

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF "THE YELLOW RIVER" PIANO CONCERTO FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF RECEPTION AESTHETICS

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Abstract

Reception aesthetics is mainly a literary research method. It regards the process of aesthetic reception as the core part of the whole literary aesthetic process and places the subjective role of the recipient in an extremely important position. Literary aesthetics and artistic aesthetics are different in form, but they are interlinked in essence. Therefore, the research will take the theory of reception aesthetics as analytical framework, analyze the reason why the Yellow River Piano Concerto has become a classic, explore how to use the theory of reception aesthetics to explain the different experience on the Yellow River of different audience levels, and analyze and summarize the experience of the case study process of the Yellow River from the perspective of reception aesthetics to the aesthetic analysis of other piano music works, highlight the importance of bottom-up aesthetic feedback for artworks, and explore the new forms of piano art development in China in the new era.

Keywords: Reception Aesthetics, "The Yellow River" Piano Concerto, Social Factors

1. Background

1.1 Reception Aesthetics

Reception aesthetic theory is a classical research theory in the field of aesthetics. It divided the reception activity of works into two forms: social reception and personal reception. It discovers the audience's aesthetic experience and the social function of the reception effect in the field of the work in the process of the audience's reception, reaction and feeling of the work itself. Compared with the traditional literary historians' linear description of literary history focusing on the creation of works, the theory of reception aesthetics focuses more on the relationship between works and readers, more on the study of readers as subjects and works as objects. It emphasizes the aesthetic experience of readers as well as the aesthetic experience of the public under certain historical conditions.

Readers in musical works, which means listeners, have long occupied a crucial position in musical art works. For the vast majority of traditional musical works in China, their aesthetic

characteristics have more or less a certain degree of relevance and similarity. In short, a musical work can only truly exert its influence when it is genuinely accepted and appreciated by the public. For this reason, one of the most important aspects of the production and circulation of musical works is the audience's ability to enjoy and accept the musical works.

Similarly, there's an important theory of music art: the theory of reception aesthetics, especially the different levels of audience in reception aesthetics, is of great significance in promoting the development of music art. The application of receptive aesthetic theory in music art aesthetics can focus on the role of audiences in music appreciation. The direction of its development mode can change the traditional sense of the work as the core analytical framework, and turn to trace the origin and gradually take the audience as the core of music work appreciation.

1.2 "The Yellow River" Piano Concerto

As an epic chapter in the history of contemporary Chinese piano music, the Yellow River Piano Concerto has an extremely distinctive national artistic charm. The Yellow River Piano Concerto (later referred to as "the Yellow River"), one of the most important Chinese musical works of the 20th century, has spanned forty-five years (1969-2014). During these 45 years, the Yellow River has been released in six editions with tens of thousands of copies in China and more than 10 million CDs overseas [1], which shows the influence of the Yellow River in China and abroad. Since its creation in 1969, the Yellow River has survived the Cultural Revolution and the reform and opening up. In the music of the Cultural Revolution, there are only a few musical works that are as influential as the Yellow River. The key to this paper is how people came to accept the Yellow River, or even, in the process of audience turnover, under what premise the different age groups accepted the work. Through literary review and the research of more than one hundred historical materials related to the Yellow River, the researcher found that there is almost no special discussion on the aesthetics of the Yellow River. Thus, the popularization of "reception aesthetics" has an absolute necessity.

2. Aesthetic Experience of "The Yellow River" Piano Concerto from the Perspective of Reception Aesthetics

Through the results of the preliminary work, it is a very suitable point cut to examine the Yellow River from the perspective of reception aesthetics. Because the study of the creation of related works and texts will eventually rise to the perspective of aesthetics, which naturally contains the subjective thinking of the creator and the aesthetic value given to the work itself by the creator influenced by the time and social environment.

"The historical life of a literary work is unthinkable without the active participation of the recipient. It is only through the process of transmission by the reader that the work enters into a continuity of changing horizons of experience (H. R. Jauss, 1987). [2]." Jauss believes that a work should be explored by people of different times to find out the unexplored meaning of this work. And to stand in the perspective of new times to reflect on the multiple meanings of the work in the process of historical development, where the many aspects of the work passed through the ages or faded into obscurity. It provides us with a foothold to study the social

factors that influenced the Yellow River in different periods of time - the transmission of the readership and the continuous changing empirical horizon of the work.

2.1 The First Level of Audience - All Those Who Listen To the Yellow River Piano Concerto

After the author completes the work, it is not a complete and praiseworthy work of art, but a potential work of art, a "possible existence". The author's meaningful emotion is still hidden in the work, and its content cannot be realized because it has not been aesthetically appreciated by the audience. It is only when the interaction between the art subject and the audience begins that the work of art is gradually complete.

As Dufrenne (1996) says in *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*: "A work of art can survive only by being presented as an aesthetic element; the presentation of the aesthetic element allows us to understand the work of art as an aesthetic object. [3] "Dufrenne divides aesthetic perception into three stages: first, the stage of presentation of the object in perception; second, the stage of reproduction and imagination; and third, the stage of reflection and feeling. It can be said that he discusses aesthetic experience from the connection between aesthetic object and aesthetic perception, and focuses on the relationship between aesthetic object and reality. In the concept of "horizon of expectation" proposed by Jaus, he even constructs a prediction threshold for this aesthetic process, answering the premise of the interaction and driving force of art creation and art aesthetics. At the same time, due to the similarities and differences among individuals, the horizon of expectation also distinguishes between the categories of individual expectation horizon and public expectation horizon. This paper believes that the first level of the audience is the aesthetic feeling in the personal horizon of expectation under universal sense. At the same time, studying the whole aesthetic process, the main feature of Jausstheory that differs from the traditional theory is that the works and audiences of the art work will be reconciled.

2.1.1 Individual Aesthetic Feeling under the Vision of Expectation

The first level of audience, whose scope is all the people who listen to the work, is often directly dependent on their personal aesthetic acceptance under the expectation horizon. But the aesthetic acceptance of all audiences has a large level of difference based on the individual. At the same time, due to some practitioners' deficiencies in the adaptation of traditional vocal music resources and the lack of cultural originality in the process of music creation, the interaction between the music works and the audience does not take place benignly. It means the purely Western aesthetic experience is difficult to bring pleasure to the domestic audience. The degree of development of the piano must be adapted to the basic features of the Chinese traditional cultural system in order to ensure that the development strategy of the piano can be formulated in accordance with the actual characteristics of the aesthetic theoretical resources and to create favorable basic conditions for the optimization of the comprehensive application value of traditional cultural resources. From the point of view of reception aesthetics, the current Chinese piano is difficult to get the full support of original artistic resources in the society, which cannot create favorable conditions for the realizing the marketability of artistic

resources of reception aesthetics. In addition, some research and analysis work of the receptive aesthetics has not sufficiently analyzed the characteristics of the originality of the artwork and has not adapted to the requirements of the receptive aesthetics in the new period in terms of the melody of the artwork creation. The cultural originality is difficult to continue and the quality is even more difficult to be ensured. The Yellow River Piano Concerto was composed in 1969. The work is based on the melody of the Yellow River Cantata composed by Xian Xinghai in 1939, which has deep historical background and emotional experience. The composition of this piece, which had the lyrics removed and the melody left, provided listeners with a precursor experience and emotion. At that time, the material resource of music in China was less, the aesthetic ability of many music audiences was not high, and the aesthetic reception was class-oriented. The Yellow River appeared which combined elements of Chinese and Western cultures, caused a sensation and made all the people who listened to this work praised. The debut of this classic piece received a strong response from the masses, and then it was performed frequently all over the country. The Central Orchestra performed more than 100 times, causing a great impact nationwide (Liu Chang, 1995). However, due to the long period of time, many newspapers or articles about the heated discussions of the masses are missing. It is unable to review the feeling of the audience at that time. However, judging from the large number of performances, it has undoubtedly won the affirmation of the masses and is in line with the expectations of the public. Although the work was distinctly political at the time, there is no doubt that it met with general public acceptance.

Due to the contradiction between the level of artistic creation and the aesthetic level of different audiences in historical periods, the results of aesthetic activities are often divergent. This research argues that the audience accepts a certain work to a certain extent, such as the Yellow River in this paper, is not only some subjective factors such as their personal preferences, but also the deeper reason that the work also meets the public expectation, that is, the public horizon of expectation .

2.2 The Second Level of the Audience - To Have a Pleasant Experience of the Yellow River Piano Concerto

The reception of a musical work is historical in nature. People are in a certain social relationship, so listeners are historical and constantly evolving. The same work must have been interpreted differently by the audience in different times. The attitude of people in the era of the Cultural Revolution towards the Yellow River is different from the attitude we hold today. Moreover, as one grows older and accumulates life experiences and perceptions, one's views on society and life are constantly changing and developing (in the direction of depth and breadth). The social life and environment plays a leading role in the social age of people, but its influence is indirect, slow and subtle. The materialistic view of history holds that everything in the world is universally connected, and at the same time is developing and changing. People living in it are bound to be its constraints and limitations. So when an old man goes back to read the Yellow River, his feelings will be very different.

2.2.1 Aesthetic Experience of the Universal Needs of Social Consciousness under the Historical Period

Aesthetic receivers usually understand the musical works based on their own personality, values, and worldviews. Different historical periods have different general demands on social consciousness, which affect the audience's aesthetic reception and subsequent aesthetic experience. The public's aesthetic understanding of a musical work is not just a one-way activity of accepting and identifying with the author and the spirit and emotions of the time. The listener is also actively involved in it, and does not engage in the appreciation of the work of art with a purely observational attitude, which is a purely rational attitude that completely excludes personal subjective factors. In the process of acceptance, the audience generally has a tendency to self-identify and self-affirmation, to find their own emotional support in the work, to cause their own empathy and resonance, so as to achieve a requirement of affirming their own existence. The Yellow River takes the kind and hardworking boatman on the Yellow River as the character, and celebrates the struggle and dedication of the Chinese people in the difficult war.

The Yellow River was composed in a special turbulent era, full of the passion of the times. It continues the core idea of "Yellow River Cantata" both in terms of music and connotation. At that time, the society was in the period of Japanese aggression in China, and the people suffered from the war. In order to arouse the anti-aggression awareness of the masses, a large number of literary and art workers took up their pens as weapons to compose numerous songs of anti-Japanese and national salvation. "Yellow River Cantata" was created in such social environment, which continues the passion of the times and has a profound musical connotation. In terms of emotion, it eulogizes the heroic spirit of the Chinese people who are steadfast and resilient, and praises the heroic and unyielding dedication of the Chinese people who have fight insistently. In terms of depiction, it inherits the structural characteristics of traditional Chinese music of rising, bearing, turning and closing, depicting the treacherous and imposing scenes of the Yellow River, the life scenes of the people on both sides of the Yellow River, and the heroic scenes of the war horses galloping and smoke filling the battlefield, and the anti-Japanese soldiers and civilians bravely killing the enemy; in terms of symbolism, it expresses the strong combat character. Symbolically, it shows the fierce combat, strength and suffering, symbolizing both the hard struggle of the Chinese people in the war against Japan and the correct path of the new democratic revolution and socialist revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party. Since its inception, the Yellow River has been imbued with a strong national feeling, which makes the whole work a musical masterpiece with both national style and contemporary characteristics. The combined effects of social environment and historical conditions made people have the same aesthetic taste, forming a group aesthetic. The reason why the Yellow River has received a warm response from the public not only because that the connotation expressed empathize with the public, but also because it provide a way for many civilians to contact with high art for the first time. The reason why the Yellow River is so popular is that it meets the expectations of the masses under certain historical conditions, and is the external expression and satisfaction of common aesthetic needs based on individual aesthetic level differences. In other words, at the second level of the audience, since not only

the individual aesthetic expectations are satisfied, but also the same expectations of the general public, the aesthetic process at this time also gives the audience a pleasant experience through group aesthetic. Compared with the first level, which depends entirely on the audience's personal level, the second level of aesthetics indicates a deeper communication between the work and the audience, which is a more profound aesthetic process.

2.3 The Third Level of the Audience - Those Who Study the Yellow River in Depth

The third-level audience of the Yellow River includes two groups of people, one is those who mainly comment, and the other is people who are mainly performing. Both of them conduct in-depth research on works after having an aesthetically pleasing experience. The common feature of them is specialization. They analyze research, explore, and try from a professional perspective, and put forward or recreate many suggestions and works of academic value to further promote the development of the Yellow River.

In the late 1980s, reception aesthetics was introduced into the framework of translation studies in China. After the 1990s, works on acceptance aesthetics theory such as Jauss's Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics and Stanley's Reader Reflective Criticism: Theory and Practice were translated into Chinese and published one after another. With the introduction of the theory of reception aesthetics in China, the researches on reception aesthetics are also gradually deepening. One important point mentioned in the theory of acceptance aesthetics is that criticism, adaptation, and other reinterpretation and secondary creation of the spirit of the content of the original work are the main forms of interaction between the work and the audience, that is, the aesthetic process. In such a third level of deep communication, the audience no longer becomes the subject or object alone, but can become a part of the author, a partial source of the work's art. This is not only an artistic aesthetic, but also an artistic creation. The audience's interpretation or understanding of a work under certain historical conditions gradually becomes a way for the art work to keep up with the times and gradually adapt to the development of the times and the changing aesthetic level of the public.

3. Aesthetic Experience in the Form of Re-Creation

With the disintegration of the leaders of the Gang of Four headed by Jiang Qing and the erroneous policies at that time, many people strongly criticized the Yellow River. the Yellow River was once considered to be the product of the catalysis of political tasks, and was seriously labeled (Pu Fang, 1999), the people deliberately avoided talking about policy-related topics, the fading of the extreme fanaticism in the 1970s, the aesthetic fatigue caused by the public (Liu Chang, 1995) and other factors led to the ignorance of the Yellow River. For a period of time, it was difficult to see Yellow River again on stage in China. Yin Chengzong had to bring the Yellow River to the United States.

In 1983, Yin Chengzong was invited to perform his first solo piano concerto the Yellow River abroad in reserved repertoire at Carnegie Hall, the most famous music hall in America, which caused a huge sensation. As a "socialist" piece with the background of the China's resistance war against Japanese aggression and incorporating "The East is Red" and "The Internationale

" piano concerto, it does not affect the Westerners' affection in any way. However, it also fully illustrates the success of the Yellow River in bridging the musical and cultural gap between China and the West, as well as its unique charm as an exemplary piece of musical and cultural fusion between the East and the West, which has successfully brought the Yellow River to the world. With the intensification of cultural exchanges on music between China and foreign countries, the nationalism and revolutionary nature expected from listening to the Yellow River diminished, and it was infused with a new contemporary connotation - Western romanticism. After 1989, the Yellow River returned to the domestic horizon, with many pianists reinterpreting this classic work. A large number of versions in this comeback were recorded in overseas performances or with foreign orchestras and conductors, and even more foreign performers played them. It is clear that the revolutionary nature of the Yellow River does not come first in this era, and that people have a more tolerant and broader view of the Yellow River. The only thing that remains the same is its symbolism, which also symbolizes the soul of the Chinese nation.

The new version of the Yellow River has been recomposed twice and rearranged. The version released in 1990, was revised by Shi Shucheng, one of the participants of the original work, in response to Yin Chengzong's version of the Yellow River. He refined the titles of each chapter and had English translation added; then he adjust the instruments in the orchestra, increasing the number of woodwind; the most noteworthy change is the deletion of the "The East is Red" melody from the original chapter of "Defending the Yellow River" and replaced with "Yellow River Boatman's Song". This is the most crucial part of the revision. However, this adaptation does not affect the existence of the original version, and even enhances the historical significance of the work. In the same period, Du Mingxin, one of the composers of the original the Yellow River (who was transferred in the middle of composing), also recreate a new version, replacing the central part with the theme of Ode to the Yellow River, using the rhythm of the brass instruments in the orchestration to set up the climax, and adding a big cymbal at the end of the introduction of the final movement to lift people's spirits, which is not found in any other versions. In addition, in the recording materials of China National Traditional Orchestrain 1991, this version was the first one to be performed by a Chinese folk music orchestra, piano by BaoHuiqiao and conducted by Yan Huichang, so the birth of this version has an extraordinary significance. It is not only a new attempt to make the Yellow River more nationalized. However, many of the timbres in folk music are different from the configuration of Western orchestras, and the fact that the version was originally composed by Western compositional techniques has led to extensive academic debate. Whether one agrees or disagrees, each version brings great value to us, and each adaptation is a precious material and the sincere expression of the Yellow River from composer.

3.1. Aesthetic Experience with Evaluation as the Main Measure

The advent of any work generates approval and non-approval, and this non-approval can be either total or partial opposition, depending on one's aesthetic understanding. As Jauss (1987) says in his article, "A literary work can satisfy, transcend, disappoint and refute the first

reader's horizon of expectation at the historical moment of its appearance, an approach that clearly provides a measure for determining its aesthetic value. [2]"

After 1990s, mixed reviews of the Yellow River gradually increased. It is easy to see that this is related to the national policy of reform and opening up at that time and the degree of inclusive of the public. The intrinsic factor was the gradual opening of people's minds and the fact that most of the performers and audiences looked at the work with an appreciative, retrospective mindset. In addition to the many reviews of the new version of the work, reviews of the old version also continue. In his article *Sending Deep Feelings between Black and White - Listening to Yin Chengzong's Piano Concerto the Yellow River (1997)*, Shimin mentions that although Yin Chengzong's version of the Yellow River explosive as the gunpowder, it is an impeccable performance which is performed by his composer. The author of the article, Shimin, undoubtedly approves the original version and does so as an aesthetic experience by reviewing the original work after twenty years. Chenxu, in his review article *My Opinion on the Revision of the Piano Concerto "Yellow River" (1997)*, expresses a positive attitude toward the original version of the Yellow River (1969) and a negative attitude toward the recreated chapter of the new version (1990). In 1996, Liang Maochun published an article entitled "Music during the Cultural Revolution" in the *Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music*. --The music of the Cultural Revolution" published in the *Journal of Xi'an Conservatory of Music* in 1996 caused a considerable reaction from the academic community. He criticized Ding Xuelei's "A Magnificent Ode to the People's War: A Review of the Piano Concerto the Yellow River" as a touted work commissioned by the political circles at the time, and argued that the Yellow River originally composed with element of Western music, and was forced to include the political songs "The Internationale" and "the East is Red", making the work a means of politicization.

In the present study, the historical evaluation of the Yellow River is mostly viewed from two perspectives: the history of Chinese contemporary music and the history of the development of Chinese piano music. Most of the critics have strongly acknowledged the importance of the Yellow River in musical creation of that time, and they are no longer confined by political ideology and no longer measured by political criteria, which is the most important difference compared to the pre-1980s reviews. Whether positive or negative, this somehow the existence and persistence of this work is further reinforced. Politics aside, the artistic appeal of the Yellow River and its totem-like status in the hearts of Chinese people are indelible. This is the reason why most Chinese are unanimous in their praise of the Yellow River, and only offer their own opinions on one aspect of the work.

Conclusions

From the standpoint of reception aesthetics, the status of the audience's aesthetic process is incomparably sublime, regardless of the complex sample of audiences at any level. Reception aesthetics is not overly concerned with what the work expresses, but rather with what the audience understands, and focusing on the process of aesthetic interaction between the work and the audience. Aesthetics is influenced by social, cultural and economic factors, and aesthetic attitudes depend on the level of culture and consciousness of people in the social environment.

After the ups and downs of its reception process since its composition, the Yellow River is still popular and has become one of best known Chinese piano works at home and abroad. To discuss the reasons why it became a classic from the perspective of reception, it is necessary to take into account the process of reception and the results of reception by the listeners in each period. Therefore, it is very important to study more classical works from the research perspective of this theory and optimize the development measures to further enhance the application value of the aesthetic theory of reception.

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