

Original Research Article

Preliminary Study of the Aesthetic Character of Guniang Song in Western Guangdong in Lingnan Area

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Abstract: On Leizhou Peninsula in western Guangdong, Guniang Song is a kind of folk art which uses local dialect to rap and perform. In 2006, among the first batch of provincial intangible cultural heritage announced by Guangdong Provincial People's Government, it was successfully selected. According to the existing research, the introduction of it by scholars mostly started from the aspects of performance forms and folk characteristics, while ignoring the research on the aesthetic character of it. Based on this situation, the purpose of this study is to explore the aesthetic character of the it in western Guangdong, in order to provide some theoretical reference and creative inspiration for the scientific protection and inheritance of the Guniang Song.

Keywords: Guniang Song; Aesthetic Character; Preliminary Study

When it comes to Guniang Song, it is a folk storytelling performance art that uses the popular local Minnan dialect-Leizhou dialect to perform, with rap alternating with singing^[1]. It is worth mentioning that the most basic feature that distinguishes it from other genres is that it performs in Leizhou dialect. Because of the different demands of folk functions, the program style of it includes three performance forms: Praises Immortals Song, Antiphonal Song and Persuasion Song. Among them, Persuasion Song is synonymous with the development of it to a certain period and degree and has both program types and aesthetic characteristics, which represents the stable form of Guniang Song art, that is, many people sit around to rap and interpret middle and long stories^[2]. It is precisely because of this aesthetic paradigm that the artistic aesthetic qualities of it are established, such as simplicity, popularity, multiplicity, imagination and comedy. Previous studies on it only gave a brief description of it from the angle of performance form and folk function, but failed to fully understand the aesthetic character of it from the angle of artistic characteristics of the songs to which they belong. Through the discussion of the aesthetic character of it in western Guangdong, on the one hand, the author hopes to improve more people's appreciation of the artistic beauty of it; On the other hand, it could correct some erroneous concepts and behaviors that deviate from its aesthetic characteristics in the practice of creating and performing it, so as to achieve the good purpose of correctly protecting and inheriting the legacy.

1. Simplicity

As for its form, it is simple, that is, its stage performance is simple and convenient. Specifically, there is a background cloth hanging behind the stage, which usually has three or five actors, dressed in their own colors, and they can perform with the sound amplification equipment they carry around. There is no need for a huge system and lineup in dance beauty, band, props and cast members. However, the simple art form of song does not mean that the art of it is very simple, low-level and primitive. On the contrary, the simple form of it breeds very wonderful and rich artistic skills and aesthetic mechanism. Following the dialectical principles of combining complexity with simplicity, seeing the big in the small and winning more with less, artists make full use of the unique performance techniques of one person with multiple angles and jumping out and jumping in, and have unique skills of speaking, singing and working, which greatly enrich the connotation and charm of oral language expression. These are the superior characteristics derived from the simplicity characteristics of it.

People often use light cavalry to describe folk art including Guniang Song to reflect the characteristics of quickness and simplicity in real life. As *The Moon Over the West River* said, there are many businesses in the world, but storytelling is difficult. It's not easy to play adagio, so remember the following requirements. First, the voice should be loud, and second, the voice should be cadence. A person's performance can be both literary and martial, and the whole performance is like a big drama. From these word, we can see that the art of storytelling is not a simple art since ancient times. But how did they create the stage effect of a big play through simple art forms? Take the Guniang Song as an example, it requires performers to make great efforts in inner skill, performance skills and spirit of content, while other auxiliary means such as facial expression, posture, and acrobatic dance can be

ignored in most cases. Because this simple artistic composition is determined by the artistic essence of its rap narrative performance. That is to say, the rap content displayed in oral language is the first element for the program to become a performance of voice and language communication, and the way to appreciate it does not necessarily require people to see it with their eyes, because people only listen with their ears, thus creating imagination and achieving aesthetic appreciation of its rap content. Moreover, its performance is mainly temporal, and the time-space transformation of content expression is very convenient and flexible. As long as the audience is told what is happening in another scene now, they will change the scene in their mind quickly, and will not be affected by spatial factors.

Through the study of this simplicity, we know that artists must not blindly follow the trend and be greedy for more. In the creative practice of many modern programs, in order to achieve the ideal western-style effect, more and more artists pursue the magnificence of stage art, deliberately pursue the lively atmosphere of stage performance, and to add fancy dancing with dance at will. Although this increases the stage effect, it seriously affects the display of the essential characteristics of the narrative performance of rap, which can easily distract people's aesthetic attention. As a matter of fact, these extra performance methods can't play a good role in setting off. On the contrary, they cover up or even dispel its rap charm, and mislead the audience to correctly understand the rap characteristics of its skills. In other words, they can be regarded as singing and dancing programs, but they are no longer performances of attributes. Therefore, a full understanding of the simplicity of the artistic form of it can prevent the above-mentioned similar creative practice of innovation with heart but ignorance trauma, thus while respecting the simplicity of artistic features, downplaying the meaningless packaging and pursuit of creative performances, and paying attention to the development and innovation of it on the deep excavation and construction of the richness and ideological content of it, and on the formal training and hard and lasting honing of it.

2. Popularity

Popularity in the general sense refers to things that are easy to be understood and accepted by the public. The performance artistic characteristics of Guniang Song in Leizhou dialect not only make the performance methods easy to understand, but also reflect the popularity of its performance script, that is, the content expression of the song, which is mainly reflected in the following three aspects:

(1) The artistic expression shows the affinity with the masses. As the Guniang Song was created by the people of Leizhou Peninsula and owned by them, it was performed in their favorite form, which reflected the life content that everyone was most familiar with and concerned about, reflected the truest thoughts and feelings of local people, and pinned their most common aesthetic aspirations. From form to content, from emotion to aesthetics, the artistic creation of it shows its strong compliance with local people, and we call this internal relationship the affinity with the masses. It is closely related to the spiritual beliefs of local people. Looking at the performance scripts of Guniang Song handed down from ancient times, the reason why they have lasting artistic charm is that their theme is to represent people's emotions, ideals and aspirations, and at the same time, they use song's basic singing style, which is familiar to local people, and their performance forms are flexible and dynamic, which well meet the folk spiritual needs of people and win the spiritual and emotional resonance of local people in different times. It is this historical song that is closely related to the spiritual life of local people, which forms the origin of the popular characteristics of it and also constitutes the aesthetic character that the content expression of it must be popular.

(2) The locality of Leizhou dialect. Guniang Song is a kind of storytelling performance art which mainly uses Leizhou dialect to rap and narrate. Among them, the combination of it determines that its expression is mainly the artistic treatment of local dialect. It can be seen that the oral performance is the core content of the artistic popularity of Guniang Song. Leizhou dialect is widely used by local people. The tune based on it has a unique identity of the native, so it can naturally narrow the aesthetic distance between artists and people, and then strengthen the rural relationship between the song and people's aesthetics. Thanks to the refinement and artistic borrowing of Leizhou dialect vocabulary, pronunciation and rhyme, tone and intonation, rhythm and charm, rhetorical devices, colloquial slang and allegorical sayings, the performance of Guniang Song has become cordial, vivid and lively, so it is extremely attractive and appealing. This also fully reflects that Guniang Song is a kind of artistic feature with the aesthetic principle of verbal rap expression. As a matter of fact, the creation of modern Guniang Song generally lacks the charm of oral language in Leizhou dialect, so it is difficult to perform on the stage. Therefore, artists should go deep into their lives, learn to refine and sublimate the vivid language that local people are familiar with and expressive, and then apply them to the creation of it, which should become an important inspiration for the contemporary Guniang Song performance script, that is, the creation of songs.

(3) Popularity of value orientation. As mentioned above, the core content of popularity of Guniang Song is the use of oral language in Leizhou dialect, but it does not mean that the oral use of local dialect can guarantee the popularity of it. As a local genre, it also has the comprehensive characteristics of art, that is, its artistic elements should have the popularity that local people are familiar with and love. For example, there are Leizhou song's basic melody backbone and tone in it, as well as some auxiliary chanting and body movements simulating daily expressions, which are the stage reappearance of the real situation in local people's life, and also a clear manifestation of the popularity of it. Especially, the content expressed in the performance script of Guniang Song, that is, the music program, has obvious popularity characteristics. For example, as a kind of Guniang Song, Persuasion Song usually ends with a happy ending, and the characterization in the story content is also an aesthetic trend dominated by the images of kindness, kindness, diligence, incorruptibility, integrity, bravery, loyalty and chivalry, and the thoughts of love and hate, beauty and ugliness, loyalty and rape, good and evil, and true and false judgment are the main enlightenment purposes, which fully reflects the mainstream social values in the historical situation at that time, because the creation of the performance script of Guniang Song is based on the collective life experience of Leizhou people, and the art of it sustains the life ideal, which reflects the life attitude and life concept of local people, and is deeply understood and loved by them. It can be seen that the popularity of

Guniang Song is not only reflected in its sharing of aesthetic tastes and spiritual beliefs with local people, but also in the simple expression of her lofty artistic conception and the ingenious expression of profound connotation. Generally speaking, the creation of it not only reflects the ease of accumulation and lightness of weight lifting, but also reflects the light expression of rich content and the secular transmission of rich implication.

3. Multiplicity

As a kind of stage performance art, the creation and performance of Guniang Song are diversified, mainly because it has a kind of artistic creation and performance characteristics which are progressive from script creation to stage performance creation to audience appreciation creation.

Firstly, both ideological content and language expression reflect the multiple variability or unfitness of its language content, in other words, from the first dimension creation to the second dimension creation, which is embodied in two aspects: time dimension and space dimension. Firstly, from the time dimension, the inheritance of Guniang Song has variability. That is, as for the same Guniang Song program, even if its artists are in the same mentoring system and perform the same work, it will have different versions due to different times. The differences in this version include the excerpts of some chapters or the simplification of individual words and sentences, as well as the increase or decrease in the content of the plot or the change of the theme, including the shaping and changing of characters. With the evolution of the social times, artists will constantly update the contents according to the changes of social fashion and the needs of spiritual quality. They will get rid of its dross, stale and miscellaneous ingredients, and add the fresh and healthy essence of other performing arts, which makes the programs have the same name, but the content and thoughts are often quite different due to the interpretation effects of different artists in different times. Secondly, the spread of Guniang Song also has variability in spatial dimension. Take the Persuasion Song program as an example, even in the same period, different regions or actors will be affected by different audience appreciation needs or belief requirements, and different content versions of the performance script with the same name will appear, that is, the music version. In particular, the folk customs of Leizhou Peninsula make Guniang Song perform in different villages in the same year. This repeated performance gives artists the opportunity to constantly update and adjust to better meet the needs of each village's annual connotation. Therefore, from the script creation of it in the first dimension to the performance of artists in the second dimension to the spiritual aesthetic needs of different people in Leizhou in the third dimension, this fully reflects the variability of Guniang Song.

Secondly, due to the artistic performance nature of oral rap, the artistic expression of Guniang Song also has the characteristics of multiple adjustments to their performances due to the different performance environment and audience. The multiplicity of this artistic expression is mainly based on the needs of the performance scene, which makes the content and performance time of all kinds lengthened or shortened, thus showing the characteristics of flexibility in the length of it. For example, when artists go to the countryside to perform, they can control their space at will and show their freedom. However, if they are invited to perform on formal occasions in the city or in colleges and universities, their performances will generally become elegant, and the length and time of the programs will be shortened to adapt to the tastes and habits enjoyed by different audiences. This not only shows that the performance art of this rap is flexible and colorful, but also shows that the artists have great respect for the audience. Their free and flexible performance ability of responding to all changes is actually a high demand for their own wisdom and performance skills. That is to say, on the one hand, artists should fully respect the spiritual needs of different audiences, on the other hand, they should constantly improve their performance skills and self-cultivation, and actively explore more artistic expressions that meet the aesthetic needs of contemporary audiences. At the same time, this kind of multi-degree adaptability is not to indulge in ingratiation and kitsch without principle and bottom line, but to lead the audience with a certain high quality and inspire the spirit and morality, which is the highest artistic realm that artists should strive to carry forward and pursue.

Thirdly, the creation and performance law of Guniang Song and the historical tradition of its artistic formation and development determine the multiplicity of its creation and performance. The artistic characteristics of its oral rap determine that their performances will be constantly tested and honed, updated and improved in practice. At the same time, in the history, all the artists are integrated with creation (self-editing), self-directed and acting (self-acting). Because of the traditional way of artistic production, its performance can't be successful at one time, it can only be changed while performing, and finally it is gradually improved and perfected by constantly receiving the aesthetic feedback from the three-dimensional audience aesthetics. Therefore, it has formed the law of multiple performances: the same program in different times will be edited and performed by artists many times. All music books without value and vitality will be eliminated by the society; However, the works with rich and profound artistic ideas, complete and superb performance skills and methods will be preserved and passed down, and become excellent traditional programs for it. Because they have classic artistic character, they will be sung from generation to generation. It can be seen that the practical process of creating and performing versatility is a process of self-sublation, constant selection and refinement, which is also a basic law and tradition of the development and evolution, and it is also the fundamental guarantee to keep their artistic youth forever.

4. Imaginative

Imagination is the characteristic of this artistic aesthetic creation. Leizhou dialect, the performing art of rap, determines that the most basic material for the artistic construction of Guniang Song is Leizhou dialect. As we all know, language itself is the product of abstraction and the direct embodiment of human thinking. Leizhou dialect, like all languages, needs to undergo the transformation of imagination and thinking, so as to become an artistic image understood by the people and complete the three-dimensional creation of it, that is, aesthetic creation. This makes the imagination produced by oral rap become an important feature of artistic creation of Guniang Song.

Firstly, the imaginative performance of Guniang Song makes the artistic performance of it particularly flexible. Artists use

the third-person tone to rap and narrate in their true identity. Only one sentence is needed to explain the transfer of time and space and change roles, or to imitate the characters' personalized voice, intonation, eyes, expressions and movements, so that the audience can instantly understand who they are talking about and who they are copying, so as to complete the instant scheduling of scenes, characters and character relationships that other arts can't achieve without changing the stage background or changing people. In the folk art proverbs, "Turning around is far away, change the voice from the old man to the new woman instantly" is a concentrated portrayal of the characteristics of this kind of rap performance, such as time and space replacement, and the flexibility and freedom of character foot color conversion^[3]. It highlights that the core of artistic creation and performance of Guniang Song is the skill of rap, and other auxiliary artistic means such as music, dance, acrobatics, foot color and art only play a supporting role, which should never replace the essential characteristics of oral performance of Guniang Song.

Secondly, the imaginative performance of Guniang Song makes the artistic expression of it embodied in freehand brushwork, which is a tendency and technique of artistic creation. It means that artists emphasize the expression of people's inner expression, spirit, temperament and interest, ambition and implication, while ignoring the external authenticity of artistic images. Guniang Song is a narrative rap performance art based on Leizhou dialect that is the basic material of artistic expression, that is, an abstract language, which makes the artistic aesthetic creation of it simply explain, introduce, describe and imitate the content to be expressed with the help of rap narration in the third person, instead of directly reproducing the story content objectively and realistically. Therefore, the imagination of this performance is mainly reflected in the use of freehand brushwork. However, the author finds that in the present performance of Persuasion Song, artists wear costumes and make-up to play characters, which is a misinterpretation and misleading of the freehand aesthetic characteristics of Guniang Song who use the third-person oral language to rap. The performance of opera on the stage needs the help of stage background and props, while the rap performance only needs to be done by hand, and people can immediately understand the meaning, that is, artists should be good at conveying the expression of things, and do not need to pay attention to expressing the real form, which is the advantage of artistic freehand brushwork including Guniang Song. Therefore, it should make great efforts to express the connotation and essence of things, and reduce the use of realism, concreteness and reproduction techniques. The way of creating a show like dressing up to Persuasion Song should be corrected in time. This is also an example of erroneous inheritance of the imaginative features of artistic aesthetic creation of this Song in practice.

Thirdly, the imaginative performance of Guniang Song makes the audience's aesthetic acceptance show rich and diverse characteristics. The artistic characteristics of singing and narrative performance of it in Leizhou dialect, and the flexibility and freehand brushwork of artistic expression, make the shaping of artistic image and the creation of artistic realm need indirect association in aesthetic acceptance. That is to say, the art of Guniang Song has left a space for the audience to imagine in diversity. Compared with the performances of opera films, the audience feels the characters directly, for example, according to a well-known Asian proverb, "There are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people's eyes", while the Guniang Song as folk art are different. By singing and narrating performances with the true identity of actors, we can create the phenomenon that there are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand audiences' eyes. Of course, artistic imagination can't leave the foundation of real life, either in the process of creation or in aesthetic acceptance. Practice has proved that the more abstract the materials and freehand brushwork conveyed by art, the more solid and extraordinary artistic skills the performers need. That is to say, using oral language as abstract material to express the figurative Guniang Song art through rap is equivalent to using freehand brushwork to create vivid image, which has very high technical requirements for artists, that is, using concise and general dialect vocabulary, to create an artistic performance with simplicity controlling complexity, being one for ten, lifting weights lightly, and accumulating a lot of money. Therefore, artists must correctly recognize the advantages and disadvantages of their own art, make more efforts in content, thought and spiritual charm, inspire Leizhou people to open up colorful and magical imagination space, and feel the nourishing effect of ideological charm and beauty from rap art.

5. Comic

Antiphonal Song and Persuasion Song in Guniang Song have comedy popular character in performance content, that is, the performance style and skills of Guniang Song are comedy. Especially, Antiphonal Song is popular among local people because of its humorous, intelligent and flexible performance characteristics. On the other hand, the stage performance of Persuasion Song program mostly uses laughter and music to achieve the performance effect of comedy ending, and pays attention to creating a relaxed atmosphere with happy reunion effect. This is mainly because the performance way of Guniang Song is that the actors communicate face to face with the audience in their true identity, so that the people on the scene can directly communicate with the actors in emotion and art, and achieve a relaxed and pleasant aesthetic pursuit. At the same time, this is also caused by our people's pursuit of festive culture and optimistic attitude towards life.

There are three kinds of comedic artistic styles of Guniang Song: the first is to incorporate some comedic plots and characters into the programs of Antiphonal Song and Persuasion Song. Usually, the comic artistic technique with relaxed style is adopted, specifically through exaggeration, deformation, contradiction and misunderstanding, to create people and things that make people laugh, to criticize the current disadvantages, to explain the truth, to express love and hate, to ask questions, and to enlighten people's thoughts. The second is Antiphonal Song, a lot of intelligent and astute artistic communication is incorporated. Through the unique display of the wisdom of the artists, a reasonable and unexpected surprise is created, which well stimulates the audience's aesthetic pleasure. The third is reflected in the improvisation of dramatic content performances such as such as "baggage" and "gimmick" when artists perform in different environments, especially the Antiphonal Song program^[4]. Impromptu choreography and playing on the spot are one of the basic methods of artistic creation and performance of all songs, including Guniang Song. However, the pursuit of the comedy effect of it should have artistic expression, and the connotation of comedy culture should be excavated

and refined, so that this aesthetic superiority can't be misunderstood and turned into a short-term operation that blindly appeals to kitsch. That is to say, "without words" is bound to be "not far away", and "without things" will be "without charm". This is a problem that we need to pay special attention to in the creation of Antiphonal Song and Persuasion Song.

In a word, through the above research, it can be found that, although the non-legacy Guniang Song is a kind of ditty in remote western Guangdong, it fully embodies the characteristics of oral language rap performance. At the same time, it also gives full play to its aesthetic character of simplicity, popularity, multiplicity, imagination and comedy. Therefore, when discussing the inheritance and performance of it, the aesthetic paradigm must not be ignored. Those performers under the guise of innovation, who change their performance form into the form of accompanying dance, or put on costumes to play the show of Persuasion Song, are actually dispelling the aesthetic quality of artists, who use oral language Leizhou dialect to rap mainly. Therefore, due to these people's biased aesthetic cognition of non-legacy Guniang Song, the creative performance effect is very poor. In real life, we should always be vigilant and avoid this phenomenon.

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4. "Baggage" and "Gimmick": refer to the special titles or technical terms of jokes in banter genre.