

“MOON” MODERN ZHAUNG FOLK SONG: THE COMBINATION OF POP SONG ELEMENTS AND ZHAUNG TRADITIONAL CULTURE

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Abstract

In the background of inheriting traditional culture in modern society, as an outstanding representative of folk music culture, Liao Song enters public vision with a new image, attracting public attention by its popularity. Passing through various music forms during the process of development and greatly contributed to the development of Liao Song, the song “Moon” has become one of the most important and representative piece of Liao Song. This article takes the song “Moon” in chorus version as a case study of modern Zhaung folk song to explore how it combines the cultural background of traditional Liao Song with modern pop song elements through the aspects of its creation features from lyric structure, melodic pattern, harmonic types, etc, in order to seek a way of innovation for Guangxi Liao Song culture inheritance and development.

Keywords: Liao Song; Moon; Interlaced Lyrics and Melody; National music

INTRODUCTION

Deeply embedded in the history and culture of Zhuang, Liao Song has become an indispensable part in daily lives of Zhuang people. The progress of intangible cultural heritage protection in China gives new opportunities to the development of Liao Song. Since 2003, the cultural workers started to build culture brand. As Liao Song has been consistently developed in the context of inheriting traditional culture with diversified modern features, the brand of “Pingguo Liao Song” is gradually established, creating prosperity in cultural inheritance involving family, society and school. The song “Moon” was created during that period. It was composed in 2008 by Zhuang folk singer with ancient flute, using the musical elements of Liao Song. The song was well received after being broadcast on national television CCTV, and subsequently won various awards in competitions domestic and abroad. In xxxx, this song was adapted into chorus version by composer Zeng Lingrong and debuted on stage by choir of Guangxi Arts University. It was soon performed on multiple professional singing competitions, becoming the representation among ethnic chorus songs of Guangxi. The chorus song “Moon” remains the ethnic music characteristics of Liao Song, combines with the theory of contemporary music creation, narrates the thoughts and emotions of Zhuang people and reflects flowing deformation

of cultural psychology and aesthetic sentiment in social changes. Its popularity is the concentration of mass aesthetic and national culture dissemination (Yuqian Chen, 2016).

1. Traditional Liao Song

Liao Song gets its name on the account of every line in its lyrics have “Liao” as a backing word. Liao Song is mainly known around the Zhuang area of Pingguo County in Youjiang River basin, has a long history back to Jin Dynasty, proved by the historical record of “singing the song of Liaoliao on the back of cow” (Ni Xu, 2017). The lyrics of Liao Song are the concentration of culture essence by recording Zhuang people’s history and culture, daily work and living etiquette, custom and belief (Pan Qixu, 2005), and has high research value in the domain of anthropology, literature and music (Zhou Yanxian, 2012). As the excellent art of Zhuang culture, Liao Song contains the unique culture wisdom and charm of Zhuang people (Qin Naichang, 2005).

1.1 The environment of traditional Liao Song

In the Zhuang area of Pingguo County, Liao Song has been integrated into the lives of local residents, singing Liao Song is not only seen in various occasions (Lu Xiaoqin, 2014), such as the birthday of elders, the birth of infants, wedding, building new houses, moving into new houses, shop openings, funerals and other ceremonial occasions, but also can be applied for labouring and enroute to somewhere else. As a way of emotional expression and communication between Zhuang people, the most common occasion for singing Liao Song are festive days, such as the Spring Festival and Sanyuesan Singing Fairs. According to different occasions and times, Zhuang people improvise different lyrics in their songs. During the singing fairs, young people of Zhuang gather in corp lands, fields, and hills to sing Liao Song to each other, in the form of two men and two women in pair singing antiphonally.

Based on steps and content of antiphonal singing, Liao Song consists of “require”, “answer”, “snatch”, “battle”, “engage” and “farewell”. “Require” usually initiated by men as a requirement to women for starting antiphonal singing, if the women agree, they sing to “answer” the men. There are two types of “snatch”, one is for the situation where men outnumber women, in order to show their ability of singing and lyrics improvisation, multi groups of men can scramble for the privilege to interact with women by the way of singing. Another type of “snatch” is during the antiphonal singing, if one group of singers fails to answer the other side, their place could be taken by the other groups of singers who snatch the opportunity to sing, until the weak group finally withdraws from the singing.

Moreover, “battle” is the step of competing the ability of singing and lyric improvisation between singing enthusiasts. If the two sides are evenly matched in ability, the singing could last very long even overnight, or meet to continue the competition the next day. “Engage” is a friendly competition between men and women during the antiphonal singing, including the themes of storytelling, puzzle guessing or love songs. Both groups usually sing under the theme chosen by one side in the beginning. The themes mostly heard are about romance love, creating chances for men and women to find their lovers. “Farewell” is the essential part of antiphonal singing, so as to ask the basic information of the other side and make appointment for the next

singing.

1.2 The recording of traditional Liao Song

At present, traditional Liao Song are mainly disseminated by the means of songbook, family heritage and singing fairs (Qin Cailuan, 2005). Liao Song frequently used sawndips can be seen in the folk songbooks of traditional Liao Song (Zheng Chaoxiong, 2005). Sawndips include invented characters, ideograph characters, phonetic characters and borrowed (from Chinese) characters. Take “𡵚” as an example, it is a swandip displaying its meaning “hill” on the upper part, and its pronunciation [pja] on the bottom part. The table below explains the ancient notation of Liao Songs with nine representative sawndips, their corresponding Zhuang language, international phonetic symbols, and the general meaning of Chinese characters.

Table 1

		Sawndip	Zhuang language	International Phonetic Alphabet	Corresponding Chinese character
Invented character		𡵚	gwnz	ku ²	up
Ideograph character		𡵚	laj	la ³	down
Phonetic character	left: meaning; right: pronunciation	𡵚	bya	pja ¹	fish
	left: pronunciation; right: meaning	𡵚	loeg	lok ⁸	bird
	upper: meaning; bottom: pronunciation	𡵚	bya	pja ¹	hill
	upper: pronunciation; bottom: meaning	𡵚	na	na ²	field
	outside: meaning; inside: pronunciation	𡵚	gyaeng	Kjaŋ ¹	close
Borrowed character	pronunciation borrowed	𡵚	miz	mi ²	there is
	pronunciation and meaning borrowed	𡵚	sim	θim ¹	heart

1.3 The characteristics of melody and lyrics of traditional Liao Song

The lyrics of Liao Song comprise of notional words and backing words. The notional words cover the aspects of ethnic group history and culture, work and labour, custom and belief, as well as daily lives and etiquette. In Liao Song, the lyrics usually are even number verse with 5 characters in each line, 4 lines are most popular therein. Each line is strictly rhyme in the middle (the middle of the line) and foot (the end of the line); as to the backing words, the most

distinguished feature is the frequent used word “Liao”. “Nahai Liao”, “Sige Liao”, “Dige Liao”, “Ha Liao”, “Yoyi Liao” are named after their different backing words. For example: “Ha” and “Liao” are backing words of “Ha Liao”; “Sige” and “Liao” are backing words of “Sige Liao”; “Yoyi” and “Liao” are backing words of “Yoyi Liao”; “Dige” and “Liao” are backing words of “Dige Liao”.

The tonic row of Liao Song melody is Zhi mode, taking 5 as the keynote, with the tonic row of “sol la do re mi”. In terms of interval, firstly the horizontal melodic interval of each voice type normally contains “la-sol” “do-re” as major second; “la-do” “mi-sol” as minor third; “do-mi” as major third; “la-re” “re-sol” as perfect fourth. Compare with the soprano, bass has less and fewer interval changes, the melody is more stable while the soprano has more melody changes. Secondly, the vertical melodic interval of each voice type normally contains “la-do” as minor third, “la-re” “sol-do” as perfect fourth, “sol-re” as perfect fifth and the distinctive “sol-la” “do-re” major second combination. At the end of each phrase, two voice types usually return to same degree “sol-sol” interval.

The combination of lyrics and melody has the features of deconstruction and interlaced, meaning the slight pause of lyrics is different from the slight pause in phrases and phrase segments. Interlaced lyrics and melody is an important feature in Liao Song composition. The strict rule of four lines and 5 characters in lyrics composition makes the phrases highly neat, which causes difficulty for singers to express their emotion. In order to deconstruct the neat verse into lines in different length, the technique of interlacing the lyrics and melody is applied to expand the phrases. The local people describe singing Liao Song as chatting more than couplet, the neat phrases restrain the emotion of singer, therefore, the deconstruction of lyrics and melody expands the phrases, turning the 5 characters lines into long and short lines, increasing the expressiveness of songs. The technique of deconstruction became a fixed pattern, which was passed on for generations, deeply influenced the conventional mindset and the musical aesthetics of Zhuang people

2. Analysis of “Moon” in chorus version : the combination of pop song elements and Zhaung Traditional Elements

The chorus song “Moon”, which is adapted by Zeng Lingrong and composed by Mo Yance, is well-known in Guangxi Province, has become the preference in professional chorus competitions. This song is the recreation of a traditional Liao Song “Bombax Ceiba are Flaming Red” in Guangxi Pingguo County, combining Chinese language and Zhuang language in lyrics meanwhile composing the melody in traditional Liao Song style (Wen Kui, 2011), which does not only remain the original form of traditional folk song but also elevate the professionalism, promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of Liao Song as an intangible cultural heritage. Zhuang language and Chinese sung alternatively throughout the song, corresponding to the male-female duo-voice type of antiphonal singing in Liao Song. From the lyric structure, the song is in binary form.

Table 2

Structure	Prelude	a	a'	b	b'	Ending phrase
Bar	1-12	13-18	20-25	26-29	30-41	33-41
Language	Zhuang	Zhuang	Zhuang-Chinese alternatively	Chinese	Zhuang-Chinese alternatively	Zhuang
Phrase	4	4	4	4	4	2

2.1 The neat verse structure of 4-line

Both parts of Zhuang and Chinese are followed the verse structure of 4 lines. They are exquisite in rhythm and rhetoric, with high literariness. The part of Zhuang consists of 4 lines with 5 characters in each line, rhymes in interior and foot, with interlaced notional words and backing words. Here are the lyrics in two language and rhythm distribution.

Daengz laj goek go leux, (棵棵木棉红)

Gangj mboux leux mboux ce ; (同往树下奔)

Daengz laj goek go geq , (谈不完不走)

Mboux ce mwngz youx noix. (哥妹情意深)

Table 3

English	Zhuang	Rhythm distribution
Bombax ceiba are flaming red Loving couples are gathering under Lean together and reluctant to part Boy and girl do love each other	Daengz laj goek go leux Gangj mboux leux mboux ce Daengz laj goek go geq Mboux ce mwngz youx noix	○○○○A ○○A○B ○○○○B ○B○○○ Note: O represents Zhuang character, AB means rhythms. Same letter means same rhythms.

The rhymes of this song are clearly displayed in the Zhuang phonetic alphabets: the final word of the first line “leux” and the third word of the second line “leux” rhyme with “eu”; the final word of the second line “ce” and the final word of the third line “geq” rhyme with “e”; the final word of the third line “ge” and the second word of the fourth line “ce” rhyme with “e”.

This song can be divided into 6 phrases: phrase 1 (1st and 2nd bars), phrase 2 (3rd and 4th bars), phrase 3 (5th and 6th bars), phrase 4 (7th bar), phrase 5 (8th and 9th bars), phrase 6 (10th and 11th bars), each phrase takes “sol” and the final note, here is the music score:

Score 1.

莫掩策 词曲
曾令荣编合唱

Linguistically, the lyrics of this song can be divided into 4 lines: line 1 (Bombax ceiba are flaming red; Daengz laj goek go leux), line 2 (Loving couples are gathering under, Gangj mboux leux mboux ce), line 3 (Lean together and reluctant to part, Daengz laj goek go geq), line 4 (Boy and girl do love each other, Mboux ce mwngz youx noix). However, according to singers' breath method and structure of the score, it is obvious that during the performance, line 2 is split into phase 2 and phase 3, the lyrics of phase 2 (3rd and 4th bars) remains only "Gangj(Loving couples)" in line 2, the rest words of line 2 "mboux leux mboux ce (are gathering under)" is performed in phase 3 (5th and 6th bars); line 4 is split into phase 5 and phase 6, phase 5 (8th and 9th bars) is performed with the first word of line 4 "Mboux (Boy)", the rest of the words "ce mwngz youx noix (and girl do love each other)" is performed in phase 6 (10th and 11th bars). Thus, the interlaced lyrics and melody can be clearly seen. Here is the score:

Score 2.

The part of Chinese language in lyrics applies the writing technique of pop music, maintains the informality by using natural and colloquial language, meanwhile improves the literary with rhetorical devices such as metaphor and simile. For example: "Even the moon keeps silent", "the night I miss you as the beauty of the moon", "Nayee, nayee, nayee ay" are absolutely melodious, "I miss you as mildness of the moon", "As sparkling as your tender face" accurately describe the honest love between Zhuang couples in simple words

2.2 The use of backing words

The lyrics for the duo voice types of male and female are written in alternate notional words and backing words, in which the usage of backing words follows the rules of traditional Liao Song, i.e. "ha""leu" in "Nahai Liao", "de""ge" in "Dege Liao"; female voice type is composed

under the traditional Liao Song framework and sings in Zhuang language while male type is original and sings in Chinese language. Both types sing simultaneously, creating an atmosphere of antiphonal singing, incisively and vividly express the strong affection between Zhuang couples. The distribution of notional words and backing words is as follows:

Table 4

	Notional words	Backing words
Zhuang	Daengz laj goek go leux, Gangj mboux leux mboux ce ; Daengz laj goek go geq , Mboux ce mwngz youx noix。	ha leu leu ha leu leu
Chinese	I miss you all night Even the moon keeps silent I am soaked with dewdrops As sparkling as your tender face Looking far to that mountain You seem to be there My heart goes anywhere with you I am enchanted in the breeze	Wu Wu Wu Degehei Ha leu Yi Daeng la gok go ge You noi Ha leu

2.3. Chorus in ethnic style

In this song, the technique of modal interchange is used. The modal of partial section A is G Zhi mode, it turns to C Gong modal in section B. Two different models in the same Gong tone interchange. In terms of tonality, it belongs to dominant-tonic relation, which provides strong support to the melody. Owing to the similar color of both modal in the same Gong tone, this structure creates dramatic changes to the melodic color.

This song contains distinct horizontal melodic lines with ethnic style and clear music levels. The texture contains less dots but more in lines. The delicate counterpoint hides behind the rich vertical chorus. In terms of chorus technique, tritone substitution is used to form a fifth chord structure. The third C Gong chord is replaced by Yu, composing a third chord of C-D-G substitution. In the same way, the third G Zhi chord is replaced by Gong, composing a third chord of G-A-D substitution.

13

S. *p* WU *p* WU

A. *p* WU *p* WU

T. 1 *p* WU *p* WU

T. 2 *f* 想你好整夜。 想到月亮都沉默了。 我满身 满头是露水。

B. *p* WU *p* WU

no.

From the 26th bar, this song is sung in four voice type's harmony. The tenor is added minor third and perfect fourth vertically on the base of original duo voice types harmony while the bass is added 4,3,2 degrees lower than tenor, in order to enrich the song and amplify the ethnic features of "Nahai Liao". Here is the score:

Score 3.

f 想 你 的 夜 那 么 美 小 河 滴 水

f 想 你 的 夜 那 么 美 小 河 滴 水

f 想 你 的 夜 像 月 亮 那 么 美 身 边 小 河 滴 水 流 波 潋 潋 笑 容 微

f 想 你 的 夜 WU 小 河 滴 水

mp 3

2.4 The development in structure of traditional "Nahai Liao".

Concerning the music mode, this song remains the tonic row of "sol la do re mi" of traditional "Nahai Liao" (Huang Xian, 2010), taking "sol" as the keynote in accordance with Zhi mode, of which the soprano comprises varied rhythm and interval changes, in the meantime the bass is stable. When soprano begins to sing the first line, the other voice types join in throughout the entire song, while the duo voice types sing parallel most of the time and diverse vertically in minor third, perfect fourth and perfect fifth. Based on the local singers' breath method and habit of slight pause, "Nahai Liao" usually consists of 6 phrases. According to the melody of soprano, it is observed that each phrase generally under the framework of "sol-re-sol", which is each phrase starts with "sol", highest pitch at "re" and ends with "sol" again.

After the prelude, soprano starts to sing the first line, alto joins in afterward. There are major second with “la-sol” “do-re”, minor third with “la-do” “mi-sol”, major third with “do-mi” and perfect fourth with “la-re” “re-sol” in the horizontal melodic interval of each voice type. Compare to soprano, which comprises more skip and steps, by contrast, alto is more stable, skip less and fewer. In the parts of vertical harmony, minor third with “la-do”, perfect fourth with “la-re” “sol-do”, perfect 5 of “sol-re” and outstanding “sol-la” “do-re” major second overlap are mostly seen. At the end of each phrase, both voice types drop back to “sol-sol”. Here is the score:

Score 5.

ha leu gang mbou ha leu mbou ce leu

mf

ha leu gang mbou ha leu mbou ce leu

Male voice type joins in from 14th bar, therein the melody basically follows the melodic contour of “Nahai Liao”, which takes “sol” as the keynote and remains the tonic row of “sol la do re mi”. In the form of 4 lines, the lyrics do not merely follow the rules of Liao Song but also ingeniously avoid the incomprehension caused by the lyrics and melody deconstruction, successfully maintain the ethnic features and local aesthetic. The example is as follow:

Score 6.

63 solo unis.

Soprano Daeng la a_e yi_gok go leu ha leu gang mbou ha leu mbou ce leu

Alto ha leu gang mbou ha leu mbou ce leu

mf

2.5 Strong local ethnic music features

This song reflects distinctive local ethnic manners and rustic aesthetics of Zhuang people. By observing the tone of local language (Gabisonia Tamaz, 2019), it can be seen that the melody of the song is consistent with the language custom; the tune and rhythm of the song is consistent with the tone and pause of local language (Ma Shuchun, 2009).

It is common for the men and women of Zhuang to get together all night long to sing for conveying love to one another. The lyrics they improvise are generally theme by romance love, vividly depict a lively image of Zhuang people’s love lives and express the desire of pure love between the lines. Therefore, it is important to insure the song performance corresponds to the

local music aesthetic (Bai Xiaoqin, 2009)

First of all, the singer should sing in natural and bright modal voice, place the voice forward, lower the breath, use the strength of core, press the vocal cord, use nasal resonance, slightly open the mouth in lateral direction, push the sound towards the upper incisors. The sound should be direct and incisive, high and bright, natural and plain, rustic and powerful. For the reason that Liao Song habitually sung outdoor, like in cropland, open field and on hills, claimed by the folk singers, such modal voice singing method is helpful to spread the sound and is in line with the acoustic law in such singing environment.

Secondly, due to the same pitch for both male and female voice types, the male singers need to sing in female pitch, which is a big challenge for male singers. They need to use the mixed sound of modal voice and falsetto, in other words, using modal voice in the pitch of falsetto, make the sound real and high.

Furthermore, compliance to the characteristics of local language, embellish technique is frequently used, making the performance rich in local features. Drag and toss technique, two of embellish technique, are commonly used by lead vocal of soprano. On the highest pitch of the song, other singers habitually use above two techniques as well. The melody flows freely and smoothly with these techniques, as same as the unique landscape of Guangxi. The prelude of the song, usually built with the intervals within 4 degrees "la-re-la", generally sung with embellish technique to switch between modal and falsetto by the male singers, therein "la" is sung with modal voice and "re" sung with falsetto. Meanwhile, based on language habits, appoggiatura and portamento are applied as well to enrich the local features in the performance.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This paper uses the theory of morphology of music, takes the theory of musical structure analysis as the reference starting point, and takes the related music score and singing audio and video as the basis to compare the musical relationship between the song "Bombax Ceiba are Flaming Red" and the chorus "Moon", and draws the following conclusions.

The choral song "Moon" combines traditional folk songs with popular music elements and uses Western harmonic composition techniques to create the arrangement. The melody is written based on the basic melodic features of the song "Bombax Ceiba are Flaming Red" of Nahai Liao in Pingguo county, and the harmony is arranged with the local language features and customs, preserving the characteristics of the native form such as the relationship between the major intervals.

In terms of harmony, the work is composed by combining the tall chord and other compositional techniques commonly used in contemporary pop music, making the work more aesthetically pleasing to the times without losing its ethnic and regional characteristics.

In terms of lyrics, the notional words and backing words alternate, and the lyrics of the traditional "Nahai Liao" "Bombax Ceiba are Flaming Red" have a strictly regulated style and rhythm, with a strong and catchy tone, rich in the rhythmic characteristics of ancient poetry,

while the lyrics of the choral song "Moon" have a free style and rhythm, more in line with the modern sense. In the aspect of backing words, similar with "Nahai Liao" in which "Ha" and "Liao" are often used, the choral song "Moon" also contain this feature, following the pattern of native folk songs.

Therefore, through the above research, the author believes that in the context of the diversified development of contemporary choral music, actively exploring the diversified adaptations of folk choral music by integrating the western modern music can promote the innovative development of traditional folk songs. Moreover, the deep digging of folk music culture and the value of adaptation contained in folk songs can make the traditional culture keep pace with the times, which is of great significance to attract more attention and consciousness of the younger generation to folk chorus and to protect and inherit traditional music

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