

On the Ideology of National Music Improvement in Liu Tianhua's Erhu Artistic Practice

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Abstract: In the 21st century, the development of professional erhu can reach today's development level, in which Liu Tianhua played a fundamental role. In the process of the transformation of modern Chinese music from traditional to modern, Liu Tianhua advocated to create a new path for the development of Chinese music through the combination of Chinese and Western music. The idea of the improvement of national music advocated by him has far-reaching influence. Liu Tianhua was an outstanding national music creator, innovator of national instruments and music education expert during the New Culture Movement. He deeply loved national music and made significant contributions to the progress of China's erhu art.

Keywords: Liu Tianhua; Erhu Art; Ethnic Instrumental Music

1. The Ideology of National Music Improvement in Liu Tianhua's Erhu Performance Practice

In the process of improving the national music, Liu Tianhua actively explored and boldly practiced, and made remarkable progress in erhu performance. He firmly believes that although the erhu music art has made great progress, there are still many problems in the performance. In particular, the lack of erhu notation makes erhu music works unable to be completely inherited, which indirectly led to the decline of erhu performance. The traditional performance and inheritance of erhu mainly rely on oral professors. Although some works are recorded with a staff chart, different performers may show different performances in understanding the music meaning of the works. This puts forward an urgent demand for the accuracy of score recording in modern erhu performance. Therefore, Liu Tianhua chose to optimize the traditional notation, that is, integrating the rhythm, strength, technique and other performance marks of the staff notation into the gongchi notation, to build a more comprehensive and universal notation technique. This not only helps to improve the expressiveness of national musical instruments, promote the continuation and promotion of national music, but also provides a possibility for optimizing the education of national musical instruments.

In the past, the erhu's performance was limited to three positions, a constraint that prevented the erhu's musical potential from being fully realized. However, with persistent experimentation and improvement, Liu Tianhua has adjusted the pitch and the internal and external strings of the erhu accordingly, and expanded the erhu's handles from the original three to seven. Such reforms greatly explored the potential of the erhu and made it gradually become an important symbol of Chinese national musical instruments.

During his performances, Liu Tianhua skillfully adopted and familiarized himself with the techniques of various instruments from both China and the West. For example, in the piece "A Good Night", he utilized overtones of the same level as the guqin, while in the piece "Birdsong on the Empty Mountain", he imitated the techniques of the single-stringed kazoos in which the handles are moved in a wide range of motion and imitated the natural sound effects, and in "Brightness Walking", he used the bowing of the violin. These techniques have greatly enriched the performance skills of the erhu.

In the 1920s, the erhu was not yet a popular instrument. On the basis of inheriting the performance heritage of Chinese folk instruments, Liu Tianhua boldly absorbed western string performance techniques and revolutionized the erhu performance style, which had an epoch-making impact and laid the foundation for the modern erhu professional performance art.

2. The Ideology of National Music Improvement in Liu Tianhua's Erhu Music Creation

In the history of modern Chinese music, Liu Tianhua was one of the earliest composers to integrate local music with Western music. He skillfully mixed and matched Western and Eastern musical elements, and subverted the notation of national instruments, realizing the idea of "upgrading national music" and adding layers of connotations to national music. His improvement of the erhu instrument has made it more important in the art world. His fusion of Western musical composition methods to create national instrumental music gave the musical style of national instruments a unique character of Chinese and Western musical languages, and enhanced the musical expressiveness of national instruments, which laid a solid foundation for the progress of modern music and art education trends.

In the process of composing, Liu Tianhua not only integrated traditional Chinese instrumental interpretation methods such as "Lamentation" and "Birdsong on the Empty Mountain" with its introductory and finale free polyphony, but also successfully incorporated western musical compositional techniques such as close relationship transposition in "Bright Walk", the introduction of the variation structure in "Candle Shadow Shaking Red", and the use of the principle of natural key and variations in "Lamentation". This series of applications is the best in the organization and musical development of the songs.

In terms of performance content, the main feature of Liu Tianhua's erhu music creation is to follow the trend of the times, reflecting the voice of the times with music and expressing his will through music. This can be seen almost everywhere in his works, such as the composition of "Singing in Sickness", which is his reflection of the social reality at that time. Afterwards, Liu Tianhua joined the local "Anti-Manchu Youth League" and the Shanghai Enlightened Music Society, but they did not last long and were disbanded. After returning to his hometown for a period of time, his father unfortunately passed away at the age of 48. After a series of pains and troubles, Liu Tianhua bought a cheap bamboo erhu on the market and used his daily erhu playing to vent his inner pain. His first erhu piece, "Singing in Sickness," was composed under such circumstances.

Another moving work of his, *Elegy*, seems to have a similar background. At that time, the composer Liu Tianhua was still teaching in the Music Institute of Peking University. His vision for the reform of national music was not fully realized, and his life was also in a difficult period. Due to the obvious shortage of funds in the women's normal university where Liu Tianhua is located, the financial crisis was caused by the delayed payment of wages. After the death of his little daughter, they even had no money to pay the funeral expenses. Against this background, "Elegy" was born in the winter of 1927, so this music is also known as "Difficult Life".

In the course of Liu Tianhua's two works, it can be seen that Liu Tianhua's erhu solo music depicts in depth the social spirit of the time and the turmoil of the society. In addition, Liu Tianhua's concern for the future of the country, his tenacity in fighting against the dark forces, and his longing for a better life in the future are also expressed in his works.

3. The Ideology of National Music Improvement in Liu Tianhua's Erhu Teaching

Erhu teaching is also one of the important contents of Liu Tianhua's erhu art practice. Before Liu Tianhua, the traditional erhu teaching in our country mostly used oral teaching to cultivate artists. For a long time, Erhu performance has not formed a set of systematic and scientific teaching methods. Therefore, Liu Tianhua abandoned the tradition and decided to reform the people's existing concept of Erhu and change the teaching methods. He was the first person to introduce erhu professional courses into the higher education system, thus pushing erhu education into the professional field. These changes have promoted the erhu in its social status, living environment and value.

Liu Tianhua's erhu teaching is based on the principle of "teaching according to the ability of the student" and "step by step". In terms of erhu teaching methods, Liu Tianhua inherits both the traditional and the western, and creates his own exercises and pieces and combines them. These exercises range from the simple to the complex, from the shallow to the deep, and each piece is designed to train specific playing skills.

Drawing on the teaching experience of western instruments such as the violin and the piano, Liu Tianhua composed 47 erhu practice pieces, making an innovative contribution to the construction of erhu teaching materials. He composed 10 erhu pieces, including "Song of Idle Habitat", "Candle Shadow", "Bird's Voice on the Empty Mountain", "Moonlit Night", "Good Night", "Lamentation", "Song in Sickness", "Brightness", "Acura of Bitterness", "Exercise for a Solo String". These erhu pieces are novel and original, each with its own unique characteristics, and have been handed down to this day, becoming classics in the contemporary erhu teaching repertoire.

His Erhu teaching content selection is innovative on the basis of combining the characteristics of the times and inheriting the traditional folk music, such as "Chanting in the Sickness", "Bird's Voice in the Empty Mountain", "Good Night", etc., all of which are characterized by this feature. From here we can see that Liu Tianhua made painstaking efforts to explore the scientific teaching system

of folk instrumental music. He utilized these repertoires for teaching, breaking the traditional erhu playing and teaching methods, and leading it into the new path of modern professional music education.

Liu Tianhua has devoted his life to the teaching of erhu, and his innovative erhu teaching method not only breaks the limitation of traditional folk music teaching method and opens up a new chapter of erhu teaching, but also contributes positively to the improvement and development of the teaching of national musical instruments in China.

4. Conclusion

Liu Tianhua, an extraordinary musician, made great contributions to modern China in the field of erhu art, and devoted himself to promoting the reform of national music throughout his life. He has distinguished himself in many aspects of Chinese erhu performance, composition and education. He created a new field of erhu solo music, transforming it into a musical style with strong expressive power. In addition, he has made outstanding achievements in the fields of innovation, teaching and performance of pipa music. Liu Tianhua's concept of national music innovation has had a wide and far-reaching impact on the development of Chinese instrumental music in modern times.

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