

# Analysis on the Artistic Characteristics and Singing Skills of the Yunnan Folk Song *Guess Tune*

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**Abstract**—There are 26 ethnic minorities living in Yunnan, including Yao, Dai and Yi. It is the province with the largest number of ethnic minorities in China. *Guess Tune* is a unique minor in Yunnan folk songs, which has the characteristics of adaptation and vitality. This work adopts the form of question and answer to describe the plot of children chatting and joking in the community, so it belongs to folk song duet in singing form. The children's guessing song *Guess Tune* is a duet song sung in children's games, originated from the guessing activity in children's games of the Yi nationality in Yunnan. This piece of work has a distinct characteristic in rhythm, and the combination of lively rhythm expresses the vivid image of Yi children.

**Keywords:** *Yunnan folk songs, artistic characteristics, singing skills*

## I. INTRODUCTION

China is a multi-ethnic country, and its rich musical art forms are an integral part of Chinese music culture. Multi-ethnic music culture is a witness to the inheritance and development of the national culture in the process of labor. As a province with the largest number of ethnic minorities in China, Yunnan is known as "China south of the clouds" for its beautiful scenery and simple folk customs. Most of them can sing and dance, and folk songs and ballads permeate every part of their lives.

## II. SUMMARY OF YUNNAN FOLK SONGS

### A. *Types of Yunnan folk songs*

Chinese music culture is a huge and complicated system, and local folk songs have their own characteristics. There are 26 ethnic minorities living in Yunnan, whose musical cultures learn from each other and infiltrate into each other, creating today's colorful Yunnan folk songs. Yunnan folk songs are divided into mountain songs, minor, dance songs, work songs and other categories, mainly reflecting the local people's production and life as well as recreational activities.

1) *Mountain songs*: Mountain songs refer to songs sung by working people in fields and mountains to express simple feelings. It is one of the traditional folk songs. There are a lot of works in the form of mountain songs in Yunnan folk songs, among which the most representative works are

*Mountain-playing Tune, Horse-driving Tune, Song of Midu Mountain, Small River* and so on. Based on the narrative of folk songs, these works highlight the expression of "emotional experience", which requires higher artistic expression for singers and sound more subjective.

2) *Minor*: The minor is also known as "life song", and its content is more extensive and more numerous than folk songs. Most minor tunes have their own fixed melodies and lyrics from ancient times, which can be adapted or improvised according to the content they want to express. *Guess Tune* is a very representative minor work in Yunnan folk songs.

3) *Dance songs*: Dance songs are popular folk songs in Yunnan and popular among the people. It has the characteristics of clear rhythm, strong rhythm, suitable for singing and dancing, and has a strong dance music character. Most of the traditional dance songs in Yunnan folk songs are performed in the form of minority dialects at important gatherings such as the Torch Festival. During the singing process, people sing and dance to celebrate the festival with strong national characteristics.

4) *Work songs*: The work songs in Yunnan folk songs are folk songs sung by local residents in the production and life of Yunnan, reflecting the real scenes of field work and mountain hunting. Work songs are divided into various forms such as farming songs, hunting songs, etc. Among them, work songs mainly describe the scene of local residents sowing, picking and celebrating harvest in the fields, and express the mark of civilization in the blood and bone of the farming nation over thousands of years. The hunting songs mainly describe the dangerous scenes of hunters hunting in the mountains and rounding up the fierce beasts, and express the heroic epic of ancient ancestors who feared nature and fought against fate. In terms of melody characteristics, the work songs and the "Yo-he-ho horn" are similar to each other in a certain degree. The melody and rhythm of the two are powerful and inspiring, while also expressing the people's passion.

### B. *Characteristics of integration of multi-ethnic music*

China has a vast territory and abundant resources, and 56 ethnic groups live and breed in this fertile land. As a

province with the largest number of ethnic minorities in China, Yunnan has long been known as "China south of the clouds" for its beautiful scenery and simple folk customs. [1] There are 26 minorities living in Yunnan, including Yao, Dai, and Yi. Most of them are able to sing and dance, and folk songs are infiltrated into every part of their lives. For example, *Small River*, which depicts men and women expressing their love for each other; *Dragon Pool*, singing in the native language of Nu nationality, reflecting the hunting scene of Nu nationality brothers. *The Orphan Song*, which tells the tragic story of the orphan, and brings people to tears; and the folk song *Sorrow*, which expresses condolences to the dead relatives. Yunnan has a long history of Han settlements. For thousands of years, there has been a long-term communication, both in music and culture, between local Han residents and ethnic minority brothers, which is unique to Yunnan. As mentioned above, *Small River* is one of the outstanding representative works in Han folk songs. The Han folk songs in Yunnan, because of the long-term relationship with ethnic minorities, also have a strong ethnic minority, with a strong local flavor. In addition, these Han folk songs in Yunnan still retain some of the "reservation" of Han music, which is more delicate in narrative expression, especially good at adding rich emotional description in the narration, which is more artistic.

### III. THE ARTISTIC FEATURES OF GUESS TUNE

#### A. Unique duet form

*Guess Tune* is divided into four sections, and the four sections are basically the same in melody and rhythm. But in terms of content, *Guess Tune* adopts the form of question and answer to describe the plot of chatting among children, so it belongs to the form of folk song duet in singing form. Such duet is different from the traditional folk song duet. The traditional folk song duet is performed by two people alternately, singing the finished works in turn, mostly expressing the love between men and women or the content of jokes in the street. *Guess Tune* expresses the scene of question and answer with the child, the singing process is only completed by one person, the singer is required to play two parts. This form is rare in the singing of Yunnan folk songs. This unique duet requires the singer to have a full understanding of the content of the work, and to have a strong ability to control their own voice and emotion processing. Only in this way can people accurately express the characteristics of this unique duet form.

#### B. Minor with distinctive national characteristics

*Guess Tune* is a unique piece of Yunnan folk song minor, which has the characteristics of living and improvisation. The children's guessing song *Guess Tune* is a duet song sung in children's games, originated from the guessing activity in children's games of the Yi nationality in Yunnan. When children of Yi nationality play games, they often guess the puzzle in the form of duets. Over time, the local children of the Han nationality learned *Guess Tune* and sang along. [2] As a unique musical work combining the Han and minority styles in Yunnan, *Guess Tune* draws on the strengths of the

Han and Yi styles, and has distinct characteristics of Han culture in its humorous and cheerful national style. *Guess Tune* consists of nine bars. The second section uses the technique of internal expansion. Internal expansion enhanced the expressive force of the music. The balance between music and music is very compact. There is no sense of redundancy in this expansion, greatly enhanced the music, which is the icing on the cake.

Alternating large jumps and small vistas on the melody create a contrast between high and low, strong and weak beats. The rapid development of the notes and the dense arrangement of the rhythm make the melody have both the singing and the declaration, forming the combination of saying and singing. In the seventh bar, and syncopation suddenly appear, which drags out the time value of the note and broadens the length of the rhythm, forming a contrast between fast and slow, local and whole. These contrasts become characteristic of the melody itself. The notes danced about in the melody like naughty children. This vividly shows the sense of mystery of children.

### IV. SINGING SKILLS OF GUESS TUNE

#### A. A lively grasp of rhythm

*Guess Tune* has a distinct characteristic in rhythm, and the vivid combination of rhythm expresses the vivid image of Yi children.



Fig. 1. The 17th section of the score.

In section 17 as can be seen in "Fig. 1", there is a repetition of the first sixteen rhythms in the work. This combination of rhythm is light and flexible, which gives the music a lively and vivid character, and makes the music have a stronger flowing atmosphere, more life-like, localized and nationalized, in line with the image characteristics of Yi children. In the process of singing, the singer should pay attention to the two consecutive appearance of the rhythm of the first sixteen to express accurately, and pay attention to the two jump mark singing, to be witty.



Fig. 2. The 19th section of the score.

In the nineteenth section as can be seen in "Fig. 2", two consecutive rhythmic forms with an average of sixteen should be paid attention to in the process of singing to bring a sense of auditory compactness, and also to avoid the problem of "ambiguity" caused by the sudden tempo. Secondly, it is necessary to pay attention to the "long" in the

middle of the word "large downlink", to ensure the expression of the "tone" of the singing. Whether it is local folk singers or professional folk artists, this sentence will be "rapped" when singing — that is, combining the regional dialect of the Yi nationality with the rhythm of the spectrum, singing in the form of "folk song rap" makes the expression of this part of the works more life-style of artistic aesthetic characteristics.



Fig. 3. The 25th section of the score.

The 25th stanza as can be seen in "Fig. 3", is the beginning of the last paragraph of the song. Since the content of the four stanzas of the song is almost the same, more changes in rhythm should be paid attention to in the process of the second creation and expression to avoid auditory aesthetic fatigue caused by too much repetition. In the process of singing this part, the singer Song Zuying gradually slowed down the rhythm, endowing the song with changes, but also making the singing with a bit of solemn humor, reflecting the "humanistic care" of the work.

#### B. Clear and smart articulation

Clear articulation and full diction are the important foundation of singing folk songs. Whether the articulation of the singer is clear determines whether the audience can accurately receive the content of the work and understand the inner emotion of the work. It is an important skill to sing folk songs and an important prerequisite to judge whether singing has distinctive national characteristics. [3] In folk song singing, "rhyming" is an important singing technique to achieve "full rhyming". Rhyming refers to speeding up the singing of "initial", that is, "word head", during the singing of a single word. The "finals", that is, the "word belly" and "word end", is extended to emphasize the word, which is similar to the opera singing. In the singing of *Guess Tune*, people should pay particular attention to the articulation of clear and rhyme skills. For example, in the above example, the singer should pay more attention to the rhyme. This word should be rhymed as "ao", with the initial "x" being sung quickly, as well as the word "guai" appearing twice in succession. Since the overall speed of the song is relatively fast, and the beginning of this sentence "little darling" are all accent, in the process of singing, people should emphasize the importance of rhyming to ensure the clarity of articulation. As they are folk songs of ethnic minorities in Yunnan, some words need to be sung in the form of dialect. For example, the word "street" in this sentence should be sung as "gai" during the singing. Such kind of singing can be more lifelike and highlight the local national characteristics.

#### C. Humorous mood control

*Guess Tune* is a simple and innocent folk song with a fresh and cheerful style, which expresses the childlike taste

of folk life in Yunnan. The whole work highlights this humorous mood, and has the characteristics of a higher range of vocal areas, a shorter overall length, and a lighter use of voice, which requires the singer to be able to achieve the above mentioned accurate expression in the process of singing. Because the song depicts a sunny and cheerful scene, the style of the work is humorous, and the phrase is relatively short, so people should pay attention to the accuracy of the rhythm during the singing. [4] The singer must not drag his feet, so that the whole work is too long, and lead to the sound of the overall style of the inaccurate grasp of the situation. So when singing, the singer should grasp the melody and content characteristics, and should neither use too much force in the treble, nor too little in the bass because of the range problem. The whole work depicts the game process of two children's question and answer, which is a relatively small, closer to life and more natural theme. In the process of singing, the singer should pay attention to the strength of singing, using a relatively lighter voice to sing, so that the music is more flexible, and more able to show the innocence of children.

#### V. CONCLUSION

China is a multi-ethnic country, and the rich musical art forms are an integral part of Chinese music culture. *Guess Tune* is a unique minor Yunnan folk song, which has the characteristics of living and improvisation. The children's guessing song *Guess Tune* is a duet song in children's games, originated from the games in children's games of the Yi nationality in Yunnan. This paper discusses in detail the singing form, singing style, articulation skills, rhythm control and style characteristics of the song *Guess Tune*, comprehensively expounds the artistic characteristics and singing skills of the song, hoping that the conclusion can contribute to the study of folk song and music education at the present stage.

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