

The Collective Memory Construction and Political Function of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*

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Abstract. *The piano concerto Yellow River* was created during the Cultural Revolution and was adapted from the national salvation song *Yellow River Cantata*. With its indomitable national spirit, it has spread rapidly in China since its birth. *The piano concerto Yellow River*, as a witness to the history of the Anti-Japanese War of the Chinese nation, spread Chinese national music and the voice of China's anti-fascist war and inherited the spirit of patriotism and national identity. At the same time, it also plays an important role in the construction of collective memory and political function.

Keywords: The Piano Concerto Yellow River; Collective Memory; The Political Function.

1. Introduction

The politics of music is the political environment for the study of music creation and dissemination. In ancient society, music played an obvious role in enlightenment [1]. The Confucianists regarded "etiquette" and "music" as a whole, and Confucius inherited and carried forward the etiquette and music culture and formed the thought of music education. In the Book of Music, it was recorded that "the way of sound is connected with politics." [2] It emphasizes the social function of music, which is mainly reflected in the upper and lower strata of society. From this, we can see that music has had a close relationship with the social and political state since ancient times, so the rulers regard music as a political means to promote social harmony and achieve the goal of ruling the world. Also like the sacrificial music in ancient China, sacrificial music is the music used in sacrificial activities. In primitive society, people communicated with the gods through music in order to achieve the purpose of sacrifice. The formation of sacrificial music is closely related to people's folk beliefs, national culture and social-moral sense, from which we can see that sacrificial music has a certain function of social education and imperceptibly standardizes people's words and deeds. In modern China, with the introduction of western culture, the cultural environment of modern China has changed, which is mainly reflected in breaking the Chinese people's cognition of the traditional five-tone mode and the situation of "use in Western music". It has affected the development of the form structure of Chinese music works. Represented by school songs, he incorporated western music elements into his creation for the first time. The emergence of school songs not only promotes the development of modern Chinese music culture, but also reflects China's political and social changes. During the Anti-Japanese War, many new musical forms and works emerged, and the music during this period reflected the growing awareness of the people in order to achieve national independence and national liberation. For example, songs such as *Broadsword March*, *May Flowers* and *Yellow River Cantata*, these works have formed a large-scale political mobilization of the whole nation, reflecting the rapid changes in political life in the process of national development, reflecting the role of national cohesion and nationalist sentiment, forming the political function of national identity and the political changes experienced by the country in a specific historical period, as well as changes in people's minds. At the same time, it also highlights the transformation of the principal contradiction of the state family at that time. Therefore, the music works of this period played a symbolic and mobilization role, which promoted the construction of populism. In the development of music in modern society, because the political policy and social environment are more inclusive, the music form structure is more diversified, and folk music has been revived, we can see that music is developing towards pluralization, nationalization, and popularization. It shows that music can reflect the process and

changes in society, such as the replacement of political power and the change of relations between countries, which can spread political ideas and express political attitudes.

To sum up, in a specific historical period, music can be used as a political symbol to promote the construction of national meaning. For example, the French national anthem *Marseilles*, written during the French Revolution, reflected the people's determination to the French Revolution at that time, and the spread of *Marseilles* formed a political symbol, thus realizing its political function [3].

Under the influence of the French Revolution and *Marseilles*, the *Piano concerto Yellow River* also acts as a political symbol and plays its political function in society. Therefore, the research content of this paper takes the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* as an example to study the political function of the piano concerto in the process of creation, adaptation, and dissemination, and to interpret how to form collective memory during the War of Resistance against Japan through its creative background and communication process, and to study the realization of its political function and how to promote the construction of collectivism. How to promote people to form nationalism and form the symbol of common resistance against Japan in the society at that time, and its influence on today's society.

According to the search, scholars' research on the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* is relatively simple, mainly focused on performance skills and emotional expression, and relatively few studies on its political function. The study of national spirit, it is mainly based on text analysis, the lack of the relationship between music and a certain culture, and the exploration of the function of music in a specific history.

From the perspective of performance skill analysis and version comparison, Wei Xuan and Hao Jie analyzed the artistic characteristics and performance skills of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*. By centering on the creative background and elements of the Yellow River, the full text analyzes the artistic characteristics of the combination of western composing techniques and Chinese folk music elements in the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*. In the analysis of performance skills, the author proposes that the first and second movements of the music use the traditional pentatonic mode, and take the pentatonic backbone tone as the main theme. In harmony, the whole song shows its unique national character through the imitation of national musical instruments and the combination of western polyphonic chords and national harmony. As for the grasp of touching keys and pedals, through the examples of the first movement and the second movement, the author puts forward that different playing methods should be adopted according to different melodies and musical ideas in order to accurately express the thoughts and feelings needed by the music [4].

Some scholars have studied the overseas spread of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*. Chen Kehong mentioned that the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*, as a prominent cultural symbol of our country, has been given a variety of identities to spread in the process of its dissemination. During the War of Resistance against Japan, the spread of the *Yellow River Cantata* promoted other countries to understand China's War of Resistance against Japan, promoted support for China's War of Resistance against Japan, and aroused the self-confidence of other oppressed countries in seeking national liberation [5]. However, this chapter does not summarize the law and path of the spread of music during the War of Resistance against Japan, as well as its role in the construction of the nation-state.

Wei Min studied the teaching of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* under the concept of ideological and political curriculum. She combined *Piano Concerto Yellow River* with classroom thinking of politics [6] and analyzed in detail the national characteristics and traditional music culture embodied in each movement. Combined with the educational function of music, it enhanced contemporary college students' understanding of the War of Resistance against Japan and made students realize the indomitable national spirit of the Chinese people.

2. The Construction of the Collective Memory of the Piano Concerto Yellow River

The musical connotation of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* and the elements of Chinese traditional folk music show the indomitable anti-Japanese spirit of the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation.

This section discusses the collective memory constructed by the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* by analyzing the creative background, characteristics, and performance skills of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*.

2.1. Creative Background

The Piano Concerto Yellow River is adapted from the *Yellow River Cantata* written by Xian Xinghai and Guang Weishan in 1939[7]. In 1969, with the support of Jiang Qing, Yin Chengzong, Chu Wanghua, Liu Zhuang and Shi Shucheng adapted the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* on the basis of the *Yellow River Cantata*, which was divided into four movements. They are *Yellow River Boatman's Song*, *Yellow River Indignation*, *Ode to the Yellow River* and *Defending the Yellow River*.

2.2. The National Characteristics of the Piano Concerto Yellow River

The piano concerto uses Chinese and western music elements in the process of creation, and its characteristic of Chinese traditional music is to further nationalize and popularize the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*. In terms of melody, in *Defending the Yellow River*, the classic melody tunes of *Dong Fang Hong* and *Internationale* are added, showing the victory scene of the Anti-Japanese War and pushing the whole work to the most exciting part. As a combination of Chinese and Western music, this song uses performance techniques to imitate the timbre of Chinese traditional musical instruments. In the *Yellow River Boatman's Song*, the author uses a large number of rhythms and tones of the labor song to integrate into the music and imitates it with the piano to depict the scene of the Yellow River boatmen fighting bravely against the surging waves. The introduction part of the third movement *Yellow River Indignation* is a melody with the national characteristics of "Xin Tian You" in northern Shanxi, and it is an imitation of the timbre of the bamboo flute [8]. The introduction uses a relatively free rhythm and is played alternately by the left and right hands. It shows the happy scene of people living and working in peace and contentment. The introduction imitates the skills of guzheng scratching. In this movement, the technique of homonym is also used to imitate the timbre of the pipa, which has Chinese characteristics. [9]

In harmony, the author uses folk music melodies, folk music texture, and other creative techniques, which fully reflect the rich nationality of this work. The four movements of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* include the Rondo form, two-part form, multi-stage structure, and variation form. It breaks through the basic music structure of Allegro-Lento-Allegro, which is the traditional Allegro suite and forms the basic form of Allegro-Lento-Allegretto-Allegro in the composition of the movement, which has strong musical and artistic characteristics of the Chinese nation.

2.3. Revolutionary Memories are Shown in the Piano Concerto Yellow River

The Piano Concerto Yellow River distributes a large number of cadenzas and appears in the form of phrases. Cadenzas from the impromptu singing at the end of the aria in the 18th century. In the 16th bar of the *Yellow River Boatman's Song*, there is a cadenza passage, which is carried out with fast-running thirty-two notes, and finally ends on the dominant seventh chord, reflecting the magnificent scene of the rough waves of the Yellow River (example 1). The cadenza of *Defending the Yellow River* appears in theme variation 4 (example 2), laying the groundwork for the entry of *Dong Fang Hong*.

In the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*, the fast running of fingers is mainly used in the songs of the "Yellow River Boatman" and "Yellow River Indignation". For example, in the *Yellow River Boatman's Music*, the left and right hands play the leading seventh chords and upward arpeggios belonging to the dominant seventh chords respectively (spectrum example 1). For the running of fingers in this part, the coordination of fingers, arms, and wrists should be coordinated, the natural movement of notes should be followed when playing, and the connection between sound and sound should be paid attention to in the alternating part of left and right hands. At the end of "Yellow River Indignation" (example 3), the right hand is the continuous thirty-second note, and the second beat is marked with stress. When playing here, you should grasp the position of your right hand and play

mainly by sticking keys. In the middle section of the Yellow River Indignation, the fingers in turn playing technique are a way of playing according to the style of different musical works (example 4). Attention should be paid to not having stress to destroy the balance of melodic lines, and it is necessary to coordinate the speed and strength of fingertips touching keys [10]. When playing homophones, the fingers should quickly retract toward the palm of the hand to make the exchange between the fingers coherent. The use of the fingers in turn playing technique increases the narrative of this passage, expresses the suffering of the common people during the enemy invasion, and depicts the scene of family breakup and family separation.



Fig 1. Spectrum example 1



Fig 2. Spectrum example 2



Fig 3. Spectrum example 3



Fig 4. Spectrum example 4

Defending the Yellow River is the core part of the whole concerto, which shows the people's firm determination to defend their country. In this movement, a large number of octave chords are used to play the theme melody (example 6). The octave advance of the left hand sets off the momentum of thousands of troops, while the right hand plays the main theme in the treble part. After Cadenzas, the melody of *Dong Fang Hong* appears (example 7), which is also the most wonderful part of the whole work, which reflects the impassioned emotion through the continuous octave chords of the internal sound part. It expresses the firm determination of the Chinese people to resist the Japanese aggressors. Therefore, it is necessary to play the octave quickly and forcefully, and at the same time, we should

also pay attention to relaxing the octave and strings, keeping the arms and wrists relaxed, and transferring the strength of the shoulders to the fingertips to prevent the arms from being too stiff and affecting the performance. At the same time, the palm of the hand should be supported to maintain the elasticity of the hand shape. Furthermore, it shows that the people are not afraid of difficulties and dangers and are brave in the War of Resistance against Japan.

The *Yellow River Cantata* provides a lot of text support and music materials for the adaptation of piano concerto. The adapted *Piano Concerto Yellow River* joined the orchestra on the basis of the chorus and arranged a large number of Chinese and Western musical instruments, which enhanced the expression and musical tension of the work, and gave full play to the unique musical expression of the piano, fully expressing the heroism of people who are not afraid of hardships and dangers.

3. The Political Function of the Piano Concerto the Yellow River

Collective memory needs to exert influence on individual memory through mass groups, media, and other ways to form the inheritance of collective memory. *The Piano Concerto Yellow River* is a symbol of collective memory and plays an important role in inheriting the spirit of the Anti-Japanese War. In the music, the progressive sound of the piano aroused the listeners' subject consciousness, patriotism and patriotism as the descendants of the Chinese nation, and the listeners placed themselves in the group of "common war of resistance" and completed the transformation of their identity at the cultural level. at the same time, it also depicts the industrious and brave patriotism of the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation. In this process, *the Yellow River Cantata* is a symbol of the Anti-Japanese War, reflecting the symbolic significance of the song, and has become the cultural symbol of the Chinese nation. The adaptation and dissemination of the song are more conducive to the establishment of the country and people's emotional identity.

The Piano Concerto Yellow River is adapted from the *Yellow River Cantata*. Before the birth of the concerto, the *Yellow River Cantata* went deep into the countryside, schools and other places to perform in the form of performing groups at the beginning of its birth [11]

To sing all over China in the form of top-down "natural communication". The singers are non-professional choirs, poorly equipped, and listen to many ordinary working people. With the increase of the influence of the *Yellow River Cantata*, it has been evaluated as "roaring for the Anti-Japanese War and making a voice for the public". The syllables are magnificent and varied. Emotional words are as shocking as the waves in the storm [12]. Formed from music creation, singing and dissemination of professional or amateur musicians and singing organizations around the United Front of the anti-Japanese people in the literary and art circles. Through the way of inquiry, the singer summoned the audience as the Subject consciousness of the descendants of the Chinese nation, summoned their national consciousness and patriotism, and conveyed the demand for a "unified war of resistance". However, when the War of Resistance against Japan entered a stalemate stage, under the momentum of the Kuomintang to "guard against Communist Party of China", works with strong ideology could not be spread through official channels. The Southern Bureau of the Communist Party of China promoted the development of literature and art to resist Japanese aggression and save the nation, and the movement of new music in the music industry promoted the spread of the *Yellow River Cantata* in Chongqing and Guilin. In addition to the liberated areas, Guilin, Chongqing, Chengdu, Liuzhou and other places were scattered in the Kuomintang-controlled areas and enemy-occupied provinces and cities [13]. The spread of *Yellow River Cantata* is like lighting up the flames of the new music movement and the unified Anti-Japanese War. Its spreading track connects the concentrated areas of the revolutionary forces of the whole country in the process of the unified Anti-Japanese War, while in different regions, the *Yellow River Cantata* produces a new symbolic meaning. In the spread of the Kuomintang-controlled areas, the *Yellow River Cantata* conveyed the message of the "common war of resistance" of the CPC's literature and art policy. In the final chapter of the suite, from "the suffering people of all China" to "the working people of the World", the main scope of the unified war of resistance was further expanded, which provided a prerequisite for the spread of "the

Yellow River" among people from different regions and different cultural backgrounds. Xian Xinghai brought the *Yellow River Cantata* to the Soviet Union to spread and revise it in 1940. In 1942, he organized overseas Chinese war workers to sing the Yellow River in Burma. In 1943, the Princeton University Choir premiered the English version of the *Yellow River Cantata*. From 1947 to 1948, the drama troupe sang the Yellow River in Singapore and Malaysia [14]. The performance and spread of the Yellow River in the anti-fascist allies not only conveyed China's call for anti-fascist resistance, but also stimulated the local Chinese's sense of national identity, and won more international support and rescue for the victory of the Anti-Japanese War. *The Yellow River Cantata* has produced a new symbolic meaning in cross-border and cultural exchanges, that is, "reviving Chinese national culture and strengthening national self-confidence". In the spread from Yan'an to Kuomintang-controlled areas and overseas, the Yellow River was linked with the emotions of different groups in different periods, expanding the scope of revolutionary music from the workers and peasants marginalized by the mainstream to Chinese with different backgrounds and strata. The spiritual core of its layers and the symbols of the common war of resistance complete the generation and reorganization of concepts and cultural connotations in the dissemination of music. The audience aroused the enthusiasm of struggle in the emotional expression of the song and agreed with the demand of the "anti-Japanese United front".

After the founding of New China in 1949, the media became the main channel for the spread of the mainstream values of official ideology. its use involves all aspects of Chinese social life, and it is also the main means of political propaganda and social control. that is, official ideology dominates the spread of music, what to spread must be carried out according to the plan, musicians create music according to the plan, and the media spread according to the plan. Mainstream values are spread through official media channels, and the educational and aesthetic functions of music are also spread. The adaptation and dissemination of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* reflects the influence of official ideology on the spread of music. During the Cultural Revolution, literary and artistic creation was restricted, but the adaptation of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* was carried out rapidly at the behest of Jiang Qing. Therefore, the *Piano Concerto Yellow River* is an efficient and rapid creative adaptation formed under the promotion of the national political mobilization system and a complete display of the revolutionary course in its music content. it also shows the historical rationality of the Communist Party of China's transformation from a revolutionary party to ruling party. The addition of the classic melodies of *Dong Fang Hong* and *Intenationale* will arouse people's love and respect for Chairman Mao and the collective memory of people resisting aggression and seeking national independence under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. It has realized the function of political mobilization and political identity of the *Piano Concerto Yellow River*. In today's society, this function still promotes the formation and development of patriotism and national identity. From the point of view of the establishment of the nation-state, its communication also hides a layer of political demands, liberating the individual, especially the proletarian people from the traditional community, and reintegrating it into the new modern nation-state system and social structure. spiritually satisfy people's sense of identity to the new identity, endow them with a sense of mission, and seek the modernization of the country under the concept of a community with a shared future. Realize cultural identity and national rejuvenation.

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