

The similarities and difference between Chinese classical dance and Western ballet

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Abstract: As one of the oldest cultural and artistic categories of mankind, dance has a profound sense of history and national cultural characteristics and a long history. Chinese and western dance clearly reflects the different psychological characteristics of the two cultures when expressing the cultural and life experience of the two cultures. The two different styles of dance both have their own cultural deposits and characteristics. Chinese classical dance and Western classical ballet are the performance forms of the eastern and western dance cultures respectively. Through the analysis and comparison, the development trend of Chinese classical dance and western classical ballet in different times and different cultural contexts is summarized. But they also have some differences in cultivating dancers. By comparing their similarities and differences, we can not only enhance the understanding of each other, but also better learn the advantages of each other, and scientifically avoid the shortcomings of each other, so as to produce a more scientific training method.

Keywords: Chinese classical dance, Ballet, Dance

1. Introduction

Chinese classical dance and Western ballet are two of the most representative dance forms in China and the West respectively. And it is well known that both dance forms place great emphasis on the training of daily basic skills, and both have a rigorous and complete training system. In relation to Chinese classical dance. It places a high value on combining the Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang in its daily training. Dance movements adhere to the Yin and Yang mutual conversion principle, which is also at the heart of Chinese classical dance. According to Pang Dan, a Chinese classical dance professor, "the upper body should always follow the waist to complete the twist to the left or right."^[4] When it comes to ballet, the goal of training or schooling is to make the unnatural natural, as if it were 'second nature' or something that was just taken for granted, in order to develop an unconscious dance habit. It's important to note that the habits develops in a field that is inextricably linked to the habits.^[6] The field is a structured system of social positions and a social arena. This paper will explore the similarities and differences between Chinese classical dance and western ballet in daily practice.

2. Differences in cultural forms

Chinese classical dance and western ballet in similar origin, Chinese classical dance is on the basis of national folk traditional dance, after successive professional workers refining, sorting, processing, creation, and after a long period of art practice test, handed down is considered to have certain model significance and classical style characteristics of dance. This is true in both China and the West. Both of them have rigorous procedures, normative movements, and superior skills. Chinese classical dance mainly comes from Chinese opera, which borrows from some hand and foot movements in Peking Opera, This laid the movement foundation of Chinese classical dance. Secondly, Chinese classical dance also borrows posture and technical skills from Chinese martial arts, and follows the traditional Chinese spirit of "the oneness of man and nature" internally. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century, when Yuanpei Cai and others introduced Western-style school dances to China. Especially during World War II, some pioneering dancers who stayed in Japan and Britain returned to China one after another, bringing modern dance and ballet to China, and is later influenced by Western ballet, Chinese classical dance gradually added some elements similar to ballet to its training system.^[4]

In contrast, Western ballet originated in Italy in the 15th century and took shape and flourished in

France. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, it became an independent and complete art form, creating tiptoe dance skills, developing various jumping and rotating skills, and producing a complete set of training methods, gradually forming the Italian school, French school and Russian school with different styles and characteristics. Ballet, translated from the French language, has three meanings. One is a stage dance form, namely, classical European dance, commonly known as ballet. The second is the dance drama, which originally refers to the European classical dance as the main means of expression. Third, in the dance works created by modern choreographers, a considerable part has no story content and no plot. The choreographer uses European classical dance or modern dance, or combines the two, to express a certain mood, artistic conception, or express the author's understanding of a certain musical work, etc., which are also called ballet. Through the processing and refinement of the French aristocracy, ballet was given a very strong aristocratic flavour, and therefore it also embodied very obvious cultural characteristics of serving the royal power, supporting centralisation and advocating reason. In terms of the movement characteristics, the ability to perform technically, learn rapidly and eventually embody movement, strength, flexibility, speed, endurance, and physical structure, as well as the ability to communicate a specific aesthetic of grace, beauty, and perfection, will be the material capital in ballet. (Pickard, 2012)

3. Difference in the naming

The difference in cultural forms has led to a great difference in the naming of the gestures of these two different dance styles. A Chinese scholar, Lyu Lyu said: "The names of the basic postures in Chinese classical dance are almost always derived from mountains and rivers, birds and animals, which reflect the ancient Chinese idea of the unity of heaven and man, such as "Yun Shou" (A form of classical Chinese dance. It is a dance-like gesture that expresses the spirit of the character through the coordinated movement of the hands and arms.) and "Tan Hai" (A form of classical Chinese dance. Originally from the terminology of Peking Opera, it was originally one of the martial arts students' kung fu stances and is divided into the "front tanhai" and "back tanhai"). The waist serves as the axis on which they are all shifted. They are named after the natural landscape and the ancient Chinese people's worship and imagination of nature.

If the naming of Chinese classical dance is more intentional, the naming of the basic postures in Western ballet is more scientific; in the 17th century, Beauchamp, the teacher of Louis XIV and director of the Royal Academy of Dance, he oversaw the Royal Dance Academy's academicians as they gathered once a month to debate dance issues, devise and enhance dance techniques, address current and potential issues, and categorise and label them in accordance with French royal aesthetic standards. The words for these movements are still in use today and serve as the foundation for terms used in traditional ballet. The five positions of the feet and certain other fundamental elements of classical ballet, such as "opening out of the legs," were also developed at that period, forming the artistic foundation of Western dance.^[8]

Although the naming of dance movements differs significantly between the two, they are both scientific, with the exception that the naming of Chinese classical dance falls within the realm of natural science, whereas the naming of the five-foot positions in Western ballet leans more towards mathematical geometry. The reason for this difference stems from cultural differences between the two. China has had a philosophy of "the unity of heaven and man" since ancient times, and it is full of endless fantasies of a better life. Because the Chinese yearn for mountains, rivers, and streams to serve them, the names of the dance movements reflect the ancient Chinese reverence for natural science. However, western ballet, on the other hand, began with the establishment of an academic institute - the Royal Academy of Dance, founded by order of Louis XIV. Because the original purpose of ballet was not to develop into what it is now as a performing art, but to raise the standard of ballroom dancing for the royal family and thus perfectly reveal their aristocratic status, and because of the development of mathematical geometry in the West, the naming of ballet's five-foot positions was more rigorous and good memory.^[5] It can be seen from the establishment of the ballet discipline. The ballet aesthetic is gradually established through pedagogical processes and increasingly difficult learning tasks. In a ballet class, for example, learning the tendu involves practising and achieving stable and repeatable technical accuracy at the barre, where balance and postural control are aided, before attempting the movement in the centre. This method allows the student to develop stability in the tendu's codified technical competency without having to master the functional capacity of balancing on one leg. Although open to criticism, the effectiveness of this approach is demonstrated by generations of elite dancers who have been trained using such methods.^[3]

4. Differences in softness and strength

Besides, there are differences in the training of softness and strength between Chinese classical dance and Western ballet. Western ballet focuses on the fundamental techniques of "open" and "taut" flexibility training. The "open" is supplemented by the "external rotation" and "external opening" to train flexibility. The "open" is the outward rotation of the lower limb from the hip joint; "outward" refers to the range of movement of the joints. To maintain the body's centre of gravity, "taut" requires the feet to be straight from the instep to the toe in ballet. Chinese classical dance, on the other hand, is much more complex, with three main steps:

1) In terms of the torso, the backward extension of the upper section to form the chest and waist, the side lift to form the sides, and the horizontal twist around the centre line are all examples of torso flexibility training in Chinese classical dance.

2) "Instead, "twist" and "close," and work with the torso to achieve "small twist and close waist" and "big twist and close waist."

3) Lower limb training in Chinese classical dance entails training the lower limbs to open out, stretch, and loop on the diagonal, as well as exercising the lower limbs' internal rotation to better show the dance's floating posture. In strength training, there are not many tumbling and jumping movements in Chinese classical dance, but generally jumping movements are based on flexibility training.

In Western ballet, strength training is always based on "open, tense, straight and standing", and these four main methods are all based on strength, supplemented by softness.^[9]

5. Differences in aesthetic

The aesthetic characteristics of Chinese classical dance are quite similar to those of ballet in some aspects. They also appreciate the stretching, stretching and opening. However, due to the different cultural backgrounds, "Yun" (the rhythm of action) is an extremely important concept among the basic movement elements of Chinese classical dance. Romantic charm is generally refers to the connotation, spirit, rhythm, temperament. Any art without verve can be said soulless. In the movement of the human body in classical dance, the verve can be recognized and felt. And it is the grasp of the "romantic charm", "form" has vitality, to appreciate the real artistic conception contained by the dance. The "inward, meaning and spirit" of Chinese classical dance is the embodiment of "verve". In the concept of mind, emphasize the connotation of breath, breath and mind.

Ballet is known in the West as the jewel in the crown of dance art. It has a complex structure and specific technical requirements, a ballet pas de deux, solo dance, group dance have a fixed form structure. The pas de deux is the core dance of classical ballet, which is mostly used to show the love or the confrontation between the hero and heroine. Its characteristics are graceful posture and inner feelings. Generally, it is divided into "enter" and "adagio", that is, the lyric dance representing the support and lift of the actors and actresses, followed by "variation", that is, the solo dance of the actors and actresses, showing the character and heart of the characters, and then the "ending" of the performance of the actors and actresses, and finally the dance. The tiptoe dance of the female dancers is the soul of the ballet, its solo needs skilled, light like flying up the jump and dizzy rotation, and powerful strong decorative feet strike, foil the main characters, rendering the environment atmosphere. Ballet emphasizes more on the extension and opening of the human body, its basic form, emphasizes the human body in the external space, the beating of the foot has almost become the representative word of ballet. Show your strength and beauty by challenging the limits of the human body. The plot of the dance often has a strong drama, and the stage structure also makes the audience feel a strong visual impact.

6. Differences in other training methods

When it comes to classroom training and exercises in the centre, taking jumping combinations as an example, Chinese classical dance is accustomed to using the waist as the axis and the circle as the basic line of movement, training the dancers to lean, dip, tilt and twist their limbs, even when jumping continuously, Chinese classical dance follows the basic posture of "Zi Wu Xiang"(Is a requirement for the styling of characters on stage. "Zi" in ancient Chinese means midnight and "Wu" means midday. It is required that the actor's face, eyes, chest, arms, legs and feet should be positioned in different directions while mirroring each other during the appearance so as to achieve balance), the body posture may always

be on the diagonal. ^[4]Take the combination of "she yan " (One of the basic dance postures in Chinese classical dance. The power leg lifts the lower leg in the direction of the heel, with the heart of the foot up, the inner thighs of the legs against each other, the upper body is tilted 45 degrees from the hips to the opposite direction of the power leg, and the waist is slightly twisted.)Take the teaching video of Beijing Dance Academy as an example. The dancers start from the starting point, and the entire formation is diagonal. In addition, the dancer's body is twisted with the waist as the axis, which can be a big jump or a small jump.^[1]

On the other hand, western ballet, is also based on the basic foot and hand positions, which are more upright and rarely have a 'twisting' posture. In the jumping exercises at the Vaganova Ballet Academy, for example, the dancers still use the basic foot and hand positions of ballet as preparatory movements, and they may begin in the middle of the stage, producing different directions in between as the rhythm of the music changes, but their bodies do not twist as dramatically as in Chinese classical dance, and their body movements appear more upright than those of Chinese classical dancers.^[7]

The difference in external posture is also a reflection of the difference in the origins of the two dance genres, as most Chinese classical dance is based on folklore and developed from folklore to the court, while Western ballet is now developed in the court, hence the aristocratic 'righteousness' of Western ballet.

7. Similarities between the two

In addition to the above differences, the two also have similarities. Both of them originated in the court, and were an important tool for the rulers of all dynasties to enjoy and praise morality. Since court dance is generally created with the aesthetic taste of the rulers, some works inevitably are beautiful and disorderly in style, or negative in content. However, with the development of time, these two kinds of dances that originated in the court began to enter into the lives of ordinary people, so there were more and more materials available for use or reference for dance, and the themes became more and more rich. In addition, in terms of training methods, ballet has a long history and many experts, so has developed a correct and scientific training system. It is precisely because of the formal training system of ballet that Chinese classical dance has added many ballet training methods in the basic skills training class. Chinese classical dance, like Western ballet, the body emphasizes precise lines, position and visual design. This physical perfection is often defined as physical practice and slim ideals. A certain aesthetic of the body will be created and replicated in the field of study and the school in response to demand. Bourdieu contends that the worldview that is conveyed and valued extends beyond aesthetic considerations and that the body is a reflection of one's habits. Young dancers' aesthetic is influenced by the social dance world, role models, teachers, and the influence of their classmates as they strive for a particular ballet body. In the social world of dance, becoming thin is both the norm and an expectation. Dancers are thought to be especially susceptible to diet plans and other methods of "correcting" their bodies. In the realm of dance, the body that is obese is the "transgressive body," as the "thin" is beautiful and the "fat" is ugly and frail ^[2]. In terms of maintaining the ballet figure, the remarks of Steve, an instructor from the dance school, are especially instructive: ballet is one of the highest arts, and if you are fat, you cannot accomplish the fundamental level required. Although it may not be politically correct, don't pursue a career in ballet since maintaining ballet posture and movement is impossible. It's possible to be politically correct in many professions. It's a world of high standards. (Pickard, 2012)

Young dancers' activities are shaped by the art of dance as a social activity, but young dancers also form the art of dance through a process of social integration. Young dancers also mould it by assimilating society into their physical forms. The procedure of becoming incorporated into the organism. Young dancers become aware of and accept the physical demands of the dance art. The expectations of the dance physique, the high standards of aesthetic perfection in the dance art, and the idealisation of the dance art physique are all understood by and accepted by young dancers. The perfect dance physique as it is perceived by the dance community. Young dancers who don't conform to the norms of body shape and form may be asked to quit school. But attitudes and comprehensions of the dance arts body The young adolescent dancers in this study's views and understandings of the dance arts body do suggest that if a person's body does not meet the demands of slimness in size and shape, then they do not meet the demands of the dance arts and cannot call themselves dancers. Or assert their status as a dancer in the discipline of dance. Being and keeping a particular body size and shape was thought to be an important aspect of being and expressing a dancer's identity because all the dancers in this study want to be professional dancers. (Pickard, 2012)

There is no doubt that the art of dance at this stage is demanding in terms of the size of dancers, especially in Chinese classical dance and ballet, both of which have very serious stereotypes about dancers, and they are both based on thinness as beauty. For reference from personal experience, during school each dancer has a weight chart dedicated to them, which is marked with a standard weight to match different heights, and will face very serious penalties if their weight or form is not up to standard. As a result, students who are unable to meet the weight or shape standards resort to extreme measures such as dieting to maintain or lose weight. However, this is very unhealthy and can lead to many chronic diseases and, in some cases, to anorexia. When 'thinness' becomes the 'religion' of more and more dancers, perhaps the art of dance will lose its original beauty. Although thinness is a common feature of Western ballet and Chinese classical dance, it is unhealthy from a human perspective and from a medical point of view. Through personal experience, the need to maintain a slim figure through dieting has caused many of the dancers around us, including myself, to suffer from varying degrees of stomach problems, which can also affect daily life to a great extent.

For these reasons, it is particularly important to change the stereotypical standard of thinness as beauty in Western ballet and Chinese classical dance. It may be difficult to directly change the current status quo within the industry, but I personally believe that this solution can be divided into three steps to gradually change the stereotypical standard of thinness as beauty. The first step is to divide the food according to its nutrient content, with the nutrients most needed by the human body being ranked highest, those essential to people's daily lives being ranked second highest, and the rest being added at the dancers' discretion according to their individual physiques; the second step is to develop an exclusive menu for each dancer on the basis of the first step, so that they can maintain a slim figure while having a more nutritious intake. The second step is to create a recipe for each dancer based on the first step, so that they can maintain a slim body while having a balanced nutritional intake. The last and most difficult step is to change the stereotype that all dancers are slim and thin, so that schools, teachers and the dancers themselves have the medical knowledge to understand that a slim body increases the risk of injury and may affect the dancer's career. The dancer's career may be affected.

8. Conclusion

To sum up, Dance is the art of form, whether it is traditional Chinese classical dance or ballet from the West, the goal of shaping the beauty of the body is achieved through constant training of the form. Traditional dance training has been polished over time, using mechanical repetition. As society has progressed and dance science and theory has evolved and changed, training in a scientific way has become the foundation of dance teaching. From the training it can be seen that there are still differences between classical Chinese dance and ballet dance. Although there are many differences between Chinese classical dance and Western ballet, they are typical of the different aesthetic cultures of China and the West, producing obvious differences while at the same time constantly drawing on each other's strengths. Through the comparative development of the similarities and differences between Chinese classical dance and ballet, the basic training methods of both have some value. Then the parts that have value can be actively referred to during the training process. Chinese classical dance places more emphasis on rhythm and the movements performed should have a certain rhythm, so students can draw on the strengths of both Chinese classical dance and ballet in their basic training, so that they can combine the valuable parts and make the teaching more effective through the gradual introduction of teaching methods. At the same time, the same stereotypical standards exist for both, and although it is difficult to change these existing standards, there are still some 'atypical' dancers emerging into the public eye, such as the Chinese dancer Huang Doudou, who is not tall enough to be handsome, but who still enjoys a high status in the Chinese dance world. It is therefore to be hoped that, with the development of time and technology, Chinese classical dance and Western ballet will change the current stereotype of 'thinness as beauty'. The art of dance is a language that can be understood by all ethnic groups in the world. The art of orthodoxy evokes the search for beauty and goodness, and can have a positive and dynamic impact on human culture.

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