

A Comparison of Chinese and Russian sports Films—A Case study of *Leap* and *3 Seconds*

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Abstract: This paper will compare Chinese and Russian sports movies from four aspects of theme, characters, narrative mode, and audio-visual language, and then show the similarities and differences between Chinese and Russian sports movies in theme and characters. By analyzing the different narrative techniques and audio-visual designs of the two directors, we can feel the charm of sports movies of the two countries.

Keywords: sports movies; *Leap*; *3 Seconds*

1. Introduction

The dictionary of Cinematic Arts explains sports films as follows: "A feature film that reflects the social life associated with sports activities. The plot and the fate of the characters must be closely related to the sports cause or sports competition activities, with more tense and wonderful sports competition scenes." China and Russia have different classifications of sports movies. Chinese sports movies are presented in two directions: one is competitive sports movies and the other is popular sports movies focusing on the general public. *Leap* obviously belongs to the former. Russian sports films can be divided into three categories: sports biopic, sports history film and virtual plot sports film. *3 Seconds* belongs to sports biopic. Both of them, as reproductions of major sports events and sports films with the highest cumulative box office in China, have a position that cannot be ignored. This paper compares the presentation and treatment of the two films.

2. Themes

The theme is the center of every movie, through which the audience can feel the ideas and feelings that the director wants to convey. The similarities between Chinese and Russian sports movies are that patriotism is linked with ideology, sportsmanship is linked with physical narration, and the background of times is echoed with personal growth. The outputs of competitive sports are usually patriotic spirit and national confidence, but the content to be displayed is substantially different. The extreme lack of material and physical limit, always going beyond show the adherence to the spirit of sports, and show personal growth through different historical backgrounds.

2.1 Patriotism

Whether in *Leap* or *3 Seconds*, a strong spirit of patriotism and a strong sense of mission have become inexhaustible driving power throughout the development of the films. Compared with the United States, which focuses on the expression of individualism, both China and Russia pay more attention to patriotism. However, due to different national conditions, the patriotism conveyed by them is not the same. Chinese patriotism is reflected in its deep feelings for the nation and the country, in the willingness to devote to the cause of socialism, in the hard work for the prosperity and strength of the motherland, and in the national confidence. Russian patriotism is reflected in defense of the motherland, but due to the influence of orthodox ideas, the belief in God makes them believe that they are the strongest, somewhat showing the religious doctrine. What is more shown in its films is the national spirit, the pride of a fighting nation, a high regard for dignity and the desire for victory and conquer.

"Ideology is the sum of ideas, viewpoints and concepts directly related to the economy and politics of a certain society, including political and legal thoughts, morality, literature and art, religion, philosophy and other forms of consciousness in social sciences." Movies cannot be separated from ideology. Both the content and dissemination of movies are ideological. From the point of the film, the

battle for the crown with different political purposes. The sharply rising China needs a win to show the world that China has stood up, and this task shall be borne by the Chinese female volleyball team. The spirit of the female volleyball team and the revitalization of China are linked, which is the reason why female volleyball teams become a kind of feeling, representing a belief and a declaration. Looking at the background of the Munich Olympics basketball championship, the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union at that time was very nervous. Sports games have been linked to politics. The focus was more on the struggle for political power between the Soviet Union and the United States. The Soviet Union was in urgent need of the victory to prove itself, but ironically, authorities let them out of the race in order to avoid defeat. It shows the obstruction of the pedantic authorities of the Soviet Union, reflects the difficulty of the insistence of Garland, and reserves the power for the climax of their final kill, with more dramatic tension. From the point of view of the time when the film is released, taking the opportunity of the Tokyo Olympic Games, The film looks back at history from the present and feels that things have changed. The greatness of the motherland no longer depends on the Olympic female volleyball gold medal to prove but is a sense of pride and pride from the inside out. While carrying forward the theme, the film grasps the market positioning and is closely connected with The Times. With the help of the Hot spot of the Olympic Games, the audience has raised their attention to the film. *3 Seconds*, released in 2017, at a time when the Russian athletes use doping scandals, the United States Canada, and other countries proposed ban on Russia, and Russia as a political conspiracy, the producers through the film to fight back against the United States, for example, to show the team players to violations of personal attack, the Soviet Union suggested U.S. sanctions against Russia, The final Soviet victory also indicates that Russia will win in the struggle between the United States and Russia.

2.2 Sportsmanship

Throughout the sports movies, the eternal narrative theme is to show the sports spirit of fairness, courage to climb the peak and unity to forge ahead. These two movies are also the same. However, while promoting the spirit of sports, we can feel the great impact of sports on the body. The film pushes the story through the body narration, namely the body discourse. The body runs through the whole film as the main line. The discipline of the body leads to their pursuit of sportsmanship.

The word discipline comes from Foucault's *Discipline and Punishment*, which mainly plays a role in education, training, teaching and other aspects and is closely related to power. Compared with the training in developed countries, the training in Chinese and Russian sports movies are in extremely rough and miserable conditions, which requires strong spirit to break through the ordeal to win the final victory and glory. "Rush out of Asia and go to the world" is the slogan pasted on the wall of the training ground in Zhangzhou Female Volleyball team in Fujian Province. At this time, the country needed strong and strong people to show the strength of China. The female volleyball team responded to the call. The need to be robust is not limited to the scope of a healthy body, but also to the great test of the will to break through the limits of the body. Coach Yuan heard that the opponent could use modern technology to analyze each player, so he raised the net 15 centimeters and asked Wang if they could still calculate it. Such intense training builds a very human body, but also leaves an irreparable wound. Chen Zhaodi, a member of the female volleyball team, was injured in blocking the radius and still fought through five rounds with one arm. Cao Huiying, the "iron girl", still insisted on finishing the whole game with her radial fracture. Lang Ping, the "iron hammer" attacker, was injured from the neck down but still insisted on contributing to the cause of volleyball. Although the medical conditions in China are not widely shown in the film, we can also feel the underdeveloped technology and medical treatment in China at that time through Lang Ping's treatment in America. On the contrary, In *3 Seconds*, Sasha has a very rare heart disease, and intense sports have serious harm to his life, but the Soviet Union's own medical level can not cure his heart disease; Sergei Belov endured a chronic injury that was handled worse than an American community college team; Mr. Zal, who suffers from near-vision, could only afford American contact lenses and knee injuries can only be alleviated with ice. The physical pain and the extreme lack of material more show their pursuits of sports spirit, the persistence of dreams and their strong national character. Under the careful guidance and quiet care of the coach, as well as the tacit cooperation between teammates, they broke through their own limits and created one miracle after another.

Both Chinese and Russian sports movies reflect that under the double blow of spirit and body, athletes surpass themselves in the will, surpass their opponents in actual combat, and pursue faster, higher, and stronger sports spirit. They also reflect the harmony of team cooperation, harmony, and tacit understanding between people. That is what sportsmanship is all about-the harmony between the

athlete and the body spirit, the harmony between the coach and the players, and the harmony with the opponent.

2.3 Personal growth

In sports movies, every character grows up in different experiences. Personal growth is closely related to personal experiences and education, which are influenced by the historical background. Personal growth is embodied in redemption and freedom in these two films. *3 Seconds* shows redemption in the same era, while *Leap* is the pursuit of freedom after the change of times.

3 Seconds has repeatedly reflected the help and redemption that coach Garland has given to the players. He paid almost everything for the team. He persuaded the politically troubled captain who wanted to escape. He used the money that should have been given to his son to treat the sudden illness of Sasha, a team member. He also spent money on contact lenses for Zal. He inspired and redeemed everyone on this team. At the end of the film, the whole team donated money for the medical treatment of his son, which was the redemption of his son, his family, and also himself. Although they lived in the era of material scarcity, pedantic system, and backward science and technology, their hearts and will make their own salvation, breakthrough step by step, grow continuously, and make their dreams come true.

Lang Ping has more parts in *Leap*. As a member of the female volleyball team, she is physically disciplined. She has no choice but to face the pain of her and her teammates, who represent the country. As the background of *The Times* changes, China's national strength is becoming stronger and stronger, and the people have national confidence and sufficient confidence. As the head coach, she chooses to let the players go their own way so that the body becomes the expression of self, no longer the dependency of ideology, and the body is liberated. From the national dream to their own dreams, they are the same, but with more pride, which comes from the powerful motherland. Lang Ping gives her team members more choices, pays more attention to their sustainable development rather than temporary wins and losses, showing the liberation of the mind rather than physical strength.

3. Characters

"Man is the main object of the description of the film plays and the main body of the art modeling of the film. The writer reflects on life, sustenance and conveys his feelings and evaluation of life through the description of characters, their activities, and their mutual relations. Creating distinctive and vivid characters is the most fundamental task of film art." Characters are the souls of movies. In sports movies, the main characters are athletes and coaches, as well as their relatives and friends. In fact, they are extended groups with athletes or coaches as the core. In the relationship between the characters, we can better understand the theme of the film, including the pursuit of sportsmanship and the awakening of women.

3.1 Group heroes

Coaches and athletes train relentlessly. Their goal is always to win glory for the country rather than gain personal gains. The spirit of sacrificing their own but contributing to others, and the ultimate achievement beyond the reach of ordinary people make them called "heroes". Two films are portraits of shaping hero's way, in *3 Seconds*, the moment when the female volleyball team won the champion means that they are no longer pure athletes, but a kind of image, a hero. And Lang Ping returned to China and became the coach of the national women's volleyball team to bring it back to the top. Her personal achievements and journey make her a "leading zero". The same is true of Garland's coach in *3 Seconds*. As the main character, he shows how he uses his personality to hold the team together so he is the "leadership hero"; To complete the basketball dream, Sasha, having incurable heart disease, has to break up with his girlfriend, so he adheres to the dream of "pay hero"; The captain of the team gives up to escape the Soviet Union and returns to the team, so he is "lost hero". In *3 Seconds*, there are "group heroes" with different personalities and identities, while *Leap* is a multi-faceted portrayal of a person, creating a small number of "leading heroes" while most of them are unknown "partner heroes".

3.2 Coaches and athletes

The image of the coach is different in the two films. In *3 Seconds*, Coach Garland is a de-authoritative training instructor and spiritual mentor of athletes. The film shows his care for the players all the time. In *Leap*, coach Yuan is a representative of the traditional authoritative coach, using almost brutal physical training to help players get rapid ascension. Coach Lang ping, breaking the traditional model and creating a new training mode, links up with the times, represents the new coach of thought liberation, and the coach Chen is the transition of the two, having the effect of the connection.

The two films both reproduce classic games and maximize the reality in the shaping of athletes. *Leap* uses real athletes as actors, while *3 Seconds* is to choose non-basketball actors after a year of professional basketball training, for the purpose of restoring the real characters and scenes as much as possible. The reappearance of real events in the form of films, coupled with dramatic conflicts, makes it more interesting and attractive.

The relationship between coach and athlete is one of mutual achievement and growth. Whether it is *3 Seconds* or *Leap*, coaches and athletes are mutual achievements, they are both up and down, which determines that they have spiritual resonance and profound friendship. *3 Seconds* is more inclined to the coach to drive everyone to grow up because the coach himself has an absolutely strong will and unyielding spirit, and he infects everyone with his own behaviors and spirits; Under the guidance of Coach Yuan, Coach Chen and Lang Ping are growing up. When Coach Chen and Lang Ping are coaching, they are also driving the growth of new players, which gives us a sense of inheritance.

3.3 Relatives and friends

The friends and relatives in the two films do not appear as opposing characters but become supporters of the athletes, which enables them to better play their own level. As for love, in *3 Seconds*, Sasha has a rare heart attack. But his girlfriend refuses to break up with him, saying she is willing to be with him for the rest of his life. The support and encouragement of his girlfriend also indirectly propelled Sasha to make the last and most important shot. As for kinship, in *Leap*, Lang Ping calls her daughter to say that she wants to teach in China. Without any hesitation, the daughter supports her decision. She believes that her mother should do what she wants and should not be bound by family or other factors. As for friendship, Chen voluntarily withdrew from the election after Lang Ping returned to China, and came out to support Lang Ping's reform when she was under controversy, trusting her unconditionally and supporting her. Garland's partner coach, Hank, has been helping Garland, even against the order of the sports bureau to arbitrarily agreed the Soviet Union participate in the competition and support the partner and the team. Whether it is love, kinship, or friendship, the support from all sides enables athletes to devote themselves to their sports career, create miracles, set new records, and surpass themselves.

3.4 Female images and male images

Male images and female images in sports movies usually do not conflict much, because the competition system is more presented as the competition between the same sex, while the opposite sex is the support and affirmation. *3 Seconds* shows the male charm while women are as supporting roles to promote the plot. *Leap* focuses on shaping the female images while the male is as a foil, reflecting a kind of awakening of female consciousness. However, men and women are never opposite, but two-way and complementary.

3 Seconds is a sports film in the traditional patriarchal society, featuring mostly male characters and all kinds of completely different male characters. With only a handful of female characters in the film, the girlfriend of Sasha, Alexandra, shows that women can be just as strong as men, supporting the decisions of their loved ones and facing up to reality. *Leap* shows that women discover their worth and break the dominance of men in sports. The main male role in the film is the seemingly inhuman coach Yuan, who is a representative of authority and a metaphor for male dominance in the sports field. In the film, Coach Yuan raised the block, continuously trained the female volleyball players, and competed with the male volleyball teams. Under the guidance of Coach Yuan, the female volleyball players appeared passive and weak, which was in line with the natural concept of strong men and weak women. The image of Chen, a teaching assistant, is thin and short compared with Lang Ping, which just forms a sharp contrast with the traditional strength of men and women. As a ladder player of the female

volleyball team, he is a kind of the role of the foil, foiling the hard training of the female volleyball team. He was reluctant and reluctant at the beginning, and later became the strongest supporter of the women's volleyball team, supporting and encouraging each other. The implication is that women can shine, that women can have a voice and a place in sport in their own right. Later, Coach Chen fully supported Lang Ping's reform and even gave up the election to become Lang Ping's foil. Men and women are not strong or weak, but stick to their position and move forward toward their dreams.

4. Narrative mode

The narrative is the foundation of the existence of film art. Sometimes what matters is not the story itself, but the perspective from which to tell the story and how to tell the story to be moving, that is, to better mobilize the audience's emotions and let them have a deeper experience of the film. Moreover, the way of telling stories is often characterized by the director's own style. A good director can let people feel his inner expression and emotional transmission through his narrative way. The two directors establish their own world in the film with different narrative perspectives and structures.

4.1 Narrative perspective

In terms of narrative perspective, the two films also adopt the way of shifting perspective. In *Leap*, the protagonist assumes the role of narrator, which makes the film more realistic, while in *3 Seconds*, different angles are chosen to convey as much information as possible. *Leap* uses the technological transformation of narrative perspective. The beginning shows the outline of the women's volleyball team from the perspective of Chen. At the same time, the heroine Lang Ping is introduced, implying their friendship. As the plot progresses, Chen gradually integrates into the women's volleyball team and becomes an indispensable part of it, implying that he will have an inseparable relationship with the women's volleyball team in the future. In the second half of the film, the narrator from Chen becomes the heroine Lang Ping, from the objective perspective of Lang Ping to subjective perspective, more detailed presented coach Lang ping's psychological activities, letting the audience feel the distance between Lang Ping and themselves was shortened as if they were experiencing what happened to Lang Ping themselves, which aroused strong resonance. In the beginning, *3 Seconds* adopts the "omniscient" narrative, which explains the background of the event as well as the characters and their relationship with each other, so as to satisfy the curiosity of the audience and give them as much information as possible, so that the audience could better understand the trend of the story. For example, in the duel of the Munich Olympic Games, the film uses multiple perspectives, such as the audience, the Soviet Sports Bureau, and the American basketball team, to convey different messages and emotions from multiple perspectives, making the plot more dramatic and comprehensive, and giving the audience more imagination and thinking space.

4.2 Narrative structure

In terms of narrative structure, *3 Seconds* is a typical causal linear structure, while the *Leap* is a multi-temporal linear structure. Both of them have their own advantages and disadvantages. Both films move forward in chronological order, which shows the internal logic of the story and allows the audience to understand the whole story, making it easier to create a sense of reality. *3 Seconds* tells the story of Garland leading the Soviet National basketball Team to defeat the United States National Basketball Team in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. It focuses on how Garland led the Russian Olympic team to victory step by step. The distribution of each line is to pave the way for the final victory. This causal linear structure is also the narrative structure often used by director Anton Megerdichev. *Leap* transcends the boundaries of time and space to show the inheritance and spirit of the Chinese female volleyball team as much as possible. It is an interpretation of a female volleyball team rather than the overall picture of a single game. Peter Chen's space-time narration is not only more apparent in the *Leap* but also appears in a lot of films directed by him. The transformation between the United States and Hong Kong in *The Twins Story*, the selection of time and space before and after the return of Hong Kong in *Sweet*, and the long span of time to show the changes of the times are a favorite narrative method of Director Peter Chan, showing his personal characteristics.

5. Audio-visual language

Audio-visual language can often reflect the skills of a director. How to use picture language to

promote the narrative? How to deal with the details of sports? They are the problems that need to be considered in sports films. In both films, authenticity comes first, followed by the director's artistic creation.

5.1 Visual modeling

The directors of both films attach great importance to the restoration of original scenes and emphasize authenticity. The training ground of Leap was rebuilt in proportion to the former training ground of the Fujian Women's volleyball team. The team uniforms, training facilities, and slogans were all close to the real scene of the 1990s. The set, the costumes, and even the shape of the sweat on the clothes were kept the same, and the cast even wore lift pads to make them look like athletes. In addition, both directors used the way of cutting into the black and white TV broadcast during the game to make the picture more realistic and immerse the audience. The control of every detail can see the skills of directors and their attention to the films.

In terms of foreground setting, Director Peter Chan made good use of blocking in the Leap. When Lang Ping first appeared on the stage, she was practicing weight alone through the grid, showing her unyielding and indomitable character. Second, in the Japanese Female Volleyball World Cup in 1981, the net caught The Chinese players, suggesting that the Chinese female volleyball team lost to the Japanese Female Volleyball World Cup in 2016, the Brazilian players blocked the net, suggesting that the Chinese team broke the deployment of Brazil and achieved another brilliant performance.

The upshot shot often appears in the two films to show the superior and inferior sides. For example, in the Japanese Female Volleyball World Cup in 2016, the score was caught up, and the upshot shot to the Japanese player further implied their dominant position. Until the last minute of the match, the director used a zoom push to blur the net that had trapped Lang ping, indicating that Lang Ping was about to break through and beat her opponent. After the Defeat of The Chinese national Team in the Japanese World Cup Female Volleyball Team, the female volleyball team members were photographed in an upside-down way, reflecting a sad mood. In 3 Seconds, the American basketball players were given upturned shots when they took the court to show their pride and disdain for the Soviet basketball team.

Both films use a lot of close-ups and medium and close shots to show the expressions of characters and speed up the narrative pace. In 3 Seconds, the Munich final accounts for nearly half of the time of the film. It uses the slow motion, close shot in close-up, show the movement of players on the pitch attitude, including ball, goal, injury, accumulating, foil the tension. It not only shows the direction of the team USA coach for the players but also presents the change of the audience look, showing the question to the American style of attack. The final three seconds of the goal were scored in slow motion, allowing people to feel the trajectory of the ball. The camera then cuts to the horrified reaction of the audience, the flying documents of the Soviet Sports Bureau, the incredible expressions of the American street basketball team, and the expressions of the American players. Finally, it cuts back to the court, where Sasha catches the ball and makes the game-winning shot. Time returns to normal and the crowd cheers. In the 1981 Japanese war, the close-ups of the Japanese flag waving in the stadium show the Japanese dominant position, and the close-ups frequently appear in the confrontation between the two sides. In 2008, coach Lang Ping and Coach Chen used mid and close shots to explain to the players how the coaches of both sides changed tactics at a fast pace and played the game.

5.2 Sound elements

In terms of the use and deployment of sound elements, both films perfectly use appropriate music to arouse the emotions of the audience and promote the narrative, so that the same shot can produce multiple meanings. In sports movies, music often plays a role in setting off the mood of the characters and rendering the atmosphere, while sound can better reflect the details and increase the sense of reality.

The selection of music in the two films is very distinctive, and the audio is mainly natural sound, with reality as the main goal. In Leap, before the friendly match between the female volleyball team and the Jiangsu Male Volleyball team, the ballads are sung by the audience had a unique sense of the times. At the beginning of the match, the relatively light music was adopted, and then the rhythm was accelerated and the exciting music was adopted, showing that the fighting spirit of the women's volleyball team had been aroused. In 1981, when the Chinese team won the war between China and Japan, black and white TV pictures and soothing music were used to arouse the emotions of the

audience, reflecting the difficulty of winning and the joy of winning, and showing the joy of the Chinese audience. The 2008 US-China War used fast-paced clips set to fast-paced music to create tension, suggesting that Chinese tactics had been cracked. Finally, after the Defeat of the Chinese team, completely different music was played, and the audience was in an uproar. Though their shouts could not be heard, their anger could be felt. After the final goal of the 2016 China-Pakistan War, no sound elements were used to create a silent joy, and then the soothing piano sound and the exciting pictures created a sound and picture separation. With a "Song of Life" as the ending song, matched with the real video of the past, it not only has a feeling of nostalgia but also has expectations for the future.

In *3 Seconds*, Garland serves as a coach and his son passes over the ball and threw into the three-point ball. The background music is passionate, indicating the awakening of the fighting national spirit. In the case of *Sasha*, the music is soothing when he meets his girlfriend, but when he falls ill, the sound of his breathing and traffic downstairs breaks the peace, creating a sense of chaos and insecurity that sets the stage for his subsequent missteps on the track. There are also some local folk songs in this film. The coach leads the team members to attend the wedding of their sister in Georgia, accompanied by Musical Instruments and the sound of ballads, showing the background of the times and ethnic customs. When the Soviet National basketball team plays the American street basketball team, the overall tone of the music is brisk. But then a rush of phone calls wake Up Garland, the coach went to the bar to find the players, finding them drunk and disorderly, indicating that they have been devastated. In *Munich's* final battle, it tries to restore the original sound, without too much music. Until the US changed tactics, Dwight hit Sergei accompanied by sound effects, to show the immorality of the US fierce collision style. When Sasha saw his girlfriend in the audience, the soothing music began to play, and Sasha began to believe that anything was possible as long as he was alive. After winning, the team returned to the restroom and played soothing music to show their warmth. The team gave the prize money to the coach to express their gratitude to the coach. The end of both films is played on videotape, showing the original miracle.

6. Conclusion

Both Chinese and Russian sports films have their own advantages and can learn from each other. The themes of them both start from the national ideology, showing patriotism, sportsmanship, and individual success. In the characterization, they show all kinds of characters and the interpersonal circle with athletes or coaches as the core and deepen the theme by constantly resolving conflicts. The narrative ways reflect the thinking of directors and have their own style. In terms of audio-visual language, the pursuit of realism, the control of the lens, and the selection of sound are all indispensable factors for a good film.

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