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ETHNOMUSICOLOGY-SINGING CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE POETRY CHORAL WORKS

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ABSTRACT

Ancient Chinese poems chorus is a very important category in Chinese choral art, and it has obvious special characteristics. which are expressed in ancient languages, we need to use conventional language to understand its connotation and extension, so it leads to the composers and conductors need to do more work when facing the subject of ancient poems in order to interpret it perfectly. This paper discusses some singing characteristics of choral works of ancient poems, and interprets how to sing and interpret choral works of ancient poems better from the perspective of a choral conductor. Research indicates that in performing ancient Chinese poetry choral pieces, there's a focus on blending poetic rhythm with musical melody, skillfully employing harmony and counterpoint techniques. Additionally, conductors, while leading the choir in these ancient pieces, continuously innovate by incorporating modern musical elements, giving these choral works a contemporary edge and revitalizing the ancient poetry with fresh brilliance within the realm of choral art. The study can provide some beginners with reference, and provide music teachers, especially choral conductors, with some experience in rehearsing choral works of ancient poems. This article will use qualitative research methods to conduct research and exploration.

Keywords: Chinese Ancient Poetry Chorus, Ancient Poetry Chorus Singing, Ancient Poetry Chorus Singing Characteristics

INTRODUCTION

Chinese classical poetry choral works blend the best of ancient Chinese literature and contemporary music, preserving the essence of traditional culture while also showcasing the allure of modern music. In performing these works, it is essential to seamlessly integrate the deep cultural connotations and rich emotions of classical poetry with the polyphonic structures and harmonic techniques of choral art, thereby endowing the poetry with renewed vitality and expressive dimensions. First of all, such a transformation needs to take into account the original rhythm, rhyme and mood of classical poetry, and the music must be created without jeopardizing the original meaning of the poem. In addition, the linguistic style of classical poetry differs from modern Chinese, and musicians need to find appropriate ways to preserve the original flavour of the poem while making it accessible to modern audiences. Ancient Chinese poetry choral compositions first appeared in the previous century. The chorus works of ancient Chinese poetry have demonstrated diversity and complexity as a result of composers' ongoing inquiry and study, as well as the real circumstances of chorus development in China (REN,2010). In addition, as more chorus conductors strive for the ideal chorus sound, they will also look for vocal techniques that are better suited for chorus works in various eras, genres, and themes. Secondly, the vocal arrangements and harmonic techniques of choral works need to match the mood of classical Chinese poetry, which requires composers to be familiar with Chinese musical traditions and be able to integrate them naturally and effectively into Western choral arrangement techniques. How to maintain a sense of structural harmony in Western choral music while still expressing the special charm of Chinese poetry is a major challenge. In addition, the vocal technique and performance style of the singers also play a crucial role in expressing the emotion and atmosphere of classical poetry. However, since Eastern and Western musical traditions are fundamentally different in terms of expressive techniques and vocal aesthetics, singers need special training in order to accurately convey the unique emotions of Chinese poetry.

In conclusion, the study of the performance characteristics of Chinese classical poetry choral works represents a topic of research that is culturally and artistically significant. This research will explore the characteristics of Chinese classical poetry choral works in terms of melody design, harmonic arrangements, emotional expression, and performance styles through literature review, work analysis, and case studies, and will discuss their significance in cultural preservation, art education, and music innovation. It is hoped that this study will provide a valuable theoretical foundation and practical guidance for the further development and promotion of Chinese classical poetry choral works.

RELATED WORKS

In the past time, there are some important works on choral technique and performance of choral works in this field.(CHENG,2015)study focuses on language-specific vocal technique. Since each language has different characteristics, we need to apply to different singing techniques to show it when singing these song works with specificity. On the other hand, (YANG,2018)study focuses more on the dynamics and coordination of the choir. In (LI, 2021) study, it was pointed out that chorus is a concept that corresponds to solo singing, and from a professional point of view, chorus is an artistic expression of multiple people and multiple voices. Compared with solo singing, this artistic expression presents a more three-dimensional and rich sound effect, and the popularity is also very strong. In the process of professional choral singing, the use of vocal singing skills is essential, and often the skills of the singers are required to be higher. While (LU, 2019) argues that among the many choral works in China, there are different musical language systems and style systems. For different styles and types of works, how singers should interpret them with their voices, it is one of the key concerns in the choral industry today. The art of choral music is a form of polyphonic music and art, which originated in Europe around the 9th century A.D. Each voice is sung by at least one person, and regardless of the form of choral music, its acoustic effect is presented by different "regular" combinations of voices or between voices and instruments. Analyzing the relationship between the works and rhythms at various stages in the history of choral music, analyzing the principles of human auditory rhythm and the physical physiology of singing, using legal methods and means to train and perform choral music, so that the science of law is truly invested in the performance of choral music, and to improve and perfect the choral sound, is the significance of a true combination of the theory and practice of law. (DOU, 2016). In the study of (TANG, 2013), it is shown that vocal singing ability directly affects the creative design and emotional expression of choral works, and is a powerful medium for displaying the infectiousness of works. Performers must be proficient in timbre changes, vocal authenticity and speed, as well as the accurate handling of the soprano extension in the climax, in order to achieve the presentation of the overall impact of the work. This article elaborates on the play of choral performance ability and the use of singing talent to provide some reference for practical training.

It usually has a conductor, who may or may not have an accompanist. It belongs to the realm of public expression in the arts. It is far more challenging than choral and solo types of art. It is highly expressive and uniform in its standards, harmony, timbre, and intonation. This paper takes the diversity of choral singing as a starting point, and explores the existence of diversity in choral singing through the comparison between Chinese folk singing and European American singing. (LI, 2014)

DATA PREPARATION

As a music article, this paper mainly analyzes the music score data by collecting them and summarizes them through qualitative research. Since ancient Chinese poems have their different forms of existence in every dynasty, for example, in the Tang Dynasty it was poetry, which had a very regular format, but in the Song Dynasty it evolved into poetry and produced many classifications, which led to the fact that composers and choral conductors need to use different techniques and experiences to interpret ancient poems with different themes. With the development of Chinese choral music, the chorus of ancient poems has also developed from the simple two-voice part in the beginning to three-voice part, four-voice part, a cappella part, multi-voice part, and so on, and more and more composers begin to take this topic as the focus of their creation. And choral conductors, when facing more and more choral works of ancient poems, need to adopt more artistic treatments to create the second part. The data used in this study are representative choral works of ancient poems from each period written by modern composers.

Analysis of Singing Characteristics

The specificity of musical melody

In the choral works of ancient poems, the design of musical melody is a very challenging part. The composer needs to design the melody according to the rhythm, content and emotion of the poems. The melody should not only express the literal meaning of the poems, but also convey the deep emotion and cultural meaning. In addition, the melodic design should also take into account the harmony and contrast between the voice parts, as well as the dynamic changes of the whole, so that the choral work has a sense of hierarchy without losing the harmony and unity. In terms of the originality of melodic design, composers need to design melodies according to the rhythms, contents and emotions of ancient poems when creating choral music. These melodies should not only be able to show the rhythm of the poems, but also match the characteristics of the chorus, such as showing the multiple meanings of the poems through polyphony and counterpoint. Meanwhile, in terms of the harmony between rhythm and language, the rhythmic design of ancient poems chorus must match the language rhythm of the poems to ensure that the music rhythm can naturally carry and set off the language of the poems, so that the singing can not only convey the meaning of the poems, but also reflect the fluency and infectiousness of the music.

For example, in the female chorus work "JinSe", which is taken from the poetry of Tang Dynasty poet Li ShangYin and adapted by conductor Zhang Yi into a female chorus, according to the composer's description, the emotion described in the work, when the chorus members sang it, they didn't know what emotion they sang, but at the end of the song, they realized that it was a kind of regretful feeling. The composer adopts a very soft melodic direction throughout the work, constantly superimposing the voices and advancing with the piano accompaniment, which makes this feeling of regret continuously sublimated, and ultimately slowly passes to the listener with the melodic direction.

The relevance of harmonic arrangement

Harmonic treatment in choral works is an important means of enhancing musical expression. Harmony is designed not only for the richness of the music, but also to better express the emotional level of the verse. For example, the use of polyphonic harmony can create a dialog or reverberation between different voices, enhancing the expressive depth of the work. The harmonic design of choral works is complex and challenging, aiming to enhance musical expression through the interweaving of different voices. Harmony is not just a simple superimposition of notes, but also a variety of harmonic techniques such as counterpoint, mimicry and variation to enrich the music's content and emotional level. The complexity of harmonic design is obvious in the choral works of ancient poems, and the design of harmony is very crucial, which can enhance the expression and emotional depth of the music. Through the harmonic combination of different voices, a layered musical effect can be created, making each line of the verse full of changes and dynamics. The diversity of harmonic arrangement refers to the fact that choral arrangement not only includes traditional four-part voices, but also may incorporate more diverse vocal processing, such as adding solos, repetitions, or other musical elements, which not only enriches the level of the music, but also makes the work more personalized and modern. The chorus of ancient poems is usually more complex in harmonic design, and the expressiveness and layering of the music is enhanced through multi-part arrangements. For example, polyphony can be used to allow different voices to sing the same poem with different musical lines, forming a musical dialog or complementary, making the overall listening experience richer and more three-dimensional. In addition, by changing the density and colour of the harmony, the emotional changes of the poem can be effectively conveyed, such as from calm to impassioned, or from sorrowful to joyful, which can be well expressed through the change of harmony. Harmonic treatment is the key to enhance the musical expression in choral works.

In the mixed-voice ancient poetic choral work *The Song of Long Hatred*, the composer adopts a complex multi-voice structure in the harmonic arrangement, including different voices such as soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor and baritone. This polyphonic harmonic layout can enrich the texture of the music, as well as better express the layering and emotional depth of the poem. In harmonic arrangements, counterpoint techniques are often used to enhance the dynamics and expressiveness of the music. Through the imitation and dialog between different voices, musical echoes are formed, making the whole choral work both unified and unchanged, and able to express the story and emotion of the poem more vividly. In the harmonic treatment of *The Song of Eternal Hatred*, it often starts with simple harmonies and gradually transitions to more complex and rich harmonic structures. This gradual unfolding harmonic design is in line with the narrative style of the ancient poem, and the emotional changes from calm to excitement are effectively musically represented. The harmonic arrangement in *The Song of Everlasting Hatred* is closely related to the content of the poem, conveying different emotional atmospheres, such as sadness, pleasure, nostalgia, etc., through the harmonic changes, which enhances the expressive and infectious power of the music. The dynamic processing and rhythmic changes of the harmonies are also one of the characteristics of *The Song of Long Hate*. In certain passages, the strength and weakness of the vocal parts and the speed of the rhythm are adjusted to match the emotion of the poem and the changes of the scene, making the music and the content of the poem more relevant and harmonized.

These characteristics of the harmonic arrangement make "The Song of Long Hate" not only highly artistic in terms of musicality, but also emotionally capable of touching the listeners profoundly, and it is a model of combining classical poetry with modern choral technology.

山在虚无缥缈间

选自清唱剧《长恨歌》

韦瀚章词
黄自曲

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system includes three vocal staves (I, II, III) and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Andante sostenuto'. The vocal parts begin with a rest, followed by the lyrics '香雾' (Xiangwu) in staff II. The piano accompaniment starts with a rest, followed by a series of chords and a melodic line. The second system begins at measure 7 and includes the same three vocal staves and piano accompaniment. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: '迷蒙, 祥云掩 拥, 蓬莱仙岛 清虚洞,' (Mimeng, Xiangyun yan yong, Penglai Xian Dao Qingxu Dong), '蓬莱仙岛, 琼' (Penglai Xian Dao, Qiong), and '祥云掩 拥, 琼' (Xiangyun yan yong, Qiong). The piano accompaniment continues with chords and a melodic line, marked with 'rit.' and 'a tempo'.

Figure 1. The Song of Long Hatred

Suitability of theme selection

Ancient Chinese poems have high artistic and philosophical values, and the lyrics in choral works are often beautiful in language and far-reaching in meaning. On the basis of understanding the original poems, singers need to express the emotion and mood of the poems through the intonation and rhythm of their voices. In ancient poetic choral works, the choice of poems is usually very delicate, requiring the poems not only to have high literary value, but also to match the emotion of the music. The poems chosen are often emotionally rich and can stimulate the creativity of both the composer and the singer. The selection of poems for choral works is very demanding, and usually focuses on poetic and emotionally rich texts, such as the classics of Tang and Song poetry. When choosing materials, we should not only consider the beauty of the language of the poems, but also take into account the emotional expression needs when combining them with music. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the multi-level expression of emotions. The ancient poems themselves are rich in emotional expression, covering a variety of complex emotions from joy, anger, sadness to loneliness and serenity. In choral singing, through the cooperation and echo of different voices, these emotional levels can be shown more delicately, making the whole work more emotionally rich and moving. The first and foremost feature of ancient poetry chorus is to combine the deep literary connotation with music. Choosing the right ancient poems for music creation not only requires that the poems themselves have a high artistic value, but also requires that the poems and the music can complement each other emotionally. When composers are composing, they will analyze the mood, rhythm and emotion of the poems in detail to design the melody, so that the melody can not only reflect the literal meaning of the poems, but also deeply show the culture and philosophy behind them. For example, for poems describing landscapes, the melodies are often smooth and broad, echoing the grandeur of the mountains and rivers in the poems; for poems describing delicate emotions, they are expressed through delicate and soft melodies.

In the mixed chorus work "Eastward the Great River", the appropriateness of the theme selection is very obvious. First of all, in terms of the historical and cultural depth of the theme, "Going East of the Yangtze River" chooses the poem "Nian Nujiao - Red Cliff Huai Gu" by Su Shi, a poet of the Northern Song Dynasty, which is rich in deep historical and cultural background and philosophical thinking, reflecting the author's feelings about the rise and fall of history and the expression of his personal emotions. Through this kind of theme, choral works can arouse the audience's empathy and touch a wider range of emotions and thoughts. Secondly, in terms of broad expression of emotion, the subject matter of the poem has strong emotional color, from sadness to sentimentality, to the praise of the natural landscape, with rich emotional levels, which is very suitable for expression in choral form. The chorus can express the complex emotional changes through the changes of different voices and harmonies, which makes the emotional expression of the whole piece richer and more three-dimensional. At the same time, when facing the combination of vision and hearing, "East of the Yangtze River", as a literary work, depicts the scene of the Red Cliff War with great visual impact. The choral work reproduces this historical scene through the power of music, so that the audience can feel the spectacular scene depicted in the poem, which enhances the infectious force and artistic expression of the work.

Finally, in the fusion of literature and music, the literature of "Eastward the Great River" is very strong, and the choral work needs to add appropriate musical elements, such as the lyricism of melody and the complexity of harmony, while maintaining the literary beauty, which enhances the artistic expression of the work, making it not only a literary recitation, but also a musical interpretation. All in all, the selection of the subject matter of "East of the Yangtze River" has excellent suitability in chorus, which can not only show the depth and breadth of the poem, but also enhance the expression of emotion and the transmission of culture through the form of music, which is an excellent example of the high degree of combination of literature and music art.

The musical score is divided into four systems. The first system shows the piano accompaniment with a complex rhythmic pattern of chords and eighth notes. The second system continues the piano accompaniment, including dynamic markings such as *dim.*, *p*, *con gran espressione*, *rall.*, and *molto rall.*, along with *pp*. The third system introduces the vocal line with the lyrics: 乱石崩云, 惊涛裂岸, 卷起千堆雪, 卷起. The vocal line is marked with *con gran espressione*, *p a tempo*, *mf*, and *pp*. The piano accompaniment continues below the vocal line, also marked with *p a tempo*, *mf*, and *pp*. The fourth system shows the final part of the piano accompaniment.

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Figure 2. Eastward the Great River

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

After analyzing the above, we can clearly know that the chorus of ancient Chinese poems has obvious characteristics in melody, harmony and theme, which all lead us to have a deeper understanding and cognition of it. First of all, as a special choral work of ancient poems, its melody needs to be created closely around the poems themselves, not only to express the connotation and extension of the poems, but also to show the rich meaning and beauty of the poems, maximizing the aesthetics of the audience. Secondly, as the main performance of the chorus, the harmonic arrangement is not only the soul of the chorus work, but also one of the core technologies to express the style of the chorus work. The chorus of the ancient poems, through the complex harmonic arrangement and well-designed harmonic direction, makes each voice not only able to express independently, but also able to form the musical dialogue and interaction between each other, which strengthens the dynamic range and expressive power of the music. Finally, in the selection of subject matter, the chorus of ancient Chinese poems pays great attention to the perfect combination and unity of literature and music. Through the selection of ancient poems and the creation of music, the chorus not only conveys the literal meaning of the poems, but also adds the expressive power of the music, which makes the singing not only the transmission of sound, but also the resonance of emotion and thought. This fusion improves the singer's understanding of the work, but also enhances the audience's acceptance and resonance, making the work in the artistry and infectiousness have been significantly improved.

Through the above analysis, we can see that the singing characteristics of the choral works of ancient Chinese poems not only reflect the charm of traditional Chinese culture, but also demonstrate the technology and expressiveness of modern choral art. The combination of these features provides rich possibilities and far-reaching significance for the creation and interpretation of choral works of ancient poems, which is an important way of cultural inheritance and innovation. In the future, there is still a vast space for development in this field, especially in terms of improving the singing technique and deepening the cultural connotation, which deserves continuous exploration and research.

CONCLUSION

The singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poems in melody, harmony and subject matter reflect the integration of the deep heritage of Chinese culture and modern choral art, showing unique artistic charm and expressive power. These features not only deepen the cultural connotation of the work, but also enhance the emotional expression of the music, making it an important way to inherit and innovate Chinese traditional culture.

First of all, from the aspect of melodic design, the melodies of choral works of ancient poems are usually characterized by a strong Chinese style, with clear melodic lines, which not only retain the characteristics of Chinese classical music, such as the use of pentatonic scale, but also incorporate the elements of modern music, such as variations and irregular rhythms, etc. This makes the melodies not only able to deepen the cultural connotation, but also enhance the emotional expression.

This design makes the melody able to faithfully express the literary flavor of the ancient poems as well as meet the aesthetic needs of modern listeners. In the process of singing, singers need to accurately grasp the emotional color of the melody, and express the mood and emotion of the poems through the intonation and rhythm of the voice.

Secondly, the harmonic arrangement plays a crucial role in the choral works of ancient poems. Choral works create rich musical textures and layers through multi-part harmony settings. Different voice parts intertwine with each other to form a harmonious and complex sound effect, which not only enhances the expressive power of the music, but also better reflects the emotional depth of the poems. For example, the harmonies are often set more densely and strongly when expressing stirring or magnificent emotions, while more concise and softer harmonies are used in lyrical or calm passages. This harmonic change makes the whole choral work emotionally richer and more moving.

Finally, the selection and adaptation of themes is also a major feature of choral works of ancient poems. Ancient poems themselves contain rich historical information and profound philosophical thinking, and their choice of materials is wide, from natural landscapes to humanistic emotions. Choral works usually choose those poems with rich imagery and deep emotions as the subject matter, which not only can show the literary value of the poems, but also through the form of chorus, let these traditional cultural elements in the modern society can be interpreted and expressed in a new way. Through the reasonable adaptation of themes, choral works can better resonate with the emotions of modern audiences and improve the artistic influence of the works.

To summarize, the unique singing characteristics of ancient Chinese poems in melody, harmony and subject matter not only show the charm of traditional Chinese culture, but also reflect the diversity and inclusiveness of modern choral art. This cross-generation form of artistic expression is a kind of inheritance and promotion of Chinese traditional culture, and also makes an important contribution to the communication and development of world culture and art. As a choral conductor, it is necessary to constantly seek more effective ways and more convenient ways, with a view to spreading this excellent art form more effectively.

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