From the Posture of the Figurine to the Movement on the Stage: The Form Extraction and Dance Translation Study of the Group Dance "The Life and Events of the Figurine"

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ABSTRACT
This thesis takes the Chinese classical group dance "The Life and Events of the Figurine" as the research object, bases on the collection materials of the Qin Army Terracotta Warriors Museum, relevant literature and critical analyses of works, and explores the translation method of the static forms of the Qin Terracotta Warriors into dynamic dance language. The analysis is conducted from three aspects: the extraction of typical figure postures, the generation of body movements, and the construction of stage images. The creative features of center of gravity shifting, movement rhythm, and spatial arrangement of group dances are examined. The research suggests that through the connection of the static postures of the figurines and the dynamic dance group, the work retains the historical recognizability of the Qin Terracotta Army's forms. It also enriches the emotional expression of the characters with life-like movements, the harmonious combination of strength and softness in body language, and the interweaving of space, thus achieving the artistic transformation from static artifact forms to dynamic stage imagery.

Keywords: *The Life and Events of the Figurine, The static forms of the Qin Terracotta Warriors, Chinese classical dance, The movement on the stage, Dance translation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The ancient terracotta figurines record figures' physical features with static posture. The Chinese classical dance utilizes the prolongation of movement and the shaping of body rhythm to create an image. The artistic mediums of the two are different. The postures of terracotta figurines cannot be directly equivalent to historical dance. The key of cultural relic-themed creation lies in extracting identifiable body elements from the static form, and organize them into motivated and rhythmic dance vocabulary. Xie Chun discussed the value of cultural relics and ancient books for dance choreography, and pointed out the connection between historical basis and artistic innovation [1]; Peng Xiaoxi, Zhou Yichen discussed the train of creation thought of "cultural relic dance" from "Sanle Tu" [2]; Tian Tian's notes on the creation of the "Terracotta Figures" series also provided practical reference for understanding the contemporary body transition of the images of terracotta figures [3].

The group dance "The Life and Events of the Figurine" is wrote and directed by Zhang Peng and Li Mengyu. It is based on the theme of the Terracotta Army of the Qin Dynasty, and won the 14th "Lotus Award" for Classical Dance in Chinese Dance Art [4]. The work unfolds its stage presentation based on the emotional relationship between soldiers and their families, and break through the manifestation mode of singly show the form of terracotta figures. This thesis interprets "dancing translation" as an artistic process that involves extracting the form of cultural relics, generating body movements, and constructing stage images. The research combines the museum collection materials with public dance comments, and analyzes its creation methods from three

aspects: dance posture, movement rhythm, and group dance coordination.

2. THE ARTISTIC EXTRACTION OF THE CULTURAL RELICS' FORM

2.1 The Extraction of the Basic Form of the Terracotta Army

The differences in the types of the Terracotta Army of the Qin Dynasty are mainly manifested in the center of gravity, posture and the relationship of the limbs. The kneeling archer figurine in the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum site Museum has its left leg bent and its right knee touching the ground [5]. Its hands are placed on the right side of their bodies, in a position ready to hold and fire an archery bow and crossbow. Its lower support constrains the form, and the direction relationship between the arms and the trunk creates a clear movement direction. The high-ranking officer figurine is dressed in a long robe and wears fish-scale armor on the outside. Its hands are crossed and hanging in front of his abdomen, holding a sword [6]. The upright posture and stable center of gravity of this figure create a solemn and dignified demeanor. The comparison of the two forms provides the visual reference for handling high and low levels, body center of gravity and character identity in dance.

Ou Jianping in the comments of "The Life and Events of the Figurine" mentions that the work uses the classical terracotta figures postures of the kneeling archer figurine, the standing archer figurine and the high-ranking officer figurine etc. [7]. From the perspective of writing and creating, the identifiable figurine posture can be transformed into dance groups' opening stance, closing stance or the stage pose. The dancers are not simply copy the shape of the terracotta figurines, but extract their posture of the torso, supporting method and body contour, making the body still retains the characteristics of the Terracotta Army before and after the movement. The dancers' coordinated control of the shoulders, chest, waist, hips and limbs provided the movement conditions for transforming the figurative form into a dancing posture. This "extracting the form and transforming the momentum" approach made the original form of the artistic relics the source for choreographing the movements.

2.2 The Spatial Form Arrangement of the Terracotta Army

The form characteristics of Qin terracotta army formation also manifested in the arrangement patterns among groups. The combination of military units, the orientation of the figurines, and the horizontal and vertical spacing constitute the collective order; the group dance also shapes the collective image through the spatial relationship between the formation and the dancers. The visual regularity of the group of terracotta warriors of the Qin dynasty can be further transformed into the source of stage arrangement in group dance choreography.

"The Life and Events of the Figurine" resorts to the collective movement pattern of the men's group dance highlights the shared identity of the soldiers. The unified orientation helps to concentrate the visual focus, while the staggered positioning and horizontal-vertical layers create differences in the overall shape. The military formation on the stage evolves into a structure that can change its layout, interweave and reorganize as the dance sequence progresses. Through the comparison of dynamic and static, the director combines the formal logic of the "static military formation" and the scheduling logic of the "dynamic group dance", making the single figurine posture forms formative marker and the group formations create a historical atmosphere. The two jointly form the foundation of the translation of dance poses.

3. THE DANCE TRANSLATION OF THE STATIC FORM

3.1 The Transformation from the Posture of the Figurine to the Movement of the Dance

The sculptures present a moment of actions, while the dance should explain the source and destination of this moment. The kneeling archer figurine's low center of gravity can serve as the basis for limb flexion and extension, body movement and rotation; the standing figurine can be regarded as the posture reference after exercise. The dancer alternates between static and dynamic states, making the "figurine shape" form the intersection point within the dance groups. What matters is not how many different figurines postures are connected, but whether a clear movement intention can be formed during the connection process.

Ou Jianping pointed out that the work mainly uses Chinese classical dance as its dance vocabulary, and also incorporating the physical expressions of modern dance and the dramatic performance techniques [7]. This combination is beneficial to break through the inherent static nature of the sculpture's form. The coordinated movement of the trunk and limbs creates a connection between the actions, and the change of body direction transforms the character from a static state to a dynamic state. The combination of static and dynamic constructs a well-balanced structure of the dance sequence. From the perspective of the choreographic structure, the fixed posture of the figurine marks the beginning and ending of the action, and the movement process involves emotions. The duration, amplitude and center of gravity shifts jointly form the rhythmic beats of a dance group. The dynamic organization in the work is an artistic creation by contemporary directors based on the form of cultural relics. When conducting research, it is necessary to distinguish between the archaeological evidence and the stage imagination.

3.2 The Recombination from the Reorganization of the Form and Texture to the Movement Rhythm

The stable texture of the static figurines comes from their body structure. In dance, this must be manifested through the tension of movements, speed control, and rhythm handling. The low center of gravity can strengthen the stability of the movement. The short pause highlights the fixed posture of the appearance. The continued extension then forms a dynamic trend shifting from inward contraction to outward expansion. The theory of the "form, spirit, power and rhythm" of Chinese classical dance movement aesthetics, which was suggested by Tang Mancheng, provides professional evidence for analyzing the relationship between physical form and inner expression [9]. The work does not need to deliberately apply a specific rhyming element; instead, the changes in intensity should be consistent with the character's identity and the motivation of their actions.

The dance vocabulary in the works also comes from life actions. Zhang Li, Yang Yi recorded the movements in the duet dance, including the woman's stepping, raising hand to look around, retracting hand and turning around, as well as the men and women embracing and gazing at each other [8].When looking around, the line of sight is in the same direction as the arm, creating an outward extending movement trend. Retracing hand and turning around makes the posture shifts from external expansion to internal contraction. The comparison of the two dynamic trends makes emotions like expecting, reluctant be expressed. The life-like actions are no longer simply imitation, but become the dance vocabulary that has emotional connotations.

Women group dance designs the actions like raising, quickly retracting, moving horizontally, drying and spreading out, etc. [9]. Rising highlights vertical extension. Moving horizontally pull apart the horizontal lines. Quickly retracting forms rhythmic closure. Clothes, as stage props, prolong the arm's line, and also generally embodied the emotions like waiting and missing. The life actions developed into dance group. Missing no longer depends on languages, but is perceived by the audience through the interaction between the body and the props. Zhang Li, Yang Yi also record the scene where the women moves the clothes diagonally downward, as well as the changes in the "rotation" and "circulation" speeds [8]. The clothes shift from rising to falling, and the body transitions from a slower rotation to a more intense movement. The emotion expression shifts with the action rhythm. This concrete dance group shows that props directions and body movement speed jointly contribute to the narrative, rather than serving as independent decorative elements.

3.3 The Spatial Interweaving from Individual to Group Scheduling

The group dance creation cannot just be the repetition of single dance postures. The position, direction and the moving line of dancers determine the effect of the actions in the whole. The same figure placed in an orderly formation highlights the sense of order, while in a disordered and interwoven formation, it focuses on depicting the relationships between the characters. "The Life and Events of the Figurine" organized men group dance and women group dance as a interrelated spatial scenes. Through group movement, the transition of the situation between the battlefield and the homeland is achieved.

According to Zhang Li, Yang Yi, in the middle part of the work, the female dancers perform a lateral movement and widen the formation, while the male dancers move towards each other in parallel shots, creating a stage space with a sense of depth. It is also pointed out that the work employs

the compositional relationship of “points” and “lines”. Horizontally expanding broadens the visual space, and the mutual displacement strengthens the connection between the groups. The point-like aggregation emphasizes the central figure, and the linear expansion reinforces the horizontal space. The alternation of the two compositions strengthens the layering effect of the formation image. The arrangement of the front and back layer on the stage enables the audience to perceive two different groups of actions simultaneously. The female dancers’ horizontal scheduling and male dancers’ movements toward each other are reference to each other. The spatial distance shifts from the visible stage scenes to the cues indicating the relationships between characters. From this, it can be seen that the choreography of group dance combines both the function of shaping and the function of narration.

4. THE SHAPING ELEMENTS FOR “ACTIVATING” THE IMAGES OF THE QIN TERRACOTTA ARMY

4.1 From the Military Style to Realistic Characters

The clothes and postures of terracotta figures can show their military identities, but cannot directly show identity’s emotional experience. “The Life and Events of the Figurine” uses dance actions to describe the relationship between soldiers and their family members, making stage characters no longer just the typical images in the military formation. Male group dance establishes one’s identity through a stable fixed posture, using the actions such as embracing, gazing and turning in the duet dance to express the intimate relationship between the characters [8]. As the same character enters the emotional expression from collective array, the audience’s understanding of their identity gradually became more comprehensive.

The image of dance character is not shaped through textual descriptions, but gradually emerges through the development of movements, changes in spatial distance, and variations in rhythm. The military styling assumes the role of character identification, and the life-oriented dance group presents mental activity. Its value does not lie in reconstruct a soldier’s real experience, but lies in break the uniformity of the military formation image through common people’s emotional experience. Appropriate artistic imagination can expand the range of expression for the images of the figurines, but it cannot replace the historical evidence provided by the original artifacts.

4.2 The Balanced Relationship Between the Body and Emotions

The contrast between hardness and softness in the work is reflected in the texture of the movements. The collective fixed posture and concentrated body force of the male group dance highlight the stability of the soldier’s image; the female group dance expresses the sentiment of vigilance through extension, retraction and the use of props. The two kinds of movement texture make vivid contrast, but “hardness” and “softness” is not simple gender division: the soldiers’ gaze also conveys their longing, while the repeated body actions of the woman in drying and waiting also demonstrate her inner resilience. Different body languages interplay with each other in the dance segment, presenting the characters’ emotions in multiple layers. For “The Life and Events of the Figurine”, whether the intensity, movement, and pauses of the actions are in line with the character’s situation is more explanatory than merely emphasizing the style differences between male and female actions.

The clothes and clothesline not only attend in the stage setting, but also get involved in dancers’ actions. The dancers’ movements of raising, lowering and pulling the clothes transform the daily labor into dance actions with emotional motivations. The props and the body form an extended relationship, and the repetition of the movements represents the waiting time. Ou Jianping’s comment also mentions the spatial arrangement of the two sets of clotheslines, with one higher and the other lower. This makes the props not only restricted the movement paths, but also contributed to the composition of the stage’s front and back spaces.

4.3 The Generation of Historical Imagery in the Interplay of Movement and Stillness

The “activation” of the images of the Qin terracotta figurines does not involve eliminating the static features of the terracotta figurines, but rather creating a correspondence between the static poses of the figures and the dynamic dance phrases. The static styling builds up historical distinctiveness. The body movements express characters’ emotion. The choreography of group dance connects individual experiences with the collective image.

Wang Bin's research about "An Evening Banquet in the Tang Palace" discussed the contemporary presentation of the traditional stylings from the perspective of body posture and multimedia performance art [10]. The medium conditions of the two works are different. Its discussion on how body postures generate new aesthetic meanings can still serve as a comparative reference.

"The Life and Events of the Figurine" forms a composite dance image with the simple and profound posture of the figurines, the smooth and flowing movements of the characters, and the changes in the relationships among the figures. The audiences identify the Qin terracotta figurines in the military formation pattern, feel parting and waiting in life-like movements, understand the connection between individuals and groups in the interwoven space of the male and female group dance. It can be seen that the "activation" in dance is not simple styling changes, but the joint beginning of action language, character portrayal, and the expression of historical emotions.

5. CONCLUSION

"The Life and Events of the Figurine" extracts the morphological characteristics of the postures and military formation order of the Qin Terracotta Army, and complete the dance translation of the static form through the transformation of center of gravity, the organization of movement rhythm, the connection of dance groups, and the coordination of group movements. The work maintains the identification features of the artifact through the figure of the terracotta figurine, constructs the character's actions through the dynamic body, broadens the emotional expression through life-like dance phrases, and forms a progressive relationship from "extracting the form" to "transforming the characteristics" and finally to "creating the image". This practice reminds that the innovation of Chinese classical dance based on cultural relics should take into account both historical basis and physical expression. Only when the form refinement truly integrates into the action structure can the historical image become a stage art image with independent aesthetic value.

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