From the Perspective of Opera Music, "Sense Reason with Emotion, Only in Peony"—A Preliminary Study on Kunqu Opera "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden"

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Abstract: The most classic of Tang Xianzu's "Four Dreams" is the "Peony Pavilion", and its essence is the tenth "Sweet Dream in the Garden". Through the deep analysis and interpretation of structure, characteristics and functions in music melody, plate type and mode of "Sweet Dream in the Garden", the music and vocal form of the whole play can be clearly understood. In addition, it includes the relationship between emotion and reason, ideal and reality. Taking Du Liniang as the host and "dream" as the support, this work gave examples and clarified and drew opinions in a simple and profound way, thus promoting the perfect combination between the music singing of "Sweet Dream in the Garden" and emotion, reason and dream.

1. Introduction

The "Peony Pavilion", also known as "The Revenant", is the most classic and legendary masterpiece of Tang Xianzu's "Four Dreams", a famous opera artist in the Ming Dynasty. The play skillfully combines the comprehensive creation and performance techniques of realism and romanticism, depicts the true love between Du Liniang and Liu Mengmei, and fully exposes the decadent system of traditional Chinese feudal society and the shackles of outdated ethics. It praises the heroine Du Liniang for pursuing free love, advocating personality liberation, breaking the feudal cage and leading the fearless spiritual virtue, which embodies the essence of anti-feudal thought.

2. Analysis and Perception on "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden"

The play "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden" is undoubtedly the finishing touch in the whole work of "Peony Pavilion". Du Liniang and Liu Mengmei are soft honey in the dream, which is a vivid representation of "startling dream" and shows its "beauty of dream". The plot and main characters of "Peony Pavilion" are all extended around a dream. The things that once noticed and fit in the heart belong to dreams. Today's modern life is not lack all kinds of material enjoyment. What it lacks is the kind of calm, free heart and experience it really has. Dream does not belong to productivity and material attributes, but a sublimation of spiritual ideal. We should always have a heart of charity and compassion, as well as a peaceful mind. In and out of the "Peony Pavilion" between the dream, in the busy work and life, we may be able to touch the passionate and sincere feelings in our hearts, and then find the feelings and essence in our own life.

3. The Music Rotation and Function of "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden"

Opera is a musical dramatic form. Opera music plays an important role in portraying opera image, showing story plot, embodying ideological theme, promoting conflict and contradiction, rendering opera atmosphere, etc. Du Liniang, the heroine of the "Peony Pavilion", was born beautiful and attached great importance to feelings. In order to free herself from the fetters and imprisons of feudal ethics and pursue freedom and love, she had an unforgettable love story with Liu Mengmei under the touch of the continuous feelings in "The Book of Songs". Due to the fact that it is difficult to realize the dream of a beautiful dream burst out in real life, Du Liniang died of
depression. However, Du Liniang tried her best to fight for her dream and free love in hell after her death, and finally sincerely influenced King of Hell to make her life after death. After overcoming all kinds of feudal constraints and shackles, Liu Mengmei finally got married. Based on the plot, it can see that the plot of "Peony Pavilion" always revolves around the contradiction between "emotion" and "reason" (i.e., feudal ethics), revealing the extremely sharp contradiction. The fierce struggle between the cruel life in external reality and the strong struggle in inner state of mind offers a great space for the use of the music function in "Peony Pavilion" and even the foil of the great image to Du Liniang. In particular, a series of soft southern melodies in "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden" vividly express Du Liniang's complicated and complicated inner world, and vigorously extol her faithful and unswerving love. The music rotation and function of the play are as follows:

3.1. Melodic development technique

In Kunqu Opera "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden", Du Liniang's south song singing cavity is mainly progressive, sometimes small jump, which contributes to the gentle, beautiful and winding melody line characteristics. In different musical situations, Du Liniang can also have different emotional changes and various singing styles.

3.1.1. Melody ups and downs

It should expand the ups and downs of its music melody to sublimate the emotion and promote the plot. For example, "soap robe" in "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden", the melody at the beginning is like the calm lake water, expressing Du Liniang's deep attachment to the natural beauty. And between the seventh sentence and the eighth sentence, the eighth sentence and the ninth sentence, the tone patterns are used twice in a row, making the music mood rise. And at the end of the whole paragraph for the word "see", the highest tone "Shang" (e²) appeared, as if the calm lake suddenly became turbulent, showing "Jinping people" to the infinite beautiful time of infinite beautiful years.

3.1.2. Free mode into

In order to show the ups and downs of the plot, some melodies properly use the free model into the creative techniques. Such as the two melodies in the end of "Sweet Dream in the Garden", the first one is "sleepy in spring, tired in enjoying, and sleepy without fragrant embroidery". And the second one is "the dream in a mood is not far away", which is the eight degree change and repetition of the above sentence. It vividly depicts the complex emotions of Du Liniang's sleepiness and waking up after the spring dream, which not only breeds tiredness, but also has the emotion of warming the dream again, and is deeply regretted by the dream suddenly interrupted.

3.1.3. Melody ups and downs

In the course of Du Liniang's southern melody, a kind of characteristic sound pattern will be interspersed throughout the whole section, thus enhancing the performance ability of the music and deepen the impression. For example, the introduction 'around the balcony' in "Sweet Dream in the Garden" has only two lines, but a special overlapping tone pattern appears up to nine times in succession. With a soft and gentle loose-board melody, this section not only reflects the situation
that Du Liniang, who has always been forbidden from her boudoir, finally summoned up courage to march towards the back garden, but also describes the excited and happy mood of Du Liniang when she visited the garden for the first time.

Figure 2.

3.1.4. Decorative notes plus flower (support cavity)

According to the difference of roles and professions, southern opera crooked cards usually uses decorative sounds and flowers to decorate the rich melody timbre. Decorative notes plus flower (support cavity) is generally divided into the following two categories: one is simple and clear, with clear melody, such as open cavity, overlapping cavity, pinch cavity, etc. The other is various and gorgeous, euphemistic and beautiful, (i.e., "the old vocal cords are also gorgeous"), such as cushion cavity, belt cavity, sipping cavity, etc. So many decorations and flower sounds have greatly enriched Du Liniang's personality and inner thoughts. For example, the "don't be wary of the heavy falling wild geese and birds startling the noise" in "Sweet Dream in the Garden" uses a large number of supporting tunes (decorations and flower sounds). In addition, with such beautiful poetry, it vividly depicts Du Liniang's beautiful appearance, as well as the virtue of being gentle, elegant, generous and advocating nature.

Figure 3.

3.2. Plate position structure

The most commonly used in southern opera crooked cards is scattered board, plus gift board, one board, one board and three eyes to show the different character characteristics and inner emotional changes of various characters. Du Liniang was deeply constrained by feudal ethics when she was a child, and she was very rich in young ladies and had a dignified and restrained personality. Therefore, its singing style is lyrical, and its style is mostly one-piece, three eyes and extra gift board, with less use of hasty one-piece, which only appears in the 'ending' of "Sweet Dream in the Garden". the 'hillside sheep' in "Sweet Dream in the Garden" is exquisite and long, and the rhythm of the music is weakened. A lot of decorative sounds and flowers (support cavity) are used in the whole song, which forms the classic southern melody meaning of "more tunes, less words, more tunes, one singing and three sighs". It shows Du Liniang's situation when she was confused and lonely, worried and resentful and frightened to dream.
The common phenomenon in Du Liniang’s southern melody is the use of many "soleplates" which are rarely seen in southern melody. For example, the voice of ‘a good elder sister’ in "Sweet Dream in the Garden" (the bottom plate in the music score is indicated by "——"). The so-called "soleplates" is the strong sound of the rhyme at the end of the sentence falls on the eye position, and the weak sound extended afterwards continues to the floor position in the next section, thus producing a syncopation effect. Du Liniang has been looking for her dream with full of longing since "The Garden". As a result, all flowers are blooming, but no peony is found. The fiery fire in her heart is mercilessly extinguished. Therefore, this is the climax of the emotional sublimation place ("how to occupy") where the melody is gradually advanced and the highest eight degrees of freedom is molded. This is also the vent and lament of Du Liniang’s inner loss to the top.

3.3. Modular tonality function

Based on Du Liniang's southern melody in Kunqu opera "Peony Pavilion", most of the tunes are commercial (minor). Then according to the development of the opera plot and the stage rotation of the main characters, the tunes are flexibly combined and used. In the process of changing tune, there are some scattered, fixed and mixed "earn" songs as the transition, and ingeniously combined with various modes, highlighting the ideological and emotional changes of Du Liniang. For example, the southern tunes sung by Du Liniang at the beginning of her dream, such as 'around the balcony', 'step by step', 'soap robe', 'good sister', 'ending' and 'hillside sheep', all belong to the feather style of D-palace system. After the dream is broken by her mother, what she sings in reverse is a D-palace systematic business mode, which depicted the sad and helpless mood of Du Liniang at this time in the music of deep love and sorrow.
Du Liniang's southern melody in "Sweet Dream in the Garden" reveals the conflict between "ideal" and "reality". Thus, the relationship between "feeling" and "reason" emphasized by Tang Xianzu, the author of the "Peony Pavilion", can be confirmed to achieve the goal of "expressing reason by feeling". In the traditional feudal society, the ruling class was ashamed to speak out due to their "feeling", and Zhu Cheng's Neo Confucianism thought of "keeping the natural principle and destroying the human desire" constantly constrained people's behavior. So far, Du Liniang's "feeling" should be regarded as a kind of impact and rebellion against traditional feudalism.

4. Conclusion

Through the above analysis, we can basically understand the characteristics and functions in musical melody, style and mode of the play "The Peony Pavilion • Sweet Dream in the Garden". It has an important guiding role for us to interpret and sing the play in depth. It is mainly due to its emphasis on the uniqueness and charm of Kunqu opera that the play "Sweet Dream in the Garden" has developed into a classic piece of Kunqu opera. Kunqu music is famous for "graceful lyricism, singing three sighs". Its singing method especially focuses on the handling and control of timbre, the cadence of rhythm and speed, the coordination of speed and sound production. This gives people a soft and gentle feeling, a light and long true feeling, and a beautiful and elegant temperament, making people feel a little calm and quiet.

The Kunqu opera "Peony Pavilion" interprets the overall works with "feeling", while Du Liniang is considered as a kind of ideal residence of Tang Xianzu. Its "love" contains broad, not only including the sincere love between husband and wife, men and women, but also refers to an ideal of persistence, a piece of dedication and a kind of warmth. On the one hand, he always believed that the ideal love dream could finally be realized. On the other hand, he always proved that the ideal love story could not completely break through the shackles of its rationality in the real environment. Therefore, the ideals in the way of "taking emotion as dream" should be expressed to achieve this goal. Thus, the whole play at the end of the play said "who is the ghost in the world like us"! Tang Xianzu's "Four Dreams" in his life, and his pride lies in "Peony".

References