

# Analysis of Chinese Contemporary Theme Dance from the Perspective of Ecological Aesthetics

## -- Taking The Spirit of the Sparrow as an Example

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### ABSTRACT

Ms. Yang Liping is a famous dancer and a national first-class actress. She is famous for peacock dance and known as "Peacock Princess". Ms. Yang Liping has many outstanding representative works, such as female solo dance "Spirit of the Bird", dance drama "Yunnan Image" and so on. Among them, the dance "Spirit of the Bird" won the gold medal of Chinese classic dance works in the 20th century. This article mainly analyzes the form and content of the dance "Spirit of the Bird" from the perspective of ecological aesthetics.

### KEYWORDS

Ecological Aesthetic; Chinese Contemporary Theme; Dance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The dance "Spirit of Sparrow" was created and published by teacher Yang Liping in 1986. It has won the Gold Medal of 20th century Chinese classic dance works and other honors. Teacher Yang Liping is also known as "China's second generation Peacock King" after Dao Meilan. The dance "Spirit of the Bird" is a form simulation of the peacock "standing in the wind", "jumping and rotating" and "spreading its wings", but its connotation goes far beyond the simulation, and more expresses the blending and presentation of the "peacock" spirit and flesh. The reason why the dance "Spirit of the Bird" has become a classic dance work has many factors (Zhao Yimeng, 2023). The main factors are as follows:

## 2. CREATE A UNIQUE IMAGE AND PRESENT NOBLE FAITH

The dance "Spirit of the Bird" has a concrete, unique and vivid artistic image. Yang Liping, the choreographer, reflected the totem consciousness of the Dai people and expressed their devotion to nature by simulating the appearance of the peacock. And in the use of female limbs to convey the theme of life, the female dance image in the Spirit of the Bird has become a typical example of the Dai dance image and the eternal embodiment of beauty. It is mainly embodied as follows:

First, embodied in the totemic belief materiality into a concrete work, that is, the Spirit of the Sparrow. Dancer Yang Liping, as a daughter of the Dai family, embodies her thoughts and feelings of awe and worship for peacocks by shaping the image of the peacock with lightness and agility. In Yunnan province, especially in the Dai culture, the peacock has the meaning of totem. As a representative of its cultural system, peacock not only has positive symbolic significance, but also is deeply embedded

in its national belief and national life (Pang Zhijuan, 2015). Therefore, the choreographer Yang Liping, as a child of the Dai family, organically combined the totemic worship of peacock by Dai children in reality with their personal thoughts of worship and love for peacock. Spirit of Sparrow not only embodies the form of peacock externally, but also reveals the Dai people's devout belief that all things have spirit and the soul is immortal through the form.

Second, it embodies a high degree of unity between ideology and emotion and art form. The dance work of The Bird Spirit attaches great importance to hand movements, which is similar to the dance of the Dai nationality. Different hand movements show different meanings and charm (Bian Zhenqi, 2020). The perfect form in "Spirit of the Bird" is not only reflected in the dance vocabulary, but also the high combination of dance beauty and dance body. For example, in the most classic circle in place shot, the dancers perform the difficult circle in place skills with an upturned head and an erect chest, which is highly integrated with the white long dress of the dance costume and the dark blue multi-beam light pursuit of the dance beauty, expressing the calm and elegant image of the peacock. Thus, it is highly unified with the elegant and noble thoughts and emotions of the peacock in the mind of the choreographer Yang Liping.

Third, it is reflected in the high combination of individual personality and extensive commonness. The success of the peacock shaped by Yang Liping is due to its distinct and unique personality. For example, in the Spirit of the Sparrow, a large number of hand movements of smart flipping are used, which is not common in the peacock dance in the past. Therefore, in order to breed new creation of dance, it is necessary to study the original characteristics from the spread folk dance culture, and explore works in line with the new spirit of The Times and its national aesthetic culture from the internal connection of various factors (Li Jiabin, 2021). In addition, it is also rich and broad in generality. Yang Liping's "Spirit of the Bird" embodies the totem belief of the Dai people in Yunnan province. She inherits the totem worship spirit of the Dai children in the form of dance. Therefore, the dance "Bird Spirit" not only has its unique artistic characteristics, but also widely reflects the totem consciousness of the Dai family and the aesthetic form of "peacock" in the minds of the public.

### **3. THE USE OF MULTIPLE MEANS TO SPREAD NATIONAL CULTURE**

By shaping a natural and authentic peacock image, the dance "Bird Spirit" spreads the natural culture about the peacock and the Dai national tradition, which is reflected in the process of dance creation, presentation and appreciation. The specific contents are as follows:

First, the natural form of the peacock and its related national culture are presented through natural art treatment. Although both of Tian Lu's "Flying Peacock" and Yang Liping's "Bird Spirit" are peacock themed dances, their forms and contents are quite different. This is because Tian Lu and Yang Liping have different life experience, educational background, knowledge structure and other aspects, resulting in their respective characteristics in the use of forms. It is mainly reflected in the artistic treatment. For example, Tian Lu's "Flying Peacock" pays more attention to the "double creation policy" which not only inherits the traditional national culture but also innovates and develops. For example, inheriting the Dai traditional elements such as the three bends of the Dai nationality, and using modern choreography means to add the unprecedented jump movements of peacock dance, such as leg hop and straight leg jump, to present the lively and playful image of peacock, thus breaking through the elegant dance style of peacock dance in the past. As the daughter of the Dai family, Yang Liping pays attention to the pursuit of nature and details, such as the use of a large number of small hand language to reproduce the agile form of the peacock. Therefore, the dance "The Spirit of the Bird" not only provides high aesthetic value, but also enables people to understand the shape and movement habits of the peacock through the dancer's flexible body language. And through the dancers' emotional expression, the audience can realize the status of the peacock in the Dai people, and the living customs and beliefs of the Dai people.

Second, through the reproduction of creative techniques, reflect the natural and true art style. The embodiment dance "Spirit of Bird" embodies Yang Liping's unique discovery and deep understanding of peacock, which penetrates into her unique aesthetic experience and aesthetic emotion when shaping peacock. Yang Liping pays more attention to the essence of peacock. From the perspective of body language, the novelty of Yang Liping's "Spirit of Bird" lies in that she does not simply use the stylized and patternized movements of Dai dance. But according to the needs of emotion and dance image, bold innovation, absorption and integration of some contemporary elements and characteristics, full of modern sense, more in line with the aesthetic needs of contemporary people (Ji Sha, 2020). For example, at the beginning of the dance, the dancer walks to the center of the stage with his head held high to simulate the peacock walking. The head held high and the head nodded quickly to simulate the dance form of the peacock drinking water. From the perspective of dance costumes, the dancers wear white fishtail long skirts with beautiful patterns. This not only highlights the dancer's modesty and noble beauty, but also integrates with the melodious and cheerful sound of hulusi and the dazzling lighting of the dance beauty (Chang Junyong, 2016). Wearing a white dress and a simple headdress to abandon complex clothing, just to be closer and more primitive to reproduce the shape of the peacock, so it reflects teacher Yang Liping's pursuit of natural and authentic art style.

Third, through the overall dance characteristics, the dissemination of traditional national culture. Appreciation, as an aesthetic activity, embodies the second creation of the appreciator. However, due to the different life experience and emotional experience of the appreciators, the opinions and feedbacks presented are also different. For example, when appreciating the Spirit of the Bird, the feedback content of the dance professional and the dance beauty professional is different. The dance professional may evaluate the body and structure of the dance, while the dance beauty appreciation may give feedback and evaluation from the lighting and clothing. Therefore, "different people have different opinions and different people have different opinions".

In the process of artistic appreciation, the dance "Bird Spirit" also plays an educational role. For example, in the most classic circle in place shot, the dancers perform the difficult circle in place skills with the posture of raising their heads and raising their chest, which is highly integrated with the white dress of the dance costume and the multiple beams of the dark blue of the dance beauty. Expressing the calm and elegant image of the peacock and containing the life meaning of Dai people's worship of the peacock, in addition, the dancer uses a quick head movement to simulate the reproduction of the dance form of the peacock when drinking water, revealing that the art originates from the imitation and worship of human nature, so that people know the source of art and the spiritual belief and life meaning of the Dai people.

#### **4. PASS ON THE NATIONAL THOUGHT THROUGH AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS**

The main reason why the dance "Bird Spirit" has been enduring is that it has a very high aesthetic value and aesthetic consciousness, and it inherits the Dai nationality's thought through aesthetic consciousness. The specific content is as follows:

First, "The Spirit of the Bird" embodies its aesthetic consciousness in the material form. For example, in the dance The Spirit of the Sparrow, the choreographer Yang Liping has a belief in the worship of peacocks. She believes that peacocks are smart and noble animals, so the graceful and elegant image of peacocks is expressed through the integration of the posture of upturned head and upright chest with the white dance dress and the dark blue stage lighting.

Second, the Spirit of the Sparrow is beautiful because it is the product of truth, goodness and beauty. Yang Liping refines the truth, goodness and beauty in reality into her works of art. For example, in The Spirit of the Bird, the "truth" of a peacock drinking water and walking is extracted into the art work by the clever head movements and the relaxed posture, and the scene of the peacock walking in

circles alone with the posture of raising the head and raising the chest shows the thought of "goodness", which is peaceful and yearning for peace. All these forms are teacher Yang Liping's sublimation of the truth of life to the truth of art, and the truth into beauty.

Third, The reason why The Spirit of the Sparrow has been enduring is that it pays attention to the form while not separating from the content, which is the unity of the two. For example, almost all the dance words in "Spirit of the Bird" come from the simulation and reproduction of the basic form of the peacock, so it expresses the spiritual belief of the children of the Dai family in totem worship, and also reflects the teacher Yang Liping's inheritance of national culture through dance and the spirit of passing on the torch.

## **5. TAKE INNOVATIVE FORMS TO INHERIT THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE**

With the improvement of productivity, we are gradually entering the information age. In the globalized information age, people's aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic needs are changing gradually. Therefore, art, as the product of satisfying people's spiritual world, should also adapt to it. However, the development of anything comes out of thin air, so the development of art should be based on the excellent Chinese tradition, and the creative concept of inheritance as the "root" and innovation as the "master" should be achieved. Therefore, for artistic creation, it is necessary to put an end to blindly copying, but to create on the basis of Chinese high-quality traditional genes, combined with the aesthetic of The Times. The combination of the two can create more excellent works, which can not only reflect the historical heritage of a country, but also reflect the development status of a country. Therefore, the reason why the Bird Spirit has become a classic is that it inherits the totem culture of the Dai nationality on the one hand, and innovates in body language on the other hand. Its inheritance is reflected in the superior subject matter. Yang Liping, the director of the subject matter, chose the peacock, which is regarded as a mascot in the hearts of the Dai people. The director wants to shape the image of the peacock, which is undoubtedly the inheritance of the peacock totem culture of the Dai people, so as to carry forward the symbol of the peacock as sacred and peaceful. Its innovation is mainly reflected in the body language, on the basis of the three bends unique to the Dai people, Yang Liping adopted the body language of flashing "head" and "arm", thus adding a touch of agility to the sacred and peaceful peacock image. On the basis of inheriting the tradition and adding innovative elements, "The Spirit of the Bird" provides a good reference for the development of Chinese folk dance, and also inspires the folk dance creators to start off towards better creation.

## **6. EPILOGUE**

The reason why the dance "Spirit of the Sparrow" has become an eternal classic work is that the peacock image it creates is not only a lifelike peacock, but also a spiritual inheritance. The peacock image in "Spirit of Sparrow" has become the standard of peacock dance. This work is impassably beautiful both in dance form and dance content. Despite the passage of time, it is still classic and eternal.

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