

THE EMBODIMENT OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT IN CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Chinese classical dance, influenced by Confucian thought, showcases both its aesthetic value and profound cultural heritage. This article primarily explores how Confucian thought is reflected in the performance techniques and cultural practices of Chinese classical dance. This article also proposed the "beauty" and "virtue" in "rites and music" of Confucianism, and combined them with the performance of Chinese classical dancing. It further examines how the Confucian ideals of "beauty" and "virtue" in "rites and music" are embodied in Chinese classical dance performances, teaching and dissemination, creation of works and cultural spirit. Among them, Confucianism emphasizes the moral concept of "people oriented", which is integrated into the creation and performance of Chinese classical dance, enhancing the spiritual connotation of Chinese classical dance performance. This article found that, during the long development process of Chinese classical dance, a set of excellent artistic standards has gradually developed, which plays a decisive role in the emergence and development of Chinese classical dance. The article reveals that Confucianism has contributed to the development of high artistic standards in Chinese classical dance, which is crucial to its evolution and significance.

Keywords: Confucianism. Chinese Classical Dance. Dance Culture. Practical Studies.

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Resumo: A dança clássica chinesa, influenciada pelo pensamento confucionista, mostra tanto seu valor estético quanto sua profunda herança cultural. Este artigo explora, principalmente, como o pensamento confucionista se reflete nas técnicas de desempenho e nas práticas culturais da dança clássica chinesa. O texto também propõe a "beleza" e a "virtude" nos "ritos e música" do confucionismo e os combina com a performance da dança clássica chinesa. Além disso, examina como os ideais confucionistas de "beleza" e "virtude" em "ritos e música" são incorporados nas apresentações de dança clássica chinesa, no ensino e na disseminação, na criação de obras e no espírito cultural. Entre eles, o confucionismo enfatiza o conceito moral de "orientação para as pessoas", que é integrado à criação e ao desempenho da dança clássica chinesa, aprimorando a conotação espiritual do desempenho da dança clássica chinesa. Este artigo constatou que, durante o longo processo de desenvolvimento da dança clássica chinesa, um conjunto de excelentes padrões artísticos foi gradualmente desenvolvido, o que desempenha um papel decisivo no surgimento e desenvolvimento da dança clássica chinesa. O texto revela que o confucionismo contribuiu para o desenvolvimento de altos padrões artísticos na dança clássica chinesa, o que é crucial para sua evolução e importância.

Palavras-chave: Dança clássica chinesa. Estudos práticos. Confucionismo. Cultura da dança.

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THE EMBODIMENT OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT IN CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Chinese classical dance, influenced by Confucian thought, showcases both its aesthetic value and profound cultural heritage. This article primarily explores how Confucian thought is reflected in the performance techniques and cultural practices of Chinese classical dance. This article also proposed the “beauty” and “virtue” in “rites and music” of Confucianism, and combined them with the performance of Chinese classical dancing. It further examines how the Confucian ideals of “beauty” and “virtue” in “rites and music” are embodied in Chinese classical dance performances, teaching and dissemination, creation of works and cultural spirit. Among them, Confucianism emphasizes the moral concept of “people oriented”, which is integrated into the creation and performance of Chinese classical dance, enhancing the spiritual connotation of Chinese classical dance performance. This article found that, during the long development process of Chinese classical dance, a set of excellent artistic standards has gradually developed, which plays a decisive role in the emergence and development of Chinese classical dance. The article reveals that Confucianism has contributed to the development of high artistic standards in Chinese classical dance, which is crucial to its evolution and significance.

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese classical dance, enriched by Confucianism and centuries of artistic evolution, masterfully blends traditional techniques with modern innovations. This dance form captures tangible grace and intangible ethos, manifesting aesthetic values through its form, spirit, power and rhythm. The deep cultural roots and philosophical ideals of Confucianism are vividly reflected in the dance, with detailed analyses of performances illustrating how these elements are intertwined.

This complexity of movements and the incorporation of interdisciplinary styles necessitate exceptional balance skills from dancers to fulfill the choreographic demands. According to Clarke (2018, p. 275), the purpose of his review is to evaluate the experimental evidence linking balance with dance performance, encompassing balance testing, training and actual performance outcomes. Further emphasizing the cultural significance, Coladangelo (2021, p. 523) aims to safeguard and share insights about China’s cultural heritage through his survey of dance resources, noting that “Surveys are mainly conducted by Western participants

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and can provide basic data for other studies” (Dang; Yiannis; Matthew *et al.*, 2020, p. 10). Horlor (2019, p. 3) observes that the blend of performance and daily life blurs the physical and relational boundaries, fostering an integration of performance into the participants’ moral lives. This discussion facilitates a smoother transition between the general exploration of Chinese classical dance and the specific focus on its Confucian influences, maintaining the integrity and relevance of the cited works.

This paper delves into the complex interplay among balance training, Chinese classical dance and Confucianism, highlighting how such training enhances the aesthetic value of dance while resonating with Confucian principles. As Rogers (2018, p. 549) advocates, there is a critical need for “[...] a deeper integration of performing arts theory and practice,” with an expansion of research to include cross-cultural aesthetics and geopolitical influences. The study further investigates how Confucian philosophy shapes the form, transmission, teaching and creativity of Chinese classical dance.

Confucianism, with its profound historical and philosophical significance in Chinese society, deeply influences various aspects of traditional arts and culture, including dance. It emphasizes core values, such as human relations, filial piety and benevolence, which frequently inspire thematic elements in Chinese classical dance. These themes often reflect respect for elders, interpersonal harmony and societal cohesion, promoting both innovation within the dance form and a meaningful reconnection with its cultural origins. This research aims to articulate the extensive impact of Confucian thought on traditional Chinese art forms, like dance, underscoring its enduring influence across cultural practices.

1 PRACTICAL EXPLORATION METHODS IN CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCE

1.1 EXPRESSION OF CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE

Chinese culture has a long history, which is not only the powerful “blood” of traditional Chinese dance, but also the “blood” of Chinese culture, making it unique charm. Literature is the foundation of the study of dance, and any art, including dance, cannot be separated from literature. Poetry, ideas and so on are the fruits of literature, which provide favorable conditions for tracing the origin of “form”. At the same time, literature provides a basis for the development of Chinese classical dancers’ “form”. Through literary works, especially ancient poetry and opera, the evolution and development of the form of Chinese classical dance can be understood. The elements, such as description, image and rhetoric in ancient poetry, have direct influence and inspiration on the movement and performance of dance. The story lines and characters, in ancient opera, also provide rich material and inspiration for the conception and creation of dance works.

Fundamentally, it is influenced by ancient traditional concepts, mainly determined by factors, such as artistic beauty and aesthetic thinking generated by human beings' views of nature. The concept of nature is the foundation of all art, and factors, such as economy, geography and climate, have a potential impact on people's thinking patterns and ways of expression. Chinese philosophy, literature and art were originally generated from the inspiration that nature brought to people, resulting in the emergence of a group of advanced ideas from philosophers and aestheticians. People's aesthetic thoughts and expressions are influenced by factors, such as the natural environment and socioeconomic environment (Han; Shim; Park *et al.* 2016, p. 281-290).

Chinese culture originated in the two river basins. The region is vast and suitable for farming, with a traditional agricultural economy as its main feature. It has a farming history of tens of thousands of years. Its long-term living habits have a profound impact on people's body and spirit. On a physical level, the long-term practice of farming requires people to perform heavy physical labor, such as tilling, harvesting and transporting. This kind of labor allows people's bodies to develop adaptability and endurance, and also cultivates people's hard work and perseverance. The long practice of agricultural economy has also promoted the emphasis on healthy eating, which has influenced people's nutritional habits and food culture.

The Chinese people created the original dance based on agriculture and the animals' life principles and the ones of plants. In ancient China, agriculture was dominated by the landlord class and the peasant one. Although the landlord did not participate in farming, the farmers' rich harvest was related to their wealth and poverty. Therefore, people were always full of curiosity about climate change, while the Eastern nations needed a long period of time to rely on nature to maintain their livelihood. Therefore, from ancient times, they had been filled with a strange respect and affection for nature. The long-term dependence on nature has also filled people, in Eastern countries, with a special respect and affection for nature. They realized that nature is the basis of their livelihood and are in awe of its power and mystery. This respect and affection for nature has also formed unique cultural and philosophical concepts in Eastern countries, such as Confucianism and Taoism in China, which incorporate the concept of harmonious coexistence with nature.

Dance originates from the outbreak of emotions and is influenced by traditional ideas. Oriental peoples have their own unique forms of expression. Easterners do not express their feelings as directly as Westerners do. They use more tactful methods because they are born with a pure, simple and introverted emotional thinking. In dance, Easterners usually do not express their feelings as directly as Westerners do. They tend to express their emotions in a more pure, simple and introverted way. This inner emotional thinking has been cultivated and valued in Eastern culture.

The profound, delicate and euphemistic emotional expression forms the Oriental nation's unique artistic expression. The same is true of the "shape" of traditional Chinese dance. For example, the posture of twisting the body conveys the Oriental nation's rich emotions with an implicit and tactful gesture, while the "horizontal twisting" expresses the Oriental nation's soft and graceful inner meaning. The use of soft and beautiful "shapes" to convey characters' obscure and introverted image reflects the emotional implication of "the so-called people are on the water side" in the poem.

Eastern culture places a high value on adhering to natural laws and possesses a deep appreciation and knowledge of the universe's all elements. This reverence for nature has given rise to philosophers, like Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. "Nature and humanity" stands as a significant philosophical concept within Chinese thought. Central to Taoist philosophy is the belief that everything, in the universe, naturally arises and develops. This encapsulates a comprehensive understanding of the natural progression and patterns of all things in the world.

The term "nature" here does not refer to nature from a physical perspective, but rather provides a focused explanation of the way things exist and operate. Smooth formation changes and rich movement vocabulary are one of the important characteristics of traditional dance. This fine choreography and movement expression can bring visual enjoyment and feelings to the audience. The audience can feel the performer's unique spiritual style and emotional expression in the dance, which is conveyed through the various movements and steps used in the dance.

The expression of "strength" in Chinese classical dance is shown in Figure 1. The characteristic of Chinese classical dance is its roundness and smoothness, which embodies the aesthetic meaning of Chinese classical dance in the moment of movement and stillness. In order to facilitate the analysis of the relationship between "strength" and its changes in Chinese classical dance, this paper focuses on the movement patterns of "strength" in Chinese classical dance and makes a relatively profound analysis of the movement patterns in Chinese classical dance. If the dynamic change of "force" in action is a circular circle simply from the perspective of action, then, in terms of the role of "force" in action, it is two different forces, namely, "point" and "line". "Point" refers to the power of a moment, while "line" refers to strength: the body's strength and the one of the limbs. It can be seen from this that the linear movement of "force" and the punctate force connect each action together, making each one coherent and forming a sense of unity. It is in this series of arc movements that Chinese classical dance uses "strength", at the key points of each movement, to demonstrate the continuity and fluency of the movement.

Figure 1 – The expression of “strength” in Chinese classical dance



Source: Chou; Singh (2022, p. 22)

1.2 EMBODIMENT OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT IN CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE

Chinese classical dance relies on ancient drama and martial arts, which are combined with Taoism, Confucian thought, the “Book of Changes”, Bagua, etc., to extract the essence of Chinese classical dance, so that it can be well followed in dance creation, clothing, work content, music selection, etc. Seeking self is actually an effective way to construct the traditional cultural symbols of Chinese classical dance, so that Chinese classical dance can truly develop into a representative dance genre in China.

Chinese dance is influenced by the theories of Yin and Yang in the “Book of Changes”, Confucian rites and music, and the theory of inaction without desire of Taoism. It also has a philosophy of “body and sky, heart and earth and heart and heart”. Influenced by this culture, Chinese classical dance has a sense of beauty that is flexible and convoluted. The inherent spirit of the dance gestures of Han and Tang classical dances originates from Taoist culture and, through the special aesthetic artistic pursuits of the Han and Tang dynasties, its unique style has finally been formed. Taoist culture also reflects the fusion of Han and Tang classical dances from mentality to breath, while qi is the charm of the dance. Although the sense of qi in dance is untouchable, it has visibility.

The Tang people’s dance posture has two characteristics. One is dignified, and the other is elegant. Chinese dance moves with a slow rhythm, expresses a sense of beauty of “external softness and internal hardness”, and demonstrates a peaceful temperament with an elegant gesture. Confucianism and Taoism are important components of body rhythm in Chinese classical dance, which have been unanimously recognized by scholars.

Through the understanding of life by both Confucianism and Taoism, a complementary connotation of life has been formed at this point, which also provides a new way of thinking for future generations to analyze the life consciousness in the body rhythm of classical dance from the perspective of the body rhythm of traditional dance (Hae; Sansa, 2021, p. 237).

The “rites and music” of Confucianism is a dual meaning of “beauty” and “virtue”, as Confucius said “[...] there is no foundation without learning etiquette” (Chang; Alan, 2019, p. 1326). The aesthetic requirement of body rhythm in classical dance, for body form, is not isolated from its own culture, history and life. It is an external manifestation of traditional Chinese life concepts. In the teaching of classical dance gestures, emphasizing the cultivation of “form” cannot only complete the cultivation of dance movements, but also integrate the aesthetic meaning of dance into the dance, thereby providing a concrete, artistic and posture oriented education of traditional Chinese life concepts.

2 RESULTS OF PRACTICAL EXPLORATION OF CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE PERFORMANCES

2.1 THE INFLUENCE OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT ON THE PERFORMANCE FORMS OF CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE

The long history and culture have created a colorful folk life. Chinese classical dance is rich in varieties and styles. This folk art, shaped by natural conditions, reflects the people’s diligence and wisdom from different regions. Among them, the Drum son Yangko and Jiaozhou Yangko, which have very strong agricultural characteristics, have been influenced by the core concepts of Confucianism, such as “propriety, kindness, and harmony”, in their creation and performance, both in terms of program composition and aesthetic orientation. While displaying their unique artistic charm, they have also been endowed with various profound meanings. In Chinese classical dance performances, dancers also demonstrate respect for family and social values. They tell traditional stories and folklore through their dance works, which reflect the Confucian values of valuing family and society. Dancers use emotive movements to interpret Confucian values, making the audience appreciate the family and society’s importance.

Figure 2 illustrates the teamwork inherent in Chinese classical dance, emphasizing the collective spirit influenced by Confucian ‘people-oriented’ values. Confucianism emphasizes the moral concept of “people oriented” and, on this basis, its pursuit of “group” is also very prominent, especially the performance of “group”. A one person’s team naturally gathers all people’s power. “In order to ensure that everything can proceed in an orderly manner, various types of work have emerged, and this situation has been greatly reflected in the creation and performance of the Drum son Yangko” (Percy; Kevin, 2022, p. 228).

Figure 2 – Team cooperation in Chinese classical dance



Source: Dang; Koutedakis; Wyon *et al.* (2020, p. 15)

Figure 3 demonstrates the aesthetic principle of balance and symmetry in Chinese classical dance, reflecting the Confucian ideal of ‘the golden mean.’ This principle is evident in the structured, yet fluid, movements of the choreography, which symbolize harmony and equilibrium. This concept has been deeply influenced by the golden mean. From ancient buildings full of Chinese characteristics to various ancient antiques and even lively folk art, it can reflect the Chinese people’s aesthetic spirit, who attach importance to balance and symmetry while maintaining the basic characteristics of things. This kind of artistic creation with connotation is a new creation after observing, summarizing, processing and refining real life (Lambert, 2020, p. 154).

Figure 3 – The representation of beauty in Chinese classical dance



Source: Qi; Zhang (2019, p. 15)

Confucius' theory of "benevolence and righteousness", from the rites and music of the Zhou Dynasty to the music and dance of Confucianism, is the foundation of human ideological activities. Benevolence is good, and righteousness is beautiful. "Benevolence and righteousness" is an aesthetic connection, especially in this China's fertile land, where this cultural atmosphere fully displays the benevolent people's personality traits. It is under the guidance of such an aesthetic ideology that the movement trajectory of the form of "circle" plays a positive role in traditional Chinese dance. "The pattern of 'circle' is based on human understanding of ancient development. It is a symbol of integrity and harmony, and it is vividly displayed in Chinese classical dance works" (He, 2018, p. 368).

In the form of traditional dance, the flowing changes of the formation and the rich vocabulary of movements bring a profound visual experience to the audience and convey the performer's unique spiritual style. The external dance composition metaphorically conveys the deep meaning of its design. During the flow and change of the entire dance, the contrast between movement and stillness also becomes stronger, highlighting the richness and pursuit of people's inner world.

The expression of body charm in Chinese classical dance is shown in Figure 4. In normal social life, dance is one of the most closely related art forms to the body, and has long been a basic means of expressing emotions and communicating. Under this interpretation of meaning, dance movement language has its unique structural logic and deep meaning. Through a series of steps, poses, body movements and spatial movements, dancers are able to convey complex emotions and messages. Dance movements are not just a mechanical arrangement of movements, but have their own internal structure and logic, and express specific meanings and emotions through different combinations and variations of movements.

From the perspective of the relationship between dance performance and the audience, whether in the field or in an elegant theater, what the audience first notices is the performer's formal characteristics, and what is more moving is the emotional color based on the action vocabulary. The highlight of all this would make the audience fascinated. From this, it can be seen that the external manifestation of actions is based on the people's inner emotions and, with the coordination of internal and external factors, it becomes the fundamental means for performers to engage in dialogue with the audience and the world.

Figure 4 – Expression of body charm in Chinese classical dance



Source: Qi; Zhang (2019, p. 16)

Dance composition is generally characterized by a combination of motion and stillness, with motion focusing on the flow of the picture and the changes in motion. It is a manifestation that needs to be followed most during the dance process. Silence is not only a visual description of form, but also a modeling symbol that is opposite to motion. Taking “motion” as “stillness” and combining “potential” and “motion”, a development trend that emphasizes both “motion” and “stillness” is formed. From static state to dynamic state, it emphasizes the expression of form and the coordination of the whole. The two interact during the specific dance steps, gradually forming an aesthetic index of “motion” and “stillness”.

In stage art, the combination of motion and stillness is the key to expressive art (Harvey, 2017, p. 133-137). It has become the most direct expression of narration, lyricism and even drama in terms of content. Static elements, on the other hand, convey the important information of emotion and narrative through expressions, gestures, and still scenes and images. Static gestures and expressions help the audience more deeply understand the emotions and story lines unfolding on stage. In terms of form, it also presents a dynamic and static effect that conforms to the overall aesthetics of the work according to the direction of the editor’s own creation (Zhao; Yue, 2022, p. 669). By interviewing dance artists, directors, dance educators, dance audiences and other relevant individuals, the aim is to understand their understanding, recognition and practice of Confucianism in classical dance, as well as their perspectives and experiences on its impact on Chinese classical dance.

2.2 THE IMPACT OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT ON THE TEACHING OF CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE

Confucianism, deeply rooted in the essence of traditional Chinese culture, significantly influences the cultural heritage of Chinese classical dance. As an integral part of Chinese cultural expression, Chinese classical dance naturally embodies Confucian virtues, which enhance the uniqueness and depth of dance. This form of dance serves as a medium for passing down and showcasing China's historical and cultural legacy, aligning closely with Confucian core principles.

Over time, the interplay between Confucian values and Chinese classical dance has continued to evolve, paralleling developments in both material and spiritual aspects of life. However, in the modern drive towards "innovation," the significance of Chinese classical dance, especially in the realm of intangible cultural heritage, has been somewhat overlooked. Despite considerable progress in cultural preservation efforts, these endeavors still represent just a fraction of China's rich cultural tapestry. Thus, the task of preserving and developing traditional dance culture remains challenging.

"Learning and teaching" emerge as critical components in this endeavor, acting as vital conduits through which new generations of dancers can absorb, perpetuate, and invigorate traditional dance forms with contemporary relevance and vitality. This educational exchange not only aids in safeguarding the cultural heritage of dance, but also ensures its ongoing evolution, integrating timeless Confucian ideals with modern expressions. Through this dynamic process, Chinese classical dance continues to contribute to the cultural landscape, reflecting both the ancient wisdom of Confucianism and the innovative spirit of the present era.

At the same time, traditional dance and modern one blend and promote each other, showing a more diversified artistic outlook. Therefore, "learning and teaching" are an indispensable link in inheriting and developing traditional dance culture, which should be given full attention and support. On the aesthetic level, Confucianism has endowed Chinese classical dance with unique aesthetic values. Confucianism emphasizes the unity of harmony, etiquette, morality and beauty, and this pursuit runs through all aspects of dance performance. Dancers pay attention to the coordination of movement and stillness, as well as slow and fast in the design of their movements, pursuing the perfection of dance forms, and reflecting the Confucian pursuit of harmony and beauty.

Confucianism, deeply embedded in the fabric of traditional Chinese culture, has undergone various stages of evolution throughout Chinese history. From its inception by Confucius, it has grown and adapted, influenced not only by internal developments, but also by philosophical challenges from Taoism, Mohism and other schools of thought. These

interactions have led to significant shifts in the interpretation and practice of Confucian ideals, which have evolved in response to the changing dynamics of different dynasties and societal needs.

Chinese classical dance, with its profound national character, has been significantly shaped by Confucian values. This dance form is not just an artistic expression, but also a cultural embodiment that reflects the moral and ethical frameworks of Confucianism. To safeguard and nurture this cultural heritage, it is essential to delve deep into its origins and continuously connect with the local cultural experiences that define its uniqueness. Understanding the “root” of Chinese classical dance involves appreciating its distinct national characteristics that have been preserved and transformed through historical changes.

Artists and cultural practitioners are urged to draw inspiration from their life experiences, using their physical and emotional expressions as foundational elements of their craft. Special emphasis should be placed on respecting and integrating folk culture and regional traits. This involves distilling complex dance forms learned from seasoned performers and simplifying them for contemporary presentation, aiming to convey the deep and resonant local sentiments embedded in traditional performances.

Moreover, in the society’s collective subconscious, there should be a concerted effort to strengthen the integration of aesthetic values to reinforce national identity. By presenting a clear structure, comprehensive evidence and well-considered counterarguments, this discussion highlights the intricate relationship between Confucianism and Chinese classical dance, offering valuable insights into how Confucian values have perennially influenced the evolution and perception of this dance form. Through such an analytical approach, the complex interplay between Confucian philosophy and the art of dance is effectively communicated, showcasing their mutual influence and the broader cultural implications.

The research results also help to promote the innovation and development of classical dance. Through the in-depth study of the relationship between Confucianism and dance, it can provide inspiration for the innovation of modern dance. It is possible to explore how to combine traditional culture and contemporary aesthetics so that classical dance can better adapt to the modern society’s needs and appeal to a wider audience.

Life is the capital of creation. In creating, a dancer must go further, take root in the people, feel the local geographical environment, local customs and many other factors, eat and live together with the people, and integrate with the people. In this way, one can appreciate the profound meaning that Confucian philosophy has given to Chinese classical dance, thereby arousing the choreographer’s strong creativity, embodying one’s own aesthetic ideas and paying attention to the rational use of media, so that Chinese classical dance exhibits a vigorous vitality and charm. As dancers, who create for the second time, they need to liberate their concepts. After deeply experiencing agricultural cultural life, they need

to recognize their bodies again and use their body language to vividly express the style and characteristics of Chinese classical dance (Helmut, 2018, p. 59).

Confucianism believes that dance is a direct experience of external things by the subject after their own experience, and it is an art that feels things and moves with emotional color.

Dancers should personally experience the ritual life of farmers, constantly understand them, and accumulate and create works that can express their true and passionate spiritual emotions, in order to achieve the practical purpose of lyricism, cultivating sentiment, and cultivating one's character (Wong, 2021, p. 155).

2.3 THE INFLUENCE OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT ON THE CULTURAL SPIRIT OF CHINESE CLASSICAL DANCE

The core ideology of Confucianism and Chinese classical dance culture contains valuable material and spiritual wealth, highlighting a strong sense of humanity, which not only affirms the human beings' real existence as material life, but also emphasizes the existence of human group consciousness as a spiritual culture. Human beings have an important subjective position in social development, but there are also special individual differences. Only by integrating human social and individual values and emphasizing the cultivation and improvement of people's spiritual aspects, people can truly achieve humanistic care. The cultivation and improvement of human spirit are an important way to realize humanistic care. The human beings' spiritual aspect not only includes emotion and consciousness, but also involves thoughts, morals, values and so on. By cultivating and perfecting the people's spiritual dimension, one can better understand and feel the others' needs and emotions, provide support and care, and build more harmonious and inclusive social relationships.

The core concept of Confucianism and the culture of Chinese classical dance have both a rich material civilization and a strong humanistic color. They have both a recognition of human material civilization and a collective understanding of human beings, which is a kind of understanding of human spiritual civilization. "Human beings are the main object of social development, but they also have unique personalities" (Rapley, 2022, p. 56-73). Only by organically combining human social and personal values, and emphasizing the cultivation and improvement of the human beings' spiritual level, genuine humanistic care can be realized. With the development and changes of the times, both of these methods have injected fresh ideas and life into them in the process of being transmitted and inherited. They have had an impact on the people's core values, and ultimately formed a cultural value throughout society. In the people's process of realizing cultural consciousness and cultural inheritance, their culture and will have also been updated.

Chinese classical dance culture is deeply influenced by Confucius' "group self relationship", which is an objective reflection of folk living habits and emphasizes the compatibility and interaction between "group self". Under the influence of Confucian humanistic spirit, it plays an important role in shaping individual morality and interpersonal communication. Confucianism applies the concept of "self discipline and courtesy" throughout the artist's words and behaviors, making them pursue "perfection" in artistic creation, and achieving a "gentleman" state of "gentle and elegant" in both the connotation and form of dance. Confucius advocates a positive attitude towards life on the premise of following the ethical norms and society's order of behavior, and thus achieves restraint on himself and others, as well as the "way of being a gentleman".

In inheriting and disseminating Chinese classical dance culture, "human" is not isolated from society, let alone individualism. It combines "human" and "group" through the relationship between "human" and "group", guiding people to pursue the common value of "good" from the inner depths of "human". In this collective composed of many individuals, people obtain emotional resonance through singing and dancing, thereby achieving the goal of edifying the body and mind, and strengthening the body. Taking "goodness and beauty" as the individuals' and collectives' fundamental values, it infects the society's inner collective with its intangible power, thereby achieving the goal of educating the people and collectives.

Chinese classical dance serves as a profound medium for embodying and transmitting Confucian values, such as benevolence, righteousness and moral cultivation. Through meticulously crafted choreography and expressive narratives, these dances showcase historical and mythical stories that emphasize ethical conduct and community harmony. Both performers and audiences engage deeply with these moral lessons, experiencing the virtues of Confucianism through the harmonious and disciplined movements of the dance. This integration of art and ethics not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the performances, but also educates and inspires viewers, fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of traditional Chinese moral values and their relevance in contemporary society.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper elucidates the profound influence of Confucianism on Chinese classical dance, underlining the significance of this philosophical tradition in shaping the performance styles, educational approaches and cultural expressions of the dance form. It highlights how Confucian values of balance, harmony and teamwork are integral to the discipline and presentation of Chinese classical dance, providing a unique blend of aesthetic appeal and philosophical depth that resonates across ages. The research underscores the importance of embracing these traditional values to ensure the preservation and continuity of the art form

in contemporary settings, while also stressing the role of innovation in keeping the dance relevant to modern audiences.

Moreover, the study addresses the challenges confronting the field of Chinese classical dance, particularly the need for adaptations in response to evolving cultural dynamics and technological advancements. It suggests that dancers, educators and policymakers should engage in continuous dialogue and research to integrate Confucian principles effectively with contemporary artistic practices. This integration is crucial for maintaining the cultural heritage and further developing the art form, making it accessible and relatable to global audiences.

Finally, the paper proposes that fostering a broader understanding and appreciation of Chinese classical dance internationally could serve as a conduit for cross-cultural exchange and understanding. By promoting the inherent Confucian values embedded in the dance, stakeholders can enhance its global appeal and facilitate a richer and more diverse cultural dialogue. This approach not only preserves a vital part of China's cultural legacy, but also showcases the universal relevance and beauty of its artistic expressions in a global context, urging international audiences to engage with and appreciate this rich cultural heritage.

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