

# Rock Elements in The Creation of French Musicals

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**Abstract:** French musicals are unique models of modern musicals beyond the classic musicals of Broadway and the west end of England. The French, who are "fashionable, romantic and modern", based on the creation of British and American musicals and through the exploratory and experimental development of various musical elements, have created the "French style" musicals with a strong sense of stage. Among them, the addition of "rock elements" is a highlight that cannot be ignored in the creation of French musicals. This paper studies the origin of "rock elements" in the accompaniment music of French musicals, illustrates the application of "rock elements" in the creation of French musicals with examples, and discusses the reasons for its formation, so as to find out the original charm of French musicals.

**Keywords:** French musicals, Rock elements.

## 1. The Origin of "Rock Elements" in the Creation of French Musicals

When the term "musical" has become the most fashionable, modern and integrated stage play definition in the world today, with the gradual construction and maturity of the musical production teams in Broadway, the United States, and the west end of the United Kingdom, France, with the "fashion capital" Paris as the center, will not be outdone. As a result, romantic, modern and bold French musicians began to create unique French musicals.

"Comédie musicale" is the French form of musical drama. "Comédie" represents "drama", which also has a meaning of "Comedy", and "musicale"'s Chinese translation is "musical", can also be "harmonious" and "pleasant" (See French Chinese Chinese French dictionary). With such a beautiful French interpretation of musicals, the French, who are good at fantastic ideas, have joined in the musical creation of musicals Many different elements.

In October 1978, the representative work of the origin of French musicals, star fantasy, released a concept CD. In the European concept at that time, the stage performance form of "musical" was a product of Broadway. Star fantasy was the first choice to issue CD, which was not created by the French. However, this musical describing the future, coincidentally, opened the door to the future of French modern musicals. The birth of the concept album brought chain effect. Half a year later, in the spring of 1979, the stage version of the musical star fantasy was premiered in the congress hall of Paris.

Although star fantasy is not the first French musical, it has been sought after by the young generation in France after its debut. In its music style, the strong "rock element" runs through the whole play, and also proves to the stage drama industry that beautiful French can also combine with rebellious rock music. And the plot of the play also uses the mode of narration and jumping in, rather than the usual way of using time as the plot to promote the development of the story in British and American plays. From 1979 to the early 1990s, the play launched five editions, namely, the 1979 edition, the 1980 edition, the 1986 edition, the 1988 edition and the 1990s edition. The leading actors were all popular French and Canadian pop music or rock and roll singers at

that time. The play became the originator of French modern musicals.

Interestingly, "Ziggy", one of the important supporting roles in the play, has almost surpassed the male number one after several revisions, and the adaptation of "Ziggy's dream" in the plot has become a favorite of the writers of the play: his dream in the 79th edition was "to become a rock dancer", his dream in the 88th edition was "to become a Rock Drummer", and his dream in the 90th edition was "to become a rock singer".

However, no matter how it changes, the dream always revolves around "rock and roll". What is the magic of "rock and roll elements"? After star fantasy, how many musical styles are affected by "rock and roll elements" in French musicals?

## 2. An Analysis of "Rock Elements" in the Creation of French Musicals

Among the French musicals, there are two masterpieces. The very popular musicals are directly labeled as "rock and roll". The French musicals "rock Mozart" (hereinafter referred to as "faza") and "rock red and black" are two of the most popular representative works of French musicals. When translating their names in Chinese, they are all musicals with the label of "rock". The common point of these two musicals is that apart from the works of the same creative team, the most important thing is the "rock element" in the music style.

Case 1: rock Mozart, premiered in France in 2009. In 2017, it was introduced by Shanghai Culture Square, which opened the premiere in China. What is unexpected is that the premiere of faza in China has gained unprecedented popularity. The 34 performances of the premiere were hard to get as early as the time when the tickets were issued. Many Chinese fans even queued for more than 30 hours to get a vote. Soon, this play was called "the first popular French play in the universe" by Chinese fans of fans. It also ushered in the second round of China tour in early 2019. Under such circumstances, no musical in China has ever done so, even the most classic musical on Broadway or the west side.

The author once interviewed the audience at the scene of faza at random. They used the adjectives "burning", "like beating chicken blood after watching", "rebellious",

"subversive classic" and "I'm crazy", all of which expressed the unique effect that faza brought to the performance site. The connection of these adjectives is the interpretation of the word "rock" in people's minds. The use of the word "rock" in the title of the play also fully reflects the determination of the main creative team to apply "rock elements" to the extreme in terms of music style. Mozart, the protagonist of the play, is one of the greatest classical musicians in Europe, and is praised as a "brilliant talent" by later generations. The ups and downs of his life, the ups and downs of his fate, and the legend of his early death are also a "mystery" in the world. The character prototype of Mozart, a talented musician, has also been adapted from many literary and film works. People have long been familiar with him. In his body, "darkness and light" and "fate and struggle" have also been discussed for several times.

The Western dictionary introduced the play and said: "this performance is a dramatic description of Mozart's life at the age of 17 and ended in 1791 at the age of 35. It uses both traditional pop rock music and Mozart's existing music." Faza retains many of Mozart's classical music works, and some of them are adapted. To a greater extent, a large number of rock music elements are used to express Mozart's legendary life, Mozart's indulgence and rebelliousness in his youth, his later hesitation, and his trans era rebellious spirit. Only rock and roll can express the product of overturning an era. Rock elements are also well integrated with the plot and characters in the play. The "poisoning" song list recommended by the fans of the play, 《Tatoue-Moi》 《Place je passé》 《Bim Bam Boum》 《Le bien qui fait mal》 《L'assasymphonie》 《Vivre à en crever》. All these well reflect the application of "rock elements".

Tatoue-Moi (tattoo me): an important aria of Mozart. He once ranked first in the weekly chart of French SNEP single chart for five consecutive weeks. The song expresses Mozart's love for the city and his desire for recognition when he first arrived in Paris. The accompaniment of the song is sunny and enthusiastic. Mozart's naive and witty monologue in paragraph echoes the powerful, witty and relaxed music style of the electric bass. The uninhibited soul of the talented musician is also jumping heartily. This song also has the style of French country rock.

Place je passé (where I walk): Mozart, the hero, yearns for the theme of freedom and expresses the most thorough catharsis. The key word of this song is "catharsis". In the accompaniment part, the electroacoustic band with a strong sense of metal, full of enthusiasm, dynamic rhythm, and the singing and dancing of the main character make people feel the changing emotions between the lightning and flint.

Bim Bam Boum: The debut song of female supporting role aylothia, the ice blue beauty, the dreamy light and shadow, and the ambiguous light singing... In this song, the accompaniment music uses the black heavy metal music of the Gothic department. The rock music with strong heavy metal sense at the climax stage holds her up for a grand appearance. People immediately understand the reason why "young Mozart also fell in this moment".

Le bien qui fait mal (good things that bring bad results), male supporting role musician Salieri's debut. This song perfectly presents the deep admiration, tears and complicated emotions of Salieri after he heard Mozart's creation for the first time. In the prelude to the song, you can hear the strong emotions of the characters laid down by the electric bass. Above the steady eighth note, there is the upward half-tone

melody of the string minor, and such upward melody implies the distorted psychology of the hero who is unwilling to be outdone.

L'assasymphonie (deadly Symphony): Salieri's solo reflects his jealousy of Mozart and his shock and contradictory psychology of having to admit his talent. This song is one of the most popular songs in faza. During live singing, the audience's volume is enough to topple the roof every time. In the accompaniment of the song, the continuous syncopation of the bass adds a lot of tense and emotional colors, and forms a duet with the song, describing the dark psychology of the protagonist and his contradiction. The chorus section, the heavy bass area of the electric piano and the singing melody are integrated, gradually pushing the song to the climax.

Vivre à en crever (living to the limit): the finale of the whole play. A duet of Mozart and Salieri. At the end of Mozart's life, he met Salieri again. In the cry of Mozart's final release, Salieri finally understood that the desire for power was not so important. The accompaniment music of the song is magnificent, holy, free and easy, fearless, rock and roll... All mixed together, creating an incredible sense of harmony.

The author has personally experienced the performance of faza in Nanjing poly Grand Theater. The whole play of faza is permeated by "rock elements". The rock music form of three chord thickening and continuous drumming runs through the whole play. The audience on the scene is like being in a huge rock music live ceremony. They are also performed by the plot, dance beauty and actors with great influence, setting off a climax after climax. During the tour, Every night, the floor of the Grand Theater gives out a strong and rhythmic sound, as if the floor also plays the role of bass drum in the music. "Rock and roll elements" have subverted the experience of all musicals audiences in watching musicals. The main creative team combined the "rock and roll" style with classical music to interpret Mozart, the soul character of the musical, probably to show Mozart's rebellious character, yearning for freedom and independence. These characteristics are exactly what many "rock youth" yearn for or pursue. It can also be said that faza broke through time and space, and brought a "rebellious youth" of the 18th century onto the modern stage.

Case 2: Le Rouge et noir (rock red and black), premiered in France in September 2016. Although "rock red and black" does not directly reflect the word "rock" in the original French, it is another masterpiece of the main creative team of "faza". In terms of music creation, it continues the rock line of "faza". The play combines the passionate rock band with the stage setting, and uses the unique "French rock" style to build a struggle between "red and black" and "romance and reality". At present, the Chinese sponsor, Jucheng network musical production company, has purchased the copyright and independently produced the play. It will start its first tour in China in 2019. The person in charge of the copyright company of the play has also mentioned that the tour in other regions is still in contact. Due to the reputation of the previous faza, the Chinese region has determined the premiere schedule first, and the Chinese audience may become the first audience of the musical except France, Enjoy this musical earlier.

### 3. The Reasons for The Formation Of "Rock Elements" In the Creation of French Musicals

Environmental factors: the use of "rock elements" in French musicals has pushed it to an alternative "fashion" height, which is affected by certain environmental factors. Since ancient times, Paris has been called the "city of fashion". The streets of France are full of various popular elements. It is easy to see many fashionable people. This fashion has been continuing since the last century. Both young women and old grannies are very fashionable and love life. It is precisely because of this century old fashion environment that when musicals began to become popular in France, the French were not satisfied with imitating or learning from the classics of other countries, but created their own "French rock style" musicals.

Cultural factors: the French are the most famous "liberals" in the world. "Freedom, equality and fraternity" is the national motto of the French constitution. The French people always advocate freedom and are full of pioneering spirit. Although French rock music is not the mainstream of the world's rock music, the main creators of star fantasy and later faza are very innovative in expressing the plot and music creation, which is also the characteristic of the French nation's pursuit of breakthrough. At the same time, the themes of musicals often endow music creation with unique charm. Whether it is the futurism to be expressed in star fantasy or the personality and pursuit of the characters to be expressed in faza, it also conforms to the frank and direct attitude of rock style and the music characteristics full of energy and emotion.

Aesthetic factors. The French love "beauty". French musicals are usually romantic, aesthetic and freehand, which also reflects their aesthetic taste. Unlike British and American musicals, they are not keen on realism. They are better at expressing the collision between ideal and reality, and expressing "yearning and pursuit" on the stage of musicals. This formal aesthetic difference makes them create musical forms different from other countries and nations. For example, Mozart, the protagonist of the musical faza, was originally an Austrian composer in the classical period and one of the great masters of German and Austrian classical music. When creating, the French jumped out of the realistic style of "classicism" and used the more released "rock spirit" to explore the deep spiritual realm of the characters, making this musical depicting the characters in the 18th century more "grounded". This is the "personality beauty" of the French aesthetic characteristics. In rock and roll red and black, it breaks the shackles of thought and breaks through the dogmatic spiritual thought, which is in line with the freedom and uncompromising in the "rock and roll spirit", and also reflects the "open beauty" of French aesthetics.

French musicals and French pop music together "make stars". The use of "rock and roll elements" in the creation of French musicals is also related to the birth process of French musicals. Many plays are first released in the pop music world, and rely on the singers or stars in the pop music world to gather popularity. Then they are fully presented on the stage of musicals. Many of the protagonists in the play are already the lead singers of rock bands or pop singers. The success of the musical also provides them with more opportunities to

become famous. For example, the actors of Ziggy, an important role in star Fantasy: in the 1986 edition, Jean leloup was a famous rock singer in Quebec; In the 1988 edition, Renaud hantson was a famous French rock singer; In the 1998 edition of Notre Dame de Paris, Bruno Pelletier, who plays the Bard Gringoire, is the lead singer of the French rock band Pëll; In Romeo and Juliet, Damien sargue, who played Romeo in the premiere version, and Cécillia Cara, who played Juliet, were both popular singers who won awards in the French TV singing competition before they starred in the musical; John eyzen, the supporting role mercatio in Romeo and Juliet, was the lead singer of the French funk rock band and released an album. Mike langelo Loconte, the actor of Mozart in faza, was once the artistic director of Léopold Nord & vous. His first single in the musical, Tatoue Moi, ranked first in the French pop music chart in 2009.

### 4. Conclusion

"Il n'y a pas trois mots impossibles dans le dictionnaire français. Napoléon. "(there is no impossible in the French dictionary.)- Napoleon.

Napoleon once said this sentence, which fully expressed his confidence in France, and when the French people took it as a catchphrase. It is also very suitable for French musical creation. Compared with the American Broadway musical, their creation is more open and casual, and they never stick to one type.

Of course, the style characteristics of the accompaniment music of French musicals are not only one rock style, but also a stage play with diversified and modern music integrating rock, romance, fashion, pop and other styles. Among the contemporary popular French musicals, many are very classical, such as the musicals Notre Dame de Paris, Romeo and Juliet, which embody the spirit of French romanticism and the soul of "beauty and ugliness"; The musical "the little prince" and "les misérables" (Paris version) which reflect the charm of French classical literature are adapted from famous works. Interestingly, in these plays, the shadow of "rock and roll" can also be found in many aria, such as the famous aria < Les Rois du monde > (King of the world) in Romeo and Juliet, < JE sens Ma vie qui bascule > in Notre Dame de Paris, and so on.

At the same time, from the perspective of musical style itself, French musicals also pay great attention to the color of music. The music has rich instruments, beautiful melodies, clear layers, and often has strange and colorful fantasy colors.

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