

The Renaissance of Tang Zheng: Reappropriations of Classical Zheng in Modern Zheng Culture

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According to Mark Slobin, artists inevitably invent new styles in response to contemporary life, even while attempting to restore the past. Slobin's insight is particularly useful if we wish to draw out the aesthetic, cultural, and political concerns that have emerged in the revitalization of Tang Zheng that began approximately five years ago in China. Fu Ming-Jian has been a primary figure in this movement. This paper builds on current scholarship of the concept of "revival" by examining his creative appropriation of Tang Zheng and is one of first studies to include an interview with a practitioner in the field.

Fu's reconstruction of Tang Zheng involves several important historiographical and aesthetic aspects. Fu has criticized the modern practice of Zheng, which places heavy emphasis on virtuosic technique, wishing instead to balance the traditional and the modern. Departing from Tamara Livingston's claim that revivalists are habitually opposed to modern and mainstream culture, Fu seeks to mobilize the tradition as a means of creating a viable alternative to modern Zheng music. Adding to the complexity of this "revival," Fu has appropriated certain modern Zheng techniques in inventing new performance styles for the older thirteen-string Zheng.