their associated meanings constitute an integrated field. According to Hall's [38] perspective, meaning within this field is not solely determined by the sender but also influenced by interpretations made by receivers, including their understanding of temporal order. Therefore, exploring the relationship between Nanyin's form and temporal order should involve analyzing not only visual images conveyed through symbols but also considering viewers' interpretation of overall meaning.

The Nanyin still adheres to the traditional form of performance, emphasizing simplicity, tranquility, and the aesthetics of moderation and harmony [39]. In the classical ensemble, the Nanyin singer is positioned at the center, holding a paiban that is gently struck during singing; on the right side of the singer are musicians playing pipa and sanxian, while on the left side are musicians in charge of dongxiao and erxian. This arrangement mirrors that described in Han dynasty's "Xianghe song" (相和歌), where both stringed and bamboo instruments harmonize

with each other under vocal guidance [23]. Performers are required to sit rather than stand or move around freely; they traditionally use mahogany chairs with backrests and armrests to ensure comfort while limiting excessive limb movements. Regarding attire, performers wear classical long skirts and shirts while under-shirts, shorts, or slippers are not permitted on stage. In ancient times when all performers were male, they were expected to appear wearing long robes and coats as a means of regulating their behavior and preventing impulsive actions. Stage design for Nanyin performances aims to minimize complex props commonly seen such as intricate backdrops or symbolic artifacts.

Therefore, the most prevalent depiction of Nanyin performance entails four seated musicians in a row, with the melody initiated by the first instrument's sound and gradually joined by other instrumentalists who subtly sway their upper bodies while maintaining a seated posture. The Nanyin vocalist sits at the center, occasionally tapping on the clapperboard to synchronize with the rhythm, without any additional physical or choreographic embellishments. At first glance, this performance style may appear monotonous and austere; however, it faithfully preserves the traditional form passed down over centuries by minimizing visual distractions for viewers and allowing them to focus solely on the refined melodies of silk and bamboo instruments. The almost static nature of these performances also engulfs spectators in a timeless musical enchantment and nostalgic reverie.

The concept of emphasizing the main body and minimizing distractions is not uncommon in various fields. For example, news writing, where it resembles a hand holding an axe to cut through the forest of redundancy, reveal the essential branches of a refreshing narrative and eliminating lifeless articles. Also this approach aligns with modern architect Rohe's design principle of “Less is more” [40], advocating simplicity and rejecting excessive ornamentation. In contemporary times, influenced by materialistic progress and evolving social trends, even the concept of minimalism has emerged. More individuals are embracing this philosophy by simplifying their interactions with people, objects, and society through subtraction—a means to attain relaxation and order.

Some scholars found that the performance form of Nanyin is rigorous, simple and elegant, not

like a self-generated folk music, it should be made by the economic strength of the princes and aristocrats of the family class or the palace workshop. Over time, Nanyin gradually incorporated elements from Buddhist and Taoist music, thus assuming the role of ceremonial music. In the context of ceremonial music, the utmost importance lies in inducing a sense of tranquility within participants so that they can enter a state of meditation. From an external perspective, this serenity primarily stems from the simplicity exhibited in Nanyin performances—a technique akin to employing “leaving blank (留白)” in painting. In artistry terms, white space refers to simplifying artwork to allow room for individual interpretation and collective understanding of its meaning; similarly, this visual concept of “leaving blank” profoundly impacts how audiences perceive changes in time and space.

An Interviewee drew inspiration from Liu Zongyuan's ancient poem “An old man sits in a lonely boat, fishing alone in the snow of the cold river” to convey his emotions while watching Nanyin performance. He described this experience as profoundly enigmatic, transporting him to an alternate realm where he could vividly relive the ancient verses learned during childhood. In the such music, he felt immersed in a snowy landscape, isolated yet captivated (interviewee S5, April 2023).

In this sensual description, the scene that the interviewee want to express may be close to the kind of lonely and quiet situation depicted in ancient poems, imagining that they are like an old man fishing alone in the snow, and what they are fishing for may not be a fish but a reflection in the water, a kind of self-finding.

As a media reporter, the Interviewee expressed his perspective on Nanyin performance in a rather radical manner, stating that:

Nanyin is not merely a performance; it transcends the purpose of entertainment and serves as a means of engaging in introspective conversations with oneself and others through music. When feeling agitated, Nanyin gradually guides individuals into a tranquil space where they can engage in self-reflection and dialogue. (interviewee S4, April 2023)

As suggested by Koepnick [41], the deceleration and slowing down of time create an environment where life experiences are harmonized, confronted, and buffered. The simplistic

visual presentation of Nanyin not only slows down time but also gives rise to a personal realm wherein individuals seek to interpret meaning [42]. The space for self-dialogue and introspection, as found in the music of Nanyin, is precisely the remedy prescribed by Han in the face of the temporal predicament of modernization – “contemplation”. As Han believes that only through “contemplation” can one counteract the time crisis, allowing time to strive towards a certain authentic otherness, and enabling the deepening of thought itself [43,44].

4.3. The Perception of Nanyin and Its Temporal Duration

We can gain insight into the intuitive essence of Nanyin through its distinctive characterization as a “living fossil”. This appellation stems from its preservation of numerous discernible historical elements, encompassing rhythmic patterns, performance styles, and instrumental usage, all traceable to their historical origins [45].

Scholarly investigations have revealed that the extensive repertoire of Nanyin, characterized by its slow tempo and melodic richness, encapsulates the quintessence of Chinese classical music since the Han and Tang dynasties while also cherishing elements from ancient Western regions' musical culture. Furthermore, the performance style upholds characteristics reminiscent of Xianghe songs from the Han dynasty, with many instruments employed having an extensive lineage corroborated by unearthed artifacts and mural paintings [46]. Additionally, scholars have identified Nanyin's unhurried playing and singing techniques along with its emphasis on empty space performances as a manifestation of “Zhonghe (中和)” music deeply influenced by Confucianism [47,48]. Relevant research has discovered that influential scholars such as Zhu Xi in the Song Dynasty and Li Guangdi in the Qing Dynasty actively promoted Confucianism in Quanzhou—the birthplace of Nanyin—resulting in it becoming a significant hub for Confucian teachings during Southern Song Dynasty [49]. Consequently, this cultural influence naturally permeated local music styles and concepts [50]. In addition, a large number of Nanyin's repertoire is based on the legends and dramas of the Tang Dynasty, as well as the stories of theater characters from the Song, Yuan and Ming Dynasties, among which such repertoires as “The Mountain is Dangerous and Steep (山险峻),” “Out of the Han Pass (出汉

关)” have been widely circulated.

The Nanyin show exudes a profound “sense of history” stemming from its extensive historical lineage and ancient conceptual foundations. This sense of history encapsulates the amalgamation of overall stylistic elements, ideological underpinnings, psychological customs, and other contextual factors that define different eras. It is not confined to specific notions but rather represents a synthesis that may appear indistinct yet evocative [51].

As the interviewee exclaimed,

When I heard the Nanyin program at the Spring Festival Gala, I instantly got goosebumps, you can feel that this music comes from a long time ago, but it is still there today, like an old man walking towards you. (interviewee S7, May 2023)

As a graduate student specializing in cultural heritage, the interviewee utilizes the unique characteristics of Nanyin to cultivate an optimal mindset. He explains,

During my literature review and dissertation writing process, I often seek out Nanyin videos or audios to immerse myself in its historical essence. Additionally, I occasionally light incense to recreate an ancient ambiance and atmosphere. Although ultimately returning to reality for the purpose of writing my dissertation. (interviewee S6, April 2023)

Through this analysis, we observe that the “sense of history” in Nanyin functions as a form of temporal manipulation, a characteristic commonly found in traditional art forms when examining temporal anomalies [52]. Building upon this transformative aspect of time, Nanyin establishes connections between distant past and present moments, creating a state of temporality known as “duration,” which aligns with Bergson's concept of time essence. This serves as a countermeasure against the transient and fragmented nature of time, ultimately restoring its coherence [53].

In the more microscopic dimension of an individual's life, Nanyin serves as a musical embodiment of childhood for numerous individuals residing in southern Fujian, China. Consequently, it possesses the ability to evoke memories from childhood among this particular segment of the population.

One interviewee expressed,

Listening to Nanyin evokes a nostalgic sentiment, reminiscent of my childhood living environment. My grandfather used to play Nanyin tapes on a cassette recorder, and there were dedicated venues nearby where Nanyin performances took place. Sometimes these performances even occurred on the street or in the alleyways, creating a relaxed ambiance that is akin to encountering someone playing guitar by the roadside nowadays! (interviewee S4, April 2023)

One interviewee shared a captivating anecdote about her initial encounter with Nanyin, stating, I vividly recall the first time I witnessed a Nanyin performance during the Lantern Festival in my second year of junior high school. The town was adorned with countless lanterns, and I will forever cherish that mesmerizing sight along with the enchanting melodies of Nanyin resonating in my ears. Even now, whenever I listen to Nanyin, it evokes that poignant imagery and instills within me a profound sense of tranquility. (interviewee S3, April 2023)

Although the interviewees' narratives are slightly nostalgic and melancholy, they are replete with joyful and heartwarming memories. These recollections attest to the fact that during their childhood, Nanyin served as a rich source of emotional energy that objectively influenced their career choices in fields such as Nanyin education and television broadcasting. Some scholars argue that time without “support” engenders a feeling of dislocation, causing time to rush forward uncontrollably until it eventually breaches its temporal boundaries. Only through “support” can we slow down time and give it direction. For many young people in southern Fujian, Nanyin serves as this force of support. No matter how frenzied or chaotic our lives may be today, hearing Nanyin evokes memories of child-hood and hometowns past; it is almost as if time has flowed backwards to those days when we listened to Nanyin with naive romanticism. Moreover, reflecting on these past experiences helps individuals find purpose and meaning for present actions while establishing a complete narrative arc for one's life journey - tracing where one comes from while charting where is going.

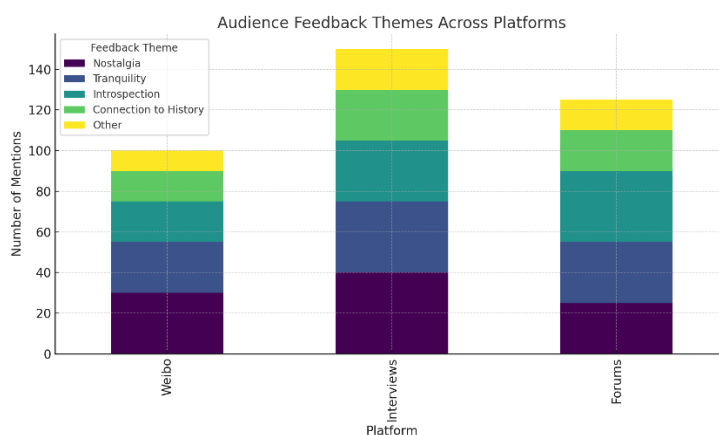


Figure 4. Audience Feedback Themes Across Platforms

Responses to audiences are categorized into five primary themes and are shown as stacked bars in the figure 4. The height of the segments corresponds to the number of mentions for that theme; each color represents a specific theme. In this visualization, we can see that different platforms emphasize different aspects of the influence of Nanyin.

5. Discussion

5.1. Contemporary Psychiatric Symptoms and the Music Therapy

Scholars have discovered that acceleration leads to a form of temporal pathology [54], encompassing mental anxiety and depression [55], necessitating the implementation of specific “time healing” interventions. Through interviews, we observed that Nanyin's characteristic slow tempo effectively regulates individuals' heightened experience of time and reconstructs a seamless temporal sequence, thereby facilitating a process akin to therapeutic “healing” [56]. In fact, the relationship between music and healing has a long history. Some scholars have analyzed the traditional Chinese characters “music (樂)” and “medicine (藥)” and found that in ancient times, the characters “music” and “medicine” were commonly used, indicating that music was a form of medical treatment at that time, so the phenomenon of “music” was also named “medicine” [57,58]. In ancient literature such as the “Huangdi Neijing (黄帝内经)” and “Zuo Zhuan (左传)”, there are also documented instances of using musical instruments for medical purposes. For instance, the “Huangdi Neijing” mentions that “the five internal organs

correspond to the five sounds,” indicating that people at that time utilized pentatonic therapy to regulate emotions and enhance blood circulation coordination [59,60]. In “Zuo Zhuan”, it is written, “Ancient kings appreciated the five flavors, harmonized the five tones, to calm their hearts, and thus established their governance. so the Classic of Poetry (诗经) says, ‘The virtuous sound is flawless’“, where music not only promotes calmness, but also accomplishes human morality. In the “Quannan Fingerprints Recompilation (泉南指编)” during the Republic of China era, there is a recorded passage elucidating the joy of Quannan's populace: “String songs and leaves are played, filling the ears with music, capable of evoking deep emotions, resonating with the soul, dispelling numerous worries, and soothing countless anxieties, thus fostering complete happiness.” From it can be realized that Nanyin has been playing the role of transforming psychological state and promoting emotional pleasure since the past [61].

Advances in the study of music medical science since modern times have also confirmed the objective existence of this connection. The anthropology of medical music has found that human beings are creatures of mind and body, and that health refers to a state in which a person achieves a balance between mind and body, in which music is often described as a bridge between body and mind, and is the most important component of a therapeutic ritual or practice, in which the act of music stimulates cognitive flexibility, and in which the nervous system shapes new cognitive links, which in turn succeeds in exercising its neuroplastic capacity [62]. From this perspective, the “heal-ing” effect of Nanyin does not lie in the repair of specific traumas, but rather in the stimulation of the nervous system to form new cognitive outcomes, which are then reinforced by the powerful plasticity of the nerves, and this cognitive effect is further extended to the human body, and ultimately, those negative cognitive factors and states are gradually overwritten, while the new and stable cognition shaped by the act of Nanyin is gradually replaced. And the Nanyin shapes a new stable and positive order to prevail.

The interviewee, who was the inheritor of Nanyin intangible cultural heritage, also discussed the therapeutic effects of Nanyin from this perspective:

Whether performed, sung, or simply listened to, Nanyin can effectively alleviate stress and worries. It serves as a valuable aid in promoting overall physical and mental well-being.

(interviewee S9, May 2023)

One of the interviewees also recounted a common saying among Nanyin enthusiasts:

There have always been rumors suggesting that Nanyin possesses healing properties. This notion carries an air of mystique, implying that the frequencies of its resonating strings align and resonate with our bodily organs. However, I don't view it as something mystical. Rather, it's simply a testament to the belief that uplifting music has the power to enrich our emotions. In essence, good music has a nourishing effect on individuals. (interviewee S3, July 2023)

5.2. Meditation Promotes Comprehension and Proficiency of Life Experience

The form of Nanyin performance pursues simplicity and atmosphere, without unnecessary visual interference, and the sound of Nanyin is mainly in the middle register, which means that in the picture and sound of this rhythm is not compact, in fact, leaving a lot of intermittent “blank space”, and these blank are exactly the place for the Nanyin appreciators to add their own understanding of the field. Unlike the superficial experience of time in alienated daily life, the unique visual mechanism of leaving blank spaces in Nanyin enables individuals to immerse themselves in a realm of self-reflection, thereby facilitating deeper contemplation on the intricate aspects of everyday existence. It is at this level that Nanyin provides an avenue for temporal inscription, liberating individuals from the ignorant and monotonous passage of time and allowing them to rediscover profound realizations and introspection [63]. Through our interviews, we discovered that the respondents who were older or had more demanding schedules placed a greater emphasis on the significance of this profound experience [64].

One of the older interviewees shared with the author their perplexity and contemplation regarding the pedagogy of Nanyin, stating,

In contemporary times, there is often an emphasis on precise pronunciation, accurate singing, and imitation of the teacher's style. However, I occasionally ponder upon the purpose of such an educational approach. In my opinion, the essence of Nanyin lies in its distinctive flavor and transformative impact on individuals. (interviewee S11, June 2023)

A self-media interviewee also shared a similar experience regarding the efficacy of Nanyin.

They stated,

Every time I write an article, I have to extensively verify information and keep up with current trends, which can be exhausting. Occasionally, I encounter writer's block. In such moments, attending offline Nanyin performances rejuvenates my thoughts. The melodious music and unhurried yet composed nature of these performances provide me with much-needed respite. Nanyin performances have proven instrumental in helping me navigate through challenging situations that are difficult to confront directly in my personal life. (interviewee S12, June 2023)

Confronted with the dynamic advancements in technology and rapidly evolving social landscape, Heidegger also embraced an attitude of inquiry and meditation [65]. His later philosophy was characterized by a prevailing contemplative tone, as he emphasized that it is not merely the destination but rather the profound reflection along the journey that holds significance [66]. It is through this period of introspection that individuals can grasp the essence of life experiences and construct a network of meaning [67,68].

5.3. Finding the Deeper Self Within an Durable Time

Bergson argues that the nature of time is intricately linked to the nature of the self, thereby suggesting that durable time also implies a durable self [69]. He further delineates the self into two distinct aspects: a superficial self and a deeper self. The superficial self represents a social facade and outward expression that can be differentiated and organized, while the deeper self remains fluid in its essence. Despite its complex and tumultuous formation process, there exists an inherent vitality of life within this deeper self. What matters is, through this vitality that the essence of the durable self is revealed. However, one may wonder where this life force, which shapes the deep sense of identity, originates from. Deleuze [70] provides further elucidation by explaining that this vital energy flows within time itself. Consequently, Nanyin's construction of duration time becomes a gateway to accessing and affirming the energy of life as well as confirming one's true essence [54].

Nanyin serves as a conduit for connecting the past with the present, encompassing both a long history and recent memories [71]. In the present context, its historical significance lies

primarily in the reiteration of past experiences, enabling us to discern a more suitable direction and purpose for contemporary development [72]. Meanwhile, its significance in evoking memories allows for an exploration of motivation and justification for current actions through the lens of time's journey already traversed [73]. Scholars have criticized the prevailing notion of “time's loss gravity”, which posits that time inexorably moves forward without any inherent direction, ultimately leading to disintegration [74]. However, Nanyin's invocation of past memories helps counteract this illusionary busyness by reinstating and reestablishing a connection between present actions themselves and their original motivations – namely, the reasons behind embarking on those actions at that particular moment [75].

Whether it pertains to the recollection of distant history or personal memories, Nanyin's re-establishment of the connection between past and present time fundamentally represents a self-reconstitution of one's life continuum. This process enables individuals to discover the vitality of existence, encompassing motivation, purpose, and significance in their actions. Consequently, this life force permeates through the journey of life, nurturing the present moment while fostering a deeper comprehension and proactive approach towards future prospects.

6. Conclusions

In the discourse on how acceleration has transformed the contemporary temporal structure, Rosa astutely highlighted that acceleration is an irreversible facet of modernization [76]. Within this paradigm shift, the paradoxical nature of time and individuals' experience of time syndrome become inevitable; however, more significantly, lies a crisis of meaning concealed behind this temporal predicament [77]. Heidegger once posited that the issue of time is fundamentally intertwined with existence itself [78]. Only by comprehending our temporal condition can we offer specific and nuanced insights into the meaning of our existence.

This research thus delves into such underlying concerns to explore the significance evoked by Nanyin. It reveals that through the material elements of its music rhythm, visual representation, instrument form, Nanyin enables individuals to recalibrate their temporal state from one

characterized by haste, superficiality, and fragmentation to one imbued with slowness, depth, and coherence – thereby rediscovering a harmonious temporal order. In a deeper sense, this reestablished temporal order aids in psychological healing and fosters positive emotional well-being; it facilitates profound contemplation which allows for introspection on life experiences; it bridges gaps between different stages in time while uncovering sources for action and future directions through retrospection on history and past events.

Simultaneously, it is imperative to acknowledge that despite the temporal influence and profound significance of Nanyin, its impact remains constrained. It is crucial to recognize that beneath the realization of Nanyin's potential lies a lengthy accumulation of historical sedimentation and the preservation of essential elements of traditional culture [79]. In reality, contemporary life represents a fusion of tradition and modernity, with traditional culture persistently coexisting alongside modern development while exuding its enduring allure [80]. Marx [81] once asserted that individuals forge their own history within the framework established by encounters with and inheritance from the past. Therefore, when confronted with numerous challenges posed by modernity, we must not overlook the indelible imprint of traditional culture surrounding us amidst emerging technologies; instead, we should contemplate how to effectively harness and fully leverage the distinctive characteristics and latent potential inherent in traditional culture so as to furnish modernity with a constructive calibration force. Concurrently, this process enables traditional culture to manifest its creativity and newfound vitality during the course of modernization and civilization [82].

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