

The Application of "Chinese Style" Music in Online Game Music—Taking "Honor of Kings" as an Example

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Abstract: *Electronic Games, known as the "Ninth Art", break the boundaries and thresholds of traditional art because of its rich and diverse artistry and entertainment, and become a popular art carrier for young people in today's society. Through graphics, sound, story, characters and other elements, create a highly immersive virtual world that engages players and conveys emotional value. As an indispensable part of the game world, Game Music contains Cultural elements that will affect the overall style presentation of the game and the transmission of Cultural Values. This paper takes "Honor of Kings", a popular Moba Online game in recent years, as an example, and analyzes the application and value of "Chinese-Style" Music in game Music through the classification of application scenarios of "Chinese-Style" Music in game music, the use of traditional Chinese Musical Instruments, and the application of traditional Chinese opera. This paper discusses how "Chinese-Style" Music helps to create the story background, shape the characters, enrich the Cultural core, and influence the game experience.*

Keywords: *Online Games, Music, Chinese Style, Culture*

1. Introduction

As an online competitive game with the creation background of ancient Chinese history, traditional culture, myths and legends, and martial arts novels, the creation of the game music of "Honor of Kings" contains a large number of traditional Chinese music elements, whether it is the game theme music, the game map music, the character exclusive music, or the background battle music in the game, all of which are very classical Chinese characteristics. Most of these music creations are based on Chinese history and culture, using instruments with traditional Chinese characteristics, such as pipa, erhu, guzheng, bamboo flute, Jinghu, national percussion instruments, etc., combining modern and traditional music aesthetics, integrating electronic music, pop music, symphony and other elements, to play melodies with obvious Chinese characteristics. This "Chinese style" music has helped "Honor of Kings" successfully create game characters with backgrounds of Chinese historical figures, such as Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Wu Zetian, Shangguan Waner, etc., and create ancient Chinese historical capitals and buildings, such as Chang'an City, Luoyang City, and the Great Wall. Through the combination of music and scenes, players feel as if they are in these ancient cities with a long history, experiencing the stories and emotions of the characters, and feeling the profound heritage of traditional Chinese culture. These music effectively improve the player's immersion in the game, improve the game experience, make the player more likely to feel the Chinese classical elements in the game world, and more interested in exploring the Chinese culture behind the characters' stories. To a certain extent, it propagated Chinese classical culture and classical music, and played a positive role in promoting the spread of Chinese traditional culture.

2. The definition and characteristics of Chinese music

"Chinese style" music is a unique type of music that is becoming popular all over the world, combining elements of modern pop music with elements of traditional Chinese culture. It often uses traditional Chinese Musical Instruments such as erhu, pipa, guqin and drum, and takes folk songs and Traditional Chinese opera as its musical expression forms. It uses traditional Chinese pentatonic scales, namely, Gong, Shang, Jue, Zhi and Yu, through mode arrangement and melody combination, and is composed with the aid of modern arrangement technology and music production techniques. The tonal fluctuations in the melody and the melodious turn in the melody form the music with the mark of Chinese classical style. The lyrics of "Chinese style" music often involve ancient poetry, historical stories,

traditional culture, myths and legends, etc. The creation of lyrics not only retains the elegant connotation of ancient poetry, but also integrates the emotional experience of modern people, and is often used in the soundtrack of film and television works.

3. The development of "Chinese style" music in online games

With the advancement of digitalization, the rapid development of online games, how to make games stand out among many competitive products, game music has become one of the key factors to solve this problem. Game music plays an important role in shaping game style, character, scene and game expression, and can directly affect players' emotions and game experience to some extent. Chinese-style music first appeared in online games at the end of the 20th century. At that time, some games with Chinese myths and legends and martial arts background, such as "Sword Heroes Fate" and "Xuanyuan Sword", tried to integrate Chinese classical music elements into the game soundtrack, making the game atmosphere simple and elegant, more suitable for the story background of the game, so that players have a better game experience ^[1]. Such an attempt also made these two games a great success in that year, among which the Chinese style music was also praised, laying the foundation for the development of the application of Chinese style music in game music. The "Chinese style" music, as a combination of traditional Chinese music elements and modern pop music elements, has gradually become an important force in online game music.

With the gradual popularity of online games, more and more games began to try to introduce Chinese music, and even began to use Chinese music as the main game music, in order to enhance the local characteristics of the game, to attract the attention of players. For example, the Legend of the Sword was launched in 1995, the online version of the Sword and the Legend of the Sword was launched in 2003, and the Legend of the Sword and the Sword was launched in 2016. The music of these games is well produced, and the application of Chinese-style music in online games has gradually matured. Chinese-style music is no longer limited to game soundtrack, scene music and combat sound effects, and has begun to become the theme song and propaganda song for game promotion.

In the second decade of the 21st century, the popularity of mobile intelligent terminals has made the mobile game market rise rapidly. In 2015, "Honor of Kings" was publicly tested and quickly occupied the mobile game market. The use of "Chinese-style" music in online games has reached new heights.

4. The application of "Chinese style" music in the "Honor of Kings" game

"Honor of Kings" is a domestic MOBA mobile game developed and run by Tencent Game Tianmei Studio Group, which runs on Android, Apple (IOS) and Nintendo Switch (NS). It was officially released in public beta 3 on November 26, 2015. There is also a European and American version called "Arena of Valor". This game is famous for its grand world view, diversified game modes, beautiful game graphics, rich hero characters and well-made game music, and is one of the most popular mobile games in the world.

As a very ambitious game for the global market, in order to ensure the overall quality of the game, at the beginning of the launch, "Honor of Kings" has paid full attention to the production and promotion of game music, invited Tan Dun, Howard Shore, Jeff Broadbent, Hans Zimmer and other internationally renowned composers to create musical soundtracks with Chinese classical characteristics and Chinese magic with very Chinese style music. Helped the Game to create a strong Chinese style of the magic world, including the collaboration with Neal Acree of the work "The art of War" album is won the 2019 Global Music Awards best Game Music Composer.

5. The use of "Chinese style" music in "Honor of Kings"

As an online interactive competitive game, "Honor of Kings" has built an extremely large world map, and each region of the game map has its own unique story background, urban layout, style architecture and heroes. Under the premise of maintaining the same music style, scene music, version theme music and character skin music are all different, but their music styles are closely related to character background, destiny setting and cultural connotation of skin, and music is the link connecting the whole story line and background ^[2]. "Honor of Kings" music style positioning is called "Oriental fantasy", which depends on the whole game concept and game background is structured in Chinese classical culture, in order to highlight these Chinese elements, "Chinese style " music almost covers all maps,

themes, scenes, characters. The following will briefly list the use of "Chinese style" music in this game music scene (Table 1).

Table 1: Examples of the use of "Chinese style" music in "Honor of Kings"

Usage scenario	Music information	composer
Character music	<HouYi>, character music	Li RongHao
	<Xiang Yu, Yu Ji>, character music	Mao BuYi
Character skin music	<Mighty Warrior>,Zhang Fei, <Invincible>Zhao Yun, <Saint of War> Guan Yu, <Gallant Archer> Huang Zhong, <Valor in Battle>Ma Chao characters skin theme music	Tan Dun
	<Water bosom friend">"Zhuang Zhou" character Mountain and water theme music	Liu Ye, WANG Mingji, Sun Jia
Version theme music	<Breath of Nature>The theme music for the 2021 "Breaking Dawn" edition	Daniel James
"King Pro League" competition music	<The new Ambush on all sides-dragon fighting > 2017 "Honor of Kings" KPL Finals theme music	Seung Hyuk Yang
Limited event music	<The flowers are as promised> Chinese knot series activities "Flower Festival" music	Wang Zongyu

The above table briefly lists the scenarios in which "Chinese style" music is used in the game. Since 2015, the music of "Honor of Kings" has included 290 game music soundtracks on the QQ music platform. With the continuous update of the game version, game characters, character skin, and limited activities, the proportion of "Chinese style" music in the game music is also increasing

5.1. The use of traditional Chinese Musical Instruments in the "Honor of Kings" game

The world view structure of "Honor of Kings" is based on Chinese myths and legends, adaptations of historical figures, and classical literary novels, and portrays a large number of related heroes, such as Zhang Fei, Guan Yu, Ma Chao, and Liu Bei, heroes of The Three Kingdoms Period, and Da Ji and Jiang Ziya from myths and legends; Zhuang Zhou, Shangguan Waner and so on in classical literature [3]; Also created different map scenes, such as "Chang 'an", "the Great Wall", "Luoyang" and other Chinese historical cities and buildings. In order to fit the characters and scenes, the music team of "Honor of Kings" dug deep into the elements of traditional Chinese music. In the creation process of the game music, they used a large number of traditional Chinese Musical Instruments, such as guzheng, pipa, bamboo flute, etc., and used Chinese classical pentatonic mode and integrated Western orchestral music for modern arrangement and production. Created a series of extremely infectious and powerful music works [4].

5.1.1. Guqin

Guqin, also known as "Yao Qin" and "seven-stringed qin", has a history of more than 3,000 years since the Han Dynasty of China. The sound of Guqin is peaceful, quiet and indifferent, and it has a very profound expression. It is the most respected instrument of ancient Chinese scholars and literati. On the sixth anniversary of the release of the game, "Honor of Kings" joined hands with the Chinese Academy of Arts to create a character skin music with the story background of "mountain and water to find bosom friend" - the Guqin song "Water Bosom Friend", and invited the Guqin artist Lin Chen of the Chinese Academy of Arts to perform. The game character "Zhuang Zhou" in the use of this skin skills picture like a flowing ink painting, the whole body exudes the atmosphere of clouds, with deep, ethereal music, the character's skin image is lifelike, and the ancient music reflects each other, the charm and harmony, presenting an aesthetic experience full of the charm of ancient Chinese scholars and literati (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Screenshot of "Mountain and Water" skin activity interface.

5.1.2. *Bian Zhong*(Chime bells), bamboo flute, Chinese drum

In the world map of "Honor of Kings", the setting of "Chang 'an City" is undoubtedly the most wonderful and dazzling. Chang 'an City is derived from Chang 'an, the capital of the Tang Dynasty, one of the most prosperous and powerful dynasties in ancient Chinese history and the most powerful existence in the world at that time. As the theme music of "Chang 'an City", "Forever Chang 'an City" invited the world's top film music master Howard Shore to act as the composer, and used an orchestra of 96 outstanding players and a choir of 60 singers to perform this song, and chose Abbey Road Studios for live recording. The melody of this music adopts the traditional Chinese pentatonic mode, and selects the most representative musical instrument in China - the bamboo flute to play the main melody, and uses the large percussion instrument of ancient Chinese court chime bells and Chinese drum to play the main melody, coupled with the orchestral atmosphere to create a grand momentum of the ancient capital of history. In the 18th second of the music, the sound of the flute is like a whispering night wind, misty, like standing on the dunes, looking out, describing the mysterious capital; In the 28th second, the chime bells and string orchestra use a steady rhythm to create a solemn, ancient and profound ceremony scene like that of the ancient Chinese court. Coupled with the powerful beat of the Chinese drum, the whole music is majestic and epic. It has perfectly shaped a "Chang 'an City" that will never wither on the "King continent".

5.1.3. *Pi Pa*

Pipa is a traditional Chinese plucked instrument with a history of more than two thousand years, the sound quality is crisp and bright, has a strong penetrating power. The high note is bright, the middle voice is soft, and the low voice is mellow. Therefore, it can not only play the shining spears and armoured horses (a symbol of war in ancient China, military hardware on the battlefield), but also describe the gentle and tender feelings of Chang 'an Yue Fu. In the music of "Honor of Kings", there are many scenes in which the pipa is used, such as the character music of "Yang Yuhuan"(Figure 2) and "Ma Chao". The character music of "Yang Yuhuan", <Ni Chang Feng Hua>, is a musical work based on the life of Yang Yuhuan, a noble concubine in the Tang Dynasty. The whole music style is sad, the pipa low in the beginning of the music string, the voice is like weeping, as if I saw Yang Yuhuan in the side recalling the loneliness and loneliness of his life at the end. In a smooth, soft voice, like a storyteller, Xiao began to tell the legendary story of the Tang Dynasty imperial concubine. In the middle of the song, the piano and strings pull the story apart, the pipa and xiao are melodious, and the atmosphere is magnified to the highest, showing the most glorious moment of her life. In the end, the magnificent music stops, the whistle sounds again, and the story is told to the end with the regret of onlookers, which seems to describe the prosperity of Yang Yuhuan's life and speak of endless sadness. Her past glory, love and tragedy are fully interpreted in this final pipa music.



Figure 2: Screenshot of "Yang Yuhuan" character skin "Ni Chang song"

"Ma Chao's character music "Valor in Battle" was composed by composer Tan Dun. The use of pipa in this music is different from the expression of feminine softness and tragic fate in "Yang Yuhuan", but uses full and bright, short and powerful voice and fast rhythm to depict Ma Chao's unmatched warrior image of wisdom and courage on the battlefield. The performance of the pipa, just like "Ma Chao" himself, is strong and brave, like a galloping horse, galloping freely on the battlefield. At the same time, the rhythm and intensity of the music also enhance the tension of the work, as if you are in an ancient war battlefield.

In the game music of "Honor of Kings", the use of traditional Chinese Musical Instruments is like the paintbrush in the hand of the painter, and the characters with Chinese elements are depicted with the language of Chinese music, telling the story full of Chinese culture, and the logo of "Chinese wind" is engraved on the hearing of the whole game.

5.2. The use of traditional Chinese opera in the game of "Honor of Kings"

In order to improve the cultural influence of the game, deepen the artistic and cultural connotation, the application of "Chinese style" music in online games is also deepening, and the game production team began to try to integrate traditional Chinese opera into the game music.

In the game "Honor of Kings", traditional Chinese opera music appears in many places. For example, the skin music "Farewell My Concubine" of the game character "Yu Ji"(Figure 3) uses the classic verse "Gai Xia Song" of "Beijing Opera" "Farewell My Concubine" to express Xiang Yu's solemn and solemn determination before "Gai Xia" battle, as well as the deep emotion between Yu Ji and Xiang Yu. The music begins with the classic "Si Ji Tou" percussion rhythm of Beijing Opera, The rhythm of gongs and cymbals is accompanied by the appearance of the characters in the form of Peking Opera, which is accompanied by the Peking Opera lyrics, "The Han army has captured the land of Chu, and the sad songs of Chu come from all sides." Immerse players in the unique atmosphere of Peking Opera immediately.

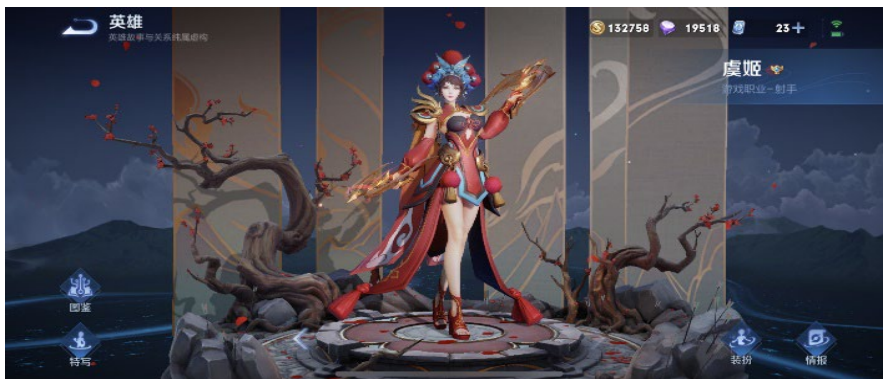


Figure 3: Screenshot of "Yu Ji" character skin "Farewell My Concubine "

Another example is the skin music of "Dream in the Deserted Garden" of the character "Zhen Ji"(Figure 4), which uses the most famous aria " Dream in the Deserted Garden " in the traditional repertoire of "Kunqu Opera". Without the garden of the Peony Pavilion, how can we know that there is

such a charming spring scenery", together with the unique delicate, graceful and beautiful "Kunqu Opera", fully showing the charm of Kunqu singing, bringing players into a dream garden full of spring.



Figure 4: Screenshot of "Zhen Ji" character skin "Dream in the Deserted Garden"

This mode of integrating historical and traditional culture with games allows the light of opera culture to be focused and amplified, making it easier for the audience of games - young people - to know, understand, explore and learn. To a certain extent, it opens up a bridge between traditional music culture and today's society, and transmits cultural values.

6. Conclusions

Taking "Honor of Kings" as an example, this paper attempts to explore the application and cultural value dissemination of "Chinese-style" music in online game music through the successful use cases and ways of "Chinese-style" music in this popular game. As a popular cultural product, online games have inherent advantages in cultural transmission to the younger generation through entertainment media. As a new form of culture and art, its value lies not only in the game itself, but also in the cultural information it carries and spreads. These messages can resonate among players through the presentation of games, stimulating their interest in and respect for traditional culture, thus spreading and promoting traditional Chinese culture in the wider society. It may be a worthwhile way to spread art, so that games can carry cultural and artistic connotations. How can traditional music and traditional culture be better disseminated in the current environment? The application of "Chinese-style" music in "Honor of Kings" provides us with a good case study. We can further study the application of Chinese-style music in different types and styles of online games to explore its characteristics and changes; We can deeply study the specific expression form and mechanism of Chinese traditional cultural elements in online game music. We can also discuss the influence and role of Chinese-style music on game experience from the perspective of players, or discuss the development of "Chinese-style" music production from the perspective of music practitioners. The discussion in this paper is only a preliminary attempt, and there is still a lot of room for researchers to dig deeply in the future.

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