The Construction of the Cultural Subjectivity of Chinese Music
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Abstract. With the trend of globalization, especially cultural interaction and integration, the development of Chinese music has welcomed unprecedented chances and opportunities. However, under the increasingly aggressive import and infusion of western cultures, the problem of sustainable development without losing one’s national traits cannot be underestimated. Therefore, with an attempt to promote the stable and scientific development of Chinese music, the author of this paper suggests that it is necessary to construct the cultural subjectivity of Chinese music. It is argued in this paper that by strengthening the conception of cultural identity, deconstructing the misbelief of West-centralism, highlighting the cultural nationality and perfecting the theoretic system building, the scientific development of Chinese music characterized by its own national uniqueness will be enhanced.

Introduction
Since the early 20th century, with the import of western music, Chinese music seems to have been on the brink of losing its own national identity as the cultural values of the west has become the dominant standards. In the context of globalization, especially cultural interaction and integration, the development of Chinese music in the contemporary society has welcomed unprecedented chances and opportunities. Not only the inner content and outer forms of the modern music cultures has been valued, but also the innovation and reformation of traditional music culture has been attached great importance. However, it is undeniable that between Chinese music and western music, there is still a considerable difference in their respective soft powers. What’s more, under the challenge of modern music cultures, the traditional music culture in China has encountered the great danger of slipping into the trap of blindness and dislocation.

Therefore, it is necessary to keep the innovative development of traditional culture in consistent with the fast advance of cultural integration in the globalized context, as it will contribute to the advocating and prevalence of traditional Chinese culture in the whole world. This paper is focused on exploring the possibility of constructing Chinese music’s subjectivity by the means of conception-formation, cultural integration and highlighting of national specialties, so as to enhance the stable and scientific development of Chinese musical culture in the globalized society.

The Formation of the Scientific Conception of Chinese Music’s Cultural Subjectivity
The construction of Chinese music’s cultural subjectivity is the demand of the trend of globalization. Faced with the challenges coming from the diverse cultures of the world, great attention is supposed to be attached to the formation of the cultural subjectivity of the Chinese music.

It is universally acknowledged that Chinese culture has a history of thousands of years, its music has also been formed into a unique system. Chinese music has unique characteristics which are totally different from the west music, both in the forms of performance and the ways of music notation. However, as far as the soft power is concerned, the difference between Chinese music and western music is unneglectable. Cultural soft power is understood as the ability to attract and persuade, or, the ability for a culture to be convincing and appealing to the outsiders. Therefore, in
order to increase the soft power of Chinese music, we cannot evade the truth that the musical style and subjectivity formation of Chinese music are totally estranged from that of western music and it is this distinctiveness that forms the basis of Chinese music’s subjectivity. Therefore, only when we have a clear-cut conception of the cultural subjectivity of Chinese music, and make great efforts to highlight its subjective characteristics in the process of absorbing and adjusting the thinking pattern of the western music system, can we push forward the scientific innovation and evolution of Chinese music, ensure the existence of its national characteristics, and achieve its continuation as well as its creation. So far, with the intention to pave the way for the scientific construction of Chinese music’s cultural subjectivity, we are supposed to put the following plans to social practice.

Firstly, carrying out social propaganda. The immense task of pushing forward the development of Chinese music should not be confined only to professionals. In fact, all music creations and productions should be deeply rooted in the mass people. Therefore, it is advisable that the government, the professionals and the communities should have joint efforts to carry out positive and active propaganda among the people. What’s more, it is also highly suggested that all kinds of opportunities of cultural communication should be positively utilized, so as to have more people all over the world have a better and deeper understanding of the unique beauty of Chinese music.

Secondly, pushing forward the frontiers of professional education. It is beyond doubt that personnel who are well equipped with the most professional education and latest information about the ongoing development are the greatest contributors to the cause of promoting the role of Chinese music in the whole world. Consequently, it is indispensable to instill the educational domain with refreshing ideas and brilliant talents so as to keep this filed forever energetic and highly competitive.

Thirdly, furthering theoretical research. Theory is the guideline and operating principles of practice. In the past, Chinese music lagged behind the western culture to some degree as far as theoretic achievements are concerned. In recent decades, Chinese researchers have made great efforts and have accomplished a lot. Yet there is still a lot waiting to be done. Therefore, we should increase our investment in theoretic system building to guide our creation of music in the new era.

The construction and popularization of a scientific conception of Chinese music culture’s subjectivity is a process that demands the endeavors from various sides, including the support of the government, the devotion of the professionals, the recognition of the mass people and the joint efforts of the cross-cultural agencies, etc.

The Deconstruction of West-centralism in Music Appreciation and Production

Besides making efforts to construct the cultural subjectivity of Chinese music, it is equally worthwhile to deconstruct the belief of West-centralism and to achieve a harmonious integration of the national elements, especially the traditional ones, in Chinese culture into the modern creation. “With the transfer of western musical culture into China in the 20th century, many scholars have adopted the western conception of musical history…Hence the belief that the historical development of Chinese music should follow the guide of the West.” Therefore, in the whole 21st century, especially in its first half, Chinese musical tradition had been under severe negation and even criticism. After the establishment of new China and the implement of our recovery policy, this situation has been improved a lot. But, the prejudice of West-centralism is still held by some Chinese, including music producers and performers. Of course, this is a misbelief which we should shake off without hesitation. Without proper recognition of our tradition, the national identity of Chinese music will lose its foundation. Returning to the traditional elements will not only enrich the modern creation with diversity in musical forms and profoundness in connotations, but also accelerate the rational reformation and colorful innovation, which will play a significant role in the construction of cultural subjectivity of Chinese culture. In order to achieve that, there are a couple of suggestions listed below.

On the one hand, it is suggested to break the myth of West-centralism in the field of music by building up a comparative perspective so as to evaluate the values of both the Chinese and western musical systems. For a certain time, there has been a widespread and deep-rooted West-centralism
which is not only prosperous in the West but also permeating among some Chinese. In order to fully appreciate the priceless value of our own musical system and achievement, it is time to break the misleading myth and develop an equitable comparative perspective. But while doing this, we should always keep in our mind that “Comparison is not for judgment of superiority or inferiority, but to compare the respective musical structure and function, so as to demonstrate what kind of music will come into existence as a result of integration and combination.”

On the other hand, music producers, educators and learners are supposed to strengthen their learning and mastering of the national culture, including not only the classic culture but also the various ethnic cultures, most importantly, the origins of different musical schools, the forms of musical notations, etc. The selective combination of different musical traits and forms of the various ethnic groups will provide rich resources for the production of more enlightening musical works.

Of course, in the process of deconstructing West-centralism, we are supposed to be alert against returning to cultural conservatism or China-centralism. What we expect is the conversation between different musical subjects on the equal footing. Through conversation, we’re aiming at more ambitious goals, that is, “The final purpose of conversation is the reconstruction of new musical culture.”

The Highlighting of National Characteristics Embedded in Chinese Music

It is claimed by some scholars that the so-called musical subjectivity is actually the national tradition of its musical culture. As discussed earlier, Chinese music is a unique system with its own national characteristics, including its musical notations which are totally estranged from the western ones. The system of five notes and twelve-tone temperament has presented a typical musical feature which distinguishes Chinese national music from the rest of the world. It will be a great pity if such a valuable national heritage does not get the proper attention that it deserves. Therefore, it is highly suggested that we should skillfully integrate the national heritage of ancient Chinese music into our development and innovation of Chinese music. Because it is sincerely acknowledged that the preservation and evolution of nationality will become the indestructible foundation of any artistic creation in the contemporary world. Otherwise, our musical production, no matter how dazzling it may look like on the surface, will be just empty and hollow without a national spirit.

Since the 20th century, western music has been penetrating and infusing into Chinese people’s cultural life. Many people, while confronted with the sophistication of western music, tend to accept the western standards without critical thinking. If we just let this tendency slide, soon we will face the tragic outcome of losing our own identity. Therefore, what we should do is to attach more attention and value to our own cultural heritage instead of abandoning it. Surely the advance of Chinese modern music needs inspiration coming from the latest development in the western music. Yet in the meanwhile, it also highly depends on the nourishment deriving from our own cultural heritage. Only when we arrive at a balance between the borrowing of alien musical achievements and benefiting from our own national cultural treasure, can we ensure the scientific and sustainable development of our Chinese music.

Perfection of the Academic Vision in Theoretic System Building of Chinese Music

The fabrication and perfection of the theoretic system also plays a critical role in the construction of Chinese music’s cultural subjectivity. Yet the fabrication and perfection of the theoretic system won’t be accomplished without a proper academic vision. The thriving of Chinese music needs not only technical improvement, but also theoretic construction. With the opening-up horizon which is required by the increasingly globalized society, an academic vision which welcomes the inspiration coming from diverse disciplines of arts and humanities, one should abandon the obsolete one-dimensional thinking pattern and cultivate a tolerant attitude to different musical theories and schools. The theoretic perfection in musicology will not only benefit the development of Chinese music itself, but also nourishes other disciplines such as folklore, anthropology and historiography, etc. In this process, the improvement of the theoretic quality of music professionals is surely of
great importance, because they play a dynamic role as subjects in the creation of musical works. Therefore, in the creation and transmission of musical culture, the professionals as subjects make up the foundation of influencing public opinion and social aesthetic. To build up theoretic cognition and practical competence is the very basis of creating heart-shaking musical masterpieces which skillfully and intellectually combines Chinese elements and global trends. However, it does mean that the audience is of no value. Instead, the role they play in the advance of Chinese music in the global culture is easily neglected but actually indispensable. The aesthetic taste of the mass audience highly reflects the cultural, intellectual and artistic level of a nation. Consequently, the construction of the theoretic system in the development of Chinese music should take the upgrading of mass audience’s appreciation and recognition as one of its major tasks. But of course, it depends on the assistance from the government and agencies at different levels, especially the support of mass media to win the public attention and consensus. “Only with the focus of public opinion and harmonious coexistence of musical cultures can we reawaken our consciousness of the cultural subjectivity of our national music.”

Enhancing the theoretic level of the creating subjects and improving the aesthetic level of individual audience members are equally meaningful and valuable. Only when we have a well-informed idea about the demand of the ongoing society, cultivate the citizens’ affection for national culture, and provide theoretic guideline to music producers, can we have the resources and inspirations to create musical works which contains our own unique national features yet still sounds great to listeners all over the world.

Conclusion

To sum up what has been discussed above, in the contemporary era with an ongoing tendency of globalization and integration, how to catch up with the latest development in the world music platform and ensure the national cultural characteristics at the same time presents a challenging yet appealing task for Chinese music. The persistence and insistence of Chinese music’s cultural subjectivity is the prerequisite of achieving the task. The construction of the cultural subjectivity of Chinese music lays the foundation of the creation and transmission of Chinese-characterized music. The cultural subjectivity of Chinese music plays a critical role in the development of Chinese music. Without the root based on recognition of our own nationality and cultural subjectivity, we can never have own music and voice heard on the stage of world music. In order to perform the task well, it is necessary to adjust our thinking pattern in cultural programming and music composing. To make it more specific, constructing a cultural subjectivity, integrating the traditional elements, combing modernity with the national features, deconstructing the illusion of West-centralism, and perfecting the theoretic system of Chinese music, are all essential channels to ensure the prosperous development of Chinese music in the globalized era and to increase its soft power in the world cultural context.

References


