

Improving the Presentation of Dance: Analysis of Visualization Methods for Stage Works

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Abstract: Under the influence of the trend of cultural media, the visualization of stage works is increasingly attracting attention from the industry and the public, and screen dance is a common form of visualizing dance works. This kind of visual adaptation has become a cross-media creative behavior, involving the transition from one art field to another. This article analyzes three typical scenarios for visualizing stage works, explores methods for transforming from stage to screen, reconstructs stage works through more extensive, diverse, and flexible film technologies, opens up possibilities for communication and negotiation between dance and film/video art, and establishes an intimate symbiotic relationship between the two.

Keywords: Dance; Screen dance; Stage works; Scene conversion

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1. Introduction

In 2019, the Chinese Dancers Association introduced the “Stage Works Screen” section at the 2nd “Chinese Screen Dance Exhibition,” which granted screen dance a relatively independent position in the dance community. However, the understanding of stage work screens primarily remains limited to former TV dance competitions or programs like “Dance World,” or popular online broadcasts of dance performances and competitions. Typically, there are two methods for recording or broadcasting these: a fixed panoramic shot, or using 1-3 cameras at stage level, which simultaneously shoot with different framing and then splice these screen dances based on the movements and rhythm of the music. Although these stage work screens possess a basic audiovisual language, they have traditionally played a subordinate role as “dance videos” and have not fully showcased the potential interaction between dance and imagery. In this article, we aim to provide important references for understanding and developing stage work screens by analyzing three typical scenarios of stage work video transformation, combined with several domestic and international practical cases.

2. Temporal and Spatial Consistency

The concept of “Temporal and Spatial Consistency” in screen dance is a crucial aspect of preserving the original stage work’s time progression and spatial configuration in the film adaptation. This concept is composed of two essential elements: temporal consistency and spatial consistency. Temporal consistency ensures that the film’s passage of time mirrors the actual rhythm and duration of the stage work, without using film editing techniques to expand or compress time, thus preserving the same perception of time as the live performance. Spatial consistency, on the other hand, ensures that the spatial representation retains the original characteristics of the stage work without altering or distorting the original stage space.

To enhance the screen presentation while maintaining the premise of consistent time and space, it is essential to maintain the freedom of camera scheduling. This freedom can break through the limitations of traditional audience perspectives and display more details and levels that were originally not easy to notice. Although live broadcasting or television media recording of dance events usually use multi-camera filming, to ensure the continuity and smoothness of stage performances, as well as avoid interfering with the

complex movements of actors, cameras are often placed below the stage or in the audience, which to some extent limits the audience's viewing angle. However, the freedom of camera scheduling can break through this deadlock, and such changes ultimately stem from the control/liberation of viewing angles and methods.

This requires the photographer not to subjectively judge and deploy the distance between the camera and the dancer, nor to simply use "routine" lens motion combinations such as pushing, pulling, shaking, and moving, but to deeply understand the camera's motion principle and combine it with dance to design the lens.

The director can cleverly utilize the perspective relationship and spatial logic of the camera to convey the intended effect of the scene.

A case in point is the stage work segment "Pina" from "Spring Festival," where the director used a panoramic upward view to film the red skirt on the ground and a group of female dancers gathered tightly behind the stage, completely covered by the red dress. This highlights women's resistance and fear towards the red dress, conveying the visual effect of being imprisoned and shrouded by the red dress. In the scene of a man facing off with a group of women, the director used a subjective shot technique of front and back, allowing the audience to see the subtle emotional changes that occur on the faces of all women when they are "screened." This shooting technique provides a special perspective that is impossible to obtain on-site, and more importantly, the design of male subjective lenses allows female dancers to perform directly into the camera, making the audience feel the fear and anxiety of being stared at firsthand.

In conclusion, the freedom of camera scheduling, coupled with a deep understanding of camera motion principles and their combination with dance, can enhance the audio-visual narrative and artistic experience of the audience. The concept of "Temporal and Spatial Consistency" in screen dance is, therefore, a crucial element in preserving the original stage work's time progression and spatial configuration in the film adaptation while enhancing its artistic value.

3. Unchanging Time but Transforming Space

The visualization of stage works in space does not need to be limited to the theater/stage and can innovatively transform and expand the original dance space while maintaining the overall duration and integrity of the original work. This is known as "time remains the same, only space changes." The visual creation of such stage works usually requires the selection of natural landscapes, living scenes, or real-life studios to build a stage based on the original content or personality traits of the work. The scene selection can be either single or variable. The method of scene transformation follows the original dance action sequence (time progression) and is connected with the music stress to ensure the smoothness of the presentation of the work.

The dance variety show "Dance Millennium" is a typical example of "time remains unchanged but space changes": the 24 dances selected in this program are all mature stage works, and many of them have already been performed in theaters. Each dance is matched with a film and television director who selects suitable scenes for visual re-creation based on the original content of the dance. Taking "The Back" in "Dance for a Thousand Years" as an example, the spatial environment setting of the work chose the real-life train station built in Hengdian Film and Television City. Firstly, the stage work was originally a men's duet, but when the space shifted from the stage to the real scene in visual practice, it was necessary to arrange group performances of various passengers on the platform to participate in creating a realistic atmosphere. Therefore, background and emotional group dances were added to the visual work. Secondly, Director Wang Ke utilized green screen cutout technology and MOCO robotic arms to present the father-son duo dance on the original stage as "one person playing two roles" (real and psychological protagonists), successfully breaking the spatial limitations of stage works. At the end of the work, with the sound of a train whistle returning to the real space, time and the group of dancers flow again. As the protagonist of reality looks into the distance, the figure of his father appearing on stage gradually drowns out in the crowd.

When creating stage screens under constant time and spatial changes, the first step is selecting a dance space that corresponds to the original work. Secondly, it is necessary to cater to the environment of the new space and adjust the motion amplitude, dance schedules, formation, and composition of the original work. Once again, adjust the camera design for the new spatial environment and dance form. Finally, according to the original dance arrangement sequence and combined with music rhythm, edit the formed screen dance.

4. Time and Space Both Change in Screen Dance

In the transformation of stage dance into screen dance, time and space change. Choreographers watch live performances to develop the core movements, altering the sequence, space, and arrangement to finalize the performance form. The process of creating screen dance resembles a choreographic reiteration via editing software. It involves breaking down the coherent dance into segments,

reshooting them, and then reassembling these movements through editing. The director relies on kinesthetic perception to disrupt and restructure the original sequence. This approach emphasizes the flexibility in linking scenes, resulting in changes to the original stage work's duration in correspondence with spatial alterations.

In the dance video work "Walking Non-stop," time and space change together. The dance prototype of this video work is the stage work "New Modern Era" from the "Sichuan Contemporary Art Performance Season", with a duration of 7 minutes and 14 seconds. The visual work "Walking non-stop" has a duration of 2 minutes and 19 seconds, with time greatly compressed and space transformed into complex urban scenes. In the New Modern Era, the upper class is the main body of expression, and four dancers show different work states: one male dancer uses uninterrupted keyboard tapping as the theme action, repeatedly changing the dimensions of speed, strength, and space (high, medium, and low), displaying a mechanized survival state; Two female dancers use simulated white paper as props, reflecting tense rhythms through continuous brisk walking and flipping through files; The third female dancer held a mountain like document, revealing the embarrassing situation of heavy burden and information overload. In the video work "Walking non-stop", the action of male dancers tapping the keyboard is weakened, and the part of the third female dancer holding the file is also deleted. The work focuses on the movements of two female dancers walking while flipping through documents, with this as the core that runs through the transformed urban space. Dancers briskly walked through many urban landscapes in Harbin, from the West City Red Square Art Museum to the Harbin Grand Theater, and then to the Shenzhen Harbin Industrial Park. In just 20 seconds, it showcases the tense and unstoppable pace of life for urban white-collar workers.

However, "Walking non-stop" is not a shortened version of "New Modern Era", but a carefully refined and re-created version. The action schedule has changed from circular movements on stage to straight walking, and the original stage scene of four people in the same frame has also been broken down into different scenes of single, double, and four people. In addition, the expression of the work is not limited to physical movements but also relies on spatial landscape display. For example, the green train on Dongjiang Bridge and the high-speed railway Harmony on the railway bridge cross each other, creating a strong contrast and presenting a collision of two eras. One end showcases the screen of the new era, the other showcases historical imprints. Further, the two ends are connected by the relentless spirit of progress. Incorporating changes in the time and space of stage works into visual adaptation can be constructed through the following levels: firstly, to extract and preserve core movements. Extracting and retaining the core action elements and their basic semantics in the original stage work can maintain the information transmission of the original work and ensure that the audience can understand the original work. Secondly, it is necessary to fully utilize spatial environmental elements. Space layout, background design, and other means can be used to enhance the visual effect of dance; Thirdly, it is necessary to allow for changes in the time dimension. To adjust the sequence and duration of actions, and ensure that the changes are coherent and smooth, without losing the basic characteristics and core spirit of the original work.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, whether the time and space of a stage work change in its transformation into screen dance, the essence lies in reinterpreting the original through the language of the camera. This process involves preserving the core message while using cinematic techniques to unfold new artistic experiences. Changes or new interpretations in some aspects of the original are not a loss but a transformation or elevation. With rapid advancements in digital technology, there's an anticipation for broader possibilities in adapting stage works into screen dance and finding better ways to disseminate and evolve traditional dance in the digital era.

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