

LIU JIAN AND HIS NEW NATIONAL ORIGIN MUSIC: AS AN EXAMPLE OF “THE DAUGHTER OF PANWANG”

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ABSTRACT

Liu Jian was an electronic music pioneer, and one of the important composers in mainland China. Among his works, the new national origin music was remarkable, especially *The Daughter of PanWang* was a famous work which attached importance to the performance of original folk songs and its original temperament, and tried to explore its inner deep national, historical and traditional culture characteristic and so on, established the concept of Chinese new national origin music.

1. INTRODUCTION

At 9:52am Feb 13th, 2012, Liu Jian ,professor of Wuhan Conservatory of Music ,died at the age of 58 due to illness. As an electronic music pioneer, one of the important composers, Liu Jian’s premature death made us lament.

Professor Liu Jian was born in February 1954 in Changsha, Hunan province. In 1978,he was admitted to composition department at Wuhan Conservatory of Music .He finished the undergraduate course in 1982,meanwhile also admitted to the study for a Master’s Degree.

In 1985,he taught in the same conservatory where he studied after graduating..

In 1987, under the great support from professor Tong Zhongliang who was the president of Wuhan Conservatory of Music,professor Liu Jian and Wu Yue set up the department of music sound director at the first ,combining the music and technology together, training allround music

talents who can use electronic equipment and computer system to accomplish the writing and making of music. In 1994, he began to recruit graduate students for a Master’s Degree. He was in a leading position in the same kind of professional field among the art colleges and universities in mainland China. In 1996, Liu Jian was invited to give lectures in Australia. From Nov 1999 to May 2000, as a senior visiting scholar, he studied and visited New England Music College in Boston America, focused on the research of Arithmetic composition. In 2004, he was invited by the French government for academic visit in the National Higher Music College of Paris, French radio GRM center, Lyon GRAME center, and Boolean gith IMEB center. In 2006,he was invited by Dutch Gaudeamus modern music center to attend the electronic music festival in Amsterdam.

Liu Jian’s main works were as follows:

1989, *Veins*, won Meritous Achievement Award in the International New Music Composers’ Competition in the United States

1990, *The first piano concerto*.

1998, *The daughter of PanWang*.

1999, *Black pearl*. This CD record was published by the Taiwan wind records company

2000, *EarSaver*

2001, *Echo of the Wind*, won the first prize in music composing competition from London croix’s music festival,England.

2003, *The Full Moon Night*, for new bamboo flutes, small TangGu and four sound box reprise.

2005, *Heaven*, for Violin and Piano. *Through the three gorges*, for symphony chorus.

2006, *Gate to Heaven, Touch*, for Tibetan bell and Max/MSP.

2007, *Bardos*, for Chamber music. *Mask*.

2009, *Offertorium*—A Passacaglia for Cell and MAX/MSP

2011, *Three Gorges Narrative*.

Professor Liu Jian created various music works with different characteristics. His new national origin music especially attracted attention from audiences. Among his works, the new national origin music embodied in three albums: *The daughter of PanWang*, *Black pearl* and *Gate to Heaven*.

Taking *The daughter of Panwang* as an example to analyse. *The Daughter of PanWang* was made of nine tracks—*The daughter of PanWang*, *Over the mountains Yao*, *Cast song hall*, *Above the clouds*, *The butterfly song*, *Story of ancestors*, *Waterless drop*, *Song of rite*, *Wishes*. This album “attached importance to the performance of original folk songs and its original temperament, and tried to explore its inner deep national, historical and traditional culture characteristic and so on, established the concept of Chinese new national origin music.” [1]

The three elements formed the characteristic of “the new national origin music”

2. AUTHENTIC YAO SONGS

In mainland China, most of the minorities’ music were found by composers, they used its material and made the music in the way of artistic processing, then created thousands of ethnic songs, became a part of the contemporary music life. But Yao nationality folk music still drifted away. Liu Jian said: “It is this sense of distance, stir up me to get close to her, to understand her and knew well her impulse. With the passage of time, the fuzzy heart impulse gradually turned into a clear and firm wish: setting Yao’s music as the core, the Chinese music as the main line, and the world music as the background, making music creation gives not only reserved Yao nationality folk songs of the original flavor, but also has the spirit of the times, with unique music language looking for Yao nationality folk music culture tradition and contemporary music temperament intersected point, let the Yao songs return to the music of our daily life.” [2]

Music creation path is varied. Understand folk music, gather material, then hide into a small room, through the use of composing techniques to adapt, create, develop, this kind of “work behind closed doors” method can also write a certain level of music works. But Liu Jian didn’t do that. **During the 2 years** since 1996, he went deep into HuNan YaoXiang field more than 10 times, 6 of them he visited PanCaiyou who was the local Vocal King. He used his

brain and recorder to record many Yao songs. Liu said: “I have heard Yao songs, mostly like from the heart monologue. Have no gorgeous melody, no western-style bright rhythm, no musical accompaniment, no with singing and natural pulsant dance, no moral deep-drawn lyrics, even rooted in the mountains of the common folk songs resounding is rare.” [3] He was shocked by this Yao song. He said: “By contrast, I used to write melody seems so exaggerative, carving, exposed and is shallow.” So, “I won’t be like in the past, as habit, with professional composition techniques to transform these folk songs. What I want to do is to keep the folk songs as its original form, arouse the implied vitality from folk songs.”

In *The Daughter of PanWang*, nothing had been changed within these nine songs. Liu Jian entered into modern music field with the attitude of keeping the integrity of national root music, this was the foundation of so-called “new national origin music”

3. UNIQUE STYLE OF SINGER

During the same time as collecting breath-taking Yao songs, Liu Jian often felt anxiety. This was because the place where Yao nationality lived, rare residents under 30 years old could sing Yao songs, 40 years old or so was even less, and the true Yao master songs were more rare to be sung by the residents under 50 years old. In order to make records, Liu Jian needed to look for a young female singer who was under 30 years old. Finally, PanQin entered his line of sight.

PanQin said: “In September 1996, professor Liu Jian, from the composition department of Wuhan Conservatory of Music, came to our Dayaoshan to collect folk songs. He asked the local people about who can sing the Yao songs, the local friend recommended me.” [4]

Liu Jian chose PanQin, there were three reasons: 1. She had a good voice and a good natural music feeling; 2. Her grandfather was a far and near famous singer, he could teach her sing authentic Yao songs; 3. Living in Dayaoshan from childhood, she could speak perfect Yao words.

In the beginning, Panqin had doubts about learning Yao songs, always asked Liu Jian: “will someone like Yao songs?” Liu Jian told her: “The appeared “old” Yao songs in many people’s ears, contain the consistent and strong artistic impact which can meet contemporary music’s consciousness.” She began to learn to sing Yao songs hard under grandpa’s oral teaching. Finally, she could sing the pure Yao songs. The Yao songs sung by PanQin’s were tone pure, natural, no traces of carve. In addition to benefit from her inborn good voice, it was also attributed to her not to professional teacher for the vocal music study and phonates method. This unique style was the most welcome for Liu Jian.

4. YAO SONG SURVIVAL AMBIENT

Liu Jian thought: "Modern material civilization to reorigins excessive demand, makes many good natural things in our lives gradually go away from us, that trace is hard to find. Also, the impact of the modern popular culture makes national personality which left by our ancestors unknowingly disappear in the fashion trend." In reality, it has been rife with fashion popular songs and the flourishing city scene.

He felt already separate a life time feeling and drift feeling, felt a kind of chaotic empty far sense of time and strong dynamic when he heard the real Yao songs for the first time.

Therefore, Liu Jian wanted to use his familiar music language, whether electronic music, pop music, symphony music or folk music language, to build a kind of both has the contemporary music temperament, and suitable for the survival of Yao's music ambient, let old Yao songs in different national audiences' hearts cause emotional resonance.

The ambient was full of special features, and it was also unique. It combined flawlessly with the original Yao songs which sung in a unique folk way and became one integrated mass. This kind of characteristic mainly lies in the following three aspects:

- (1) A variety of artistic forms of comprehensive application: Electronic music, pop music, symphony music, such as chorus art form comprehensive application, some paragraphs recitation of human with a variety of artistic forms of comprehensive application.
- (2) Belong to the ambient build part component was "heavy", including vocal and instrumental music. It is the atmosphere rather than simple accompaniment or interlude.
- (3) From composing technology to recording technology are endowed with distinct features of the times.

In a word, the whole work ambient is unstoppable, surging forward with great momentum, let us always shroud in Yao's history of great legend, feel the heavens and the earth, the people together singing, as if feel far distant in time and space to happen so fantastic, make the gods cry of heroic story. This "ambient", more profound to interpret the connotation of the folk song, stimulate the folk music implicit vitality.

Liu Jian has passed away, in the historical progress of the great wheel, Yao songs also slowly walked away, so that one day, its trace might is hard to find. But Liu Jian's *The daughter of PanWang* can tell us and our offspring, on the vast earth once lived such a group of people, they had as much as us, equal finality with pain and joy, tenacity and magnificent.

5. CONCLUSION

Liu Jian was a pioneer composer of electronic music in mainland China. His great contribution in education with inspiration will be remembered by people, and his composition of the style in pursuing Chinese national origin is the main feature of music culture. Hopefully his works can be studied, performed, and preserved to keep Chinese culture in electronic music.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] Qin Tian, *The Daughter of PanWang* - find the origin of the Chinese mysterious voice, National Unity, January, 1999.
- [2] Liu Jian. "Yao Song" far away. <http://blog.sina.com.cn/redviolin66>, accessed October 25, 2012.
- [3] Li li. PanQin: I'll always go on the road of Yao Song. National BBS. 2008(6).