

Two Directions of the Development of the tones Rules in Chinese Ancient Southern Songs

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ABSTRACT. *The opera music in the South of the Yuan Dynasty in China did not have perfect tone rules. After the Ming Dynasty, many literati participated in the creation of the South Opera, so that its musical rules were gradually established. In terms of the use of vocabulary in the lyrics, the literati also put forward a series of requirements. At first, the tonal rules of the folk southern lyrics were mixed. Some lyrics can use any tone at will, and some lyrics learned from literati poetry, using fixed tone rules. After the Ming Dynasty musicians participated in the improvement, the Southern Lyric Rules were quickly regulated by the influence of the Northern Lyrics Rules, forming the rule of “Music determines the tone of the lyrics”. Each song was stipulated by the tones of the Chinese character in the lyrics and recorded in the dictionary of songs. Then, the Southern music has undergone a great change from “fixed melody to sing different lyrics” to “the lyrics determine the melody direction”. The Southern music lyrics rules break free from the shackles of music, forming a kind of “poem” with the ancient Chinese poetry rules as an important reference. The development of the rules for the creation of ancient southern lyrics was developed in both directions of “text-based” and “music-based”. These two contradictory rules of creation have had a huge and long-term impact in the history of ancient Chinese music.*

KEYWORDS: *Ancient southern songs, tones rules, lyrics*

0. Introduction

As we all know, Nanqu, the ancient Chinese Southern music was originally used in folk opera in the south place of Song Dynasty, and was later used in the dramas created by the Ming Dynasty writers. The literary level of author of folk operas was

not high, so the early works of Nan Opera have many folk characteristics, and the requirements for rules and literary talents were not high. In the Ming Dynasty, a large number of literati invested in the creation of this new music literature. Later, they quickly transformed the original, folk opera lyrics, especially as they promoted the rule progression from folk music to professional music. In the process, the musicians each insisted on different opinions and offered their own opinions on the music. However, their views were not the same, or even the opposite. Therefore, the evolution of rules from folk opera lyrics to literati poetry cannot be simply described as the process of “from no rules to strict adherence to rules”, but in two completely different directions. In the actual creation, there were two ideas for the formulation of lyric rules.

1. Basis for the development of the tones rules in Southern songs

The ancients generally believed that the southern opera lyrics of the Yuan Dynasty had no tone rules. However, this view is not entirely correct. Some of the Southern opera music has inherited the rules from the Song Dynasty music. The Song Dynasty lyrics have long-developed and widely accepted rules. Therefore, some of the songs in the folk operas in the South fully conformed to or basically conformed to the rules of the Song Dynasty lyrics, but there were also many works that did not meet the rules of creation. Therefore, the lyrics rules of the folk tunes in the Southern Yuan Dynasty were very confusing: some of the tunes conformed to the rules of the Song Dynasty lyrics, which were “rules that follow the rules”; some of the tunes conformed to the rules in some parts but do not conform to the rules in other parts, so they were “partially obeying the rules of music”. There were also some folk songs which was written without fixed rules in sentences, words, tones, rhymes, showing the original appearance of folk songs, were “songs without rules of lyric.” In short, the folk songs in the South present a chaotic state of “regularity” and “no rules”, which was also in line with the origin characteristic of South Opera that was “Song Dynasty literati poetry plus folk music” [1].

2. Tones rules in lyric ruled by music

After the Ming Dynasty started, the ancient Chinese southern opera was widely

popular in the whole society. A large number of literati invested in the creation of such scripts, and the southern opera developed into a “legend”. The participation of literati makes the music of the opera become elegant, and the important aspect of the music becoming elegant is the formulation of the lyrics.

There were certain reasons for the establishment of the Southern Music Creation Rules. First of all, literati wanted to show the rationality of their own creations. They urgently wanted to change the literary world's contempt for script-writing, and wanted to raise the literary status of the script, and classified the script and Chinese traditional poetry literature into one category. The opera critics of the middle and late Ming Dynasty uphold this view. After the promotion of the literati, the script gained a certain literary status and became a kind of “poetry” literature. Since the poetry has rules of creation, the lyrics of the southern opera must be standardized in terms of creation.

The second reason for the establishment of the Southern Music Creation Rules is that after the creators gradually increase, the legendary works inevitably appeared good and bad case in terms of rules, especially the works written by some literati who do not understand the laws of music, so the lyrics created cannot Adapt to the requirements of the opera show. Therefore, the formulation and promotion of lyric rules has its practical significance.

Contrary to the chaotic situation of Southern opera music rules, in the early Ming Dynasty, the music of northern China had already undergone long-term development, formed a relatively mature norm specification. The rhymes and tones of the northern lyrics had rules, and writers can not use words at will. Zhou Deqing[2], a musician of the Yuan Dynasty, pointed out in his book that the northern lyricist writers should create lyrics according to certain rules, and the singer can sing according to the existing melody. From this, we can know that the lyrics creating of ancient Chinese northern music should start from the melody of music, that is to say, the arrangement of Chinese character with different tones must try to match the ups and downs of the music melody, so that the original tone can be maintained when the vocal is sung. Compared with the clear rules of Northern Songs, the rules of Southern songs were not clear at first. Therefore, some literati formulated the norms of southern music according to the practice of northern songs.

First of all, musicians advocated that Southern music should learn from northern

music and obey the universal pronunciation of central China. Secondly, in the aspect of the tone of Chinese characters, musicians also learned the practice of northern music, requiring the cooperation of the melody and the tune of the music, that is, the “arrange Chinese characters with tones according to the fixed melody “, with music as The standard limits the use of text. This rule-making principle originated from the music of the Tang and Song dynasties. The Tang Dynasty writer Yuan Zhen said: “The lyrics are determined according to the melody, and the music should be carefully listened to to limit the singing. The length of the sentence and the pitch of the Chinese character is determined by the melody. These music all need to decide the lyrics according to the melody, instead of choosing the lyrics and then looking for music to match it.”[3]. The key to this approach is “Determining lyrics based on music.” From the lyrics of the Tang and Song Dynasties to the Northern music of the Yuan Dynasty, the principles of creation were standardized. That is to say, the melody of northern music was basically fixed, because the performer of the same song cannot changed the way of playing at any time, so the lyricist should pay attention to using the appropriate Chinese characters to match the original melody. As a result, there was a requirement for each word in the tune. If you choose an inappropriate Chinese character, you will face the phenomenon of “singing this word, it sounds like that word.” This is because the Chinese characters have their own tones, so if the tones and melody are inconsistent when singing, the pronunciation of the Chinese characters will be changed in the song.

3. Lyrics creation rules without regard to music

The lyrics creation norms formulated by music provided a convenient reference template for writers' creation, but they also formed a more stringent constraint on creation. As mentioned above, according to the requirements of this rule, in order to match the melody, the song's words must strictly distinguish the four tones. When writing the lyrics, writers cannot select Chinese characters at will. This is much more complicated than the traditional rules of poetry, and it brought considerable difficulties to the author's literary inspiration.

On the one hand, the lyrics rules improved the artistic level of traditional Chinese opera music. On the one hand, it also affected the literary creation of scripts. Some writers inevitably wanted to break through the constraints of rules. In the

Ming Dynasty, the emergence of a new singing method provided great convenience for the creation of lyrics to break through the shackles of music. This is the singing method of “Creating Melody Based on Chinese Characters” advocated by Wei Liangfu, a musician of the Ming Dynasty. Contemporary scholars have a lot of wonderful expositions about this Southern music singing method. Its main feature is that “four tones determine five pitches” [4]. That is to say, the drama writer should arrange music according to four sounds, which is exactly the opposite of “taking music as the standard”. Wei clearly opposed the arrangement the Chinese character tones to match the melody. He advocated according to the words' sound to determine the tendency of the melody, so that the instrument and the human voice can be played in harmony. The singing method of “writing melody according to the tone of Chinese characters” has gradually become the mainstream of southern music. Until today, Kunqu also used this method. The popularity of this singing method has also brought about changes in the rules of lyrics from “music-based” to “literary-oriented”.

The literary-based lyrics rule emphasizes words rather than music melody, so the playwrights who held this concept did not refer to the tones arrangement of previous lyrics created by former writers, and they naturally learned the rules of traditional poetry. Moreover, in the Ming Dynasty, opera lyrics had a tendency to “turn into poetry” on the literary level. As described in the foregoing, the literati, in order to find a legitimate reason for his creation, classified the legendary musical literary form into poetry. When they elegantly renovated folk operas, they handled lyric in the method of traditional poem. Since the rule of “creating melody according to the tone of Chinese characters” does not need to follow the ups and downs of the melody, then it can be arranged according to the natural high and low laws of Chinese. In the traditional rules of poetry creation, the law of the words undulations of Chinese characters has been mastered by literati. Therefore, the literati used a long history, simple and clear way to arrange ups and downs of tones in the creation of lyrics. The Chinese poetry rhythm, simply speaking, has only two sentences: “The gentle voice and the rushing voice are alternating in one sentence, the gentle voice and the rushing voice are opposite in the upper and lower sentences”[5]. Therefore, there were only four kinds of sentences in Tang Dynasty poetry. Compared with the complicated and varied lyrics, the rules of poetry were clear and convenient, and at the same time can effectively make the melody beautiful. Tang Xianzu and other

Ming Dynasty playwrights consciously used the rules of poetry to create opera lyrics.

They freely arranged four sounds according to the characteristics of Chinese language in their creation. From the perspective of text reading, these lyrics were very smooth and harmonious, but their tones were very inappropriate in singing, so many people criticized these lyrics because that they only can be read, but can't be sung. However, under the impetus of Tang Xianzu, the method that literati created a melody according to the tone of Chinese characters became popular, and many famous playwrights often wrote works that do not follow the rules of the lyrics but follow the rules of poetry. Since the literati no longer considered the lyrics should match the music, the singer must adjust the melody according to the text vocals during the singing so that the audience can understand the lyrics. Therefore, the “music-based” creation rules make the author feel difficult, and the “text-based” creation rules make the singer feel difficult.

4. Conclusion

The Ming Dynasty opera lyrics rules evolved from the Southern music Rules of the Yuan Dynasty. The rules of the southern folk lyrics were very chaos. After participating in the creation of Southern music lyrics, the literati made a rule to transform this folk art. However, the literati's creation and development of the rules of lyrics was not in a direction: some scholars draw on the principles of northern music, based on music melody, formulated a fixed use of four sounds, and stipulated the rhyming rules with the pronunciation of the central region; Some literati were inspired by the new singing method of “writing melody according to Chinese vocabulary”, directly abandoning the strict and complicated lyric rules determined by the melody, not following the vocal arrangement pattern specified in the book, but starting from the four tones ,using a method called “text-based” rules which learned from the rules of poetry that have been matured for a long time and widely used by poets. Therefore, the evolution of Chinese opera music was in two opposite directions, which was a special phenomenon in the history of Chinese music development.

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