

Treasures of Opera Art: A Study of the Aesthetic Features in Puccini's Works

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Abstract: Giacomo Puccini is a great master in the history of Italian opera. His works not only have profound artistic value in music creation, but also show rich aesthetic characteristics. Puccini's opera works are famous for their lyricism, drama and exquisite description of music. This paper discusses the aesthetic characteristics of Puccini's opera works, analyze his creative style, musical characteristics and the expression of piano accompaniment, and reveal how these characteristics make his works transcend the times and become the treasure of the world's opera art.

Keywords: Opera, Puccini, Aesthetic Characteristics.

1. Introduction

As a representative composer of Italian opera from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, Giacomo Puccini has become an eternal symbol of opera art with his exquisite musical skills and profound insight into human nature. Puccini's works often express the complexity of human emotions through music full of emotional tension and vivid plots, especially his profound psychological depiction of female characters, which makes his operas have strong dramatic and emotional resonance. Puccini is unique in his music creation, skillfully integrating elements of Romanticism and realism, greatly expanding the form of expression and emotional depth of opera. His works not only inherited the brilliance of traditional opera, but also created a new path of artistic expression, which profoundly influenced the direction of opera creation in later generations. This paper aims to analyze the aesthetic features of Puccini's works and explore his musical style and how it affects the development of opera art.

2. Characteristics of Music Style

2.1. Special Miniature Prelude

The overture refers to the musical piece played before the formal performance of the opera, usually played by the orchestra, also known as the opening music, whose purpose is to wait for the audience to enter the theatre. After the reform of Gluck's opera, the overture has been gradually enriched, with more plot factors added to it, creating a more real plot atmosphere, greatly enhancing the theatre audience's sense of experience and a higher sense of substitution for the plot. Unlike other opera creators, Puccini preferred to use a shorter overture before the opening of the opera, the so-called "miniature overture", with which the audience could quickly enter the plot. Taking *Tosca* as an example, the overture of *Tosca* has only three bars, in which Puccini uses strong chords to set off a flustered and tense plot atmosphere, paving the way for the content of the opera.

2.2. Beautiful and Soft Melody

Eulogizing the true feelings of the world is the center of Puccini's opera creation. His works basically revolve around this theme. In order to ensure that the plot conforms to this

theme, it is essential that the melody of the opera should be soft and beautiful. Therefore, the beautiful and soft melody is also a prominent feature of his works. The melodies of Puccini's operas are not only beautiful and soft, but also very smooth. For example, the aria "People Call Me Mimi", "For Art, For Love", "Sunny Day" and so on have been sung for a long time. Puccini's operas are widely spread all over the world, in addition to the beautiful melody, more is that his works express the true emotional portrayal, is a reflection of the society at that time, Puccini's opera art creation is to grasp this point, the most real living conditions of people are generally concerned by everyone.

2.3. The Status and Role of Human Voice

For Puccini's opera works, the voice plays a vital role. Under the influence of Italian traditional opera, Puccini attaches great importance to the position and role of the human voice in the opera, which is in the central leading position in his works and plays a significant role in explaining the plot, the unfolding, process and ending of the plot. Therefore, Puccini always insisted on the leading role of human voice in his opera creation, and all other work, such as plot, music and dance beauty, served the human voice and played a role in setting off the beautiful human voice. In order to pursue better voice effect and magnify the important role of voice in opera, Puccini used a large number of magnificent duets to enhance the audience's sense of experience and substitution.

2.4. Symbolic Dominant Motivation

The iconic dominant motive is also one of the important characteristics of Puccini's operas. The dominant motive plays the role of suggesting the development of the plot in opera, and is the striking label of the characters, ideas or events in opera. Puccini is very skilled in the use of dominant motivation, through which he portrays the characters and implies the development of the plot. In Puccini's operas, each character has his own musical fragments, and the overall plot of the opera is woven by the musical fragments of the characters. Taking "The Artist's Career" as an example, Puccini used violin and clarinet to play "Mimi Theme" quietly in D major and 4/4 adagio, which embodied the quiet and soft musical characteristics of the theme, but used flute to express Musetta in 3/4 slow waltz speed, which set off his enthusiastic

and outgoing character characteristics. The use of this opera technique, to a large extent, improves the symbolic nature of music, so that the audience can clearly identify different characters or things in the opera.

2.5. Characteristics of Soprano Arias

The soprano arias in Puccini's operas have the following characteristics: the beginning of the soprano arias in Puccini's operas is generally in the middle and low voice areas, the prelude time of the opera is relatively short, some operas even lack the prelude, and directly enter the singing stage, in the process of singing, most of the operas are sung from the pianissimo, and the rhythm of the opera has the characteristics of slow and soft. At the beginning, the melody of the opera remains calm. With the passage of time, the melody of the opera rises progressively and gradually approaches the highest point of the melody. Generally, it erupts with great strength in the B area of the second group of small words, which is the formation process of the climax of the aria. Under the influence of this writing technique, Puccini's opera has a high level of dramatic appeal, while enhancing the audience's sense of involvement, it will not appear inconsistent with the opera. In the history of the development of world opera, Puccini's operas occupy a crucial position, and it is of great significance to study and analyze the musical and artistic characteristics of Puccini's operas. On the one hand, it can help them better understand and sing Puccini's opera works, on the other hand, it can also provide theoretical reference for opera lovers who also pursue his works.

3. Aesthetic Features of Performance

3.1. The Simulation of the Sound Effects of Different Musical Instruments by the Piano

In Puccini's piano accompaniment, the simulation of string effects is crucial, especially the treatment of tremolo. In the 35th bar of "Come to You", the piano imitates the tremolo of strings with strong strength, which enhances the thickness of vocal lines. This tremolo interpretation requires the performer to keep the tone smooth and avoid stiff sound effects. Especially in the late works of Romanticism, there are higher requirements for the delicacy and fullness of emotion. In addition, when imitating the string unison, it is necessary to convey the breathing feeling of the violin bowstring by touching the keys to ensure the fullness and fluidity of the harmony.

The simulation of wind music in Puccini's piano accompaniment is divided into two parts: woodwind and brass, each of which undertakes different emotional expression functions. In the 19th bar of "Come to You", the piano imitates the flute's jumping tone pattern, which contrasts with the previous string's coherence. In "For Art, For Love", the piano in the high voice imitates the flute and contrasts with the triplets of the harp, which sets off the pure emotion. The simulation of brass is reflected in the 38th bar of "Sunny Day", and the syncopated rhythm of the trumpet is interpreted by the piano, which gradually deepens the emotional tension and shows Cho-Cho-San's eagerness for her husband's return.

The simulation of harp timbre is particularly important in Puccini's works, adding a unique lyrical atmosphere to the music. In the B section of "For Art, For Love", the progression of triplets shows Tosca's inner piety and prayer. At the end of

"Come to You", the harp arpeggio shows the character's gentle and delicate character. When imitating the harp, the performer needs to make the tone as smooth as running water to strengthen the warmth and emotional level of the music.

The simulation of percussion adds a lot to the strength and tension of the music. At the climax of the 35th bar of "For Art, For Love", the triplets of timpani and harp create a strong emotional explosion, highlighting Tosca's spiritual tremor. In "a Sunny Day", the imitation of the big drum shows the magnificent scene of the warship saluting through the accent treatment, giving the singing a more magnificent background support.

3.2. Score Marking and Playing Skills Complement Each Other

Puccini's works require players to have a high degree of skill in dynamics control. Strong force needs to mobilize the coordination of all parts of the body to produce a full and powerful sound, while weak force relies on delicate finger control and gentle touch to ensure the stability and clarity of the sound. Players should not only pay attention to technical treatment, but also convey emotions through changes in strength. Mimi's aria changes from very weak to strong, showing her process from introversion to emotional explosion. The contrast of the strength of different passages shows the ups and downs of the character's emotions. The introversion of section A and the gentle exhortation of section B finally reach the emotional climax in section C, and then end with a very weak farewell, showing the complex mood of the role. In addition to the macro control of strength, the elaborate design of details presents more complex changes in strength. In Tosca's aria, the fifth stanza is marked with "from strong to weak", which deepens the emotional expression of music and contrasts with the beginning; the twelfth stanza is marked with "from weak to strong", which shows Tosca's pious and sincere prayer to God. The use of elastic speed is an important means for Puccini to express his emotion and style. Performers need to accurately convey emotional ups and downs through flexible control of speed changes. Mimi's aria, at a slow pace, conveys her sickly state at the beginning; in the B phrase, the speed gradually slows down (*poco rit*), and then contrasts with the previous section through *Andantino's* slightly faster speed, deepening the sense of loss of her return to her former residence. Cho-Cho-San's aria also uses detailed speed changes, the 42nd bar of *Adagio (Lento)* shows the fantasy of her husband's return, and the 49th bar of *Uniform Andante (Andante come prima)* returns to the original speed, showing her feelings immersed in missing. In the phrase processing, the speed design from slightly faster to gradually slower (*Un poco mosso Ritenuto*) highlights Cho-Cho-San's nervous and excited mood.

3.3. The Mastery and Expression of Diversified Accompaniment Sound Patterns

Column chords are often used in opera accompaniment to set off the atmosphere and strengthen the harmonic color, which can effectively restore the harmonic effect of orchestral music and show strong musical expression. According to the different ideological connotations, the column chord can accurately convey the emotional changes of the characters. In the C section of "Come to You", with the turning point of Mimi's emotion, the piano left-hand column chord from weak to strong promotes Mimi's emotional transformation from calm to passionate. The strong column chord in bar 32

provides a strong support for singing, showing Mimi's affectionate farewell to her lover. The pianissimo chord at the beginning of "For Art, For Love" sets the stage for Tosca's melancholy, and as the passage develops, the intensity gradually increases, pushing her mood to a climax.

Arpeggios play a colorful role in Puccini's piano accompaniment, and are good at expressing lyrical melodies and delicate emotions. In the 37th bar of "Coming to You", the alternate use of long and short arpeggios echoes the accent of the lyrics "farewell", which enhances Mimi's sentimental farewell to her lover. In the 26th bar of "For Art, For Love", the short piano arpeggio provides clear rhythmic support for the voice, accompanied by the triplet changes of the melody, which sets off the contradictions and struggles in Tosca's emotional ups and downs. The long arpeggio in bar 29 deepens the emotional intensity of Tosca's questioning of God.

Puccini used syncopated rhythms to break up the conventional strong and weak beats and create a unique sense of propulsion. Players need to accurately execute syncopated rhythms, which require excellent rhythm, precise finger control, and an understanding of the overall structure. In the seventh bar of "Come to You", the syncopated rhythm of the accompaniment left hand enhances the fluidity of the vocal melody, avoids the pause caused by repetition, and provides better rhythm control for the singer. In the 26th bar of "Sunny Day", the syncopated rhythm contrasts with the previous column chords, showing Cho-Cho-San's inner anxiety and uneasiness. The rhythm of the 38th bar changes from 2/4 to 4/8. With the change of timbre of woodwind and brass, the piano needs to adjust the way of touching keys flexibly, showing the deep transformation of rhythm and emotion, promoting the emotional development of Cho-Cho-San, and showing the complex mood when facing her husband's return.

4. Conclusion

Puccini's opera works are of great artistic value both in music creation and in dramatic expression. His works reveal the complexity and diversity of human emotions through delicate musical expression and profound characterization. The musical techniques adopted by Puccini, such as "miniature overture", beautiful melody and emphasis on human voice, are important factors for the success of his opera works. At the same time, his unique way of expression in piano accompaniment also adds a strong artistic color to the interpretation of opera. Puccini's opera not only had a great impact at that time, but also became an important model of opera creation in later generations, which deserves our in-depth study and inheritance.

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