

A Study on the Artistic Characteristics of the Zheng Song "Han River Rhyme"

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Abstract: *Guzheng, as one of the traditional plucked instruments of the Chinese nation, can be traced back to the Qi, Qin and other regions during the Warring States period, and experienced significant development during the prosperous Tang Dynasty. With cultural exchange and dissemination, Guzheng has gradually spread worldwide. During the Eastern Han Dynasty, Liu Xi recorded in his work "Shi Ming" that "the zither is played with high and sharp strings, and the zither is naturally played." Therefore, it was named "zheng" or "guzheng" to describe its unique "zheng zheng" sound. The sound quality of Guzheng is sweet and round, with crisp and pleasant high notes and deep and powerful low notes. Its wide range and rich expressive power make it a highly distinctive instrument. As one of the representative works of Henan guzheng music, "Han River Rhyme" has a style closely related to the Henan dialect, blending slow and fast rhythms, reflecting the cultural characteristics of Henan region, and highlighting the deep emotions of local people towards labor. This article aims to analyze the performance techniques and musical structure of "Han River Rhyme", trace the development process of Henan Zheng School, explore its connection with Henan Opera, and conduct in-depth analysis and research from a technical perspective.*

Keywords: Henan zither music; Han River Rhyme; Playing skill.

1. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

In 1962, composer Qiao Jinwen composed the zither piece "Han River Rhyme" for performer Ren Qingzhi, who was known for his "iron nails". Due to Mr. Ren Qingzhi's superb skills in playing Henan zither music and his rich experience in accompanying Henan Opera Troupe multiple times, Qiao Jinwen cleverly selected the two pieces of "Han River" and "Shuyun" and extracted their essence to create this zither piece. In this song, the "Han River" section exudes a lively and joyful atmosphere, while the "Book Rhyme" section reveals a gentle and profound sadness. The work is arranged in a fast slow fast structure throughout, echoing from beginning to end. The cheerful and enthusiastic melody vividly portrays the hard work of spring plowing and the joy of autumn harvest, with unique cultural characteristics of Henan region. The cheerful rhythm, bold glissando, and authentic vibrato in the music quickly guide the audience to immerse themselves in the rich atmosphere of Henan zither music.

2. PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND STYLISTIC FEATURES OF THE TRACK

The zither piece "Han River Rhyme" showcases the profound cultural connotations and spiritual outlook of the working people in Henan Province with its unique artistic charm. The structure of the song is compact, the rhythm is bright, and it combines the unique playing techniques of the Henan Zheng School, vividly depicting the joy and vitality of the working people in their work. When analyzing this zither piece in depth, its structure can be divided into three sections, namely "Shuyun Han River Shuyun".

At the beginning of the music, the first section "Shuyun" is presented in the form of passionate allegro. The melody of this paragraph originates from the "Book Rhyme" in "Henan Song", with a fast rhythm of 152 beats per minute, leading the audience to quickly immerse themselves in the music atmosphere. It vividly reproduces the scene of laborers working hard, as if one can hear their hearty laughter and feel their positive and uplifting spirit. The entire section runs smoothly until the end, when the music suddenly slows down. After a transition of four bars, it ends with a long shake technique, laying the groundwork for the next section to unfold.

Subsequently, the second section "Han River" is presented in a lyrical and delicate slow paced form. The melody of this paragraph is played at a rhythm of 46 beats per minute, based on the "Han River" from the "Henan Song". It combines the singing style of the Han River with interlude music, showcasing a warm scene of people greeting each other through a combination of narration and discussion. The music is full of longing for a better future, depicting warm scenes of laborers working in the fields, such as women delivering food, children playing, and neighbors greeting, fully reflecting the emotional bond between laborers and fellow villagers. When playing this

paragraph, start at the speed of a wide board, gradually increase the speed, and cleverly use techniques such as left hand pressing and vibrato to make the melody more rich and full, in order to express sincere emotions. In the transitional section, the technique of running a circle in traditional Chinese opera is used to gradually transition the speed from slow to fast, until reaching the peak of the rapid tempo. The intensity is also enhanced, making the entire piece reach a climax at the end, which is captivating.

In the end, the third section "Shuyun" repeated the changes of the first section, with clever adjustments in speed and emotional processing. The melody of this paragraph is more lively in speed, more passionate in emotion, and further strengthened in intensity, with slight changes in notes and a more compact length. When playing, it is necessary to fully express emotions and charm, so that the audience can resonate with the music. The ending gradually slows down the rhythm, giving the listener unlimited space for imagination, achieving a perfect artistic effect in the aftertaste of the entire zither piece.

The Han River Rhyme, with its unique artistic style and profound emotional connotations, successfully showcases the cultural characteristics of Henan region and the spiritual outlook of the working people. Through in-depth analysis of the three musical segments and exploration of performance techniques, we can gain a deeper understanding of the artistic charm and value of this zither piece.

3. ANALYSIS OF MUSIC TECHNIQUES

3.1 Analysis of right-handed performance techniques in the work

(1) You Yao

The technique of "swimming and shaking" is a distinctive technique in the performance of Henan zither music, which is fully reflected in "Han River Rhyme". This technique requires the performer to perform a special left-right swinging motion using their right thumb, which involves moving from the right side of the piano code to the front mountain on the right side of the strings while shaking their fingers. During this process, the intensity of the volume gradually increases, and the timbre changes from initial blur to brightness, thus making the emotional level of the music more rich. At the same time, as the rhythm accelerates, the emotions conveyed by the music are also pushed to a climax. While performing the "sway" action with the right hand, the left hand needs to cooperate with the right hand, starting from "press to change tone", sliding and trembling at the same time, and finally returning to the "original tone". During this process, the interval of the glissando is a descending third.

Overall, "You Yao" is a composite technique that combines multiple playing techniques, making the emotional expression of music more complete and giving the work a deep and tragic artistic style. In order to achieve better artistic effects, coordination and cooperation between the left and right hands are particularly crucial. During the performance, effective interaction must be formed between the left and right hands to ensure that the changes in tone and intensity can be accurately and vividly presented. This coordination not only enhances the expressiveness of guzheng performance, but also fully showcases the artistic charm of the work.

(2) Clip bullet

During the performance, the first step is to tie the stakes with the ring finger of the right hand. After playing one note, it is necessary to quickly and accurately place the next string and play the next note. The technique of thumb support splitting in Henan zither music is different from that in Shandong zither music. The support splitting in Henan zither music relies more on the strength of the large joints to complete, which is also the most significant difference in the support splitting technique between Henan zither music and Shandong zither music. The "pinch technique" of the right hand and the use of large joint strength can make the sound produced fuller and more powerful. This tone is not only full of penetration, but also has a strong Henan flavor, and the song is more vivid and three-dimensional in expression.

3.2 Analysis of Left Hand Techniques in Henan Zheng Song 'Han River Rhyme'

The Henan zither, as a musical instrument with deep local characteristics, has a profound historical origin. It was originally used as an accompaniment instrument in the singing of local operas in Henan. With the evolution of the times and the continuous development of art, Henan zither has gradually shown its unique charm, especially in

imitating tone and singing style, forming a unique expression technique, which has become one of the important symbols that distinguish Henan zither from other zither schools of music. In the performance of Henan zither music, the left-handed technique is particularly crucial, as it reflects the unique artistic style of Henan zither. By using techniques such as "pressing, kneading, sliding, and trembling" in the left-hand technique, performers can express rich "up and down glissandos" and "big and small vibrato", which not only adds rich layers and charm to the melody of zheng music, but also strengthens the local characteristics and artistic expression of Henan zheng music, achieving the goal of "supplementing sound with rhyme".

(1) Slippery sound

In this song, a lot of techniques of glissando are used. The first note at the beginning of the music is not an ordinary octave double note, but the high note la quickly slides up to the treble do, creating a superimposed sound effect of a small third and eighth interval. This technique requires the up glide of the left hand to be fast and direct, without transitions, and the accuracy of the minor third degree to be precise and error free, in order to showcase the unique intonation characteristics of Henan dialect. It is like a generous Henan person passionately shouting out "Zhong!" with a unique dialect, which is very similar to the sound effect of the minor third degree.

When playing Henan music, the stress of the first sentence is very important, and the sound head needs to be strong and powerful. Due to the fact that the string is located on the second one, it is relatively thin and easy to break, so the performer needs to control the position of the left hand pressing the string. If it is slightly off the left, the pitch is insufficient, and if it is slightly off the right, the string is prone to breakage. When pressing the string with the left hand, use the second, third, and fourth fingers close to the nail area, with the center of gravity leaning towards the four fingers for stronger force. At the same time, the wrist and palm provide stable support, with the fingers bent in a semi-circular shape. Apply force from below the forearm and keep the upper arm relaxed. The overall movement should be agile and natural. This playing technique has a certain level of difficulty and requires the performer to carefully grasp and embody its unique style.

The downward glissando is similar to the upward glissando, without any transition, and contains rich regional characteristics. The glide here is not an ordinary half circle glide, but a gentle and smooth glide. When playing, the center of gravity of the left hand is initially placed on the index finger. Then, with the help of the wrist, the index finger is slid to the ring finger, completing a semi-circular slide from right to left. This creates a rounded and full tone effect, full of charm, rather than a straight and hard tone.

The glide sound can be divided into two forms: slow glide and fast glide. In the second slow section of the music, the use of slow glide is very rich, highlighting the aesthetic feature of "supplementing sound with rhyme" in music. In the fast-paced section, the glide needs to be fast, adding a rough and unrestrained feeling to the music, making people feel the infinite charm of the music. This playing technique is also a unique feature of the left-hand playing style of Henan Zheng music.

(2) Vibrato

Tremol, the core lies in the characteristic of vibration, so the notes will also move during the playing process. In the slow tempo performance of the zither piece "Han River Rhyme", the "swimming shake" of the right hand and the vibrato technique of the left hand need to be performed simultaneously, complementing each other.

The vibrato in the repertoire is divided into dense and large tremolo, which is the artistic feature of Henan zither music. Tremors require fast and short, high frequency and small amplitude, in order to create a delicate and compact rhythm. Due to the high pitched effect of vibrato, the pitch will slightly increase when playing fa and xi, but not exceed the second degree. In addition, the performance of tremolo should not be too stable and requires moderate movement. Therefore, the muscles of the left hand should be practiced independently to make the melody of the song elastic and undulating, with tremolo added to every note.

And the big vibrato is used to create atmosphere and stimulate emotions. When playing vibrato, the left hand needs to increase the kneading force, and the wrist can drive the fingers to vibrate up and down significantly, forming a large wave like kneading effect. This exaggerated string rolling technique adds a third degree of decoration and polishing to the music, creating a lively atmosphere when the performer fully immerses themselves in the performance, effectively mobilizing the audience's emotions.

(3) Dianyin

In the process of interpreting musical works, the use of pointillism not only injects humorous elements into the movement, but also endows it with profound charm. The performer must demonstrate extremely high agility by quickly pressing up and down on the string with their left hand. This pointillism technique is reflected in both the slow section and the final part of the movement. At the end of the movement, it pushes the music to a climax, vividly showcasing the straightforward and bold personality traits of the people of Henan, becoming a highlight of the movement. Compared to techniques such as vibrato and glissando, the uniqueness of pointillism lies in its requirement for quick and precise operation, especially in the movement of the left hand, which must remain agile and not allow any hesitation or procrastination to avoid unnecessary vibrato effects, thereby affecting the purity and expressiveness of the overall performance.

4. CONCLUSION

Henan zither music has a profound historical background, a wide variety of repertoire, diverse genres, and beautiful and moving melodies, fully demonstrating the unique artistic charm of traditional Chinese music. Henan zheng music has widely absorbed various musical elements in its development, and the zheng piece "Han River Rhyme" is a model of the increasingly mature music style of the Henan zheng school. It marks the emergence of Henan zheng music in long-term artistic practice and is the artistic crystallization of performers' repeated practice and careful polishing. The development of this song not only enriched the Henan Zheng music genre, but also provided valuable experience and inspiration for the inheritance and innovation of traditional Zheng music in China. The Han River Rhyme contains a strong ethnic artistic atmosphere, deeply reflecting the rich emotions and distinct personalities of ethnic music. Its melody is simple and down-to-earth, with unique tones and charm, deeply loved by people and widely circulated. The development of this zheng piece not only enriches the expressive power of Henan zheng music, but also promotes the progress of modern zheng music art, injecting new vitality into the inheritance and development of traditional music.

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