

The Exploration of the Root-source of the Chinese Music “Er Quan Ying Yue”

EXPLORATION DE LA SOURCE DE LA MUSIQUE CHINOISE “ER QUAN YING YUE”

Huang Renge¹

Abstract: This paper tries to explore the root-source of the Chinese music “Er Quan Ying Yue”. It recalls the life background of the composer, the blind man A Bing and the background of his music career. The paper tries to prove that the contents and style of the music are closely related to the composer’s life experiences, and the vivid music image is just the reflection of the composer’s tragic life and beautiful dream.

Key words: “Er Quan Ying Yue”, A Bing, root-source

Résumé: L’article présente tente d’explorer la source de la musique chinoise “Er Quan Ying Yue”. Il évoque la vie du compositeur, l’aveugle A Bing, et sa carrière de musicien. L’auteur essaie de prouver que le contenu et le style de la musique sont étroitement liés à l’expérience de vie du compositeur, et que l’image musicale vivante est justement le reflet de la vie tragique et du beau rêve du compositeur.

Mots-Clés: “Er Quan Ying Yue”, A Bing, source

1. THE BACKGROUND OF THE ORIGINAL COMPOSER

Hua Yanjun was born in Wu Xi, Jiang Su province. He had great interests in folk music, and learned to play drum, flute, Chinese fiddle and lute since he was a boy. When he was about fifteen or sixteen, he has become a fine musician. However when he was thirty-four, he was blinded because of the disease. Being poor and ill, he was drifted in the street, living in desperate difficulties. But as a man of strength and firmness, he never begged others for anything but made living as a performer. And he was the well-known—blinded A Bing. Had been living in the lowest level of the society, A Bing had strong love and hatred. He had composed quite a lot of music, including what we listened just now—his representative work “Er Quan Ying Yue”. Because he was living in the age in domination of Kuomintang, he composed much ironic music, which challenged the evil power, such as “Listening to the Pine”, and “The End of the traitors”. His music expressed his great indignation to Japanese army and traitors to China; as a result, he became the thorn in the flesh of the reactionary authorities. In 1947, he was beaten to illness so as to stop his living as a performer.

After half a century’s struggle, A Bing could finally welcome the national liberation, and his life as an artist has stepped to a new stage. In the summer of 1950, the Central Music College interviewed him, and recorded six music of him in haste, including “Er Quan Ying Yue”, “Listening to the Pine”, “Da Lang Tao Sha”, “Zhao Jun Chu Sai” and so on. He promised to record more than two hundred music six month later. But he was passed away in 4th, December, after long time’s torture in old society. His death, as well as the lost of hundreds music, is a great loss in Chinese musical history.

A Bing had learned many kinds of folk instruments from his father. He had great artistic accomplishment. His “Er Quan Ying Yue”, created in 1940s, is the representation of lute music. “Er Quan” refers to the Hu Shan fountain in Wu Xi, which has the name “the second fountain in the world”. The composer used this name to depict a righteous blind man, in a silent night, beside the fresh fountain and under the cold moon, telling the world about the inequality and hardness of life with tears in the eyes. Though the description of the night with moon, it expresses the deep emotion of the composer, and the unrelieved oppression and spiritual torture of people in that age (including the composer himself). The work also expressed the heart sound of the people who fight against the darkness of the old society,

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and revealed their nice hope for the future life.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGINAL MUSIC

“Er Quan Ying Yue” is a kind of lyrical music language that shows us the scenery of Hui Shan fountain in the moonlight and the composer’s deep feeling. The whole music contains six parts, and five variations. The theme varies for five times, and as the development of the music, it stretched and spread, expressing the emotion fully. Through the expanding of the sentences, the variation combines with the rise and fall of the melody to express the development and twists of the music. Its variation is not to express the different emotions, but to develop the theme, so the musical figure is centralized. The speed of the music doesn’t change a lot, but the force does change from *pp* to *ff*. When it longer than crotchets, the force of the player has to vary from might to soft, strong to weak, so the music rise and fall, deeply moving the listeners.

3. THE NAMING OF “ER QUAN YING YUE”

In 1950, professor Yang Yinliu, Cao Anhe of Central Music College as well as Mr. Zhu Shikuang went to Wu Xi to make record for A Bing.

Zhu Shikuang published “The Naming of ‘Er Quan Ying Yue’” on Wu Xi newspaper. He wrote, “After the recording, when Mr. Yang asked A Bing about the name of the music, A Bing said it had no name, and as the playing of it for a long time, it became the present music. Then Mr. Yang asked again where he usually played it, and A Bing answered that some times in the street, sometimes at the fountain in Hui mountain. Mr. Yang blurted out that it could be named Er Quan! I said, Er Quan didn’t like music’s name. In Austria, it has San Tan Yin Yue, why not call it Er Quan Yin Yue? Mr. Yang said Yin is the copy word, since Wu Xi has a Ying Shan

river, then it can be named Er Quan Ying Yue. A Bing nodded.” So here comes the name of “Er Quan Ying Yue”.

4. THE JUDGMENT ON “ER QUAN YING YUE” AND THE ADAPTATION

The material of “Er Quan Ying Yue” comes from the folk music. In A Bing’s playing, they became the natural language of the composer to express his emotion. His sorrow, hatred and love all integrated in the tune. The whole music mingled scene with feelings, touching and shocking, that’s why after listening, the famous Japanese conductor Xiao Ze Zheng Er said, “It’s best to use heartbroken to describe it.”

From the beginning to the end, this music described the meditation of a weather-beaten blind artist. The great playing technique and style and its uncompetitive conception has shown the attraction of Chinese fiddle as well as expanded the expressive force of it. It got the prize of “classical music in 20th century of Chinese music history”.

In the late fall in 1950, at a concert in Wu Xi, A Bing played it the first time as well as the last time. The audience gave him lasting applauses. Chinese record association had made it to LP and became well-sold in the country and abroad. In 1951, Tian Jin People’s Broadcasting Station first played it; in 1959, the 10th anniversary of the liberation, Chinese Foreign Cultural Association send it to over sea’s friends as a representation of Chinese fine music. From then on, it was widely broadcasted and gained high evaluations. In 1985, it was made a record in the United States, and came to the first place in the top 11 popular Chinese music.

Later, Peng Xiuwen adapted it to folk instrumental ensemble; Wu Zuqiang adapted it to string music ensemble; Ding Zhinuo and He Zhanhao adapted it to violin solo; Ding Shande adapted it to string quartet; Chu Wang hua adapted to piano solo and so on.

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