Intercultural Strategies of Chinese Composers in the Organizational Structure of Their Works

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Abstract: The Opium War unlocked the gate of China. Since then, modern western culture has been imported strongly and spread throughout this Asian country. The monologue of traditional Chinese culture in the past has been replaced by the hustle and bustle of multiculturalism. In the field of music, starting from school music, China, a country without the concept of composition, was deeply influenced by western culture and professional music composition, and entered the era of professional music composition. Recognizing the importance of national culture, a group of insightful artists began to try to add ‘China’ to musical composition. However, due to the special historical origin of Chinese professional musical composition and the three times of cultural nihilism in China, professional musical composition at this time failed to interpret the deep language structure of local culture within Chinese traditional culture, but only regarded Chinese traditional music as a ‘melody material library.’ At this time, the cross-cultural composition still takes Western music as its ‘norm,’ while our own music culture only exists as the sound of the contrast of Western music. However, after reading scores extensively, watching video performances, and interviewing several active composers, we found that at least in the past 30 years, China has created some works that can be called intercultural music. In these kinds of music, composers put Chinese and Western, traditional and modern in an almost equal position to have a dialogue based on their deep understanding and respect for the two cultures. This kind of music connects two music worlds, and links the two cultural and ideological worlds behind it, and communicates and grows together. This paper chose the works of three composers with different educational backgrounds, and pay attention to how composers can make a dialogue at the organizational structure level of their works. Based on the strategies adopted by composers in structuring their works, this paper expounds on how the composer’s music procedure shows intercultural in terms of whole sound effects and cultural symbols. By actively participating in this intercultural practice, composers resorting to various musical and extra-musical procedures to arrive at the so-called ‘innovation within tradition.’ Through the dialogue, we can activate the space of creative thinking and explore the potential contained in culture. This interdisciplinary research promotes the rethinking of the possibility of innovation in contemporary Chinese intercultural music composition, spanning the fields of sound studies, dialogue theory, cultural research, music theory, and so on. Recently, China is calling for actively promoting ‘the construction of Chinese music canonization,’ expecting to form a particular music style to show national-cultural identity. In the era of globalization, it is possible to form a brand-new Chinese music style through intercultural composition, but it is a question about talents, and the key lies in how composers do it. There is no recipe for the formation of the Chinese music style, only the composers constantly trying and tries to solve problems in their works.

Keywords: dialogism, intercultural music, national-cultural identity, organization/structure, sound

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