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The Significance of Musical Narrativity in Performing Selected Choral Works by Jin Chengzhi

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Abstract

Musical narrativity had a significant influence on the variety and diversity of artistic forms in contexts of music performance research. However, understanding many aspects of musical narrativity in music performances requires a deeper understanding, especially related to expression features from the performer's perspective. This article examines a number of aspects of musical narrativity that correlate with the style of performance in Jin Chengzhi's Choral compositions. There are three objectives in this article. The first is to investigate the characteristics of Jin Chengzhi's Choral compositions. The second is to review the musical narrativity literatures in the context of music performance. The third is to correlate musical narrativity in the context of artistic research of music performance. The methodology of this research is carried out based on a literature study. This article is part of ongoing research with the title "Musical Narrativity in Performing Selected Choral Works by Jin Chengzhi". Through this article, it is hoped that the understanding of the aspects of musical narrativity in the choral music performance style can be clarified.

Keywords: Musical Narrativity, Musical Narrativity in Choral Music Performance, Jin Chengzhi's Choral Compositions, Artistic Research in Music Performance, Research in choral Music Performance.

Introduction

The use of the term 'narrativity' in music theory has its origins in the narrative features that are apparent in musical works. In his book "The Composer's Voice", the American musicologist Edward T. Cone discusses the close relationship between music and narrativity. In the book, he says, "Music is a language. Even if this statement is not an outright assertion, it is at least an implicit assumption, as many people do when they talk about music and write musical texts. Music communicates, makes statements, conveys information, it expresses emotions. Music has its own nomenclature, its own rhetoric, and even its own semantics. We are told that music has a meaning, although no two authorities can agree on what that meaning is. And so, there is a great deal of discussion about what music tells and how it tells it - indeed, music can 'tell' anything" (Cone, 1974)

Choral singing is both a form of performance and a highly expressive "vocal symphony" musical genre, which is the highest form of vocal expression. The art of choral singing is fascinating art, and mixed choral singing with multiple voices is even more wonderful. It is

one of the most popular and widely participated musical art forms. Choral singing is the best expression of the common life, thoughts, and emotions of a group, and can most directly demonstrate the spirituality and strength of a nation or people (Ma Geshun, 2003).

Most of Jin Chengzhi's choral compositions are rich in plot and drama but rarely has a choir performed his work with the idea of musical narrativity. In this perspective, musical narratologies have considered that all music can be explored from a narrativity perspective, choral music works that contain a variety of musical materials, particularly biographical or title works, have attracted more researchers to narrativity theory. However, it is almost unheard of in contemporary Chinese choral society to be able to perform Jin Chengzhi's realism in the idea of musical narrativity (Hong & Liu, 2017; Xiaobao, 2012; Bo, 2013) and there are very few attempts to perform musical narrativity in realistic choral works (Xunsheng, 2006; Zesheng, 1981; Qihong, 2003).

This article is based on a review of related literature as part of ongoing research with the title "Musical Narrativity in Performing Selected Choral Works by Jin Chengzhi". Through this article, it is hoped that the understanding of the aspects of musical narrativity in the choral music performance style can be clarified particularly related to the expression features from the performer's perspective.

The Characteristics of Jin Chengzhi's Choral compositions.

The rapid development process of Chinese choral art, the numerous fields involved, the high frequency of organization of activities, and the strong participation of people are irreplaceable by other forms of artistic expression in China at present. Whether it was the chorus of a thousand people from the People's Liberation Army Choir in Tiananmen Square on the 70th anniversary of China's victory in the war (the first time in the history of China's military parades), or the finale of the Cultural Gala "Millennium Promise" at the "Belt and Road" International Summit Forum, "Ode to Peace" The first time in the history of China's military parade. Chinese choral art has shown its artistic charm to people all over the world with its unique characteristics of strong mass, wide audience, and magnificence, and has become the main way for the Chinese people to express their love for their motherland (Siyang, 2014). Although the choral art in China has not developed for a long time, when we look at the whole world, China has been ranked among the top in terms of quantity and quality in every world choral competition. It can be said that China's choral art has developed at an astonishing rate, and its scale and influence have been ranked among the great choral countries (Xiaobao, 2013).

Jin Chengzhi's music is important for the development of amateur choirs in Chinese choral society and for the current state of development of social music activities in China. The musical form of his compositions and his diverse artistic characteristics are important for enriching the study of the development of Chinese choral theory. Combining social hot spots and social phenomena, Jin Chengzhi's compositions have attracted the public's attention with his innovative performance style, and as a result, his compositions have received increasing popularity in the Chinese choral society (Shumei, 2020). Today, Jin Chengzhi's compositions have a high level of attention and influence in Chinese choral society, with many mass choirs and university choirs singing Jin Chengzhi's compositions, which cater to the diverse aesthetic innovations of contemporary youth.

Many of Jin Chengzhi's choral compositions have a great appeal and influence on the Chinese public. His compositions can be roughly divided into two categories: the first category is the popular repertoire that has been called "divine songs" (The Less Serious Collection) by

the Chinese audience. The lyrics of his works in this category use popular lyrics without much depth (Li, 2019).

In addition to the above-mentioned 'popular' compositions, he also wrote many conventional, in-depth choral compositions, which we called 'serious' compositions, such as 'Morning View of Jinguang Mountain', 'Zeya Ji' collection and 'Journey to Baima Village' collection, etc. (Shumei, 2020). The reason why Jin Chengzhi's works have had such a huge impact on listeners is that these "divine songs" say what they want to hear most in a way that is currently most familiar, loved, and easily accepted by our listeners, especially the younger generation (Yaru, 2016). An important feature of the art form of vocal music (including choral music), as opposed to other forms, is the presence of language, i.e., lyrics. In a sense, this has both advantages and disadvantages; when singing vocal works in an unfamiliar language, there is a risk of creating a gap between the singer and the audience (although the sound itself can be relatively moving); conversely, it can lead to a rapid understanding of the work by the audience (Chunyu, 2014).

In general, Jin Chengzhi's compositions are characterized by realistic compositions in which the performances are full of drama and storytelling. The content of his compositions reflects the majority of people working in all walks of life in contemporary China, writing about their daily lives, their nostalgia and emotions for their home scenery and loved ones, and their pursuit of faith.

Musical Narrativity Literature

Narrative theory has always been a very active branch of literary theory. In his book "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative, 1966", the famous French literary theorist Roland Barthes states that "narrative exists in all times, in all places, in all societies. It transcends nations, histories, cultures, and lives on as if it were life. "The origins of narrative as a fundamental way of understanding and reflecting on the world and on oneself can be traced back to ancient societies (Barthes, & Duisit, 1975; Xunqing, 2009)

The French critic Tzvetan Todorov, in his "Grammaire du Decameron (Ten Days on Grammar)", also named this "science of narrative works" as "narratology". He considered narrative to be the symbolic reproduction of a series of events that are linked in meaning in terms of time and causality. The narrative, therefore, includes not only fiction but also cinema, theatre, comic strips, newsreels, diaries, chronicles, and so on (Todorov, 1969).

In his book *Narratology: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, David Herman discusses this flourishing of narrative theory: "In an age of interpenetration, a single narratology has in fact branched out into multiple narratologies. The structuralist theoretical construction of storytelling has developed into multiple modes of narrative analysis. "It is in the context of the interdisciplinary study of narrative that "musical narrativity" has come to the forefront of researchers' minds (Herman, 2001).

Fred Everett Maus, a leading American scholar of narrative theory, in his article 'Classical Instrumental Music and Narrative', divides the study of musical narrativity theory into three periods (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2008). The first period began with Cohen's book *The Composer's Voice* (1974), and it continues through the first half of the 1990s. Much of this period has focused on the question of the similarity between music and narrativity. Most of the researchers were optimistic and tried to resolve long-standing critical and philosophical problems by answering this similarity.

In the second period of narrativity music theory, researchers focused on the proper way to view the connection between music and narrativity. Some musicologists became skeptical

of the over-reliance on narrativity concepts to understand music at the part of investigating and element of music performance. As far in the third period is from the late 1990s to the present. The first period of narrativity music studies was optimistic, a period in which narrative thought seemed to promise solutions to some of the traditional difficulties of meaning and interpretation of music. The second period was sceptical, with several leading scholars severely criticizing musicologists for over-emphasizing the identity of music and narrativity.

Musical Narrativity of Jin Chengzhi's Choral Works in Artistic Research of Music Performance

Musical narrativity in choral performance is not the same as rearranging the score or accompaniment parts of a chorus but is based on the deeper content of the choral work that needs to be expressed, while at the same time adding a performance element to the interpretation of the work. This choral performance has a dramatic element but is different from a musical or opera (Chaoyang, 2011)

In the context of artistic research in music performance, the idea of musical narrativity is met with what is stated by Djahwasi and Saidon (2020) as the representation of the way we think about art, the way artists processed it, and the artworks themselves. Reflecting on this perspective, Jin Chengzhi's choral works will be performed in three phases of investigation.

In the first level, the performance of the musical narrativity is not only a manifestation of the events in the piece but a focus on how these events are told, with how the language structure is interconnected with the thematic structure of the narrativity, which means that the focus needs to be on the narrativity and structural processes of the musical work. The second level investigates the discursive ways in which composers and lyricists tell their 'own' stories in the context of the situation, the historical context, meaning that the design of the performance needs to capture the meaning of the narrativity in a particular historical context.

As far in the third level focuses on the 'linguistic' variations that the narrator engages in, meaning how these narrativity language styles affect the contours of the narrativity structure and the presentation of meaning, all of which form the main tenet of the musical narrativity performance - how the narrator tells the story. The goal of musical narrativity performance is not to make the listener understand the events of the work or the story itself, but to show the meaning behind the work, so that the listener can perceive the musical meaning on a deeper level (Wang, 2013). In other words, narrative music is an argument within the scope of an artistic research paradigm that reflects the idea that art can be understood as a process of inquiry and knowledge production (Djahwasi and Saidon,2020).

Conclusion

The musical form of Jin Chengzhi's compositions is important for enriching the study of the development of Chinese choral theory. Jin Chengzhi's compositions are characterized by realistic compositions in which the performances are full of drama and storytelling. The content of his compositions reflects the majority of people working in all walks of life in contemporary China, writing about their daily lives, their nostalgia and emotions for their home scenery and loved ones, and their pursuit of faith.

The first period of narrativity music studies was optimistic, a period in which narrative thought seemed to promise solutions to some of the traditional difficulties of meaning and interpretation of music. The second period was skeptical, with several leading scholars severely criticizing musicologists for over-emphasizing the identity of music and narrativity.

As far in the third period is from the late 1990s to the present. The first period of narrativity music studies was optimistic, a period in which narrative thought seemed to promise solutions to some of the traditional difficulties of meaning and interpretation of music.

In the context of this research, Jin Chengzhi's choral works will be performed in three phases of investigation. In the first level, the performance of the musical narrativity is not only a manifestation of the events in the piece but a focus on how these events are told, with how the language structure is interconnected with the thematic structure of the narrativity. The second level investigates the discursive ways in which composers and lyricists tell their 'own' stories in the context of the situation, the historical context, meaning that the design of the performance needs to capture the meaning of the narrativity in a particular historical context. As far in the third level focuses on the 'linguistic' variations that the narrator engages in, meaning how these narrativity language styles affect the contours of the narrativity structure and the presentation of meaning, all of which form the main tenet of the musical narrativity performance.

This article has discussed several aspects of musical narrativity that correlate with the style of performance in Jin Chengzhi's Choral compositions. Apart from the characteristics of Jin Chengzhi's Choral composition, a review on the musical narrativity literatures in the context of music performance has also been discussed. In addition, this article has also discussed on the musical narrativity in the context of artistic research of music performance. It is hoped that the discussions in this article could contribute to a better understanding of the aspects of musical narrativity in the choral music performance particularly related to the expression features from the performer's perspective.

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