

MODERN CHINESE BALLET IN THE CONTEXT OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF A CHOREOGRAPHER

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Abstract. Modern Chinese ballet is a unique cultural phenomenon, characterized by a synthesis of national and European traditions. Studying modern Chinese ballet can improve the process of professional training of a choreographer. The article analyzes the specifics and characteristic features of modern Chinese ballet; a classification of modern Chinese ballets is presented; main directions of professional training for a choreographer are proposed.

Keywords: modern Chinese ballet, professional training of a choreographer, choreography.

СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ КИТАЙСКИЙ БАЛЕТ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОЙ ПОДГОТОВКИ ХОРЕОГРАФА

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Аннотация. Современный китайский балет – уникальное культурное явление, характеризующееся синтезом национальных и европейских традиций. Изучение современного китайского балета способно усовершенствовать процесс профессиональной подготовки хореографа. В статье проанализированы специфика и характерные особенности современного китайского балета; представлена классификация современных китайских балетов; предложены основные направления профессиональной подготовки хореографа.

Ключевые слова: современный китайский балет, профессиональная подготовка хореографа, хореография.

Modern Chinese ballet is a unique cultural phenomenon, characterized by a synthesis of national and European traditions. Modern Chinese ballet is represented by a variety of genres, dance and acrobatic techniques, and musical accompaniment. The perspective of considering the proposed scientific problem is relevant in connection with the significant developmental capabilities of modern Chinese ballet in the context of improving various aspects of professional training of a choreographer.

The relationship between dance and music has long been recognized. The evolution of music ties it closely to dance, while dance has historically relied upon music for its structure and rhythms. Any discussion of dance without reference to music would seem

incomplete. There is an abundance of literature on the natural partnership between dance and music. Dance scholars have formulated views from an education perspective (H'Doubler), sociology perspective (Thomas), analysis perspective (Adshead), and phenomenology perspective (Fraleigh). Stravinsky (Gardner) is reported to have said that «music must be seen to be properly assimilated» while Balanchine (as cited in Ellfeldt) argued that «In my choreographic creations, I have always been dependent on music» [1, p. 173].

Analysis of modern productions and theater repertoires allows us to highlight some features of modern ballet.

For ease of perception, we have presented these positions in a table form.

Specifics and characteristic features of modern Chinese ballet	
Integration and Innovation	While maintaining the basic techniques and styles of ballet, Chinese modern ballet choreography actively integrates elements of traditional Chinese culture and other dance styles, such as folk dance and modern dance, to form a modern ballet style with Chinese characteristics
Diversity of Themes	The themes of modern Chinese ballet are diverse, ranging from classical Chinese literature and history, such as "The Legend of the White Snake" and "Red Detachment of Women", to works that reflect modern life and socialist values
Drama	Modern Chinese ballet emphasizes storytelling and drama, and the choreography of dance drama is not only the accumulation of dance movements, but also has strong dramatic conflict and plot development, focusing on the expression of character and inner world
Education and popularization	Chinese modern ballet choreography also focuses on dance education and popularization, and promotes ballet as an art form by choreographing dance works suitable for different ages and levels

Figure 1. – Specifics and characteristic features of modern Chinese ballet

So, specifics and characteristic features of modern Chinese ballet are: integration and innovation, diversity of themes, drama, education and popularization. Let's take a closer look at each of the highlighted points.

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The Oxford English Dictionary offers two definitions for the word «choreography» – the first, a beguilingly simple assertion, informs us that choreography is the art of dancing; and the second, marked as an obsolete usage, refers to choreography as «the art of writing dances on paper». The first definition identifies all aspects of dance as choreographic, whether the process of teaching someone how to dance, the act of learning to dance, the event of performing a dance, or the labor of creating a dance. The second definition, used perhaps for the last time by Rudolf Laban, specifies choreographers as those who endeavor to notate through the use of abstract symbols the spatial and rhythmic properties of movement [2, p. 98].

We suggest considering the following classification of modern Chinese ballets. This classification reflects the following positions:

- movement fusion (on the basis of ballet, elements of Chinese folk dance are added, such as the gestures, postures and steps of classical Chinese dance, which are combined with the basic movements of ballet to form a unique dance language);
- musical fusion (the use of traditional Chinese instruments and melodies, combined with the musical style of ballet, creates a novel dance music that has both Chinese style and ballet elegance);
- costume design (a dancer's costume combines the elements of traditional Chinese costumes, such as Hanfu, cheongsam, etc., as well as the costume characteristics of ballet, to design a new style of dance costumes that not only has traditional Chinese beauty but also meets the needs of dance movements);
- theme content (the theme of dance often comes from Chinese historical stories, myths and legends or modern life, and is presented in the form of ballet, so that Chinese stories can be expressed internationally);
- stage scenery (in the stage design, it integrates traditional Chinese elements and modern technology to create a stage effect with both Chinese characteristics and modernity);

- cultural exchange (as a form of cultural exchange, Chinese modern ballet has promoted the cooperation and exchange between Chinese and foreign artists, and contributed to the internationalization of Chinese dance art).

A ballet dancer's development engages two aspects: the technical and artistic capital (Pickard). It is imperative that these two aspects are nurtured in coincide to cultivate ballet dancers. However, if the artistic capital is neglected; ballet education is at risk of merely remaining as a practice of technical skills unfulfilling the nature of ballet as art (Carr). Sometimes, due to skillful mechanical movements without artistic qualities, attempts are made to draw analogies between ballet and aesthetic sports, such as skating and gymnastics. But we are talking about the highly artistic expression of the image in the plastic art of ballet.

Traditional teaching methods in ballet largely focuses on the extrinsic values that concerns the appearance of the dancer as oppose to the intrinsic values of the individual (Spohn and Prettyman). «...The «old school» teaching methods that are authoritarian tends to maintain teaching and learning as «prescriptive» and educate dancers to conform to acquiring steps rather than to develop autonomous dancers through a democratic process in pursuit of significance and purpose. Such ballet teaching and learning then becomes disengaged from any artistic meaning or choreographic knowledge» [3, p. 142].

The artistic aspect is embedded in the technique according to the schooling style and even further within the choreographic style, which gives the steps/movement meaning and significance in terms of artistic expression. However, if the teaching and learning does not connect the technical and artistic aspect, the problem «...of the Cartesian mind–body split that exists in ballet and ballet teaching will only continue to prevail developing the mechanical dancer void of self-expression» [3, p.143].

When talking about practical training in a ballet class, significant details should be noted. The experience of practicing and performing any technique should vary depending on one's ability, proficiency, and perceived potential. Both movements and body parts are held to highly shape specific standards in ballet. Some (skill, flexibility) are manifested through action and movement, while others (height, weight) are static. Self-consciousness in ballet class arises from the reflexivity produced in symbolic interaction within training contexts [4].

Dance emerged from ancient court performances and traditional folk tales. Originating from cultural, historical, and philosophical backgrounds, dance forms have been developed and refined over centuries, leading to the establishment of rigorous training systems and pedagogies [5].

Thus, we can determine the main directions of professional training of a choreographer at modern stage. The training direction of Chinese choreography mainly

includes the following aspects: basic dance training, choreographer theory, dance creation practice, dance performance skills.

Main directions of professional training of a choreographer	
Basic Dance Training	Including the training of basic dance skills, such as ballet, modern dance, Chinese classical dance, etc., to ensure that choreography students have a solid foundation in dance
Choreographer Theory	Learn the basic theories of choreography, including dance history, dance aesthetics, dance creation methods, dance analysis and criticism, etc., and provide theoretical support
Dance Creation Practice	Cultivate students' creative thinking and choreography ability through practical exercises in choreography, including the creation of short dance works and dance combinations
Dance Performance Skills	Learn the basic skills of dance performance, including dance posture, dance steps, dance posture and dance sense, etc

Figure 2. – Main directions of professional training of a choreographer

Thus, modern Chinese ballet in the context of professional training of a choreographer makes it possible to realize the universality of human expression through a dance, as well as the unique distinctive features that are determined by the cultural and historical context.

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