

Exploring the Cultural Meaning of the Dance Poetry Drama “Only This Green”

Ruijun Bao

Dance Academy of Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou, Gansu, 748400, China

Abstract: *When the maidens in high bun and green clothes came, were you attracted by the overwhelming oriental aesthetics? On the night of January 31, 2022, at the live broadcast of the CCTV Spring Festival Gala, an excerpt of the dance poetry drama "Only This Green" reaped unanimous praise from the audience and drew a buzz of attention. This seems to be the same as the 2021 Henan Spring Festival Gala "Tang Palace Night Banquet" of the cultural and cultural fever, giving people an illusion of "copy and paste", but it is a coincidental journey to find the roots. This paper will explore the spirit of Chinese craftsmanship and Chinese culture in the dance poetry drama "Only This Green" from the perspective of historiography and aesthetics, including the hair buns of the ladies, the green clothes, the paintings, and the fine carvings of the creative team.*

Keywords: *“Only This Green”, Cultural Confidence, Traditional Culture, Oriental Aesthetics, “Thousand Miles Of Rivers And Mountains”*

1. Introduction



Figure 1: Stills from the dance poetry drama “Only This Green”.

The painting “Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains” in the Palace Museum in Beijing is considered an heirloom because of its fine brushwork, majestic composition, rich meaning, and exquisite green color scheme, which depicts the boundless thousands of miles of mountains and rivers of the motherland. The dance-poem drama “Only This Green” uses a modern perspective and adopts a staggered narrative structure to show how Wang Ximeng created this masterpiece while bringing traditional crafts such as silk weaving, pigment making, brush making, ink making and seal engraving to the stage, and at the same time extracting “green” from the painting as a symbol of Oriental aesthetics. A symbol of oriental aesthetics. The elegant and refined oriental aesthetics create a dreamscape spanning a thousand years and awaken the audience's deepest respect for traditional culture. In this paper, the author will analyze the excellent traditional culture involved in “Only This Green” from the perspective of history, aesthetics, and costume design, and enhance the cultural confidence of the young generation while spreading oriental aesthetics and manifesting the spirit of Chinese culture.

2. High Bun With Vivid Lips, Traceable to Song Dance

2.1. Song Makeup High Bun

According to incomplete statistics, the dance poetry drama “Only This Green” has already traveled to 16 cities and performed more than 50 shows. In addition to the beauty of Song painting and Chinese

classical dance, the original mountain peak high bun, Song makeup, and unique Song costume design of the ladies on stage have become the attractions of the play.

At a recent workshop, the creative team explained that to make the dancers look more like the mountains on stage, different shapes and physical changes were designed to simulate the mountains, of which the hair ornament, the mountain peak high bun, is a good example.

Bun, also known as a knot, jade, that is, the ancient Chinese women's hair knotted on top of the head or combed in the back of the head of the hairstyle, rich and long history, the dynasties have been different. For example, the Han Dynasty high bun and hanging bun, the Wei Jin and North and South Dynasties when the rise of the hundred flowers bun, hibiscus bun, cross bun, flying bun, etc., the Sui Dynasty court is popular to wear side bun, Xiang Yun bun, Ling Xu bun, turn the lotus bun, the Tang Dynasty period Tang people good comb half-turn bun also known as a single knife bun, the Song people prefer the sky bun, concentric bun, bunhead, pick heart bun and another relatively simple hairstyle. In the dance poem drama "Only This Green", the dancers' hair is similar to the half-turned bun worn by the Tang people, and the simple hairstyle style preferred by the Song people is the main design orientation. Based on this, the creative team added innovative elements to form a high bun that resembles a mountain rock.

2.2. Green Clothing

The afterglow spreads the ancient rhythm and the dance of the rivers and mountains at a distance of a thousand miles. The ingenious ideas of costume, chemistry, and path in the dance-poem drama "Only This Green" also include the green clothes of the ladies on stage. The creative team chose to respect the overall trend of Song Dynasty clothing and designed the tail of the lower skirt to simulate the gentle slope of the mountain, highlighting the slender waist of the women, while using the two main colors of "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains": stone green and stone blue, as the color scheme of the costumes. The top is stone green and the bottom skirt is stone green. The top is stone green and the bottom skirt is stone green, such a color scheme of the costume forms a harmonious beauty for this particular work of material selection, which is also in line with the ancient Greek philosophical sage Socrates' proposal: "Beauty is a formal beauty, a beauty of order."

3. Dance to Paint the Mountains and Pass on Civilization

3.1. Rivers and Mountains in Pictures

After the Song Emperor released the military power from the cup of wine and returned the military and political power to the central government, a literary society was established, and the status of literati gradually increased. At the end of the Northern Song Dynasty, Song and Jin formed a military confrontation, and the Northern Song society, which was centered on the rule of literature, was economically prosperous, but financially corrupt, militarily weak, and the country was decimated, so a strong patriotic force was formed inside and outside the dynasty. Among them, young students were the mainstream patriotic force, but in the face of the weakness of the imperial court, they could only put their ideals of enriching the country and strengthening the army to recover the mountains and rivers in their artistic and cultural creations [1]. They could only put their ideals of enriching the country and strengthening the army to recover the mountains and rivers in their artistic and cultural creations. Among them was the young and talented painter Wang Ximeng, who, as a typical court painter, had been chosen by Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty and recruited to study painting at the Hanlin Painting Academy.

At the age of 18, Wang Ximeng vomited his heart and blood for more than 11 months and offered to paint "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" to Emperor Huizong, who was delighted at the sight. He saw the painting with layers of mountains, rivers, fishing villages, cottages, and fishermen's boats, with no failures in any of the paintings. The scroll unfolds in the form of a long scroll structure, focusing on the development of the beauty of the landscape in terms of mood and form, depicting thousands of miles of mountains and rivers while at the same time being a kind of fallacious praise for the ruler. The landscape and the traditional Chinese spirit merge in the Tao, which is a part of Chinese philosophy, and the painting language is transcendent to reality and comes from nature, but shows the appearance of the self. In the painting, the mountains are steep and rugged, the water in the south is smoky and misty, and there is a thatched-roof dock in the countryside. The picture is a moment of a thousand years [2].

3.2. Fine Carving

The creative team was under tremendous pressure to create the dance poem "Only This Green" because of the mature artistic masterpiece "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains", a legendary painting of the Northern Song Dynasty, and how to use dance language to show the cultural meaning of painting became an obstacle in front of the creative team. After a series of in-depth research and long talks with cultural relics experts and painters, they found a solution to the problem, which is to start from a multi-dimensional perspective, draw on the montage technique to link time and space, and qualify the details of the work.

It is easy to see that the point of the play is how to dance painting mountains and rivers, which is both the point and the difficulty. Screenwriter Xu Junrui said in an interview: "Dance drama and drama, opera is different, there are no lines, and no words in the act of painting has a natural connection, the body language of dance can show the beautiful mood of the painting. [1]" To better complete this work, the creative team did their homework and read through most of the poems, books, paintings, and even craft books related to Song Dynasty culture on the market. When designing the story of "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" without characters, choreographer-director Zhou Leah, Han Zhen, and Xu Junrui came up with the idea of starting with all the processes needed to bring the painting from nothing to something, from making brushes, ink, weaving scrolls, grinding stones, seal engraving and other handicrafts, so that painting could come to life.

With the basic chapter outline in place, the creative team began to think about how to achieve the perfect presentation on stage. In terms of stage design, considering that the traditional Chinese scrolls are usually unfolded circularly, the creative team cleverly set the stage in the shape of multi-layered concentric circles to restore the process of traditional scroll unfolding while commemorating the endless flow of years. In terms of movement design, the creative team integrated the beauty of the meaning of painting and the beauty of Chinese classical dance into the slow gait of the ladies on stage, designing "Waiting", "Looking at the Moon", "Falling Clouds", "Hanging Thoughts", "Solo Steps", "Dangerous Peaks", "Reclining Stones" and other stylized movements spread out on the stage, and exhale, all the mountains and rivers. According to the analysis of choreographer Han Zhen, some of the shapes and movements of the group dance "Only This Green" express the concept of mountains in layers [3].

4. Dance as a Medium and Pay Tribute to Tradition

4.1. Craftsmanship

Since our government proposed and advocated the artisan spirit in 2016, China's economic development has been injected with new vitality, and today, during rapid development, we still desperately need labor creators with the artisan spirit. Craftsmen's persistence and excellence in their artifacts tirelessly promote the economic development of the country and the times. For example, the "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" has been in existence for more than 900 years, with dynasties changing and years passing by without fading to green. Predictably, this has to do with the countless Chinese craftsmen whose names are not remembered. Ancient China was a veritable "country of craftsmen". For more than 2,000 years, China was the world's largest exporter of silk, porcelain, lacquerware, gold and silver, and other exquisite products, mostly by the hands of ancient Chinese craftsmen [4].

In the play, the choreographer and director bring the audience's attention to the Chinese craftsmen hidden behind the painting: the brush maker, the ink maker, the stone grinder, the seal carver, and the silk weaver, through the perspective of the person who exhibits the scroll. The creative team uses multiple perspectives to unfold layer by layer, progressively hiding the painting, emphasizing the focus on traditional craftsmen such as pen makers, ink makers, stone sharpeners, seal carvers, and silk weavers. In this regard, choreographer and director Xu Junrui said: "The long stretches of peaks and rivers reflect the heart of the craftsmen condensed in the green landscape. On the stage, we express not only the craft itself, but also the people, or a kind of artisan spirit. Those ordinary people who are silent, who do not pursue fame and fortune, and who only do one thing well in their lives, contain greatness in their ordinariness. [5]"

4.2. Home Country Feelings

Many art connoisseurs have given high recognition to the dance poetry drama "Only This Green"

after it has entered the public eye. Feng Shuangbai, Chairman and Party Secretary of the China Dance Association, said in an interview, "As we enter a new era and General Secretary Xi Jinping proposes to enhance cultural self-confidence, what response should dance art give in the trend of this era? I think that "Only This Green" has made a very clear and loud answer. [6]" Indeed, the dance poem drama takes the Chinese national spirit as the origin and awakens the traditional cultural genes in the hearts of the audience, showing the charm of dance art while sending Wang Ximeng's profound and unremitting pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty in "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains".

In the process of creating the work, the creative team repeatedly mentioned that "If you can accommodate the gullies in your heart, your brush can converge the mountains and rivers." Wang Ximeng, who was able to paint, must have been able to take the rivers and mountains into his eyes, and the persistence of Chinese artisans in traditional craftsmanship must be what keeps the greenery going for thousands of years. This spirit, from ancient times to the present, is not only an inheritance of family sentiment but also a continuation of life and emotion. As Zhang Ping, executive deputy director of the Dance Art Center of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and executive deputy director of Dance magazine, said, "Human culture and art in the long history of the slowly unfolding is no longer the artifacts themselves, but the living people, cultural heritage is not a material heritage is the continuation and flow of the great human life emotions. [7]"

5. Conclusions

"Aphorisms from the Ancient Chinese," said: "Consult history when observing reality, reality does not exist without history. [8]" Since the 18th Party Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has increasingly emphasized and discussed the important status and role of culture, and he has incorporated cultural self-confidence into the "four self-confidence" system as an important part of it, with "cultural self-confidence based on the inheritance of a civilization of more than 5,000 years" to He further deepens the "road confidence, theory confidence and system confidence [9]. The dance work "Only This Green" finds inspiration from the cross-section of history, puts the aesthetic spirit and traditional culture in the artistic ideal, shows the way forward for the development of Chinese dance art, and contributes to solving the existing major contradictions in China, satisfying the people's aspiration for a better life. While painting the mountains with dance, it pays tribute to the traditional craftsmen and the intangible power brought by the materiality of the Eastern civilization.

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