



“Salt God”: A National Opera for Ordinary Working People

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Abstract. “Salt God” is a national opera that praises the working people at the bottom of the society. It takes the love story of the hero and heroine as the main development line. When the team they lead encounters setbacks and difficulties, they still trust and support each other, and finally lead the salt workers. It took ten years to file through a salt well. The national opera “Salt God” is based on the real story as the creative theme, and praises the perseverance and hard-working spirit of the salt workers at the bottom of the salt field. The musical images of the main characters in the play are polished and shaped by “Salt Worker’s Haozi” and “Elegant Song”. The entire play’s aria not only penetrates the material of the salt worker’s hawthorn, but also reflects the unyielding spirit of the characters. It shows that “Salt God” is an excellent national opera that highlights the spirit of ordinary working people.

Keywords: national opera · national character · “Salt God” · salt workers · music image

1 Introduction

“Salt God” is a large-scale original national opera composed and orchestrated by Han Wanzhai, screenplayed by Liao Shixiang, directed by Mao Tingqi, and performed by Zigong Song and Dance Performing Arts Co., Ltd. Since its creation in 2012, it has continued to seek perfection and improvement in continuous performances. After three title changes: “The Legend of Salt Well” (2013) “Salt God’s Daughter” (2016) “Salt God” (2017) [1]. “Salt God” is constantly improving in terms of form, content, plot and other aspects. As one of the national outstanding national operas in 2018, it is the only one in the first batch of key support repertoires of the Ministry of Culture’s “Chinese National Opera Inheritance and Development Project”. A national opera that establishes a monument for ordinary laborers (salt workers), “Salt God” has gained a very good reputation after being performed in Beijing, Chengdu, Xuzhou and other places, leaving a deep impression on the audience, making many audiences. Zigong salt culture has a deeper understanding. The national opera “Salt God” is a five-act opera, which tells the story of the salt workers in the salt field who finally succeeded in mining brine after ten years of hard work. In the play, the heroine Yanmeizi and the male protagonist Mei Zelang met each other and fell in love in the process of hard brine salt, and when the

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salt workers were forced to a desperate situation where they had not filed a well for ten years, Yanmeizi still did not forget everyone. For the kindness of his family and Yanjing, he reluctantly gave up his love and sold his only gold hairpin, and asked everyone to “eat a separate wine” to live up to everyone’s hard work. And the well that was not filed for ten years was filed through the last few strokes of the salt workers’ drunkenness and gratitude. Ten years of bitterness and hard work finally paid off. Therefore, it can be said that “Salt God” is both a The drama is also a history - a condensed “historical drama” that shows the hard work of our entire nation and its hard work and perseverance through the salt workers.

2 The Authenticity of the Story in the Play

The national opera “Salt God” tells the story of “salt”, and the story takes place in Zigong City, Sichuan Province. The establishment of Zigong City is precisely because of the appearance and existence of “Ziliu Jingyan”, so Zigong City is also known as Zigong City. Known as China’s “Salt Capital”. The creator of the play has known “Artesian Well” as early as in middle school textbooks and knew its influence in China and the world. He has heard, witnessed and experienced the life and labor of Zigong salt workers during nearly 30 years of working in Zigong, I really felt the hardships of the salt workers in starting a business and the hard-won development of the salt industry [2]. In the salt industry, there is bound to be the most laboring chants in Zigong, so they are called “salt workers chants”. Zigong’s Salt Worker’s Haozi is a very specific form of Haozi produced in Zigong along with working in Yanjing. It is different from the Bashu Jialingjiang Haozi and Chuanjiang Haozi, and has a high degree of integration with the salt industry. The artistic characteristics have left a deep impression on the people of Zigong, and left a deep mark on the development of the salt industry. Therefore, the music material of the whole play is based on the unique labor chanting of Zigong, which has a strong The characteristics of “Salt Worker’s Haozi” and “Wangzi Song”. “Salt worker’s horn” is the salt worker’s muscles and bones, will work hard and cry; “dirty song” is the salt worker’s spirit, soul talk and even roar. In “Zanjing”, the vigorous well-playing horns of the salt workers are shown when they are working in the salt wells; in “Music of Mei Zelang on the Stage”, the presentation of the musical theme of the male protagonist Mei Zelang is to refine the “salt workers’ horns”. “The musical elements in the song; then several arias of Sister Yan: “Believe in You”, “This is Unfortunate and Lucky”... And the chorus “Body as a Bull and Horse”, “Drinking Song”, etc. are also subtly integrated into the “Elegy Song”. “musical element”. “Wangzi Song” embodies the spirit of the salt workers; “Salt workers’ horn” embodies the will of the salt workers. The combination of the two fully reproduces the situation of the salt workers working in the salt field and the spirit of not being afraid of hardship.

The emotions of the characters and the tension required for the development of the plot in the national opera “Salt God”, only using the unique high-pitched materials and techniques in Sichuan Opera does not seem to be able to fully express that unique momentum, so whether it is the performance of music or the image of the characters. The creative aspects need to be upgraded, and some Chinese operas have been successfully created in terms of creative techniques and musical performance for reference.

Helping tunes, characteristic instruments, characteristic harmonies, folk songs, folk art, instrumental symphony... All are the combination of experience and the re-creation of materials. The last “Praise for Salt Workers”. “A Long Time to Die Well” borrows the harmony style of the oldest religious chant in the West, but the tone is still an authentic national tone, to express the sympathy for the salt workers as a representative, Sincere and lofty respect for the workers who truly create material wealth.

3 The Musical Image of the Main Characters in the Play

The story line of the national opera “Salt God” is clear and clear. The development of the love between the hero Mei Zelang and the heroine Yanmeizi has always reflected the determination and perseverance of the two. They all have a fixed musical image with different instruments and different themes. Fixing the musical image of the main character will make the musical image more pervasive, so that when the audience listens to a repeated musical segment or theme, they can think of which character should appear or the development trend of the plot. The diversification of the characters in the play relies on the accompaniment of the orchestra, choreography, and characters to create the individual characteristics of different characters, and the points and positions of the characters’ musical images in the plot line are the key to the whole play. The actual performance of a musical image needs to be combined with musical elements such as melody, timbre, rhythm, etc. Therefore, to create a very down-to-earth and understandable musical image, it needs to be based on the organization of the symphony orchestra, but it is not limited to the musical instruments of the symphony orchestra. Therefore, the special national musical instruments such as suona, xun, pipa, sanxian, banhu, erhu and other traditional Chinese national musical instruments are added to the play, in order to better reflect the nationality and regionality, so as to create a better match for the “Salt God”. “The characters in the play. In addition, although the creation of the harmony and texture of the whole play “Salt God” is based on the harmony of the national tone, it also adopts some modern harmony, tonality and symphony processing methods in a timely manner according to the plot. Including the organization of the band, the melody of the song, the input of the actors, the cooperation of many factors has formed a very recognizable musical image.

3.1 Musical Image of Salt Workers

The musical image of the salt workers is reflected in the rhythm and aria of the salt workers’ horns, so the melody and rhythm characteristics of the salt workers’ horns will appear throughout the whole song, and in most cases, it will be combined with the performance of the salt workers’ group portraits. It fully and profoundly reflects the hard work and perseverance of the salt workers. “Zuo Lei” is the most frequently used lyric, and it is also the chant that best reflects the full energy of the salt workers. The words “Zuo” and “Lei” are both words of strength during work. Brine and salt are also used, and the volume and rhythm change with the intensity, method and props of the workmanship. Singing while exerting force can not only reflect the diligence of the salt workers, but also show that they are enjoying a full head. The process of sweating and working hard.

While the plot of the opera “Salt God” continues to develop, the musical structure and singing form of the horns in each aria will also change with time and intensity, but no matter what the changes have not jumped out of the salt field. Based on labor, it can also reflect the profound scene that the salt workers are industrious, busy and happy.

3.2 The Musical Image of Yanmeizi

Yanmeizi is the heroine in the play. She is a beautiful, kind, and generous daughter of the salt farm [3]. She met the industrious and simple salt farm worker Meizelang when she was working in the salt farm, and she had a long-term relationship. In order to solve the plight of the family and the salt workers, he chose to leave his hometown to find a new salt well with Meizelang when his own salt well did not produce brine, and finally dedicated the best ten years of his life to finding and filing wells. It is not only a love, but also a responsibility and determination to Meizelang, the family, and the salt workers [4]. In Yanmeizi’s theme music, the overall melody is high, the rhythm is rich and changeable, and there are some features of rest, which well reflects the image of her lively and spiritual female character, and has a singing quality. The melody also increases the feminine feeling of Yanmeizi, which makes the whole Yanmeizi’s musical image rich and full, with a very visual sense.

3.3 The Musical Image of Meizelang

The hero of the play, Meizelang is a tough, simple and ambitious ordinary salt farm worker, but he is in love with the salt farm daughter Yan Mei. Baojing began his long ten-year career of searching and filing wells. It can be said that Meizelang’s ten years of perseverance is just for a breath, a wait for a man’s self-esteem, and an insistence on his love commitment. In “Zanjing”, the basic music of Meizelang appears, and the tone “sol-do-la” used by Meizelang is also the ascendant of the basic tone “re-sol-mi” of “Elegant Song”. A perfect fourth, the use of this tone better reflects Meizelang’s identity as a salt worker. The organic combination of the firm and powerful rhythm and the tone of the salt worker’s horn creates the image of Meizelang’s tough and resolute salt worker, and also brings an inner and positive force to the audience. This musical theme runs through the entire opera, haunting Meizelang’s arias and music. It is not only the theme of Meizelang’s music but also conveys a positive and unyielding power to the audience.

3.4 The Musical Image of Dadongjia

As the leader of Yanfeng Mountain Hall and the mother of Yanmeizi, Dadongjia’s musical image is different from previous characters in terms of orchestration and timbre. When Dadongjia sings, the banhu and accent are highlighted, and the mode is changed according to the plot and different arias. On the other hand, the band played in unison to show off the steady and confident musical image of Dadongjia’s family. The lyrics such as “First Well” and “Wonder in the World” can all reflect Dadongjia’s sense of pride in telling its three treasure wells.

4 The Unyielding Spirit of the Male and Female Protagonists is Reflected in the Aria

In a complete opera, the auditory and visual conflicts caused by music are only one aspect, and the dramatic conflict in the play should be the most important. Shaping, in a certain sense, is to set off and shape the development lines of opera characters and events. There are many different arias or act sections in each opera, and the changing music development is to make more perfect decoration for the depiction of each plot, so that the actors can be more engaged in the performance, and the audience can watch and listen more carefully. In “Salt God”, the musical theme of the male protagonist Meizelang as a responsible and courageous ordinary salt worker appears in many arias. Lang’s duet, this aria is when Meizelang found out that the salt well in Yanfeng Mountain Hall was “nearly 70 years old and rare”. As a salt farm worker, he did not give up on strike in despair, but reinvigorated himself and wanted to find the treasure well. Sung. At this time, the tone of Meizelang’s theme is clearly recognizable. From the performance of the music, it directly reflects the aura of Meizelang’s own descendants of the “Salt God”. He can find Baojing also to show his sincere heart to Yanmeizi. Meizelang didn’t use such gorgeous language and boastful words to tell the salt girl, but he was really telling it firmly. It can be seen that Meizelang is an honest, tenacious and unyielding ordinary salt farm. The image of the worker.

In the aria of “Golden Hairpin”, Yanmeizi gave the only valuable golden hairpin on her body to Meizelang, and Meizelang also took this golden hairpin on the road to find the well, which shows that Yanmeizi’s affection for Meizelang. Lyrics such as “Please give me strength” and “Put the hairpin for you with your own hands” can be seen from Meizelang who regards the golden hairpin as the incarnation of the salt girl. In the process of searching for the well, he reminds himself that he must prove himself. I want to give Yanmeizi a result, and I hope that one day I can let Jin hairpin give Yanmeizi another hairpin. The echoing arias of Yanmeizi and Meizelang also appear frequently in the play, and the theme of the song “Believe You” is very clear. In “Golden Hairpin”, I want to use the golden hairpin to echo the hairpin of the Yanmeizi. The emotions of these three sentences rose step by step, calling out the trust in Meizelang and the firm belief in his love. Later, in the songs such as “The Calling of Autumn Wild Goose in the Sky” and “Inseparable in Adversity”, it is even more evident that Yanmeizi has not violated her original intention. For ten years, she has followed Meizelang to search for a well, file well, indomitable, tenacious will and love for her. Hold fast [5].

In the play, whether it is the industrious and kind-hearted Meizelang, or the tender and determined Yanmeizi, they help each other and rely on each other to prove that they have not given up their struggle for Yanjing. During the time of searching and filing the well outside, they endured loneliness, loneliness, and sadness by the cold well, but they never complained. It took ten years to find the new well, and they firmly carried their responsibilities and used their own It tells the story of hard work in Yanjing, and conveys to the audience and the people the national spirit that entrepreneurs in Yandu and Yanjing are not afraid of hardship and suffering.

5 Conclusion

The national opera “Salt God” was created in the history of salt industry with more than 2,000 years. The people and events in the play are inseparable from the word “Salt Well”. The spirit and experience are also an excellent work that condenses the sadness, blood and tears, joy, perseverance and unique Zigong salt cultural imprint of all well diggers. This national opera tells the unremitting struggle of the people of Zigong to find and dig salt wells. From the material of the music, the technique of creation, and the characteristic musical instruments, it is not only a tribute to the ordinary working people, but also enlightens the background of the new era. The creation of ethnic operas should always grasp the basis of the creation of the national spirit. The story in “Salt God” really comes from life, and it is true to be loyal to the land and hometown. This is the root of infallibility. The opera “Salt God” has this root and shows the spiritual outlook of ordinary working people, in order to have a strong practical significance in the development of the new era.

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