

The Application of Ancient Chinese Poetry in Art Songs - Take “When Is the Spring Flower and Autumn Moon” As An Example

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Abstract:

This paper takes the ancient Chinese poetry art song “When is the Spring Flower and Autumn Moon” as an example, combined with the background of the lyrics, the background of the style of the art song and the analysis of the work, the internal relationship of the lyrics and the correlation of the language tone and music. In addition, the author’s experience of the works in the process of singing, combining theory with practice, to explore the application of ancient poetry in artistic songs. The Chinese art song “When is the Spring Flower and Autumn Moon”, as one of the representative works of ancient Chinese poetry and art songs, is the theme of the poet Li Yu, using the poem “When is the Spring Flower and Autumn Moon”. Composer Wang Long used this poem as the background to create the ancient Chinese poetry music work “Spring Flowers and Autumn Moon When”, which is a perfect fusion of modern music and ancient poetry, presenting a new style of ancient Chinese poetry art songs.

Keywords:

Chinese Ancient Poetry, Art Songs, Language Tone, Analysis of Musical Form

1. Introduction

Chinese art songs are gradually developed in the repeated integration of Chinese and western music culture. Art songs are produced and developed on the basis of lyric songs. They are the perfect combination of poetry and music, and are a kind of artistic theme. The development of Chinese art songs has experienced a difficult test. Because the genre of art song is always applied to Schubert’s standard, the development of art song has lost its vitality. The original Chinese art songs express their emotions through the description of the situation, which reflects the special requirements of the time to varying degrees; The art songs in the 1930s mainly reflect the unity of national style and art; the art songs in the 1940s, which opened up the way of Chinese art songs. [1] It can be seen that Chinese art songs focus on drawing lessons from the expression forms of foreign art songs, while highlighting the characteristics of

Chinese national language and emotion. As an foreign genre of vocal music, “art song” has unique aesthetic characteristics.

The characteristics of art songs are mainly reflected in the following aspects:

(1)The content of the song adopts the combination of poetry and music. The composer writes according to the tone of the poem and the connotation of the poem. The song expresses the composer’s subjective view of the poem.

(2)The accompaniment of the song is mainly the piano accompaniment,and the melody part is a solo.The proportion of piano accompaniment is as important as the proportion of vocal melody. The contrast of the piano accompaniment and the vocal singing will highlight the emotional value of the song. Therefore, the piano accompaniment not only plays a foil role of harmony and rhythm, but also can express the emotion and artistic conception of the song.

(3)The song structure is delicate and complete. Art songs belong to a kind of short and concise music sketch, which can tell a story through lyrics and melodies. Therefore, more attention should be paid to every detail when singing art songs.

(4)The content of the song is extremely rich. The content of art songs is mostly composed of celebrity poems, with profound connotation and high artistic value.

Since the birth of ancient poetry and art songs,it has been deeply influenced by western singing methods. As the product of the combination of Chinese and Western music culture,the singing style has a certain similarities with the western singing style. In the rhythm and techniques, it has its own artistic characteristics, showing distinct national characteristics.Compared with western countries, Chinese art songs started late, but they developed very rapidly. [2]

For example, Zhao Yuanren’s “Teach Me How to Meet him”, Shi Guangnan’s “Turpan Grape is ripe”, Xu Peidong’s “I Come like Snow in the Sky” and other works are all representative works of modern Chinese art songs.

Ancient poetry culture has a rich connotation,it has been read since ancient times,this form of reading following the rhythm itself has a certain musicality, and has been promoted in private schools.In the process of the development of ancient poetry, due to the addition of music melody, there is a way of creating ancient poetry by composing first and then filling in lyrics. [3] Since modern times, various Western Musical Instruments have been spread in China and have been widely used, among which the combination of poetry and piano is like a duck to water. Music art comes from life and is higher than life. With the improvement of living standards and the change of social environment, music forms are also developing towards the direction of diversification. [4] In recent years,China pays more and more attention to the influence of people’s spiritual culture, of which ancient poetry is an important part. In the new era, it has triggered the frenzy of ancient poetry and art songs. In order to make more people interested in ancient poetry, the artists have made great efforts and left many ancient poems and art songs for China. This is a kind of inheritance of China’s traditional culture, and also laid a foundation for the long-term development of ancient poetry in China. [5]

2. Lyrics to the Background Analysis

Li Yu, is the last monarch of the Southern Tang Dynasty, he fine calligraphy, painting, music, “beauty spring flowers autumn moon when” this word is Yu

desperate word, when Li Yu returned to the Song Dynasty has been nearly three years. Li Yu's creation can be divided into two periods. In the early stage, Li Yu lived a feudal imperial luxury and decadent life, so the content of Li Yu's poems in this period is mostly the content of emotional pleasure; Later, Li Yu experienced the dramatic changes of his political status and thoughts and feelings, and lived a prisoner's life, the works created in this period often use the technique of plain description to express the feelings directly and express the complex emotions extremely deeply and vividly. The poem "When is the Spring Flower and Autumn Moon" is one of the typical examples of his such "words of scholar-officials". According to the research of the late scholar Zhan Antai, this poem was created in the first month of the second year (977) after he was captured in the Song Dynasty. According to relevant historical records, Li Yu was sent to Bianjing in the first month of the previous year (976) to be demoted, and the writing of this poem was just a year old. This poem is probably written by Li Yu to commemorate the anniversary of the subjugation of the Southern Tang Dynasty. [6]

This poem uses the expression technique of expressing the feelings to express the author's inner feelings. Through the rapid writing, the author reveals the author's psychological activities. The whole article caught the stirring tone, the melody, the author's inner ups and downs of the mood and the sadness vividly, [7] express the sadness of life after the death of the country.

In the first paragraph of "To the Tune of Yu mei ren: Spring Flower and Autumn Moon", "When will the endless cycle of the spring flower and the autumn moon come to an end? How much remembrance of the things past does a heart know?" means spring flowers and autumn moon are the scene of every year, years change constantly, and life is so beautiful. But when will my years mate suffering end? Looking back, as the king, how did I do in the past? Why did it end up like this? "Last night, in the attic revised by the eastern wind again, it was unbearable to look toward home in the fair moonlight." means last night the attic blew the spring breeze, spring flowers will be in full bloom. Recalling the Southern Tang Dynasty, the poet lived in the cell, listening to the spring breeze, looking up at the bright moon, the poet's thoughts are myriad. This "again" word, reflects this scene has appeared many times. Once again, the scene of "spring flowers and autumn moon" came again, it shows that it was the New Year when Li Yu fell to the Song Dynasty, which also aggravated the poet's melancholy and led to the poet's memories of the past in the former country. [8]

In the second paragraph of "To the Tune of Yu mei ren: Spring Flower and Autumn Moon", "The carved rails and the marble steps must remain unchanged, but not her beauty." These two sentences describe the magnificent palace, the carefully carved railings, jade are still there, but the appearance of the bereaved palace maids has changed. Metaphor of Li Yu to the land to change the surname, rivers and mountains discoloration regrets. "Zhu Yan" refers to the pink beauty in the former palace, and is also a symbol of the beautiful things and life in the past. "How much sorrow do I have? It is like the spring flood of a long river flowing east!" The poet uses a thought-provoking question, ask questions with "sorrow" and answer with "water". Use "a river of spring water" to compare the sorrow and regret in the heart, fully reflects the strength and depth of the poet's emotion. The whole word is in a clear, concise, fresh language. Using the rhetorical devices of metaphor, contrast, and questioning. Make the poet's true feelings expressed incisively and vividly, its connotation is more thought-provoking. [8]

3. Analysis of Musical Form

Mr. Zhao Yuanren, the founder of modern linguistics in China, is one of the most important linguists and musicians in modern China. The relationship between music and language has influenced his academic research and artistic creation throughout his life. In 1930, Mr. Zhao Yuanren published “A Set of Standard Letters” in the linguistics Teacher, the IPA journal of the International Voice Association. In simple terms, Mr. Zhao Yuanren used the tone characteristics of language cadence to sum up five points, and correspond to do, re, mi, fa, sol in music, it can be used as a reference. This set of Chinese tone symbols has been used today, and has a wide application significance. [9]

According to the above basic research, the author not only analyzes the song style, but also compares the tone of the lyrics with the melody of the music, analyzes the relationship between the lyrics and the music, so as to make the application method of ancient poetry in art songs more clear.

This song is one of the representative works of ancient Chinese poetry and art songs, and was composed by Wang Long. The soprano version is in the key of $\flat A$, the alto version is in the key of F. Since the high-pitched version has a wide audience, this paper focuses on the analysis of $\flat A$ key version.

This is a song with a two-section structure, the rhythm is 4/4, and the structure of the whole song is a square structure. From the perspective of the song structure, the whole song is composed of two paragraphs, A and B, the composer did not fully reproduce the two parts, but fine-tunes the individual notes to enrich the melodic lines. In A paragraph a1 phrases, “When will the endless cycle of the spring flower and the autumn moon come to an end?” melody is not too big ups and downs, are controlled within the five-degree range, smooth melodic lines relative to the tone of the lyrics, not only can we see that the pronunciation of “spring flowers (chūn huā)”, “when(hé shí)” and “know how much (zhī duō shǎo)” is very similar to the melody, but also we can find that the rhythm of the song is similar to the rhythm of the poem recitation. From the analysis of musical form, a1 phrase (Figure 1) belongs to the $\flat E$ tone in the traditional Chinese pentatonic scale. The pentatone is a tone composed of five tones arranged according to the pure five degrees: Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi, Yu, the formation of the national melody. These five tones can be used as the tonic of the tone to form five different tones. [10]

Spring Flowers and Autumn Moon

Lyricist: [the Southern Tang dynasty] Yu Li
Composer: Long Wang

chūn huā qiū yuè hé shí liǎo, wǎngshì zhī duō shǎo ?
When will the endless cycle of the spring flower and the autumn moon come to an end?
How much remembrance of the things past does a heart know?

Figure 1. “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon” A paragraph a1 phrase.

In the phrase b1 (Figure 2), the phrase shows the obvious melodic direction, starting from one-lined octave $\flat E$, climb up to two-lined octave $\flat E$ in the traditional Chinese five tone in the high tone area, such an octave crossing, accompanied by the strength of the weak and gradually strengthening, also brings the mood of the phrase to the peak. Combine the pronunciation of Chinese characters, The tone of “attic (xiǎo

lóu) ”in the poem is rising, corresponding to the $\flat E$ and F in the melody. The “east wind (dōng fēng) ” tone is all flat sound, corresponding to two identical $\flat E$. In the last sentence, it focuses more on the rhythm of the recitation. At the same time, the melody of “It was unbearable to look toward home in the fair moonlight” will bring back the peak of the last sentence. Normally, the trend of music sentences from low to high, we will do by the weak gradually strong processing. On the contrary, by the strong gradually weakened. In this phrase, the melody follows the emotion of the poem from weak to strong, and then by strong to weak processing, make the song more emotional, at the same time for the emotional processing of the next sentence buried foreshadowing. From the analysis of musical form, the $\flat 1$ is a six-tone tone of $\flat B$ Shang with Qingjue.



Figure 2. “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon” A paragraph b1 phrase.

a2 phrase (Figure 3) is basically the same as a1 phrase, it is an incomplete reproduction of the a1 phrase. The melody in this phrase is more inclined to doubt. The melody of “when (hé shí liǎo) ” and “know how much (zhī duō shǎo) ” also shows a trend of “up first, then down later”. The “when” melody of a2 phrases is different from a1 phrases, The span between the “when” sounds in the a2 phrase is large, and this large span jump will give people a strong sense of contrast, but after the analysis of the phrases combined with the meaning of poetry, this large span jump more emphasized the poet Li Yu's heavy, difficult to contain the melancholy. It reflects that the composer wants to express Li Yu's complex feelings at that time through the music.



Figure 3. “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon” A paragraph a2 phrase.

b2 phrase (Figure 4) is a phrase connecting the past and the future in the whole music, G (Bian gong) and D (Qing jue) are added to the phrase, constitute the Qing jue mode in the traditional Chinese style, the phrase is $\flat A$ gong Qing jue mode. The Qing jue mode is the same as the natural major in the western tones, with the addition of the Qing jue and the Bian gong in the music sentence, people have expectations for the melody behind. Will the traditional Chinese tone or a change into the western tone? Leaving suspense for the audience.



Figure 4. “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon” A paragraph b2 phrase.

To undertake the “suspense” left by the composer mentioned above, the answer was found in the B paragraph (Figure 5) of the song. The rhythmic patterns of the c1 and c2 phrases are basically similar, different from A paragraph is that the starting point of each phrase in B paragraph is higher than A paragraph, the musical mood representing the B segment is emotional, but the composer did not consistently output the excitement in the high-pitch zone, to peak the emotions in c2 phrases.

c1 phrase is a six-tone tone of C Jue with Qing jue , c2 phrase is $\flat$ A Gong Qing yue mode. The rhythm and melody of the whole B section agree very well with the rhythm and tone of the poetry recitation. However, the musical emotions of the two phrases are slightly different, c1 phrases seem to tell the helplessness of Li Yu's heart, while c2 phrases push the melody of “how many sorrow (jǐ duō chóu)” to the highest sound of the whole music, and they are repeated many times in the reproduction part, emphasizing the poet Li Yu's extremely melancholy mood. “Ask me how much sorrow there is in my heart, just like this endless surging spring water rolling east.”

17 *mf* c1
diào lán yù qì yīng yóu zài, zhǐ shì zhū yán gǎi.
The carved rails and the marble steps must remain unchanged,
But not her beauty.

21 *f* c2
wèn jūn néng yǒu jǐ duō chóu? qià sì yì jiāng chūn shuǐ xiàng dōng liú.
How much sorrow do I have?
It is like the spring flood of a long river flowing east!

Figure 5. “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon” B paragraph.

The A1 (Figure 6) paragraph is a partial representation of the A paragraph, it's the same as a2 and b2 in paragraph A.

25 *mf* a2
chūn huā qiū yuè hé shí liǎo, wáng shì zhī duō shǎo?
When will the endless cycle of the spring flower and the autumn moon come to an end?
How much remembrance of the things past?

29 *f* b2
xiǎo lóu zuó yè yǒu dōng fēng, a! gù guó bù kān huí shǒu yuè míng zhōng!
Last night, in the attic revised by the eastern wind,
It was unbearable to look toward home in the fair moonlight.

Figure 6. “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon” A1 paragraph.

The B1 paragraph (Figure 7) is a complete reproduction of the B paragraph. Just repeated the last sentence, in terms of the dynamic marks, the composer compared B1 with B. In the B paragraph, the intensity of both phrases is treated in the “forte” process, from *mf* to *f*. In the B1 paragraph, the c1 phrase used *ff*, and the last phrase is *mp*, the transition from forte to mezzo piano, in the three phrases to do a complete “by the forte gradually piano” treatment. In B1 paragraph, to make the music feel more natural to ending at the end, the composer repeated the last line to make the mood of the whole piece more complete.

The figure displays three staves of a musical score in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff (measures 34-36) is marked *ff* and *c1*. The second staff (measures 37-39) is marked *c2*. The third staff (measures 40-42) is marked *mp* and *c2*. The lyrics are in Chinese and English.

Staff 1 (measures 34-36):
 34 *ff* *c1*
 diào lán yù qì yīng yǒu zài, zhǐ shì zhū yán gǎi.
 The carved rails and the marble steps must remain unchanged,
 But not her beauty.

Staff 2 (measures 37-39):
 37 *c2*
 wèn jūn néng yǒu jǐ duō chóu ? qià sì yì jiāng chūn shuǐ xiàng dōng liú.
 How much sorrow do I have?
 It is like the spring flood of a long river flowing east!

Staff 3 (measures 40-42):
 40 *mp* *c2*
 wèn jūn néng yǒu jǐ duō chóu ? qià sì yì jiāng chūn shuǐ xiàng dōng liú.
 How much sorrow do I have?
 It is like the spring flood of a long river flowing east!

Figure 7. “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon” B1 paragraph.

4. Conclusions

Through the analysis of musical form and the relationship between the lyrics and music of “Spring Flower and Autumn Moon”, the following aspects can be summarized.

First of all, “Spring Flower and Autumn Moon” uses ancient Chinese poetry as the background and poetry as the lyrics. As a singer, we should have a deep understanding of the poetry author and the creative background, which can better interpret the works. It is very necessary to explore the content behind the work.

Secondly, the emotional expression of every word and word in “Spring flowers and Autumn Moon”, using the combination of musical pitch with the pronunciation of Chinese characters, the fusion of lyrics and music, not only can it facilitate the audience to understand the content of the lyrics, but also can highlight the beauty of the song, and it is convenient for the singer to sing. Composers use the traditional Chinese tone style - Five-tone, six-tone and seven-tone tones are composed of poetry. It retains the common characteristics of traditional Chinese music and poetry, and uses the characteristics of Chinese character pronunciation to match the melody to make the songs catchy.

According to the above conclusions, the author believes that in the creation of Chinese ancient poetry and art songs, we should first understand the creation background of the ancient poetry, the mentality of the creator and the connotation of the poetry, and pauses, breathing, emotional changes when reciting poetry. Only then can we more accurately capture the emotional content of poetry expression, grasp the style of music, and better show the charm of ancient Chinese poetry and art songs. And in the process of singing the work later, it can better interpret the deep cultural connotation expressed by the work.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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