

Changes in the Attributes of “Skill” Symbols of Dance under the Development of Market-Oriented Economy

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How to cite this paper: Liu, Y. X. (2022). Changes in the Attributes of “Skill” Symbols of Dance under the Development of Market-Oriented Economy. *Art and Design Review*, 10, 411-417.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/adr.2022.103032>

Received: May 2, 2022

Accepted: August 23, 2022

Published: August 26, 2022

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Abstract

As dance is an integral part of the market development in the era of market-oriented economy, the expansion of audience population for dancing and the refinement of audiences' tastes thanks to the popularity of various TV shows focusing on dance competitions and re-defines the expression “skills”. It is no longer limited to refer to the superb skills of dancers, instead, it has the attributes of symbols and both functions of “signifier” and “signified”. It refers to combinations of visible movements, invisible choreographic skills, the ability of dancers and choreographers, and stage design skills that internalizes and directs the said visible movements, and prospers in the market-oriented economy development following the mainstream aesthetic. The development of “skills” itself could produce economic benefits, and the discussion of the development of symbolic attributes of “skills” in the current market-oriented economy shall be made first based on the analysis of their attributes and then on their symbolic attributes in the market-oriented economy.

Keywords

Beauty in the Skills, Art Form, Art Attributes, Market-Oriented Economy, Symbols

1. Introduction

The “skills” emerged from the body language of the dance in the social development are worth studying from the perspective of aesthetic concepts. The exploration of “symbol” connections generated in the characteristics—the key subject of the study—and make the display of “skills” attractive and meaningful could be

made based on whether the symbolism has the characteristics of artistic forms and on the connection between the market-oriented landscape evolution and the phenomena accompanying the social and cultural development.

The movement of things does not exist out of the surface. It is interconverted with internal experience. Dance is a physical art, the bodies of the objective existence of people, where spirits must exist. Zong Baihua clearly mentioned that the symbol must have its represented object, namely the content presentation in the teaching material of “Art” in 1926. Li Zehou conducted an overview of Susanne Langer in the paper *Review of the Modern American and British Aesthetics* in 1964. He recognized and highly evaluated the theories of Susanne Langer. As to the local resources provided by dance semiotics in its development in China, Li Zehou held that the emotions of art should be the historical “sediment” of the collective emotional experience; (Liu, 2004: p. 62) the history is formed under the combined action of productivity and production relations. The feature of dance is that dance boasts the characteristics of “dual symbol”. We capture the transient posture of dance, so that we have chances to extract the symbolic representations of dance. However, for the comprehensive conversion of skills under the current social development system, we may make use the existence of “skills” to extract or inject the symbol properties. Symbol is the display and representation of the history, so that dance, namely the transient and vivid art hard to retain may be kept and developed.

The beauty of dance itself could be divided into five dimensions, “beauty in the movements”, “beauty in the spirit”, “beauty in the imagination”, “beauty in the distance” and “beauty in the skills”. (Lv, 2011: pp. 85-87) I believe, while discussing the beauty of dances and the development of “skills” is worth exploring as skill more or less has its economic value showing the demands of economy-oriented market development and mainstream aesthetic trend in this era. (Lv, 2011) The display of skills is made consciously, which makes dancers to reflect, remember, study, improve and develop their skills. The nature of symbols also exists in this process and makes the communication more meaningful and identifiable. For many layman audiences, the beauty of dance comes from not only the “empathy” invoked by the theme of the work, (Deng & Tong, 2011: p. 335) but also the visual impact stimulated by the smooth movements and quality skills of the dancers as such hormone-generating elements are more touching.

A practitioner in this field always starts his/her study after feeling the beauty of “dance”. Parents always send their children to learn to dance with the original pursuit for a good form and for showing them what a nice-looking form is. Children want to learn after trial classes as they are attracted by the beautiful teachers, the simple but impressive dance postures, and the fulfillment when they make some movements they won’t do at home or during the classes; all the children, before truly learning all the dancing skills, being attracted by the simple movements they make on the stage in beautiful clothes, and as I see it, this feeling is a true example of “beauty from the soul”. For audiences, the simplest way to feel beauty is to appreciate the beauty with the dance form, which is

shown under the lights, costumes and music; The beauty shown in the dancers' skills; and then the resonance which is invoked by the plot and echoes with the audiences' artistic preferences. "Beauty" has become the most common "symbol" referred to by the public when they talk about dance.

With the attention paid by the country to art development, the professional competence training organized by the government, top-level dancers' lectures, and qualification training of various teachers of grading tests have diversified the improvement modes of professional proficiency of dance employees. When the dance works to occupy a position in the market development under the market economy, the scope of the targeted group of dance aesthetics is wider; the spiritual level of spectators is also improved. The definition of the word "skill" needs to be measured in terms of the "beauty of skills". It is no longer limited to refer to the superb skills of dancers, instead, it covers various skills multi-dimensionally, including visible movements, invisible choreographic skills, the ability of dancers and choreographers, and stage design skills, which shall be internalized in the visible movements and direct such movements, and prosper in the market-oriented economy development based on the mainstream aesthetic. How could we balance the "beauty in skills" between artistic attributes and economic needs? The author will express his viewpoints on "beauty in skills" from both perspectives of the form and the market-oriented economy, and explore specially the "symbolic" aspect of the skill attributes.

During our study of dance ontology, the form of dance performance is expressed in three dimensions: Representationism, expressionism, and formalism. (Jia, 2020: pp. 55-56) The display of dance skills, if expressed in one dimension, shall be classified into which one? From my point of view, in this era, we shall not simply classify it into a form, instead, its attributes in the multi-dimensional relationship shall be explored to study the variations of symbols in the "skills" in this background. (Jia, 2020)

2. Attributes of "Skills" from the Perspective of Formalism

First of all, in terms of the formalism, all the skills need to undergo systematic training required at each stage to form the final movement.

In the current change of aesthetic trend, the techniques and skills function as not only the basic evidence showing the dancers' abilities, but also the external presentation of beauty in techniques, a product of the expression of the dance form. Different dances performed at the same time will be interpreted by the audiences from different perspectives due to the different carries. The audiences are more likely to be impressed by the display of techniques and skills, which is what we call "layman always love the fun". The "fun" here refers to the beauty in skills.

Taking the appreciation of works as an example, work 1 is a clip of modern dance of western countries; work 2 is a clip of Chinese modern and contemporary dance; work 3 is a clip of modern and contemporary dance of China in 21st Century. In terms of the response, the 3rd work gets the best feedback from the

students; In terms of the post-watching researches on the meaning of the works, the 1st work outperforms the others, to be specific: and the uniform movements and the marvelous skills in the 3rd work stimulate and touch the students aesthetically; the unique techniques and skills of modern dance displayed in the first work may be a little hard for audiences to accept and appreciate, however, the mystery “between the lines” could be meaningful for the students; in the 3rd work, perhaps due to the era, the technique and skills are displayed in “incremental” difficulties. For most audiences and critics today, no matter they are professionals or laymen, a dance will be appreciated first intuitively based on the techniques and skills, and the presentation of techniques and skills is a product of the formalization of the work content during which process the choreographer or actor adds “skills” to the work to make the content more rich and attractive.

3. Attributes of “Skills” from the Perspective of Expressionism

“Skills” are used in a way that is compatible with the dance or the emotions of the dance, it is not only a carrier of the body of the dancer, but also an explanation of the reason why the choreographer chooses this movement, therefore it has the function of expressing. In other words: “In the nature, they are all external manifestations of inner life, and also objective manifestations of the subjective reality.” (Zong, 2015: p. 120)

As finding in the exploration of “beauty in skills”, the beauty in the actors’ performance ability is also an example of “beauty in skills”, and an external form of expressionism. In addition to jumps and spins, the dancers’ performance skills also form an indispensable part of the dances. Many dances and dance dramas in these days, from the audiences’ perspective, are attractive first because of the “beautiful customs”, “shining lights”, and “marvelous performance”, but “the marvelous performance”? Based on which standards do the audiences define “marvel” and feel “being touched”? The above two problems shall be answered based on an external subject of display. For dancing, the personal body is the unique subject of expression. The abilities of the actors and the power of the work could be shown to the audiences intuitively through the display of techniques and skills. The performance that conveys the inner heart is achieved through the integration of the actors’ expression into the body language.

In terms of appreciation, a TV play always attracts us by virtue of the actors’ acting skills, which plays an important role; For dances and dance dramas, the dancers’ abilities, as a display of their techniques and skills, is also especially important, of which the jumps, spins and flips, as well as the neat and stable movements, all require diligent practice.

4. Attributes of the “Skill” Symbol from the Perspective of Representationalism

The “phenomenon” and “meaning” in *the Book of Changes* are great to describe

the principles of art and the laws of art creation, which thus gradually become aesthetic expressions beyond the philosophical field and play a key role in the establishment of the basic concepts of Chinese aesthetics, and supports the “phenomenon” and “meaning” in terms of dance. (Liu, 2011: p. 335) From the perspective of representationalism, dance has an implicit function of “metaphor”.

Dance as an art of movement creates “phenomena” through human body, and postures through static display of the body. In classical Chinese dances, the posture is made based on traditional Chinese cultural ideas. For example, there are many postures coming from “animals” as literally shown in their names. The posture “Dragon claw stretching” in traditional classical Chinese dance is a sophisticated movement that requires the dancer to wriggle his/her upper body and arms as snakes and to create a sense of “flying dragon stretching out its claws” through the combination of body and arm movements such as various spins and circles. (Jin, 2014: p. 64) It is an example of the unique cultural idea of classical Chinese dance of “showing the spirit through the phenomenon, and well expressing both of them”. In addition, “eagle spreading its wings” and “swallow flying through the forest” are also perfect embodiments of Chinese dance aesthetics. These names literally express the postures of the dancers. During the human culture development, totems are mostly derived from animals, and in field researches of nations, humanistic ideas are also often found to be conveyed with animals used as symbols. This “symbol” is a reproduction of cultural phenomenon in a dimension from the name to the movement, and is thus meaningful.

5. Analysis of “Skill” Symbol from the Perspective of Market-Oriented Economy

Is it possible to attract the market by displaying the skill symbols? The multi-dimensional development of the world spawns unconventional concept for dance development. The widespread influence of “new media” and the shared resources on Bilibili both indicate that, nowadays, dance works are no longer to satisfy the audiences visually as professional dances, the study of dance is no longer confined to the traditional teaching mode, and the performance does not refer to only those on the stage. Now, the popularity of short videos now has broken the limitations on dance venues and the circulation of dance works; “AI dance” has revolutionized the conventional composition of dance movement elements, and reorganized the “genetic sequence” of such movements; The combination of “metaverse” and dance further guides people’s thinking into different dimensions of parallel universes, and opens the “2D” “fantasy world” of dance. What shall we do to protect and pass down the dance cultural source honored as “intangible cultural heritage” that we cherish in such a special era and with such unorthodox mindset? The popular TV show *Dancing for a Thousand Years* uses the promotion methods for online TV shows to show the art that was confined in the theaters, and makes inspiring innovations in the expression of traditional

culture in line with modern aesthetics. The show does not use the traditional dance PK mode, instead, the mode based on “story + 24 dances” is developed as a new type of variety show of dance dramas; diversified styles of different directors are introduced to rule out faceless aesthetics, including even the styles from Wong Kar-Wai’s films, the old version of *Journey to the West*, Sci-fis and other styles. The “meaning” of dance is more important than the “posture”. The display of parallel spaces could better express the idea underlying the dance. As for the metaverse, the “virtual nature” and “reality” also exist in dance, therefore the combination of metaverse and dance is natural. It breaks the limitation of dance in displaying, expands the platform of visual demonstration and promotes unconventional aesthetics. As the boundaries of symbols expand in the modern industry, the symbolic information in dances becomes a good way to accelerate the spreading of dance. The eager to learn a posture (“symbol”) could inspire a round of dance learning, and it could also facilitate the promotion of dance and economic development from the perspective of economic communication. Brilliant dances could be brought to the public through “symbols”, the cultural heritages of ethnological history could be recorded in “symbols”, and the attributes of “symbols” could be used to support a more diversified inheritance and preservation of the ecological development of dance culture.

Technique, no matter in the field of dance or science, is a tool itself. The key of the emergence and display of such techniques lies by people, in the ideas of people. “Whether a technique addicts the people or enlightens them depends on the person who uses it”, metaverse, as a target that carries people’s curiosity about the future and their desire to change the nature, is highly similar to dance in its original purpose.

6. Conclusion

First of all, dance itself is a “non-linguistic art”. To keep and develop it, the “language” and “texts” shall be converted; the process cannot fully respect the characteristics of dance itself; Secondly, semiology holds that all things in the comprehensible scope may be “symbols”. The particularity of dance enables us to know that the “signified” action in dance may be comprehended as the broad symbol. “It seems that the art and skills of dance are contradictive.” (Lv, 2011: p. 108) Skills that pursue only the movements will mix dance with other arts such as acrobatics and sports; while giving up the “skills” will make the work mediocre and out of date. The question of “achieving progresses in techniques and skills without compromising the artistic pursuit” will be a topic worth exploring from the perspective of “beauty in skills” through the development of dance aesthetics. Today, the research of Dance Semiology is still at its early stage. As academic development always starts from bold hypothesis, my reflection on Dance Semiology in the context of the social development to date and my exploration of attributes of symbols in the skills, as represented in this article, may also contribute to both the recording and popularity of dance.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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