

On the Inheritance and Innovation of the Cultural Spirit of Chinese National Music

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Received 2 September 2015; accepted 4 November 2015
Published online 26 November 2015

Abstract

During its developing course of several thousands of years, Chinese national music formed a cultural spirit that is based on “harmony” as core. This cultural spirit has a solid foundation from the excellent Chinese traditional culture, which also plays a key role in state governance, social education, self-cultivation, and so on. Today, we must actively inherit and propagate the cultural spirit contained in the national music, sticking to the value idea of national music’s artistic aesthetic, deepening the artistic creations of national music, innovating the inheritance carrier of national music, delivering the educational function of national music, and realizing the great boom and development of national music’s artistic cause.

Key words: National music; Cultural spirit; Inheritance and innovation

Liu, Z. Y. (2015). On the Inheritance and Innovation of the Cultural Spirit of Chinese National Music. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 9(5), 64-68. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/7822>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7822>

INTRODUCTION

Literature and art are the torch of national spirit, the horn for the advancement of the times. Comrade Jinping Xi points out at the National Conference on Propaganda Work that Chinese culture accumulates the deepest spiritual pursuit of Chinese nation, which is the rich

nourishment for Chinese nation’s endless succession, development and expansion; excellent Chinese traditional culture is the best advantage of Chinese nation, our most profound cultural soft power (Holding the Big Picture in Heart, para.12, 2013). Music, as the spiritual symbol of a nation, can most reflect the cultural connotations of a nation, exhibiting in a condensed way the humanistic spirit, mode of thinking, imagination and cultural awareness contained by a nation. In the history course of more than 5,000 years, the Chinese nation created a vast quantity of excellent national music, forming a national music system that has profound connotations, contains rich contents, and has a variety of subjects, which has become the treasures of Chinese musical art palace and is also the typical representation and key part of excellent Chinese traditional culture. Our national music was written by people and for people, expresses emotions for people, and reflects the work and life of people. National music profoundly contains the spirits and value orientation of excellent Chinese traditional culture, among which “harmony” is the core cultural spirit. The cultural spirit, with “harmony” as the core, not only reflects in its rich artistic contents, but also embodies in the social functions of the national music. “Harmony” has become a successful concept of governing a state in politics, a universal way of doing business in economics, a primary code of ethics in interpersonal relationships, an important rule for artistic aesthetic in art, a highly prosperous summarization of scenes in social development course. This spiritual national music has important roles in areas such as state governance, social education, self-cultivation, and so on. Today, the realization of the great renaissance of the Chinese nation requires the prosperous thriving and development of the national music cause, which will offer a strong value guidance, cultural cohesion power, and spiritual driving force for the realization of the great renaissance of the Chinese nation.

1. STICKING TO THE VALUE IDEA OF CHINA NATIONAL MUSIC'S ARTISTIC AESTHETIC

The experience of auditory aesthetic perception brought by national music for people sufficiently reflects that aesthetic value is the most essential characteristic of national music. Music embodies the value orientation of people's artistic aesthetic, no matter from its outer orderly expression form, or from its inner cultural connotation. Aesthetic is the number one value of national music, it is also the source for a long lasting national music. In the long period of artistic practice, national music takes materials from the people, which was created by people and orally taught inspiring true understanding within, continuously changing and being modified with time, and reflecting the value idea of artistic aesthetic by people in different historical periods. National music is the wisdom crystallization of human culture, the aesthetic choice of people of different times, therefore containing profound cultural accumulation. Thus, national music has a strong vitality, existing for thousands of years and long lasting.

From the essential characteristic of musical art and the artistic feature of national music's artistic aesthetic, realization of the harmony and resonance of people and sound is fundamental to the realization of the artistic aesthetical values. During the process of national music's creation, dissemination and promotion, the cultural spirit that uses "harmony" as core always run through it. This cultural spirit has a profound philosophical foundation. "The essence is consistent with the nature", "correspondence between man and universe", and "harmony between the heaven and human" mainly emphasize the relationships between human and nature, consciousness and existence. The musical art coming from life and work is the oldest way of expressing thoughts and emotions by human being, is the most instinctive reflection to nature by people and the most abstract expression to self-awareness. Music existed before the language formation, the most primitive musical expression promoted the thinking of human being. At the same time, this is also in accordance with its self-rule of the national musical art, reflecting the beauty of harmony of the musical rhythm. According to Ruan Ji's *Yue Lun*: "Music embodies the nature of heaven and earth, and all the things, so when music is in accordance with them, it is harmonious; instead, if it deviates from them, it is not harmonious. In the past, when the sage makes music, he will make it harmonious with the heaven, earth, and all the things, so he can create music that is in accordance with the heaven and earth to greet the sound of the Yin and Yang." *Yue Ji*: "Every sound, born of the heart, reflects the feelings of the heart, which results from the things and is moved by the things, so it can reflect them in sound." These discussed that music is the creative

reflection of the objective existence of all things and people's subjective thoughts and feeling in a harmonious way. In the essential factors of heaven, earth, and people, "harmony" is the important factor connecting the subject and object, i.e., heaven, earth and people. Dong Zhongshu in the Han Dynasty said in *Chun Qiu Fan Lu* that: "Music comes from harmony, and reflects the feelings." Ji Kang said in *Qin Fu* that: "When holding a peaceful heart, it can be reflected by a peaceful sound." So it can be seen that "harmony" has a core aesthetic value in the beauty of musical art.

The aesthetic ideology of "harmony" contains a unique quintessence of musical art of Chinese national features. Marx proposed in *The Economic-moral Interpretation on the 1844 Economic and Philosophy Manuscript* an important topic of "shaping things according to the law of beauty". About the applications of "the law of beauty" in China national musical arts, the author thinks that we should create China national musical arts in the cultural spirit with "harmony" as core, which requires the authors, performers, appreciators and reviewers to establish an aesthetic consciousness of cultural spirit with "harmony" as core in their thinking, to embody the cultural spirit with "harmony" as core in their artistic practices, to create the most beautiful China national musical arts, to exhibit the exciting contemporary spirit of Chinese nation, to praise the pursuit to the true, the good and the beautiful by the Chinese people, and to express the beauty of human nature in the new historic period of 30 years since Reform and Openness. Especially since the new century, constructing a harmonious society and building a well-off society in all-around way with the scientific outlook on development as the guidance, as well as strongly promoting great development and prosperity of socialist culture during the great practice of the Chinese Dream of realizing "Two 100-Year Goals" will need the cultural power, artistic charm and spiritual support of national music.

2. DEEPENING THE FULL DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTIC CREATIONS OF NATIONAL MUSIC

The general and specific policies of literature and art are the embodiment of politics, is the most important factor in the development of art. For a long time, China sticks to the direction of "Two For" and the policy of "Two Hundred". The direction and policy of Chinese literature and art profoundly contain the cultural spirit with "harmony" as core, is the specific embodiment of this cultural spirit during the socialist period, and these two are connected one after another in one continuous line. Grasping the cultural spirit of "harmony" means the grasping of the spiritual life of national music. Today, under the background of global interconnection and interfusion of culture and art, in order to promote the full

development of national music's artistic creations, we must stick strongly to the "Two For" direction and "Two Hundred" policy, continuously propagating the cultural spirit with "harmony" as core.

Sticking to the "Two For" development direction of national musical art. All creations of progressive music come from the people, for the people, and belong to the people; we must firmly establish the view point that people are the creator of history (Liu, 2014). During the long practice of creations of national musical art, we must continuously adhere to the creative guidance to people at the center. National music takes materials from people's life and work, is created by people themselves, and is sung by people for a long period of time. This is the one of the most obvious characteristics by which national music is different from other musical art types. The development history of Chinese national music is a struggle history of Chinese nation's work and life. Starting from the earliest, most primitive instrument, bone flute, made by animal bone, in the long course of live and multiply, as well as production and work, people continuously carry out the creations of national music and the practical explore of artistic aesthetic. In the socialist period, Chinese national music must adhere to the basic direction of serving the people and serving the socialist. Holding spiritual temperament, establishing spiritual pillar, as well as building a spiritual home is the lofty mission of national music. Conscientiously propagating the Chinese spirit, passing the Chinese value, and condensing the Chinese power is the sacred duty of national musician, passionately eulogizing the national spirit of patriotism during the reform and openness period and the zeitgeist of reform and innovation, strengthening the characteristics of times and attractiveness of national music, offering a rich feast of national musical culture for the people.

Adhering to the "Two Hundred" development policy of national musical art. Exchange, interfusion, borrowing, and inter-learning is the key for the enduring life of national music. We must adhere to the "let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend", promoting the free development of musical themes, forms, and styles of different nations, and encouraging the free competitions of folk music from different style groups and regions. During the practice of arts, the musical art of every Chinese nation absorbs, borrows, integrates, and fuses with each other, using popular for refined, taking the strength to compensate to the weakness, inter-compensating for popular and refined, and improving together. Profoundly activating the artistic creation passion of national music can promote the great prosperity of national musical art, injecting a strong vitality for the development of national music. From the ancient work song to *Tale of Springtime* reflecting reform and openness, from the passionate *Man Jiang Hong* to *Often Coming Home to Take a Look* reflecting ordinary people's aspirations, the most beautiful Chinese national

musical art exhibits the exciting mental outlook of Chinese nation, praises the constant pursuit to the true, the good and the beautiful by the people, exhibits the advanced and prosperous scenes of social history. Today, the national musicians need to go to the front lines of factories and workshops, farms and fields, streets and communities, party and government offices, to profoundly experience and learn the versatile, praises-and-tears evoking touching stories and moving scenes during the practice of life and work, in order to create more high-quality national music, allowing the people to enjoy together the innovative fruits of national musical arts, thus to condense a bigger and stronger cultural power for realizing the great Chinese Dream.

The self-fusion of national music needs to be actively promoted. There are two basic aspects in the law of self-development of Chinese national music. First, from the vertical way, national music must critically inherit the cultural spirit with "harmony" as the core and the excellent traditions of national music. This inheritance is not only in the artistic skills, variety and forms, as well as creative methods, but also in the content of thinking. At the same time, we need to realize that the purpose of inheritance is for innovatively creating the newest and most beautiful Chinese national musical arts, for realizing the historical surpass of the national music in the new era. Second, from the horizontal way, China is vast with 56 ethnic groups. Different ethnic groups and places have their own musical forms. Between the Chinese different ethnic groups, Chinese national music and world different nations' music and arts, from ancient times and to the present, they borrow and fuse from each other, continuously innovate and develop prosperously. In the Tang Dynasty when the Chinese national music was at the peak, in the exchange and interfusion between different ethnic group's music and world music, the Seven Music developed into the Ten Music. In the Ten Music, Qing Shan music is the traditional Han music, Yan Music is the innovative music of the Tang Dynasty. Xi Liang, Gui Ci, Shu Le, and Gao Chang are the music of the brother ethnic groups, while An Guo Yue, Kang Guo Yue, Tian Zhu Yue, and Gao Li Yue come from the national music abroad.

3. PROMOTING THE CARRIER INNOVATION OF THE INHERITANCE OF NATIONAL MUSICAL ART

China is vast with a rich history, many ethnic groups, and widespread exchange. It has distinctive characteristics in the aspects such as region, history, ethnic group, and versatility, and has formed unique artistic styles in the aspects of line, harmony, and artistic conception (Xi, 2015). These styles vastly absorb and borrow the excellent characteristics of various musical arts from ancient time

to the present, and from China and foreign countries, thus having strong containment and integration. During the long practice of national musical arts, excellent national music masterpieces are unique in the spiritual content and artistic methods; therefore, they must be inherited and can be inherited. According to the features and laws of national musical arts, we need to respect the personalities of music artists, respect the artistic laws, thoroughly develop artistic democracy, thoroughly combining the characteristics of the times, strengthen the carrier innovation, and promote the exhibitions and plays of national music. Only through strongly promoting the exhibitions and plays of national music can we integrate the cultural spirit of "harmony" into the hearts of people in the artistic practices.

We need to establish a network of music and culture information and the exchange platform for exhibitions of various musical cultures, and create a multi-functional ecological space for music and culture. Chinese national music must follow the lead of the party and country in order to develop prosperously in a better and healthier way. This is the most direct and key factor for the heteronomy of art development. Today's era is the one in which information technology develops in high speed, and the internet technology revolution brings a deep change in people's way of life and work. The spread of national music must also get on the express train of information technology, through establishing the information network of music culture, to build an exhibition platform of various music cultures, and to construct an industrial center for national music culture as well as different development modes for national music. In the culture center cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, high-level comprehensive music culture industrial modes can be established, reflecting collectively nation's level and layer of music culture; at the provinces where music culture is advanced such as Yunan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and Neimeng, featured music culture industrial modes should be built, exhibiting the music culture with the breath of the times and ethnic factors; in the areas where minor ethnic groups are gathering, primitive music culture centers can be built, thus digging, arranging, protecting, and inheriting primitive national music culture industrial modes, as the mother body and source of national music culture. Such an optimized, national-music prosperously developing, and multi-route, multifunction, and multi-effect music culture ecological space must promote the unprecedented development, hundred-flower blooming, and all-color shining situation of Chinese national music.

The "go outside" strategy for national music needs to be implemented. Chinese national music is not only the treasure for Chinese culture and art hall; it is also the shining pearl in human being's cultural system. In the historical course of 5000 years, China and the world kept a deep culture exchange, which profoundly affected the development of the world. Since the reform and openness,

China and the world exchanged more frequently, however, the world people's recognition to today's China is not yet comprehensive, not yet detailed, and even with some bias. The national music needs to fully play the bridging effect, to strengthen the multi-aspect exchange with every nation's music in the world, to realize the connection between Chinese culture and world culture, to actively go to the world stage, allowing the world people to learn Chinese culture, Chinese value and Chinese spirit in playing and singing Chinese national music.

4. DELIVERING THE IMPORTANT AESTHETIC EDUCATIONAL FUNCTION OF NATIONAL MUSIC

National music has the distinctive features of aesthetic, nationality, history, and versatility, which determines that it has double values in both the content and carrier of aesthetic education, that it can also be adapted and accepted by different ethnic groups, that it can also ensure the lasting of the aesthetic education. Through digging the aesthetic educational function of national music, people's artistic cultivation and aesthetic abilities can be improved in general. It can cultivate fans and followers one batch after another for the development of national music, and can also cultivate one batch of national musicians who are excellent in both performing skills and moral integrity, and more importantly, it can create an active artistic development environment for the development of national music. During the course of promoting quality-oriented education, the educational system needs to re-inspect the special place and function of national music in the quality-oriented education, propagating the cultural spirit with "harmony" as core in the national music education.

The national music education needs to be added into the system of aesthetic and moral education in the schools. The national music education itself contains the double connotations of aesthetic and artistic educations, at the same time, it carries the important mission for ideological education such as patriotism, nationalism, and humanism. Different levels and types of school need to integrate the national music education into their educational systems and the overall arrangements for talent cultivation process. The course system for national music education has to be developed and established greatly. During the basic education stage, schools need to develop national music courses of its own ethnic group and prepare aesthetic education courses in combination with their local features. During the higher education stage, national music elective courses need to be offered greatly in the non-art universities, encouraging the cultivation and development of national music art groups to promote the development of national music education.

The development of the national music subject in art universities needs to be strengthened. Universities are

the cradle for Chinese national music talent cultivation, gathering a large batch of highly moral, extremely talented national musicians and national music educationists, at the same time, also forming a relatively perfect talent cultivation system and subject foundations. We need to highly emphasize the development of national music subjects in universities, offer safeguards in the aspects of teachers' team, art equipment, and funding, further optimizing the talent cultivation mode and course systems and improving in all around fashion the cultivation quality for national music artistic talents, in order to offer professional talent safeguards for promoting the great development of national music.

CONCLUSION

During the long development course of history, Chinese national music nurtured and formed the humanistic spirit

with "harmony" as core. This cultural spirit supported and led the development of national music, and will continuously lead the development of national music. Chinese national music must adhere to the cultural spirit with "harmony" as core, actively deepen the practice of artistic creations, innovate the spreading subject, actively carry out national music education and promote the prosperity and development of Chinese national music.

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