

The Identity Construction and Contemporary Inspiration of European National Music Choral

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the choral music of the European folk music school in the 19th century, and discusses its artistic practice and contemporary significance in the construction of national identity. Research shows that composers express national identity in three main ways: using folk music elements, innovative harmonic techniques, and combining national literary creation. Through the analysis of representative works, the characteristics of music as a carrier of cultural identity are shown. This historical experience is reflected in the innovative practice of contemporary Chinese national chorus, such as the modern adaptation of Zhejiang folk songs and the Yunnan multi-ethnic mixed chorus, forming an educational model of "cultural decoding, artistic reconstruction, and emotional resonance". This study provides a reference for the study of music sociology, and also provides practical ideas for cultural inheritance and music education reform in the context of globalization.

Keywords

Nationalists in music, choral music, identity construction, music education.

1. The Historical Context and Identity Demands of European National Music Chorus

1.1. Voice resistance in political change: the awakening of national consciousness after the Napoleonic Wars

The rise and development of European folk music chorus art in the 19th century is inseparable from the special historical context in which it is located. The political landscape of Europe after the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) underwent profound changes, and the general awakening of national consciousness injected new spiritual connotations into musical creation. The war that has ravaged the European continent has not only reshaped the boundaries of various countries, but also stimulated the strong demand for cultural autonomy of all ethnic groups at a deep level. During this period, music was no longer just a carrier of aesthetic expression, but also an important medium for all ethnic groups to strive for cultural independence and political identity. This shift is reflected in the composers' conscious search for creative inspiration in local folk music traditions and the integration of these elements with the formal norms of Western art music to create works that are both national and in line with professional musical standards.

Taking Smetana's symphonic poem "My Motherland" as an example, the composer successfully created a musical image full of the spirit of national resistance by quoting the melody of the war song of the Hussite War in the 15th century and the extremely tense timbre treatment of the brass voice. The passionate brass phrases and militant rhythms in the work not only reproduce the scenes of national resistance in history, but also metaphorically represent the realistic

demands of the Czech people in the 19th century against Austrian rule. This creative technique that combines historical memory with musical language vividly demonstrates the unique role of music in the process of national consciousness awakening. It is worth noting that Smetana does not simply copy folk music materials, but artistically refines and develops these elements, so that it not only retains the rustic characteristics of folk music, but also has the exquisite character of professional music creation.

The music creation of this period also showed distinct regional characteristics. Composers from all over the world have drawn inspiration from the rhythm of their own language, the rhythm of folk dances, the timbre of traditional musical instruments and other elements to create their own unique musical languages. For example, the Norwegian composer Grieg made extensive use of the unique acoustic effects and modal characteristics of the Hardanger fiddle in his works; The composers of the Russian "Strong Group" are committed to expressing the unique accent laws and prosodic characteristics of the Russian language. These creative practices not only enrich the artistic expression of European music, but more importantly, they make music a powerful tool for constructing and strengthening national identity. Through the collective form of music, composers successfully evoke the audience's memory and emotional resonance of the common history and culture, thereby realizing the cohesion and expression of national consciousness in music.

1.2. Response under cultural hegemony: from German-Austrian tradition to local expression

Faced with the strong position of the German-Austrian musical tradition in the European music scene, composers of various ethnic music schools began to consciously explore localized musical expressions. The creative practice of the Finnish composer Sibelius in "Ode to Finland" is quite representative, and he deliberately strengthened the prosodic characteristics of the Finnish language to make the male chorus passage present distinct national characteristics. This innovation in musical language is not only an artistic resistance to Russia's policy of cultural assimilation, but also a manifestation of cultural consciousness. It is worth noting that this effort to seek cultural autonomy in music is not simply xenophobic or retro, but a creative transformation of national musical elements based on the absorption of mainstream European musical traditions.

1.3. The birth of collective soundscapes: chorus as a carrier of identity construction

Choral art plays an irreplaceable role in the construction of national identity because of its unique collective participation. This collective form of musical expression transcends the limitations of individual solo singing, creating a unique "soundscape" experience through the organic interweaving of multi-part vocals, allowing both participants and listeners to feel a strong sense of belonging to the group. The resonance effect produced by the interweaving of multi-part vocals not only has pure musical beauty, but also can effectively evoke the historical memory and emotional identity of group members. When dozens or even hundreds of people sing a melody with national characteristics in unison, the shocking sound effect can often stimulate the audience's deep understanding of the common cultural roots.

This characteristic was fully explored and artistically expressed by national music composers in the 19th century. They are keenly aware that choral art can be a powerful tool for gathering national consciousness. For example, Sibelius used male chorus in "Ode to Finland" to express the tenacious spiritual quality of the Finnish nation, and created a very infectious collective sound image through concise and powerful melodies and rhythms. This creative technique not only shows the rhythmic characteristics of Finnish, but also strengthens the expression of national identity through the collectivity of chorus. Although China's "Yellow River Chorus" was

created in the 20th century, its creative concept of condensing the national spirit through choral art is inherently consistent with the European national music school. Xian Xinghai also used the form of a multi-part chorus in this work, closely combining the Yellow River, a cultural symbol of the Chinese nation, with the theme of national salvation during the Anti-Japanese War, creating a shocking artistic effect.

History shows that when choral music is combined with specific historical and cultural contexts, it can often transcend the mere aesthetic category and become a powerful force in shaping collective identity. In the creation of European folk music, choral works are often associated with national epics, historical events, or folklore, evoking memories of a common history through music. This kind of music creation is not only an artistic act, but also a process of cultural construction. Through carefully crafted musical language, composers transform abstract national identities into perceptible sonic experiences, enabling those who participate in singing and listening to confirm their cultural identity in music. This interaction between music and social culture provides an important perspective for us to understand the artistic value of European folk music in the 19th century. It reminds us that the meaning of music lies not only in the notes themselves, but also in the deep connection between music and specific social and cultural contexts.

2. Triple Path Analysis of Ethnic Music Identity Construction

2.1. Symbolic layer: the application of folk music elements

In the process of constructing national music identity in the 19th century, European folk music schools showed a multi-level artistic innovation path. At the level of musical symbols, composers consciously collect and use folk music materials of their own nation and transform them into musical languages with cultural symbolic significance. The Bohemian composer Smetana skillfully incorporates the rhythmic and melodic trends unique to Czech folk music in the symphonic suite "My Motherland", especially in the movement "Visehrad", which evokes the audience's collective memory of the ancient culture of Bohemia by simulating the musical vocabulary of the ancient Slavic bards. Similarly, in the "Slavic Dances" series, Dvořák not only absorbed the tones of folk songs from the Moravian region, but also artistically refined and developed these materials, so that they not only retained the rustic characteristics of folk music, but also had the exquisite character of professional music creation. This creative technique of elevating local music elements into national cultural symbols has become an important feature of the construction of the musical identity of the national music school.

2.2. Technical layer: the ideological expression of harmonic language

At the level of harmonic technology, composers of the national music school broke through the shackles of traditional functions and sound systems and developed harmonic languages with national characteristics. Smetana's frequent use of augmented sixth chords and their chromatic progressions in his works not only creates a unique acoustic effect, but also metaphorically represents the anxiety and struggle of the oppressed nation. Norwegian composer Grieg created a harmonic style with Nordic regional characteristics through the creative use of natural modes, especially the modal characteristics that emphasize the unresolved mode of the guiding sound. These technological innovations not only enrich the expressiveness of music, but also carry specific cultural ideologies, making the harmonic language itself a carrier of national identity. It is worth noting that this kind of technical innovation is not simply unconventional, but an artistic exploration based on a deep understanding of the musical traditions of the nation.

2.3. Narrative layer: the intertextual construction of literature and music

At the level of artistic narrative, composers of the national music school are good at combining music with cultural texts such as national literature and historical legends to construct multi-level intertextual expressions. Grieg's score for Ibsen's play *Peer Ginter* is a typical example, and he not only enhances the expressiveness of the drama through the organic fusion of Norwegian folk modality and dramatic literary imagery, but also makes music an important medium for conveying the spirit of the Nordic nation. In the opera "*Boris Godunov*", the Russian composer Mussorgsky shows the collective psychology and destiny of the Russian nation through the interweaving of choral passages and historical narratives. This cross-art practice makes music transcend the category of simple sound art and become a comprehensive artistic expression that carries the memory and identity of national culture. Through the creative exploration of these three dimensions, the national music school finally formed a unique path of musical identity construction, providing valuable artistic experience for future generations of music creation.

3. Contemporary Practice Verification of the Construction of National Music Identity

3.1. Creative practice from the perspective of cross-cultural comparison

The contemporary Chinese national choral creation forms an interesting echo with the artistic practice of European folk music schools in the 19th century. Taking the adaptation of Zhejiang folk songs as an example, musicians pay special attention to preserving the dialect characteristics in the original ecological singing when dealing with works such as "*Tea Picking Dance*". They carefully studied the tonal variations and biting characteristics of the dialect, naturally incorporating them into the creation of multi-part choruses. For example, the melody progression maintains the unique pitch direction of the dialect, and reflects the rhythmic characteristics of the local dialect in rhythm processing. This approach is reminiscent of Dvořák's meticulous handling of folk song rhythms in "*Moravian Duet*." Dvořák showed superb folk music adaptation skills in his creations. He not only retains the unique dance rhythm of Moravian folk songs, but also makes these rhythmic characteristics fully displayed in multi-part works through clever vocal arrangement. For example, in some passages, he alternately presents the prototypes and variations of folk songs in different parts, which not only maintains the vividness of folk music, but also enriches the expression level of the music. This creative technique coincides with the idea of Chinese musicians dealing with folk song materials.

In the specific creative process, Chinese musicians have developed some distinctive technical methods. They often go deep into folk styles, record the original ecological singing of old artists, and carefully analyze the musical characteristics in them. Then, according to the performance needs of choral art, these materials are appropriately adjusted. For example, expand monophonic folk songs into multi-voices, add harmonic foil while maintaining the melody backbone, or enhance the three-dimensional sense of music through vocal imitation. These practices not only respect tradition, but also give folk songs new artistic vitality.

3.2. Innovative development path with Chinese characteristics

Chinese musicians have embarked on a unique path of innovation in the creation of national choral songs. In Yunnan and other ethnic minority areas, composers spend a lot of time learning original singing methods from folk artists. They found that traditional singing methods like the Yi sea vegetable cavity have a unique charm, and their high-pitched and loud timbre and special interval relationships are rarely encountered in professional music training. During the adaptation, the creators both worked to maintain these characteristics while skillfully incorporating them into the framework of the multi-part chorus. For example, when dealing

with Yi folk songs, they retain the characteristic glissando and ornamental tones in the original song, while allowing these elements to be naturally presented in the chorus works through carefully designed harmonies.

In teaching practice, music educators have summarized a set of proven methods. Teachers will first take students to ethnic minority villages to collect style, so that they can experience the original environment of folk songs firsthand. After returning to class, teachers and students analyzed the musical characteristics of these folk songs and discussed how to adapt them into choral works. During the actual rehearsal, the conductor will emphasize the grasp of the charm of folk songs, requiring students not only to sing the correct notes, but also to understand the cultural connotation behind the songs. Through this process, students not only learn singing skills, but also enhance their understanding and love for national music.

These explorations reflect the wisdom of Chinese musicians. They do not simply copy European experience, but creatively develop local creation and teaching methods according to the characteristics of China's multi-ethnic culture. While maintaining the authenticity of folk songs, they also give them new artistic vitality. This attitude of respecting tradition and having the courage to innovate makes Chinese national choral art unique in the world, and also provides a useful reference for the development of music in other countries.

4. Historical Enlightenment and Contemporary Value of the Construction of National Music Identity

4.1. The localization path of music education

The creative practice of European folk music in the 19th century provides an important reference for the reform of contemporary music education. The musicians have successfully combined elements of their own folk music with professional composition techniques to create works with national characteristics and artistic standards. Their experience shows that music education should pay attention to the inheritance and development of local music culture. In the practice of Chinese music education, we can learn from this idea and incorporate excellent traditional music resources such as folk songs and opera music into the teaching system. Especially in primary and secondary school music courses, by organizing students to sing chorus works adapted from folk music, they can not only cultivate their musical literacy, but also enhance their cultural identity.

This localized exploration of music education needs to deal with the relationship between tradition and innovation. The success of European folk music composers lies in their ability to learn from German and Austrian musical traditions without being confined to them, but creatively incorporating elements of their own national music. Similarly, contemporary Chinese music education emphasizes the inheritance of traditional culture while also maintaining an open and inclusive attitude. In teaching, students can be arranged to learn traditional folk songs and guide them to understand excellent musical works from all over the world. By comparing musical expressions in different cultural backgrounds, students can establish a broader musical horizon.

It is worth noting that the localization of music education has been carried out in many places across the country. Before the 20th century, China's ethnic minority chorus mostly existed in the form of original multi-part music, and different forms of multi-part folk songs were widely circulated in different ethnic areas. [1] Many schools invite folk artists to the campus to teach local music, and organize teachers and students to participate in the collection and adaptation of folk songs. Some regions have also developed music textbooks with local characteristics, systematically integrating local music elements into the curriculum system. The styles of Chinese choral works are becoming more and more diversified in the rapid development of specialization, aesthetic education and marketization of domestic choral art, and the chorus

works of ethnic minorities created by a group of Yunnan composers represented by Professor Liu Xiaogeng, as a type of work with distinctive national characteristics and regional context, have become the object of commission and singing by many domestic chorus groups. [2] These explorations not only inherit traditional culture, but also enrich the teaching content, and accumulate valuable experience for the establishment of a music education model with Chinese characteristics. With the deepening of practice, this traditional and future-oriented music education concept is having an increasingly widespread impact.

4.2. Research limitations and future directions

Although this study systematically analyzes the identity construction mechanism of choral art in European folk music, there are still some issues that need to be further explored. In terms of the scope of research, the attention paid to ethnic music movements in non-European regions is relatively insufficient. In terms of research methods, the new characteristics of the dissemination and acceptance of national music under the conditions of digital technology are not deeply discussed. In terms of practical verification, there is a lack of long-term follow-up research on teaching results. Future research can expand the horizon of cross-cultural comparison, strengthen the exploration of ethnic music inheritance models in the new media environment, and carry out more systematic educational empirical research. These research directions will help deepen our understanding of the relationship between music and identity, and provide richer theoretical resources and practical references for cultural inheritance in the era of globalization.

4.3. Development Suggestions in the Context of Globalization

As one of the most popular and infectious art forms, choral art has always resonated with the times and plays a unique role in uniting people's hearts and spreading positive energy. [3] In the context of globalization, ethnic music creation needs to find a balance between tradition and modernity. The experience of European folk music tells us that successful folk music must be rooted in tradition and future-oriented. As a unique musical art form, national chorus carries the essence of national culture and national spiritual connotation. [4] Chinese musicians can learn from this idea to maintain the essence of traditional music such as folk songs and operas in their creations, and integrate the expression techniques of contemporary music. For example, when adapting folk songs, they retain their unique melodic lines and rhythmic characteristics, while using modern harmony and orchestration techniques to make the work both national and acceptable to a wider audience. The development of digital technology has brought new possibilities to national music. Now, musicians can let listeners around the world understand Chinese folk music through online platforms, and can also use modern recording technology to completely preserve the performances of folk artists. Some innovative attempts are worth noting, such as combining ethnic instruments with electronic music or presenting traditional music performances through virtual reality technology. These explorations not only protect the traditional core of music, but also expand its forms of expression. Looking forward to the future, taking root in the soil of traditional culture, deeply cultivating "people" materials for creation, establishing a systematic national choral works library, and building an all-round three-dimensional display and dissemination platform integrating digital and real will be an important guarantee for the sustainable development of the nationalization of Chinese choral works. [5]

In cross-cultural communication, Chinese folk music needs to establish its own discourse system. We must not only show the music itself, but also tell the cultural story behind the music. The world can better understand the unique value of Chinese folk music by holding international music festivals and carrying out academic exchanges. At the same time, it is also necessary to learn from the excellent musical traditions of other ethnic groups with an open

mind, and promote the innovation and development of Chinese folk music through exchanges and mutual learning.

5. Conclusions and Prospects

This study preliminarily explores the interaction between music creation and national identity construction through the investigation of choral art of European folk music schools. Although there are still many shortcomings in this research, it may provide some reference for understanding the sociocultural function of music. In today's accelerated development of globalization and digitalization, the inheritance and development of national music are facing new opportunities and challenges. Future research may be able to conduct more in-depth exploration in cross-cultural comparison, technology application and educational practice, in order to provide some reference for the innovative development of Chinese folk music. At the same time, we also look forward to jointly promoting music to play a greater role in cultural inheritance and exchange through more solid empirical research and more open international dialogue.

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