

Characteristics of Chinese National Choral Works in Yunnan

-- Take Liu Xiaogeng's Return Home and Rippling Brook as Examples

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Abstract

In recent years, with the popularization of choral music and the creation of a large number of choral works, especially with the continuous exchange and cooperation between Chinese and Western music activities and music education, China's choral career has developed rapidly, especially excellent works with the characteristics of Chinese national style have been specially recognized. Liu Xiaogeng, one of the representatives of Chinese national music composers, is dedicated to the creation of ethnic music with Chinese characteristics. With a unique aesthetic perspective and novel creative techniques, he creates unique choral music with national characteristics, which not only reflects the native characteristics of the nation, but also gives contemporary diversified musical elements. This paper attempts to elaborate and show the unique characteristics of Liu Xiaogeng's creative style in his choral works through his two representative works.

Keywords

Choral music, Liu Xiaogeng, characteristics of composing creation, ethnic music in Yunnan, Return Home, Rippling Brook.

1. Introduction

Liu Xiaogeng, born in 1955 in Yunnan, China, is a first-class Chinese composer. He is currently a member of the Chinese Musicians' Association and Honorary President of Yunnan Arts Institute. Liu Xiaogeng is one of the most representative and innovative composers in Yunnan, and his compositions cover almost all musical genres. Chorus is an important part of his musical creation, and he attaches great importance to the discovery and protection of Yunnan's native folk music. His choral works are mostly inspired by the musical elements of Yunnan folk songs, and he pursued a musical language integrated the essence of Yunnan folk music, the spirit of the times and the composer's artistic personality, gradually formed his own creative characteristics in the process.

In this paper, the author has chosen two representative works of composer Liu Xiaogeng, the instrumental choral work Return Home and the eight-part mixed choral work Rippling Brook as the research objects to explore the characteristics of ethnic choral creation with Chinese characteristics. Through the interpretation and comparison of the two works, this paper summarizes the characteristics of the creation skills of the contemporary national characteristic chorus.

2. Elements of Yunnan Folk Music

"Among the 56 ethnic groups in China, 25 ethnic minorities gather in Yunnan. They live together in large and small communities, like pearl spots embedded in this red earth plateau." [1] Liu Xiaogeng always immersed in Yunnan with musicians sensitive and understanding of folk music,

he went up from music form not only recognizing and grasping of the features of Yunnan ethnic music form, but also from the perspective of ethnic culture in-depth study ecological minority music culture, learn from the vast folk music culture and refined modern elements.

2.1. Material for National Melodies

Both of the composer's works are based on ethnomusicological materials, which are mainly based on folk life and toil, with oral tradition being the main mode of transmission, so the length is relatively short in terms of musical structure. The most important feature of both works is to draw beautiful melodies from simple themes. The melody material of piece Return Home adopts the core sound of Haicai Qiang of national minority Yi, which is often used in music performances by Sani people of national minority Yi. The melody is euphemistic and catchy. Rippling Brook is one of the typical representative of Yunnan folk songs, which adopts the simple and lyrical melody of pentatonic mode. The composer retains the original melody, expanded and adapted it in the form structure.

2.2. Ethnicity of Accompanying Instruments

The piece Return Home with a distinctive Yi style, in which the accompaniment instrument used Zaiyang drum of national minority Yi in Yunnan, which has a rich tone and large in size, and are beaten with drum sticks to produce a huge sound. Another percussion instrument in the work is traditional "cigarette box", which came from the "cigarette box dance." It's used by clasping one in each hand, jamming the casing with the middle finger and tapping inside the box with the forefinger in conjunction with the thumb, "cigarette box" then send out clear and crisp sound. The addition of ethnic instruments not only reflects the extremely strong ethnic flavor, but also enhance the dynamic rhythm of singing.

2.3. Accession in Local National Languages

Composer Liu Xiaogeng often adds local dialects to his works, which is not only an artistic technique for expressing thoughts and feelings in music among various national minorities, but also one of the characteristics that cannot be ignored in folk songs of various national minorities. In the piece Return Home, the middle paragraph is overlaid with local dialects, such as the Dali dialect "A Huihui", "Maimai Sansan" and so on. In the piece Rippling Brook, the composer created a large number of onomatopoeia for the sound of water according to the characteristics of minority languages, such as "Da Dala", "Ba Lala" and so on. Although these onomatopoetic words have no practical meaning, when they are combined with the lyrics and the melody, the distinct emotions they show are consistent with the traditional folk music, which not only highlights the style of folk music, but also fully reflects the composer's creative ideas.

3. Modern Creation Techniques of National Chorus Works

Composer Liu Xiaogeng not only inherited and continued the traditional composing techniques, but also explored the composing techniques of modern choral music. He tried to enrich contemporary choral music through new artistic expressions, such as:

- a. Vocalization of human voice: The human voice simulates all kinds of sound in nature, such as playing tongues, whistling, stamping feet, etc.;
- b. Behaviorization of human voice: It uses the voices that people often make in life situations, such as shouting, yelling, crying, laughing, etc.;
- c. Rhythmicization of human voice: The use of human voice to imitate the different sound changes produced by rhythm and pursue the richness of rhythm changes.

3.1. The Technique of Creation Without Musical Sound

By "non pitch", it means a sound without pitch. In modern choral works, the use of human voice has broken the aesthetic habit of the traditional choral concept and created a variety of novel sound effects. "In terms of vocal technique, it not only adopts bel canto, national singing, popular singing and other vocalization methods as the vocal techniques, but also integrates more natural original voice pronunciation. In terms of pitch, a new sound system is formed by integrating non-musical sounds with musical systems, such as the imitation of Musical Instruments by non-tonal onomatopoeia. In terms of musical expression, it tends to be close to the life of the original expression, the natural roar, scream, speech into the creation of the works." [2]

In the piece Rippling Brook, there are three musical fragments imitate the sound of water without pitch, and the added sound effect enhances the stereo sense of the musical picture, which can fully attract the imagination of the audience. In the middle part of piece Return Home, the creation technique of non pitch was also used. The whole section consists of chanting, stomping feet, high-fives and other body percussion sounds and percussion instruments.

3.2. Element Composition Method

Composer Xiaogeng Liu takes apart and crumbles the elements of local folk music (language, tone, rhythm, etc), It was rearranged and orchestrated to create a new and unique music, which Liu xiaogeng calls "The Element Composition Method". [3]

The core sound "do-mi-fa-sol" is used in the composition Return Home, the onomatopoeic word "Sailuo Lisai" created by the composer for each vocal part followed. Rippling Brook is a music with different images formed by processing and changing according to the theme motive of "la-do-re-mi". The accompaniment voices sing the onomatopoetic word "Dili Lili".

3.3. Improvisational Singing Method

"An important force in music in the second half of the 20th century has shifted in the opposite direction, towards less composer control and more performer creativity". [4] In both compositions, improvisational singing method was adopted. In contrast, the impromptu singing of Return Home was relatively more demanding. Because the impromptu part in Rippling Brook was just imitating the sound of water. But in Return Home the chorus improvised on the spot and whispered about going home without limitation. At this moment, this tested the creative ability and active artistic attitude of the chorus member and conductor. In consideration of the emotional resonance of the audience, the conductor leads the chorus to create a second time and even integrates the emotional resonance of the audience into the music. The author realized that "material - composer - composition - conductor - choir - audience" is a complete cultural system. In this sense, Liu Xiaogeng has integrated this system into his own creation and into the Chinese cultural circle, and his works have made great contributions to the development of Chinese modern choral music.

4. The Performance of Choral Works

For most people in China, choral singing has only one concept in mind: the form of singing in large numbers, in unison and with a loud sound. However, with the continuous development of modern choral music, the content and form of Choral music in China have undergone great changes, and the performance of choral music has been constantly emphasized. The chorus performance gradually becomes diversified and novel from the single standing position and unnatural singing expression. As for the choral works of ethnic groups with Chinese characteristics, they paid more attention to the expressiveness of formation and performance, took performance factors into consideration in the creation, and became a part of the works in a prescriptive way. "In terms of the tacit cooperation between composers and conductors,

creation and performance, this is also where the post-modern features of Choral singing in China are revealed". [5]

5. Conclusion

Music creation is the free expression of the composer's inner feelings, and the richness of inner feelings comes from diverse social life experience and artistic practice. Taking Yunnan's folk music as the source of creation, so that it with the spirit of the modernity and the composer's artistic personality organic combination, to achieve new breakthroughs, new expressions. In the creation of choral chorus with Chinese national characteristics, it is necessary to deal with the relationship between nationality, modernity and artistry, and find a new way of contemporary choral composition and musical language to express the life of the times through the collision of the three. Music is inclusive and developed, and chorus, as the music with the most extensive participation of the masses, embodies the essential characteristics of a kind of nationality, time and fusion. The creation of Chinese national choral music should be based on ethnic music and draw on advanced Western technical skills to create choral music that keeps pace with the times, truly make Chinese chorus go to the world and make more people feel the artistic charm of the Chinese nation.

References

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