Call for Chinese Opera with National “Temperament and Character”—Thinking about Development of Chinese Opera

Xiuling Zheng

Abstract

The birth and development of Chinese opera are generally divided into five stages: the budding stage, the foundation stage, the exploration stage, the stagnation stage, the breakthrough and development stage. Nowadays, from the script to musical composition, from opera singer to all kinds of talents training, the development of Chinese opera should be adhere to the soul of Chinese culture, adhere to the national temperament and character, and also should adhere to be loved by the masses, can accept the idea and bloom its unique dazzling brilliance in the world opera stage.

Keywords: the Development of Chinese Opera; National “Temperament and Character”; Personnel Training

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Chinese opera has experienced several stages as follows. The budding stage (1919-1942): Influenced by the “five four” New Culture Movement and In order to meet the needs of the patriotic struggle against imperialism, small repertoire has been produced in which, children's song and dance drama The Sparrow and the Child produced by Li Jinhui is generally regarded as the first Chinese opera works. The foundation stage (1942-1956): Take the new yangko dance movement occurred after Yanan Forum on literature and art as starting point, a large number of yangge opera have been produced, which opened the way for the creation of the new opera. Yangge opera Brothers and Sisters Reclaim the Wasteland (1943), Husband and Wife Learn Characters (1944) were produced, and so on. By 1945 a great upsurge in the history of Chinese opera was formed. At this time, the classic work The White-Haired Girl got strong social repercussions and had a great impact on the development of Chinese opera. The exploration stage (1956-1965): After the founding of the people's Republic of China, adhere to the policy of “letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend”, the opera singer further bold explored the new opera, constantly accumulated experience in opera creation. There are three creative directions for the new opera on the whole: First, the creative direction of the study of traditional opera and folk song and dance drama, such as Liu Hulan, Red Leaf River, and so on; Second, adhere to the creative direction of The White-Haired Girl on the whole, such as Xiao erhei Marriage, Wang Gui and Li Xiangxiang, and so on; Third, the language and style of music are based on folk music, and in the form of music draw lessons from the traditional idea of Western Opera, such as Jiang Jie, Hong Hu Chi Wei Dui and Guli Ayi which has reached a very high level in the chorus and Orchestra, and so on. The stagnation stage (1966-1976): Ten years of turmoil, almost no new opera. The breakthrough and development stage: Since the reform and opening up in 1978, because of the change of the living environment of opera and the difference of artistic conception and interest, there has been an obvious
tendency of polarization in the creation of the Opera: First, One is the elegant trend, namely along the direction of serious grand opera continue to dig, integrate and balance the comprehensive aesthetic feeling of opera at a higher aesthetic level, which was the main artistic exploration target, such as Regret for the Past, Wilderness, Cang Yuan, Struggles in the old-Line city, and so on. Another is the secular trend, under the impact of commodity economy, serious opera especially exploratory and experimental serious opera are faced with a situation of distress, and make some opera artists have to find a new path to survive and develop opera. In their view, the development of music drama is one of the possible and feasible way. The opera with typical musical aesthetic features was produced, such as Fang Cao Xin, and so on.

Opera has a history of nearly one hundred years in china, from children's song and dance drama of Li Jinhui to the first grand opera Qiuzi (1941) created by Huang Yuanluo, from the Yangko opera to the new opera, regardless of the process of development or the singing characteristics, both musical composition or stage performance, Chinese opera has shown its national “temperament and character”, which has been formed and gradually developed. From arduous efforts to explore, continuous reform and innovation to gradually mature, Chinese opera has gone through the tortuous course of more than 90 years, and changed the earliest single into diversification, formed a distinct features of multiple coexistence. Today, however, the main content of the opera is mostly near modern and ancient history themes, and the content can truly reflect the contemporary people's life and emotion is very few. The author thinks that the Chinese opera should deduce the life and emotion of contemporary Chinese exactly, and embody the culture and spirit of the contemporary Chinese, which is the most important form of the uniqueness of the Chinese Opera's national “temperament and character”.

2. The characteristics of national “temperament and character” of Chinese opera

Today, literature and art in our country is developing constantly with vigorous situation, the opera art is no exception. Because it is required for the masses of the people, shows the essence of the superstructure, the opera art should have more excellent works to reflect the progress of our country's soft strength in a real sense. However, throughout the history, since the reform and opening up there are still too few works loved by the people, and the classic arias which popular and can be sung are less and less. Some works are too highbrow and other-worldly, place themselves above billions of ordinary people's appreciate ability, even far higher than it, the result can only be just to console themselves. It does not know that if the art lost the function of expression and acceptance of human basic emotions, the final result is suicidal. On the contrary, some works are too “popular literature or art”, artificial, superficial and flamboyant. From music to the story is no sense of beauty at all, the audience can not wait until the end of the show will be tangled, and quickly fled, so as not to be ravaged on the spirit. Some works are just curious and no vitality for foreigners, and for ordinary Chinese people, they do not love to sing and can not to sing, some people even think that for a lot of works singing is not like singing, saying is not like saying, and neither the high pitched voice nor the low pitched voice can be sung, expose the problem of that the work is out of the general audience's ability of acceptance. People love the popular and classic works that can be sung, and with fresh style, it should be worth considering.

The musical critic Ju Qihong said: “Chinese opera stories and characters are so exciting. The music and the famous arias are so beautiful, even woman and children all know, and a lot of people sing that opera, it completely become an indispensable part of the life for ordinary people.” We can
see that whether musical composition or theme selection of the opera script, whether Chinese composers or Western composers, in the work creation, it basically reflects the unity of the singing, dramatic, and lyricism. But from the aspect of the aesthetic interest and the accepted ability of audience, social influence and the necessity of historical development, there is a certain gap between Chinese opera and western opera, such as Italy opera, French opera, German opera, and so on. As a combination of songs and drama, “drama” is the priority among priorities. The art of different countries are consistent in the overall framework and the means of revealing the theme, but the concept of aesthetics is different, different composer has different demands about music aesthetic, different nation, different language, and different appreciation of the beauty. The aesthetic tendency of opera often reflects on the stage, and according to a series of elements to show it, such as the overall design style, costumes, stage property, lighting, stage dispatch, and so on, in addition, it also consist of performer, stage art, dance, the characteristics of the times, the status of the audience and the economic condition, etc. Good opera script has independent value of literature and aesthetic value, on the basic of the outstanding literary image, accurate and vivid language performance, stronger action, typical ness and character language shows the characteristics of opera art. Using the aesthetic tendency of opera on the stage, the composer has great imaginary space and creative space. Creating an impressive melody, creating opera music with national characteristics, is a prerequisite for the production of opera in china.

Chinese opera is created by the Chinese people This is Chinese music talking about the story of the Chinese people, and it is Chinese people's language, which should have a more rich heritage of Chinese culture. But from the existing Chinese opera, it needs further innovative ideas. To create a Chinese opera with the national “temperament and character”, it might as well in the study of western music composition techniques, while taking the creative road base on the nationalization. Taking national opera as an example, represented by Jiang Jie, Hong Hu Chi Wei Dui, and so on, the complex and tortuous typical character relationship in the play, through careful design and artistic creation of the composer, shine the light of humanity, and excite peoples mind. Moreover, the excellent works, such as Wilderness, Regret for the Past, Farewell My Concubine, sunrise, etc., widely absorbing western tradition and modern techniques. Besides, operas performed overseas, such as First Emperor of Qin, A Madman's Diary, Legend of White Snake, created by Tan Dun, Guo Wenjing, Zhoulong, and so on, also highlight the combination of Chinese and Western culture and art in different degrees. Content themes and musical language clearly reflect the Chinese elements, which turn on the good momentum and become a classic example for the development of Chinese opera market and Chinese opera art.

3. The diversified artistic creation of Chinese opera reflects the national “temperament and character”

Technique is only a “tool”, the beauty of art should be highlighted no matter using what techniques. Chinese opera should be orphean and can be sing. This condition seems simple, but not easy to express. Chinese folk music resources are very rich, if extract some elements of folk music resources in creation, and skillfully develop and create them, the result should not be overlooked.

The diversity of Chinese opera art means is the basic of creating Chinese opera with national “temperament and character”, and the way based on the forest of the world opera for Chinese opera. Such as the opera wilderness, which is a diversified art of work. Wilderness was translated into English, performed and succeed in January 1992 at the Eisenhower Theatre in Kennedy Center in
Washington, USA. Mr. Jinxiang adhered to based on the national tradition, uses national music style, also fully and delightfully to write the male and female love arias with European romantic style. Wilderness can go out of the country to get success is also the achievement of Chinese opera creator and Chinese opera performing artist achieved by their own true artistic strength. Sunrise is also a work created by the idea of a diversified artistic style. The arias of the play, such as “who are you” “Oh, Lulu” “look for” “I want to have a home”, are catchy songs. The opera Mulan Psalm drawn from a well-known story in China of Mulan disguised as a man replaced her father as a soldier, the music of the play arose with a new form of the symphony and opera scene. According to the rules of music, Mulan Psalm woven story, this practice make the music acquire a free play space. The drama have carried out a bold innovation in the form of artistic expression and stage performance, blended of symphonic music, music drama, dance drama, Chinese traditional opera art and other elements. It had a unique style and a strong Chinese style, highlighted the creation of diversified art. And Guo Wenjing's The Ricksha Boy used the opera language of tension, fused material of Beijing Opera and folk song, used sanxian, suona, drums and other folk instruments of China and cries reproduce the scene, made the opera has deep Beijing local brand, music expressive force and affinity greatly enhanced have increased significantly.

4. The cultivation of Chinese opera talents

Whether Chinese opera could stand on the world opera stage, the cultivation of opera talents, the cohesion of the creative team, the establishment of the Chinese opera school, etc., all need each opera artist and opera performer to work together to complete. As the Opera Research Institute, Peking University President Kingma said: “Whether Chinese opera could stand on the center of the world opera stage, this is not only related to the establishment of the concept of Chinese opera, also marks the development of Chinese opera has risen to a new stage. Because the Chinese opera is a concept, which must be placed in the world to set up, rather than a concept of a country or a nation on the corner in a play.” This requires Chinese opera to appear in the world opera stage regularly, show the more pure China culture and the more distinctive Chinese artistic creation technique in the world.

1. Chinese Culture is the Soul of the Development of Chinese Opera

Chinese culture is the soul of Chinese opera, because of the broad and profound Chinese culture, Chinese opera is attractive on the world stage. Such as Guo Wenjing's A Madman's Diary, which was first performed in June 1994 In Amsterdam, Holland; The Banquet was first performed in October 2, 2001 on the Autumn Art Festival in Paris; Tan Dun's Tea was first performed in 2002 in Japan; First Emperor of Qin was first performed in 2006 in New York; Zhou Long's Legend of White Snake was first performed in June 2010 in Boston, and so on. These operas are from the Chinese people's stories, reflect the Chinese culture, adopt music elements of China, as a result of this Chinese opera stand up on the world stage. Jin Xiang's sunrise was performed up to 3 hours, the success of the opera made this classic drama which have experienced 80 years once again blossom out extraordinary artistic charm in the form of an opera. Yinqing's Canal Ballad absorbed the techniques of scattered perspective and blank technique of Chinese traditional painting in artistic expression, fully reflect the development prospect of diversified art means. Meanwhile, it should also be noted that many composer's works are always first performed overseas, and on the stage of China it is hard to see, which make the vast majority of opera lovers have countless regrets in the heart when mention the Chinese opera. In addition, in the past ten years, the opera works which reflect the real life and
reflect the current situation of the contemporary society are few, which is also a subject for the opera circle needs to think deeply. Some people say that China's opera has no market, some people say that China's opera has no audience, the author think that these are one-sided argument. A Madman's Diary returned to the opera stage of China after ten years of overseas performance, the audience reacted very strongly and praised highly. They feel the shock of the modern opera art. Therefore, Chinese opera could stand up in the forest of the world, and show together in the world with Chinese culture and art, only by strengthen the Chinese opera creation and popularization, and train creative talents who can integrate national “temperament and character” into works.

2. The Cultivation of Chinese Opera Talents and the Idea of the Transformation of Chinese Opera Production System

In the creative team of Chinese opera, young composers account for a large proportion, they are the main force of Chinese opera creation, and the hope of the Chinese opera. Whether traditional music creation technique or modern music creation technique, they must be able to skillfully use them, and in-depth study of the essence of Chinese traditional art, so as to create works with art value and social value.

The mining and training of talents is also an important part of the development of Chinese opera. We might as well try western countries’ method that take the opera as the center, facing the whole society collect the actors for the role, and look for the actor who can shape the image of the opera in the broad masses. At the same time, the National Grand Theater and the Central Opera House at least make 10 operas each year, and product an opera needs 70 million yuan, this situation needs to be adjusted. The author think that a part of fiscal expenditure need to be used to education, and truly implement into the life of teachers and students, let the creative talents have the ability to dive deeply into folk to collect folk songs, let the performance of talent to accept the guidance and training of the world's leading masters, let the talents who are interested in the development of Chinese opera put their whole heart into the creation of opera culture. Culture management department, social theatre, and university group should work together to create a good platform for the cultivation of excellent and outstanding opera talents, and make the development of Chinese opera have a good fashion and clear future. This is a method to fundamentally solve the problems existing in the current development, and a prerequisite for the sustainable development of Chinese opera.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Opera performance art is a kind of ultimate comprehensive art form, usually created and presented by the top talent in the field of opera, who has a creative experience, a certain life experience, and a open vision of art. However, for the general talent training, our country's existing art colleges and universities, as well as music department of general comprehensive universities basically can complete. But to cultivate the top opera talents, it also need a higher level of teaching mechanism, professional opera teachers, and professional opera teaching and research institution, in order to meet the needs of the development of Chinese opera. The expansion of the opera creation team, the improvement of the level of opera actors, also need to actively strive for all sectors of the society to support the development of opera. We must strive to work together to create a good opera art environment and social environment, to provide a good practice and development platform for the reserve talents of opera, and to create and perform more, better, and more excellent opera works with national “temperament and character”, so as to make Chinese opera rise to a new stage, then establish status on the world opera stage.
References


