

# Creation Features and Development of Chorus Art in the "New Period"

Zhaodong Xuan

College of Humanities & Sciences of Northeast Normal University  
Changchun, China 130000

**Abstract**—With the coming of the reform and opening up, Chinese culture and art started again after suffering from the "Cultural Revolution". The chorus works created in this period began to have feature of humanity, and gradually got rid of the status of serving as a means of political propaganda during the Cultural Revolution; and the form was striving for making it novel and unique and got rid of the sturdy, monotonous and boring tone of the previous music forms. The form of chorus music gradually became vivid and humanized.

**Keywords**—new period; chorus art; creation features; development

## I. INTRODUCTION

In December 1978, the convening of the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China marked the official entry of China into the "new period of reform and opening up." With the coming of the reform and opening up, Chinese culture and art started again after suffering from the "Cultural Revolution" and was facing a new development period. During the period, literary and art workers made in-depth reflection in artistic field and actively sought new ways of exploration so that the art works in the "new period" generated unique development trends both in artistic content and style. The chorus works created in this period got rid of the status of serving as a means of political propaganda during the Cultural Revolution; the form of creation was striving for making it novel and unique and got rid of the sturdy, monotonous and boring tone of previous music forms. The created music contents gradually became rich and individualized. Music creators could incorporate their personal views on the current politics into the chorus music creation more freely to express their inner thoughts and emotions. Those "reforms" in chorus music shown that chorus music in the "new period" had abandoned the cultural function of orienting to "praising" and focusing on political propaganda; the concept of music creation had been gradually shifted from "political" way to the way focusing on "humanity". Those phenomena reflected that both the humanistic spirit and artistic aesthetic realm of chorus music had been elevated to a new height in this period.

## II. CREATION FEATURES OF CHORUS ART IN THE "NEW PERIOD"

### A. Chorus Music of Folk Song Style

1) *Han People's folk song style*: China is a multi-ethnic country. Different ethnic groups have their unique customs and humanistic characteristics. Han People is at the highest level of development in political, economic, and cultural aspects among all ethnic groups in China. Therefore, Han People also have the largest artistic influence in Chinese national music culture. Han People has the largest population in China. For this reason, Han People has a wide variety of national music, mainly including Hao Zi (a work song sung to synchronize movements, with one person leading), Shan Ge (a folk song sung on mountains during or after work), Tian Ge (a folk song sung in the fields during or after work), and ritual songs. The chorus music composers of the "new period" attempted to get those folk songs adapted into formal chorus music works.

Hao Zi, which is produced and gradually developed in the labor process of people, has a vivid and simple folk style. It is a way of expression created and sung by people to stimulate their working enthusiasm. Therefore, the song shows a strong, bold, and powerful mood. It is sung by a leading person firstly and then accompanied by the remained persons in an organized and instructed manner. This way of singing can enable people to work more passionately and complete the work efficiently. Different working contents are incorporated into different types of songs, such as Xingchuan Hao Zi (a song about the situation of navigation), and Tiaodan Hao Zi (a song about the situation of carrying load). The performance form of Hao Zi mainly combines leading singing and chorus and can be classified into a multi-voice music form. The work division and coordination between the two voices of leading singing and chorus may be different in different labor environment and content.

As for Shan Ge, Han People's multi-voice Shan Ge has gradually declined under the influence of a long period of change and the development of ethnic groups' Shan Ge. Nowadays, Han People's Shan Ge is only preserved in the inhabited areas of Han People in Guangxi, Hunan, Hubei and other regions in China represented by Guangxi region. Han People's Shan Ge inherited in Guangxi region preserves the artistic features of Han People's folk songs, and also has very

local ethnic characteristics in aspects such as music style and music form.

As for Tian Ge, seen from the name, it is sung in the field; it is also a combination of leading singing and solo; in this feature, it is similar to Hao Zi. However, unlike Hao Zi, Tian Ge does not need to stimulate people's labor passion and motivation; it is mainly produced for relieving labor urgency and relaxing tension. Therefore, Tian Ge can be sung relatively freely and in scattered way other than in uniform and orderly manner. Tian Ge's lead voice has a wide range, so it is needed to sing in true and false sounds combined manner. After lead voice appears highly infectious lead voice, the chorus voice naturally enters and conveys the atmosphere of joy.

As for ritual songs, it is mainly produced in ethnic minority areas and applied in the rituals of marriage and funeral. It is also a multi-voice music form. This song is obviously functional, so the singing form is completely changed and adjusted according to the ritual specifications. Therefore, this song is relatively free and random to sing and does not have too many norms and requirements.

2) *Mongolian folk song style*: Mongolian People belongs to the hunting nation. After the reform and opening up, Mongolian agriculture and animal husbandry became very developed. Mongolian people's economic life had also achieved tremendous development. The transformation in social and economic conditions had provided material security for the formation and development of Mongolian folk songs. Mongolian music is classified into long and short tones. This classification is made on the basis of the music characteristics and singing style of Mongolian folk songs. Long tone, just as its name implies, has long tune and has very high requirement for the singer's breath and range of voice. The rhythm changes are relatively free, and there are no fixed rules for the use of vibrato. Irregular vibrato is moderately blended into the long tune to create an artistic conception of the vast and wide grassland. Short tone has small and refined tune, narrow range of voice and has more regular structure than long tone; the rhythm is regular and orderly. This song most appears in Mongolian agricultural areas.

3) *Gaoshan People's folk song style*: Because partial Gaoshan people lives in the eastern plains of China, their folk songs are well fused and exchanged with Han People's folk songs. The singing of their songs adopts five-tone style, dominated by Yu-note five-tone scale, and simultaneous chorus, and occasionally added with mixing sounds. However, some of the folk songs may use two-part chorus method; the melody part is completed by one person and the other part is sung by the mass in continuous low pitch. The expressive force of the music is enhanced by means of continuous low pitches to create a melodious and broad music effect.

4) *Zhuang people's folk song style*: Most Zhuang people are concentrated in Guangxi, China. It is the second largest

ethnic group in China and also the ethnic group with the largest population in China. Their folk songs are generally divided into three types "comparison", "happiness", and "poem". The division is made by the differences in the lyrics, tone and structure of the folk songs. Their songs are very diverse, and have very rich materials for creation and also diversified performance forms. Different identity of singer and different performance occasion may all make very different styles of songs. For this reason, Zhuang people's folk songs not only have distinct ethnic characteristics but also have very diverse music performance methods.

Since 1980s, Chinese chorus music had begun to attempt to touch the field of folk songs in order to both enrich the materials for creation of chorus music and widely spread some excellent national songs in the advantage of broad audience of chorus music. Driven by this creation concept, people gradually tried to get folk songs adapted into chorus music in the development process of chorus music. Folk songs have distinct characteristics of rhythm; by adaptation, the simple and catchy melody was performed in chorus manner, which made the folk songs' sound effect more vivid and stereo, showing extremely strong performance power and influence power. As a result, it is deeply loved by audiences and gets the audience experienced the novel and unique artistic form. "Chengshui Chuanfu Hao Zi (a song about story of boatmen on Chengshui River)" is adapted from Xingchuan Hao Zi, describes the labor scenes of people sweating in the labor process. The music effect is magnificent and very appealing. After entering 1980s, more chorus music adapted from folk songs gradually emerged. Lu Zaiyi was a representative chorus music creator at that time and his relatively influential works were: "Yi Gen Zhu Gan Rong Yi Wan (a song about a scene of "one bamboo is easy to bend") and "Yunnan Min Ge San Shou (three folk songs in Yunnan)".

### B. Modern Chorus Music

The form of modern chorus music was originated from the West. The music creation technique is combined with tonality and atonality. The tacit assistance and coordination between various vocal parts of the music, and the creation of the overall music atmosphere of the chorus raise more strict requirements for modern chorus music in performance. Due to the influence of Europe, modern chorus works in China are created in European music composition technique, in order to make the chorus works have more characteristics of the times.

The main line of the symphony chorus "Call for green color" is the development history of Chinese people living in the entire Yellow River Basin; the green color represents that Chinese people at the moment are as rich and lush as the vast forests; the combination of vocal and instrumental music creates a rich and plump sound effect and naturally achieves a vivid and situational artistic effect; the music work expresses the natural image of wind and sand in full sound scale, and vividly reflects the cultural deposits of the Loess Plateau. It can be said that this work very cleverly gets the creation style of Western music integrated into Chinese

music culture, and thereby realizes the exchange and fusion between Chinese and Western music cultures. Zong Jiangyun's "Fishing Girl" uses dual tones to write female vocal part and male vocal part respectively; polytonal thinking is well reflected in his music creation. Tian Feng's "Yunnan Style" created in multi-tonality and detunes techniques draws on Western modern composition techniques and integrates the elements of ethnic instruments such as cucurbit flute and elephant-foot drum, which makes the music form novel and unique and greatly increases the ethnic characteristics of the music work. The chorus music works in this period had distinctive characteristics; obviously, the multi-voice creation thinking as used in modern chorus music is applied in Chinese chorus music works, and hence makes the chorus works have the style and characteristics of Chinese national music.

### C. Chorus Music Adapted from Popular Songs

At the beginning of the reform and opening up, the cultural exchange between Mainland China and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan China were increasing. With the increase in extent of the opening up, the exchanges between China and Western countries became gradually frequent in the cultural field. Popular songs took a big share in the market of Mainland China and quickly were spread. To cater to the public's aesthetic demand for popular songs, some music creators began to try to create popular chorus music works, which further enlarged Chinese music works' influence on the international music field. At that time, one of the representative works is Li Yuqiu's "Voice of the City". This work is generally divided into 9 paragraphs, takes city life as the main background, and describes the life experiences of different figures in the city. The music has rich forms; and the changes in music themes are corresponding to the story plots.

Some composers also tried to adapt some popular songs prevalent at that time into chorus music. Wherein the main changes are as follows: the original rhythm characteristics are adapted; the monophonic music form is adapted to multiple voice parts. All the adaptation creates a stereo sound effect, enriches the music performance power, plays the popular songs in a new music performance form and greatly enriches audiences' aesthetic demands. Works such as "The Moon Represents My Heart", "Grateful Heart" and "My Chinese Heart" had been adapted into high-quality chorus music, got spread and recognized in the practice of professional chorus groups, and became classic works in Chinese chorus music.

## III. DEVELOPMENT OF CHORUS ART IN THE "NEW PERIOD"

### A. Paying Attention to the "National" Elements in Chorus Music

In the past, although there are many kinds and forms of ethnic folk songs in China, with the development and impact of popular music, ethnic folk songs are rarely concerned by Chinese musicologists except as being used in some specific occasions and rituals. Since the reform and opening up, this

situation had been transformed, and the academic researches on ethnic music had received support and attention. The "A Complete Collection of Chinese National Folk Song Chorus" as edited by Mr. Zhou Zhengsong is an authoritative work with great research value in Chinese national chorus field at that time. This work contains the chorus music works of various ethnic groups in China, has associated with audio-visual materials to facilitate researchers having an audio-visual experience, and provides a solid material support for researches on Chinese national chorus music. Up to now from the beginning of the "new period", the exploration on more national chorus music is still a research trend to which attaches more importance in today's musicological circle; meanwhile, integrating ethnic elements into modern chorus music works is also an important intention of creation of chorus composers.

### B. Breaking Through the Performance Form of Previous Chorus Music

Before the reform and opening up, the form of Chinese chorus was almost singing by the mass in loud voice in a uniform and orderly manner and this chorus performance form has been continuing to this day. However after the reform and opening up, along with the vigorous development of the cultural field, people have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of chorus music, have a clearer understanding of the more detailed classification of chorus music, and gradually produced the pursuit for individualized creation of chorus music.

The place of performance of chorus is generally arranged in a professional concert hall, because the structure of concert hall is mainly designed on the principle of providing the audience with more perfect sound; the chorus form is mainly elegant, serious and fixed and this is the main performance form of Western chorus music. After Chinese chorus music began to follow the performance form of Western chorus, an attempt started to shift its performance scene in concert hall to studio; by coordination with stage art and application of LED screen, the visual effect of chorus music was upgraded to a new level and the music content was more effectively explained. In this way, the audience can have an intuitive and practical sense of the music theme and image in an audio-visual combined way.

After the reform and opening up, popular music was quickly developed into the most popular and widespread form of music, and the composers' creation intentions were also based on the aesthetic demands of the public. This made that the chorus music composers in this period were also seeking for a new way of creation for chorus music, while adapting from the widespread popular songs; gradually, they combined popular elements with modern chorus music forms perfectly and created more excellent and popular chorus music art.

### C. Chorus Music Has More Obvious "Humanity" Feature

Since the "new period", chorus music has achieved relatively significant development. In aspect music function, it no longer just focuses on political propaganda, but begin to

pay attention to the development of humanity. In aspect of music content, it no longer just focuses on praising, but is transformed to explain people's emotions in life. In music creation, it is no longer as sturdy as before, but mainly aim to meet the people's aesthetic demands and create a more vivid and imaginary music form. As a whole, unification is realized between the creation concept of chorus music and the aesthetic concept of the people. Consequently, chorus music becomes better spread and popularized among people and the humanistic characteristics of chorus music are gradually enhanced.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

After the reform and opening up, with the foreign exchanges between China and the world in cultural field, the world has had a clearer understanding of Chinese chorus, and clearly felt the formal characteristics and development trend of Chinese chorus music. Meanwhile, Chinese chorus music is also actively joining in the international music family, and trying to integrate Chinese national elements with modern chorus creation techniques, and striving to master advanced singing skills, so that Chinese chorus music can take a place in the international chorus field. It was from the "new period" during which time Chinese chorus began to walk on the development way of "internationalization". Chinese chorus composers broke away the "yoke" of just using composing chorus for political purpose in "school music songs" period, made music creation more free, attempted to adapt from folk songs and popular songs and created more excellent chorus works. Those works have begun to be shown on chorus stages and widespread. In order to ensure the quality of performance, professional chorus group provides professional trains to chorus players; meanwhile, the spread of excellent works also earns more chorus music lovers so that Chinese chorus music enters a new situation of vigorous development.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Ding Li. Choral Works and Performances of Chinese Reform and Opening in New Period. Master's Thesis of Central China Normal University. May 2016. (in Chinese)
- [2] Sun Congyin. Handbook of Chorus Art. Shanghai Music Publishing House. 2002. (in Chinese)
- [3] Li Yuqiang. Analysis of Problems in the Development of Contemporary Chinese Chorus Art. Journal of Minnan Normal University. 2005. (in Chinese)
- [4] Tian Xiaobao. Thoughts on Several Issues Concerning the Development of Contemporary Chinese Choral Art. People's Music. 2007. (in Chinese)
- [5] Qiao Bangli. Research on Chinese Contemporary Small and Medium-sized Chorus Creation. Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House. 2013. (in Chinese)
- [6] Fu Yan. The Role of Chinese Chorus in Building a Harmonious Society. Guizhou Normal University, 2008. (in Chinese)