

## Music Analysis of Act II Scene 1 of Gluck's Opera "Orfeo Ed Euridice"

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**Abstract:** This Paper Takes Act II Scene 1 of the Opera "Orfeo Ed Euridice" as an Example, from the Aspects of Work Structure, Material Use, Motivational Tone Type, Special Rhythm, Harmonic Grammar, Termination Meaning, Orchestration, Timbre, Expression of Strength, Continuous Process of Tension, Balance and Relaxation, This Paper Explores the Creation Style and Opera Spirit of Composer Gluck.

### 1. Introduction

Christoph Willibald Ritter Von Gluck (1714-1787), a Famous German Composer, Created More Than 40 Operas in His Whole Life, and the Music Styles of Italy, France and Germany Were Rolled Up into One by Him. His Works Were Famous for Their Simplicity and Solemnity. Influenced by the Enlightenment in the 18th Century, the Artistic Thoughts and Humanistic Thoughts of the Emerging Civil Class Power Surged, and the Opera Reform of Gluck Became a Milestone in the History of Western Opera. he Made Great Contributions to the Opera Getting Rid of the Shackles of the Feudal Ruling Class. His Classic Opera "Orfeo Ed Euridice" Was a Successful Example of His Cooperation with the Italian Poet Raniero Da Clazabigi (1714-1795), and It Was Also His Overall Conception of Opera, the Representative Work Developing Towards the Direction of Music Drama. in the Increasingly Rigid Italian Operas, Singers Blindly Paid Attention to Flaunting Skills, Which Destroys the Coherence of Dramas. Luxurious Scenes and Stiff Performance Forms Led to the Aesthetic Tendency of Valuing Music But Neglecting Operas. as an Opera Reformer in 18th Century, Gluck Advocated Dramatic Performance in Opera and Emphasized the Shaping of Character and Emotion. the Arrangement of the Whole Opera Structure Play Should Be Based on the Needs of the Plot; It is Not Allowed to Add the Aria of Love Scene At Will. he Pursued the High Integration of Words and Songs, Exerted the Instrumental Music Part of Music, Highlighted the Personalization of the Instrument, and Improved the Role of Chorus in Environment Construction and Dramatic Tension, Narrowed the Difference between the Narrative Tone and the Aria. the Opera Orfeo Ed Euridice (1762) Created by Him Strove to Achieve an Organic Balance among the Music, Drama and Dance of the Opera, It Made the Whole Opera More Harmonious and Unified in Style, Thus Forming Its Own Opera Art.

### 2. Gluck's Life Story

(Christoph Willibald Ritter Von Gluck)(1714-1787), a Famous German Composer, Born in Eresbach, Eastern Bavaria, Southern Germany, on June 2, 1714. he Died in Vienna, Austria, on November 15, 1787, Aged 73. he Joined the Jesuit Church from 1726 to 1732, and Then Studied Music in Prague University. in 1737, he Visited Milan with Prince Mezil and Sammartini (1700-1775) Was His Teacher. in 1745, he Went to London to Meet George Friedrich Handel (1685-1759). Influenced by His Oratorio Style, His First Opera, Artaserse, Was Conceived in 1747. he Returned to Vienna Again in 1750 and Served as the Conductor of Vienna Opera House in 1754. he Created Singing Drama and Dance Drama Successively, Advocating the Unity of Music and Drama, Digging the Deep Connotation of Opera and Advocating the Expression of Natural

Simplicity. in 1760, Jean Georges Noverre, the Master of Dance Drama, Published an Article to Criticize the Musical Drama That Advocated Showing Off Skills At That Time, Which Was Exactly in Line with the Music Thought of Gluck, Thus Creating “Orfeo Ed Euridice” (1762), “Alceste” (1767), “Peris and Helen” (1770), in These Works, he Insisted on Abandoning the Male Voice to Sing Soprano, and Put an End to Grandiose Flaunting Skills, It Was Once Controversial. in 1774, the New Opera “Ifefini in Audley” Premiered in Paris Was Approved. Subsequent Creations of “Alps and Oridick”, “Almida”, and “Effigene in Torid” Have Caused a Lot of Sensation, Leading to the Conservative Composer Nicholas Picchini Confrontation Was Triggered, and History Called It “the Battle between Picchini and Gluck.” in His Later Years, he Added Comedic Elements to the Creation of Opera and Still Followed His Spirit of Opera.

### **3. The Creation Background of the Opera “Orfeo Ed Euridice”**

“Orfeo Ed Euridice” is a Three-Act Opera Written by the Italian Scriptwriter Raniero Da Clazabigi (Raniero Da Clazabigi, 1714-1795). the Plot is from the Greek Myth “Orfeo”, in 1761, Gluck Met the Poet Calzabigi in Italy and Was Very Interested in the Script of the Opera. At This Time, Gluck Was Also Looking for a New Script for the New Opera Ideal. Calzabigi Worked as the Script Writing of the Opera “Orfeo Ed Euridice”. he Finished the Creation of the Opera in 1762, and the Tragic Ending Was Not Adopted in the Plot, the Story Was about the Death of the Beloved Wife of the Singer Orfeo, Whose Sorrowful Singing Moved the God of Love and Allowed Him to Go Down to the Underworld to Save His Wife. At the Moment When Euridice Asked to Have a Look Back At Her, Orfeo Forgot the Advice of the God of Love. Looking Back At His Wife, Euridice Died Immediately. Orfeo Was Ready to Die for Love. Their Love Touched the God of Love Once and Euridice Revived, At This Point, the Story Ended Successfully.

In October 5, 1762, the First Public Performance in Vienna Opera House Achieved Great Success. the Opera Hero, “Orfeo”, Was Sung by Caetano Godani, a Castrated Singer. There Were Only Two Acts in the Opera At That Time, and It Was the First Time to Add Orchestral Music Accompaniment to the Opera. in 1764, after Readjusting the Order of the Tracks, They Were Sorted and Processed into Three Acts. 12 Years Later, Monstrelet Translated the Opera Script into French, Which Was Performed for the First Time in Paris Royal Conservatory of Music in August 2, 1774. “Ophelo” in This Version Was Sung by Singer Legero. in Addition, in Order to Cater to the French Audience, the Opera Also Added Chorus and Ballet. the Whole Play Ended with a Love Hymn and a Grand Ballet Scene.

### **4. Scenes and Roles in Act II Scene 1 of “Orfeo Ed Euridice”**

#### **4.1 Scene**

The five scenes in the first scene of the second act of the opera are respectively: Scene 1: At the entrance of Orfeo to the hell, a group of demons and ghosts prevented him from entering the hell with ferocious faces, when Orfeo played the lyre and narrated his purpose with singing, all the ghosts opened the gate of hell for him sympathetically; Scene 2: Orfeo came to a peaceful Paradise, where there were trees and flowers and gurgling streams, and the songs of ghosts came from far away. They were dancing elegantly, and Euridice was also in it; Scene 3: Orfeo saw such beautiful scenery, his heart was still restless, and he wanted to take his lover out of here as soon as possible; Scene 4: The happy elves in the Valley told Orfeo that Euridice had woken up and could meet him soon; Scene 5: Orfeo heard the footsteps from Euridice. The elves put her hand on Orfeo's hand. Orfeo held her tightly and rushed to the exit of hell excitedly.

#### **4.2 Roles**

The solo part of the opera was played by three roles, the hero - Orfeo, who was sung by an eunuch singer when it premiered in 1762, and the tone characteristics of the voice part were close to mezzo-soprano, after being adapted and processed in 1764, it was officially sung by tenor; while the heroine - Euridice was sung by soprano, and the important supporting role-God of Love was also

sung by soprano; the chorus part of the opera was sung by herdsmen and monsters, the goddess of vengeance and hell resentful ghosts as well as the gods of men and women in the beautiful valley.

## 5. Music Analysis

The music in this scene is mainly traditional functional harmony, which mainly uses dominant, dominant and subordinate off-key, extensively uses seventh chords to dilute the influence of the traditional function harmony, highlight the special color of hell through the three-drop chord and seven-drop chord of the leading note in a minor. The period is distributed in five parts, including prelude, Chorus (I), ballet, Chorus (II) and chorus (III).

### 5.1 Prelude Part

The prelude adopts E-down major. At the beginning, the sixteenth note is used twice in succession to connect a tone with the same tone and high-length tone, which consolidates tonality, with a clear rhythm and a powerful expression. The strength is constantly strengthened, especially the addition of trombone in the orchestration, in Figure 1 which creates the depressing and heavy atmosphere of ghost elves and avengers dancing in the music.



Fig.1 Spectral Case Prelude Part of Act II Scene 1

The core phonemes of this paragraph are tautophony and downward four-degree jump, three-degree jump and downward seven-degree jump. The first full presentation of the theme is in section 1-5, and section 6 uses the material in section 1-5 for the upper small degree sequence. Section 11-23 is the derived phrase section of section 1-10, and the materials are tautophony in section 1-5, reduce the three-time jump into the material in section 1-5 to progressive melody by means of interval contraction. The rhythm material takes the iambic pentameter appearing in section 1-2 and the weak starting rhythm as the core, takes the 4-level rhythm as the main part, and Section 21-23 is the concealment termination (coda), which has the property of connection, takes gorgeous sentences as the transition, prepares for the appearance of chorus (I), and turns tonality into c minor.

### 5.2 Chorus (I)

The chorus of this section starts with c minor, and the first three sections of harp adopt sixteenth note arpeggio pizzicato. The melody lines are light and coherent, and the rhythm of the string part of continuous quarter note is smooth, starting from the fourth section, the string music is played with the same melody, and the power of the four choruses is obviously strengthened. The end is on the dominant note of minor, in Figure 2 and the music transitions to the next ballet passage.



Fig.2 Spectral Case Chorus I Part of Act II Scene 1

The core phonemes of this paragraph are three-degree jump and grading, and the structural feature is the independent musical phrase with supplement. The development technique of musical phrase takes the sequence as the core, and the downward sequence, without termination, ends in dominant note, Open semi-stop, introduce ballet, and take c minor as the main tone, section 30-31 detunes into the subordinate f minor and return to c minor

### 5.3 Ballet

This section applies the sequence and reflection techniques in polyphony techniques in music creation, and uses the eighth note skipping in the weak beat to create the scene of the avengers dancing happily, the repeating part of the music ends at the semi-ending place, preparing for the next chorus in Figure 3.



Fig.3 Spectral Case Ballet Part of Act Ii Scene 1

The core material of the music is the progressive melody of section 1-2, which is developed by the sequence and reflection. The musical instrument group is selected as the string band, with gorgeous sentences and lively atmosphere, 8 + 8 structure square and equal long music segment harmony is carried out around the traditional function harmony, no termination type, open semi-termination;

### 5.4 Chorus (Ii)

The structure of this paragraph is relatively large, which can be divided into two parts for analysis. The music of the first part starts from the chorus, and the plot of the corresponding script is "who dare to walk through this horrible place will definitely become the prey of the magic dog Kaibais." Implying a gloomy and horrible atmosphere, the accompaniment of orchestral music distributes 40 sections in four parts on average, and section 51-60 adopts c minor and stops half cadence; section 61-70 uses strings with decorative sounds to add the color of music. Section 71-80 uses new musical sentences to compare the effect of increasing the tension of music. Section 81-90 uses the material at the beginning of this section to end the subordinate relationship.

Among them, section 51-60 is the complete repetition of chorus. Section 61 enters the new material, which comes from the contraction of the third interval into the second interval in chorus (I), and the homophonic repetition in the prelude. The development method is the combination of free sequence and strict sequence, and there are many subordinate and dominant detune chords. Some of the 7 chords that can't be solved increase the sense of depression of music, and the structure is relatively regular and the rhythm is evenly divided, the structural tension is relatively weak, and the motive force corresponding to this melody is also slightly weak, mainly focusing on steady progressive progress. Section 69 semi-terminates and guide 7 chords, section 71 is a new phrase, and the material of section 60-70 is extracted, which is still mainly homophone repetition. Section 72 adopts the rhythm of attachment + 8 + 4, slightly increases the music tension, section 76 is incomplete full termination, no termination type. Section 81-90 are full repetitions, ending with a lead of 7 chord, a stop point in rhythm, no stop in harmony, and section 4 joining into the second part of chorus (II).

The second part of this paragraph is the answer between Orfeo and all the ghosts. The pizzicato of the strings and the arpeggio dialogue of the harp laid the emotional foundation for the solo and

chorus, Orfeo repeatedly begged all the ghosts in the hell to sympathize with his beloved wife, but what he got was a cold refusal. The thirty-second note used in the music strengthen the tension, create a soul-stirring effect, and finally end on the main chord.

The second part is a brand new material. The composition of phonemes is based on the three-degree jump progressive, and the two sections of section 96-97 are expanded to add two new phonemes of six-degree jump downward and five-degree jump downward, section 98 shows a 7-degree uplink jump. Section 99-103 is still a new material. By section 103, the first complete statement of the new theme has ended. Section 104-107 is a sequence music section with the nature of expansion, and section 107-109 is a supplement, section 107 refers to overlapping termination and open semi-termination. Section 110-132 is the contrast phrase, which expands the progressive material of the previous phrase, jumps into the material and gets it from tightening. The internal microstructure is relatively complex, the rhythm is changeable, and the iambic pentameter alternating, the tension of the musical composition is relatively large, and the end of the musical composition is D-T (which belongs to the progress of the main one), without specific termination mode, which is the complete termination of the closure;

### 5.5 Chorus (Iii)

The first four sections of the chorus of this paragraph are slow, forming a semi-stop in the fourth section and entering a faster rhythm, and finally ending in f minor, creating a painful atmosphere covered by darkness in Figure 4.



Fig.4 Spectral Case Chorus Iii Part of Act II Scene 1

The core phonemes of the section are extracted from chorus (I) and chorus (II), section 133-134 is extracted and compressed from chorus (I), section 135-136 is extracted and compressed from chorus (II) extract from section 61 and adapt it into a new material in a reversed way. Compared with chorus (II), the flow of melody shows a little convergence, homophones appear again and again, and the same alternate between the restrained and the restrained rhythm keeps the tension of the music, and the development mode mainly focuses on the sequence and repetition, section 151 begins with the new derived writing method of contrast section, section 154 is extracted from section 72 materials, section 160 appears continuous preparation of 7 chords, section 162 appears standard termination of K46-V-I, incomplete closure is completely terminated, not in the main tone but in the f minor.

## 6. Conclusion

Opera is a kind of theater art originated from ancient Greek drama; it is a comprehensive art both in the form of creation and stage performance. Drama and music are the most basic and important elements in the composition of opera. Since the first opera appeared in Florence, Italy at the end of the 16th century, the aesthetics of the opera has gone through the changes of times, and Representative composers and classic works have emerged in each period. The opera “Orfeo ed Euridice” is Gluck's attempt to reform the opera. It emphasizes on starting from the whole and advocates music as one of the artistic means to integrate with drama.

Simplicity and truth are the aesthetic principles of all art works. The theme of his opera did not depart from the myth stories of ancient Greece, and eliminated the flaunting singing skills which hindered the development of the plot. The Aria expressed the emotions of the characters truly, and the singing and drama of the recitativo were sublimated, the layout of tonality presented the logic thinking of classicism and added chorus and ballet according to the promotion of drama plot. This epoch-making reform critically inherits the form of Italian operas and gives the traditional operas a new life. “Orfeo ed Euridice” is called the masterpiece of “enlightenment” in the history of classical operas.

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