

On Traditional Chinese Culture: Common Rhythmical Point Between Traditional Opera and Classical Dance

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Abstract: The spirit and techniques of Chinese classical dance stem from traditional Chinese opera. Chinese classical dance is an integral part of the Chinese nation’s traditional culture for its unique charm, and classic “Shenyun”, which means the lingering charm of dancers’ posture, as the essence of Chinese classical dance, has influenced the world dance at certain degree. Traditional Chinese opera culture that also derived from traditional Chinese aesthetic consciousness, possesses numerous features in common with Chinese classic “Shenyun”. This article centers on the common rhythmical point between traditional opera and classical dance, for more scholars to understand the pith of Chinese classic culture. This article tries to look into the common part between traditional opera and classical dance, and to find out the consistency of rhythms and rules of the both, adopting methods of analysis and research.

1. Introduction

The formation of traditional Chinese opera runs throughout the ideology of traditional Chinese culture, which also is one of the ideas that guided the establishment of Chinese classical dance “Shenyun”. Under the influence of traditional Chinese opera, not only dance, but music, painting, architecture, medical science etc. possess remarkable features of traditional Chinese culture.

The magnificence of Chinese classical dance condenses the essence of the Chinese nation’s traditional culture, and embodies the style of dance culture, artistic value and the aesthetic rhythm, Chinese classical dance is the combination of power and gentleness, it’s exquisite and mellow, normative and rigorous, and has the aesthetic characteristics of harmony and unification of the form and spirit.

“Shenyun” is the soul of Chinese classical dance. It has become the core aesthetic symbol of classical dance with its strong nationality, changeable dance style, intense performance.

How did “Shenyun”, the essence of Chinese dance culture, come into being? What connection does it have with traditional Chinese opera? Now, we're about to find the answers.

2. The formation of traditional Chinese operatic culture and its influence

The emergence of traditional Chinese opera was traced to the pre-Qin period, and it was firstly produced from dances imitating labour. It is a highly comprehensive national art, blending a variety of art categories, such as dance, acrobatics and so on. Singing, reading, acting, fighting are several major constituent elements of such opera. To sing, is to vocalize with clear phonation and rich resonances; to read, is to recite the lines in a performance; to act, is to make actions and expressions; fighting represents acrobatic fighting motions in performances. The development of traditional Chinese opera dance necessarily led to the emergence and evolution of such traditional opera culture, which possesses uniqueness, inheritance and nationality.

3. The formation and aesthetics of “Shenyun” in Chinese classical dance

As a special approach of expression, Chinese classical dance displays the nation’s spirits, masculinity, and manners in a centralized form, incessantly delivering its exclusive social significance and life

worth. From the perception of people in the contemporary era, Chinese classical dance is the modern exhibition of Chinese nation's traditional dance, instead of being limited to the Concubine Qi's "*Qiao'xiu'zhe'yao*", or the "*Ni'chang'yu'yi*" of Yang Kwei Fei.

Chinese classical dance was developed on the foundation of traditional Chinese operatic dance, and it was the mixture of opera, dance and "Wushu"--a traditional Chinese martial art, with the basis of operatic dance. It adopted the same training methods as ballet, intermingled the dynamic, spirits and power in Wushu. However, due to the conventionalization of ballet and operatic dance, Chinese classical dance seemed to be slightly nondescript, among all class dances, once named as "old-fashioned opera" or "folk ballet", and hence "Shenyun" arose for the aesthetic demand of such historical moment. Moreover Chinese classical dance, inheriting the essence of Wushu, differentiated from the genre of operatic dance, and regained its appearance in history.

"Shenyun" is a combined appellation of "Shenfa", the bodily movement of practising Wushu, and "Yunlv", which represents rhyme and rhythms. It is the organic hybrid of a dancer's physical techniques and spiritual content in an performance. During the ceaseless process of seeking and developing, "Shenyun" gradually grew to be the core that displays the spirit of Chinese classical dance and the ultimate goal that's pursued by all dancers. At the year of 1950, Chinese classical dance was officially established by two professors, Tang Mancheng and Lee Zhengyi. The two came up with Chinese classical dance's basic form--"round, twist, tilt and curve"--through the summarization of operatic dance learning, which took in the essence of Wushu and operatic dance and developed with something new --"promote the style, shift the form, reserve the spirit". Shenyun was firstly generated as a course in 1979. Meaning the combination of bodily movements and rhythms, Shenyun is equipped with the motion principles of lifting, sinking, marching, leaning, harboring, protruding, migrating, side-lifting, and circling horizontally, vertically and in the shape of figure 8, based on elements, centralized on rhythms. Shenyun has its pattern of motion of "down before up, right before left, close before open", measuring the aesthetic standard with form, spirit, power and rhythm. It is the representation of Chinese nation's traditional culture, and its moderate aesthetic ideology. The course name was altered from "Shenduan" to "Shenyun" in Chinese classical dance in 1984, and the generation of Shenyun shook the stereotype of opera off Chinese classical dance, achieving a giant leap and breakthrough essentially. Mr. Tang Mancheng, a well-known Chinese dancer, compiled a set of textbooks for classical dance, and created vast dances and plays that were rich in characteristics of Chinese classical dance, such as "*On the Love For Lotus*", "*Moon Night On A Spring River*" and "*Dance For Danqing with Fans*".

"Shenyun" shows the curves of dancers body using techniques of twisting, tilting, circling and curving, and displays performers' aura, requiring dancers' obedience to the three circling movements and aesthetic principles that contains both activity and in activity, dots and lines, which epitomizes Chinese classical dance's nationality and the union of its forms and spirits. The set of teaching materials possess ancient Chinese culture and national characteristics, and the "Xing'Shen'Jing'Lv" brought up in the materials annotates Shenyun's features and aesthetics in a more intact way[1]. The three circling movements as was mentioned in Shenyun--circling horizontally, circling vertically and circling i the shape of figure 8--and the aesthetic specification and principle of twisting, tilting, circling and curving, are all exhibitions of a grand coalescence of traditional Chinese culture and Tai Chi culture, which displays the ideology of "He"--union--in Taoism.

4. The common rhythmical points between opera and "Shenyun" in Chinese classical dance

Rhythm is a kind of perception of time, which can reflect the order of objective phenomena and the laws of nature. Rhythm is divided into external rhythm and internal rhythm. The external rhythm refers to the song's key, strength, length, speed, and it's regularly changed in space; the internal rhythm refers to the changes of people's emotions and feelings caused by changes of the internal body[2]. The two in both Chinese opera and Chinese classical dance have much in common.

4.1 Power of "Qi"

In the essence of the culture of the opera, "Qi" has an inseparable position, the "Qi" in the drama of the time in the outside performance is not well-behaved in the form, not contrary to the air, it through the "siblings corresponding, do not care about thinking" way to show a natural and smooth state.

and put forward "qi" should be the gas sinks, with abdominal breathing, to increase the depth of breathing, and strength. In classical dance, the use of Qi in different ways, the resulting rhythmic style is also different. People often say "breathing", in fact, refers to the "breath" in the dance movement, there is a long and short breathing, there is a sinking, there are disadvantages, use it properly, in order to make the dance breath flow smoothly.

Of course, good dancing, light gas is not enough, but also the "form and spirit of the law" to match, to achieve artistic conception. Chinese classical dance body rhyme, "qi" occupies one of the important elements, but also requires actors should be "heart and meaning, meaning and gas, qi and strength, force and shape and". The old saying goes "outside practice bones and muscles skin, inside practice a breath", and this qi, refers to is the dance breath movement, how with the breath cooperate, in the vomit the fusion, achieves the movement relaxation to have the degree, the relaxed and easy. In classical dance to pay attention to a "Sheng", this "Sheng" is to force and gas with each other, in the dance reflects the appearance of the movement of the duncuo, such as flowing smoothly, so that the audience feel the harmonizing of dance, reasonable.

4.2 Acme of emotions

The opera dance retains some of the ancient traditional dances, such as sleeve dancing. The movement of the sleeve dance is not only beautiful, but also can express a variety of different feelings, popular in the Southern Dynasties and Sui and Tang Dynasties, "White queue Dance" is mainly to dance sleeves, and opera dancers used by the long sleeves, is not only good dance posture, but also mainly used to portray characters up, this is the traditional opera in the inheritance of the important development of dance, Today we are developing the classical dance is also the continuation of the opera dance in this part of the characteristics[3] .

Therefore, the expression of emotion is an important embodiment of the rhythm, emotion is the essence of the dance, and the rhythm of the same, the external feelings to express similar. The Art of dance and opera is a kind of "art of Drawing Round", and the Movement Law of "circle" is fully embodied in Chinese classical dance. Mainly for "flat, round, 8 word circle, round small Circle", and "cloud hand" this action, is the embodiment of the circle of the track, embracing the ball, do the kneading circle movement, is also "rubbing balls" movement, in terms of its movement line, is the combination and development of "circle" in different directions. Again, such as: Broadsword, hand, small dance flowers, step over, roll over, Hot Wheels and other movements, no one does not reflect the body's circular movement, but in the space position, intensity, speed, focus on a different point. Cloud Hand walk flat round, broadsword flower Walk a circle; round, round, 8 characters round dance scheduling, formation change on the circle, arc; body rhyme in the movement and movement and its cohesion, change, are all kinds of large, small and different circular trajectory "big trap small circle, large round sleeve small circle." "Generates infinite changes. In particular, the 8-character circle is not only rich in formation changes, but also in the complex form of circular movement in human body. The training system of Chinese classical dance is mainly based on the traditional opera dance and Chinese Wushu, with the "circle" as its core and the development of the principle of the absorption of many elements.

4.3 Rhythms in soul

"God" is also an essential part of the classical dance, which is the inner, perceptual, and mental of the dance. A dance is visible, to be integrated into the verve, to have vitality, to give people a sense of freshness, such as "Dapeng Wings", are in the form of vivid.

The movement has the extension must have the internal collection, has the movement must have the static, has just must have the soft, the composition has the retreat to have to enter, has the departure must have the combination. And the posture and skill is the essence of the application process of the dance expression means, classical dance and opera dance, the body and techniques of

the dancers have very strict requirements, of which, "figure" requires the dancers have a strong physical performance of the tension, and skills require the dancer not only to master the dance skills[4].

The dancers are also required to use flexibility according to the content of the dance. The "Ten desires" rule of classical dance is also the inspiration and refinement from the "figure" in the drama, which embodies the dialectical view. The so-called "desire to go first, want before successively, want to mention first Shen, want to be first oblique" wait, this "Ten wants" are symmetrical, a pair of son, is inversely proportional, this also embodies the roundabout tactics in the drama "reverse", let a person feel the fast-changing, the feeling of the twists and turns. and action "Swallow through the forest", also just can reflect the reverse start of this feature, how the image of the expression of the swallow's flexibility, and the move up and down the moving potential, in this one "wear" on. and want to achieve "with God-shaped, with the shape of the spirit" of the realm, must be the body rhyme elements of a firm grasp, so that the body and mind can communicate, so that "unintentional ten."

4.4 Grooving in motion

In the classical dance body rhyme, as well as the drama, pay attention to the change of the actual situation. Dancer's dance change, is precisely the combination of reality and reality the best carrier, will body rhyme "lift, Shen, Chong, rely on, contain, thrust out, move" these movements, through the adjustment of the tone and music, make the dance content richer, action will not only in one way movement changes, but you, is same's mood,

To the audience's vision to leave a certain space for imagination, virtual reality, but virtual, real combination, surprise. We often in the training classical dance body rhyme and other dances to hear "practice dead, play live" in order to achieve less effort, also intended to show that the combination of virtual and reality is the form of Chinese dance characteristics. Through the change of the movement, the feeling rhythm of different, the combination of reality and reality, static and dynamic combination, rigid-flexible combination, these are in the rules, there is a normative premise, and to grasp the good degree, so mellow or strong, these are put together in the dance, the enjoyment of the United States, and will not give people an abrupt feeling, Shong sense. At the same time, in the mind, can also be a better expressive.

5. Conclusion

Chinese classical dance in its thousands of years of development, with many traditional culture mastery, Chinese classical dance body rhyme is the most elements of Chinese classical dance features and charm of the elements, Chinese classical dance body rhyme will not only the integration of the opera, and its development process to a certain extent followed the Tai Chi consciousness, reflecting the natural development of the law, It embodies the law of the change of things, embodies the way of life of Chinese people, and embodies the movement view of Chinese human body. The classical dance form God both, if is to say that the Chinese classical dance can produce, then is the Chinese classical dance to break the stylized routine movement, has walked out the brand-new has the time characteristic and the national Essence key.

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