

Performance and Artistic Characteristics of Erhu Music *Xingjie*

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Abstract: *Xingjie* is played by Jiangnan Sizhu, the string and bamboo flute music of Chinese traditional folk instrument music. The lute, Qinqin, xiao, flute, Yangqin and erhu are used in the band of Jiangnan Sizhu. It has a profound history in local folk for wedding or funeral, or temple fairs. This paper analyzes the artistic characteristics of *Xingjie*, the erhu solo of Jiangnan Sizhu [1].

1. Introduction

Jiangnan Sizhu, was spreading in Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and developed in Shanghai after the Revolution of 1911, forming research organizations on instrumental music, such as Yageji, Qingpingji, Juntianji, Club of Traditional Chinese Music and so on here. It is intangible cultural heritage in China, playing an important role in studying the history of Chinese folk music. Besides, it is one of outstanding representatives of Jiangnan water own culture. Since 1960s, traditional organizations of Jiangnan Sizhu have been dissolved. Till now, old artists over the age of 70 have passed away, and there is no successor for inheriting Jiangnan Sizhu. The situation is serious.

2. The Origin of Erhu Music *Xingjie*

Xijing is one of eight tracks played by Jiangnan Sizhu, also called *Xingjiesihe*, famous for its performance in wedding or funeral, or temple fairs. *Xijingsihe*, as the name shows, means walking on the street. Players perform it while walking, so it is also called *Xingjie*. Performers are mostly bustling and crowded people on the street, and listeners are mostly ordinary people, the artistic and cultural quality is low, so there are not many artistic requirements for its performance. Thus, players can give full play to their artistic individuality in this noisy atmosphere, increase different variations while remaining the entire melody to reach climax atmosphere, so that it can become the music suitable for the taste of the mass and livening the atmosphere [2].

3. Analysis on the Performance of Erhu Music *Xingjie*

For the audience, the music style depends on players' playing techniques to fully reflect its sound effect, and the audience can know its cultural carrier can learn from indirect source local history, aesthetic values and cultural inheritance. The performance of Jiangnan Sizhu with erhu requires the erhu-holding in left hand and bow-holding in right hand. The bow-holding shall be plump and gentle, and shall be the Legato technique. In this way, the music will be the incessantly melody, requiring exquisite controlling of force for drawing the bow [3].

3.1 The analysis of techniques

3.1.1 "Translucent sound"

It is a technique that is combined with the empty string. For example, in the "2" sound of the D key, the right hand pulls the empty string "1" with the bow, and then quickly presses the "2" sound with the index finger. At this time, the empty string "1" has translucent "2" sound. This technique makes the overall tone more dynamic, and has a deep taste than playing the "2" sound directly. It is a little shorter and more impressive in the sound than the ornament.

3.1.2 “Glide sound”

It is also called the “puff-off sound”, which is a kind of low-rotation glide in erhu. Generally speaking, compared with the conversion sound, it is lower to a minor second. For example, in the second “1” sound in the second beat, first pull a “7” sound with the ring finger, and then glide back to the second “1” sound, so that a glide effect sound of 11 is produced.

3.1.3 “Left-side sound”

It is a commonly used method of using erhu in Jiangnan Sizhu music. This method is done with the index finger of the left hand. For example, in the first beat, the last middle “2” sound in the fourth sound is made by “left-side sound”. In the performance, the player first presses with the left index finger in the place where the “2” sound is slightly higher, then the left wrist moves to the left quickly, and the index finger hooks upward, and presses the high pitch in the natural “2” sound.

3.1.4 “Vibrato”

In the Jiangnan Sizhu music *Xingjie*, vibrato includes common vibrato, inverted mordent and lower mordent. This technique can produce a lively and cheerful style, which is often used in Western music.

3.1.5 “Souyin”

It is also called “single sound”, generally including “upper single sound” and “lower single sound”. It is used to play the ornament head on this natural sound, so it is also double appoggiatura. In the action, the left hand should be agile and quick to lift the finger and hit the string under the movement of the metacarpophalangeal joint. After the string is touched, the finger should quickly rebound from the string. Do not make the performance look a little clumsy because of the large movement force [4].

3.2 Analysis of bowing

The performance of Jiangnan Sizhu music *Xingjie* is usually composed of allegro and adagio. Allegro gives people a lively, cheerful and bright feeling, and has a full sense of dynamics; while adagio gives elegance, exquisiteness and gentleness. While performing on the noisy street, allegro used the erhu to push the mood of the masses to the climax with the rapid speed and vigorous force in the cheerful mood of players. This can be seen in many folk music, popular in the mass and natural.

3.2.1 “Cross bowing”

It is called “cross-beat bow”, which is a more distinctive cross-section bowing method in *Xingjie*. For example, after finishing the “1” sound, use the “changing bow” to make the “6” sound, simply, concise and quickly, and then exert force on the “5” sound, so as to bring a powerful sound and can effectively solve the noise when the cross-string is played. This technique is adopted for many times in playing *Xingjie* to make unique melody.

3.2.2 “Spiccato”

For erhu, the “spiccato” is played with fingers, set off with a small pressure in an instant, so that the overall playing sound is mixed with a very short and flexible sound. In *Xingjie*, many of the sounds are made by the same method, little by little, so that players can play a lively “spiccato” effect.

4. The Artistic Characteristics of Erhu Music *Xingjie*

4.1 The influence of ensemble and solo on music characteristics

Due to the unique characteristics of erhu, in the solo process, without many changes in the melody, the overall melody can be displayed in a uniform sound. In the solo performance, because

people's love for this song is overwhelming, the soloists can integrate their own thoughts and feelings, and drive their own emotions in the rhythm, proving the audience a unique style.

In contrast, in the ensemble, due to the participation of different instruments, the overall range of sound can be displayed in a wide range. In some specific sounds, the sensation of the ensemble shows the cheerful feeling. The ensemble of *Xingjie* is uniform and is full of momentum, in the soft and harmonious up and down, free to show the essence and beauty of its opera.

4.2 The emotion and breathing in performance

In general, Jiangnan Sizhu is "small, light, exquisite and elegant" in artistic characteristics, and *Xingjie* is same. The three music names are accelerating in the process of playing, and the emotions are progressively increased from joyful feeling to climax feeling. It can be said that the whole mood has a big ups and downs. Therefore, performers should gradually adjust the strength of drawing the bow and pressing the string with the constant change of emotion during the performance, so as to better cope with the constant change of the tone in the music.

In the performance, the processing of breathing is also very important. Players should fully understand the rhythm of bowing performance and emotions, and follow the principle of instrumental sound, proficient and calm, strong and not flexible, which is that the way to the proper treatment of breathing in *Xingjie* [5].

5. Thoughts on Erhu

Compared to traditional instruments, erhu is in lower position of the mind of young people, due to, on the one hand, the insufficient novelty and fashion. On the other hand, most players are old people, and they think erhu is not suitable for young people. In fact, they are wrong. The sound of erhu is gentle, similar to people's singing. The pitch of internal and external tune and string tension are appropriate, and the one side of canister is made of python skin, so there is no need to use too much force when play erhu to make gentle sound, suitable for reflecting deep or desolate content, or magnificent image. It has higher emotion expressiveness, superior to western violin. Whereas, young people know less about this.

5.1 The characteristics of erhu

Traditional erhu music is famous for the well-known *The Moon over a Fountain* by Ah Bing. There are only two strings in erhu, however, its sound is not inferior to any other instrument. The selection of wood is strict. According to old artists, the canisters made of different wood make slightly different sounds. Therefore, erhu is highly valuable in art [6].

5.2 The aesthetic value of erhu

Due to the large territory and profound origin, the music and language sense of erhu are different in different regions, and run-cavity also not same. The varied rhythm and vocal cavity in pitch and constant changes of music tension and emotions make erhu music style in different regions distinctive. In traditional music, the aesthetic values shown by erhu can directly or indirectly express the difference in folk custom and conventions, conducive to the study on folk art of different regions.

5.3 The current status of erhu

Many young people know less about erhu. There are three reasons concluded after combining the opinions of many people.

First of all, the positing of awareness. Because erhu is relatively close to the people in terms of price and workmanship, and most of the sound can resonate with people, many artists in the folks choose to play erhu for making a living, such as the famous erhu performer Ah Bing, wearing a pair of sunglasses, sitting on the stone pier and playing erhu. As the art of entertainment gradually evolved into a derogatory term in modern times, everyone feels that it was an industry for people who had no money to eat, like a beggar. In addition, many programs use erhu to express a bleak or

pessimistic feeling and to set off their feelings. At this time, everyone will feel that erhu is relatively low and not suitable for young people.

Secondly, the erhu music. Erhu is the most difficult instrument for people to learn in Chinese folk instruments. It is said that people who have learned about erhu know that if they cannot play it well, the music will become awful. However, for piano or Guzheng, even for a person who can't play the piano or Guzheng, it can make a good sound by randomly pressing. On the contrary, erhu has higher requirements on the strength and angle of the fingers and the speed of drawing the strings in the overall rhythm. Therefore, many people who cannot learn erhu well and say that erhu is not suitable for them, are completely funny and ridiculous.

Lastly, the appearance. Many folk instruments, such as Guzheng, Xiao, and flute, frequently appear on TV, giving the audience a feeling of classy. For many foreign piano violins and guitars, many people feel that they are very high-end, whereas, learning our own folk instruments is low, and erhu is no exception. Therefore, the understanding of folk musical instruments by Chinese people needs to be greatly enhanced. Our musical instruments are not inferior to those of foreign countries.

6. Conclusion

The performance of erhu music Xingjie has fully expressed its immeasurable influence on the artistic and cultural value of Chinese erhu. The status of erhu in people's mind cannot be impacted by its difficulty. Compared to foreign instruments, Chinese folk instruments are not inferior. Therefore, it is necessary for Chinese people to understand again and like erhu one day.

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