

The Significant Role of Music and Zen in Education and Culture during the Twentieth Century

Yixin Lai^{1, *}

¹Department of Composition,
Xinghai Conservatory of Music,
Guangzhou, China

*Corresponding author: lai yixin@
email.xhcom.edu.cn

Abstract:

The relationship between Chinese and foreign music and philosophy has not been fully explored and studied, but through the exploration of the relationship between the works of Tan Dun and John Cage and Zen Buddhism and philosophy, we can find that it contains profound thinking and cross-cultural communication value. This kind of research helps promote cross-border music cultural exchange and music education, providing new perspectives for international culture and music education. This article takes the works of Tan Dun and John Cage as the research objects, and draws research conclusions through the use of literature research method and comparative research: Tan Dun's water music is closely related to the water element in Taoism, showcasing the infinite possibilities of water as a musical instrument. John Cage created accidental music through music experiments and Zen philosophy, overturning traditional rules and standards. Musicians from different countries integrate traditional philosophy and culture into their works, promoting cross-cultural communication and understanding, and playing an important role in diverse music education.

Keywords: Music education; taoism; cultural communication; organic music; chance music; philosophy.

1. Introduction

Schopenhauer, in his essay "The World as Will and Representation, Part III: A Restatement of the World as Representation," states that "if [we] succeed in giving a sufficiently correct, complete, and detailed account of music, that is, in giving a detailed retelling of what music represents in the concept, then, This would at the same time be a full repetition and

explanation of the world in the concept, or exactly the same meaning as this explanation, and it would be true philosophy [1]." In short, Schopenhauer believed that a detailed description of music was also a complete philosophical explanation of the world. In the category of modern and contemporary works, people's research on the relationship between Chinese and foreign music and philosophy is relatively insufficient. Therefore, in this field, although some

scholars have carried out relevant exploration and discussion, there are still many problems that have not been deeply explored and difficult problems to be solved. The research significance of this paper is to explore the relationship between Tan Dun and John Cage's works and Zen and philosophy, so that more people can explore the deep-seated thinking and cross-cultural communication value contained in them.

In the process of exploration, the author believes that the research on the relationship between music and philosophy at home and abroad has not formed a reasonable method that can summarize the helpful role of music philosophy in music communication and education. Although there are some scattered research results, there is a lack of unity and coherence. Therefore, this paper believes that people need to further explore the deep relationship between Chinese and foreign music and philosophy. From the perspective of transnational cultural exchanges in the past, it can be observed that the former Chinese and foreign philosophical thought systems are not so similar. However, in the context of the development of modern and contemporary music and the growing transnational cultural exchanges, the artistic ideas and ideas of various countries have begun to incorporate unprecedented elements, making the musical creations of various countries produce diverse and expressive works in the process of constantly absorbing and learning from the philosophy and culture of other countries. This is undoubtedly beneficial to the promotion of transnational musical cultural exchanges. In addition, different types of music can bring unique aesthetic experience and musical value. In the process of music education, if learners can deeply analyze the aesthetic and connotation of music, instead of just listening to it on the surface, then music students from different countries can also learn from unusual cultural experiences by appreciating music works containing local or foreign philosophical connotations. Therefore, this practice is very beneficial to promoting cross-cultural music education and communication. And the impact on international communication and international music education.

From the perspective of research methods, Chinese and foreign scholars also have big differences in this regard. Meanwhile, the author believes that the current comparative study of Chinese and foreign philosophical thoughts and the contribution of their research results to international music education and cultural exchange are relatively scarce in the academic circle and rarely mentioned. Because it involves a complex and huge intersection between two different fields, how to choose and find the right entry point has become an urgent problem to be solved.

In general, the "relative insufficiency" of "the current relationship between Chinese and foreign modern music and

philosophy" does not simply refer to the lack of relevant research results in quantity or on the surface, but more importantly, it means that the research on the relationship with international music education and cultural exchange needs to be further in-depth and explored. In this paper, the author will explore more about the essence and influence of the relationship between music and philosophy in China and abroad through comparative research and other methods to deepen the practice and understanding of all aspects, and hope to establish a deeper level of international cultural and music education exchanges through this paper.

This paper will be divided into three chapters. Firstly, the works of Tan Dun and John Cage are analyzed in depth, secondly, the close relationship between them and Lao Zhuang's Zen and philosophy is discussed, then these deep connections are expounded through comparison, and finally, the role of these works in global cross-cultural communication and music communication is discussed. After analyzing the works of Tan Dun and John Cage from various angles, it can be found that they not only have excellent achievements in creation, but also integrate Zen and philosophy into their music. It contains the Zen thought of Lao Zhuang and Taoism, as well as the concepts of "Theory that man is an integral part of nature", "accidental" and "random", which bring us a collision between thought and art. It is hoped that these in-depth studies can promote the exchange between international music culture and philosophy, and explore a new perspective in international music education.

2. Analysis of Tan Dun's Creation Background and Music Perspective of Water Music

2.1 Tan Dun's Creation Background

Tan Dun's creative style is closely related to the growth process he experienced. Tan Dun was born in Changsha, Hunan Province, worked as a farmer in the local countryside, and then joined the Hunan Peking Opera Troupe as a performer. Since then, the hometown has become his "motherland culture", and the imprint of his growth has been deeply engraved on Tan Dun's body, becoming a complex that will never fade away. He himself once said: My works, no matter how to organize a language, or involve a structure, there is something in the mind can never get rid of, that is, the witch culture of my hometown Hunan. Witch culture is a primitive culture in ancient times that human tried to talk with nature and transform nature. It expresses a kind of concept of "animism" and embod-

ies human's worship of nature [2]. Therefore, Tan Dun's works often involve religious themes, and contain the essence of "The Tao way follows nature" and "Theory that man is an integral part of nature" in traditional Chinese thought.

Tan Dun then entered the Central Conservatory of Music, where he received a double degree in conducting and composition. After graduation, he did not stop there, but went to Columbia University to continue studying music, and during this period met the avant-garde composer John Cage who is important to his creation process and became a mentor. John Cage is an American avant-garde musician of the 20th century who is considered one of the pioneers of modern and experimental music and is known for his unique approach to composition, which includes the use of randomness, silence, ambient sounds, and non-traditional instruments. Tan Dun is one of the first composers to go global. During his master's degree, this young composer who dares to challenge innovation bravely went to the United States to study. The diversified music culture and artistic thoughts of the United States constantly impacted him, providing the most ideal environment for his different thinking and rebellious spirit. This experience opened a new thinking path for him, stimulated his creativity, and cultivated his artistic talent. All kinds of experiences have strengthened Tan Dun's vanguard consciousness, especially John Cage's concept of "Chance controlled music [3]." Various modern and contemporary creative theories and multicultural impact enable Tan Dun to create a series of works that break the tradition and have a very personal style, so he was once called the "John Cage" of China [4]. It can be seen that Tan Dun's creative style and content are inseparable from his cultural capital.

2.2 A Brief Analysis of the Expression and Musical Characteristics of Water Music

One of the most notable features of the Water Music series is its prominent water element. Tan Dun boldly proposed the creative concept of "organic music" after deep learning of sound art, and "Water Music" is one of the most successful masterpieces of "organic music". Organic, originally originated in the field of chemistry, but under Tan Dun's understanding, organic, can also be understood as everything depends on the sound of nature. Tan Dun uses no less than 50 water-related sound devices in his composition, including translucent plastic water basins, water harps, water pipes, water gongs and water shakers. This innovative initiative has increased awareness that music is no longer limited to the use of traditional instrumental music. For avant-garde musicians like Tan Dun, anything can be part of the music, and the sound it makes can make

the music itself. Tan Dun skillfully uses the highly uncertain generating device in Water Music to show the ideological connotation of "randomness" and "The Tao way follows nature" in Taoist philosophy. Tao natural means that things do not exert too much intervention, everything happens naturally and according to the laws of nature. The water element in the work just confirms this view through its fluidity and change.

When listening to Water Music for the first time, people may not immediately associate this experimental avant-garde music with traditional Chinese culture. There is no doubt that the experience given to the listener from the sense of hearing is very novel. However, after understanding the creation background, we can find that the deep connotation of this work is inseparable from traditional Chinese Taoist culture. In terms of harmony and sound arrangement, Chu culture plays an important role in this series of creative processes. Therefore, people's understanding of the works can be extended from Chu culture and Taoism culture to traditional Chinese culture.

"Water Music" is presented in the form of a concerto and is divided into three movements. Tan Dun aims to narrate the wonderful hearing experience of the two subjects, man and water, and the unique Chinese traditional philosophy through the combination of Chinese and Western forms. In the first movement, "In the Tears of Nature," Tan Dun introduced it by using the aquaphone, whose timbre was sharp, harsh, and difficult to control. Later, brass and strings were gradually added, using the brass's characteristic metallic timbre and the same sharp colors of the strings in the high register to gradually merge with the aquaphone. On the whole, this import is very natural and has a strong cohesion. The piece becomes difficult to control due to the playing of various extreme registers, resulting in swaying colors. In the next part, the player begins to use a hemispherical container of transparent water, and beats, tapping the water in the container. The mood of the music is conveyed to the audience through the gesture of slapping water, strength and speed. The different speeds and rhythms greatly give the music a sense of layering, and in this way highlight the unstable character of the water. After entering the central part of the country, Tan Dun used traditional Chinese instruments to play fast ascending and descending scales to imitate the sounds of ancient people shouting and singing, thus incorporating the concepts of Chu and Wu culture. After entering the second movement, "Mysterious Adagio," the players began to hit the traditional Chinese percussion music, the gong. Tan Dun once again combines gongs with water, harnessing the creative and wireless possibilities of the water element. Then the cello enters, creating a mysterious musical effect with the sound of the gong drifting in the water.

The music that followed was suddenly light, and the gong returned to its original tone. Tan Dun arranges melodies full of Chinese music styles here to highlight the Chinese meaning. The musical style change and contrast of this movement are very obvious, giving the audience an extraordinary hearing experience. After entering the third movement, "Singing Andante", the beginning also enters with weak music. The player holds the pipe in his hand and taps it in various forms to produce a unique sound, then he speeds up his tempo to complete the musical style switch, a good transition to the next light part. Here, too, Tan Dun incorporates light and Chinese orchestral music, culminating in a collaboration between the percussives and the orchestra. At the end of the movement, the player holds up a sieve filled with water and ends the piece with a great sound of water. In this movement, Tan Dun is not limited to exploring the collision between water and percussion sound effects, but focuses on more possibilities of orchestral instruments, so in the third movement, there is even a situation of using the flute head alone as a sounding instrument. Therefore, the author believes that Tan Dun's exploration of sound art is undoubtedly not to be underestimated.

3. John Cage's Creation Background and the Characteristics of His Works

3.1 John Cage's Creative Background

John Cage is one of the most acclaimed avant-garde classical composers of the 20th century, and has achieved excellence in the fields of postmodern and experimental music. Before becoming a fully experimental music composer, John Cage studied with his teacher Schoenberg for two years, and received many avant-garde musical ideas, which also laid the foundation for his later musical ideas. Schoenberg began to teach himself early in his career through his love of music. A systematic study of composition followed, but Schoenberg eventually moved beyond traditional theories of compositional techniques and began to seek unusual auditory experiences. This is undoubtedly very rare for him in Vienna, the birthplace of classical music. Schoenberg then boldly put forward the twelve-tone sequence and atonality of the music theory, so that the music industry once again appeared a significant reform. And John Cage, as his student, also well absorbed this innovative and avant-garde musical spirit. However, due to the different background of The Times, the "avant-garde" of the two composers also has very different colors and connotations. For Schoenberg, notes were still an important part of music, but John broke that box. In John's

work, he boldly included silence, ambient sounds and noise as part of the music. In 1950, John Cage's student Wolff gave him a book on Eastern philosophical thought, the *Book of Changes*, and it was because of this book that gave him a new direction of thinking about composition, but his desire for Eastern philosophy and Zen went far beyond that. In 1951, Cage heard the Japanese Zen thinker Daichi Suzuki speak at Columbia University, and inspired by Japanese Zen, his music went from one end of chance to another: emptiness. In light of these experiences and inspirations, John Cage's subsequent works such as "4'33" and "Water Walk" are deeply embedded in the Zen concept of chance, randomness, and emptiness.

In the 1960s, a new generation of artists in Europe and the United States formed an art school called "conceptual art". This genre is centered on the idea of expression, rather than relying on the external form construction of the entity. Conceptual art does not depend on specific media materials, but pays more attention to the exploration of "artistic essence" and the expression of ideas. Tan Dun not only realized the implantation of conceptual art, but also made the work itself more groundbreaking through the reference to the concept of Zen [5].

3.2 Analysis of Music Arrangement and Expression of "4'33" and "Water Walk"

"4'33" is one of John Cage's most famous works. In this era of rapid musical style change, many different composers have experimented with countless situations in which music can develop and the sounds that instruments can make. From the Romantic period, Wagner began to blur tonality, to the special tonality and color chords of Debussy during the Impressionism, to the twelve-tone system of Schoenberg and later the microtonal. The possibilities of music are constantly being explored. So for the musicians who come after, there is less room for them to create. But that situation didn't stop John Cage from finding another breakthrough. In this environment, he boldly came up with this highly controversial work - "4'33". In other words, John Cage's creative direction has shifted from "music" to "sound". The player walked up to the piano and sat down on the bench, but John Cage did not actually use any of the music produced by the piano. When the player sits down and takes out a stopwatch, the length of time of each movement is different, and if the structure of the sonata is considered, this length arrangement does not seem to be very different from that of the sonata. Cage closed and opened the lid after each movement to tell the audience where one movement ended and the next began. In this work, the music is expressed in a "silent" way. But his musical arrangement is reflected in the impatient chat-

ter of the audience that follows, as well as the honking of car horns and other ambient noise. After the premiere of the work, people's opinions were mixed. Some people think that this work is meaningless and sensationalistic, but at the same time, many listeners think from other angles and give a positive opinion. When listening to this work for the first time, people's first reaction is often surprised by the silent expression of this work, after all, this was an unprecedented experience for the audience at that time, although the micetonal and twelve-tone system and brought a lot of impact to the music industry at that time, but this way of musical expression is too advanced. But if one thinks and listens from a different Angle, one will find a larger concept that breaks through the concept of musical categories - the "emptiness" and "chance" in Zen. It's also because John Cage wants people to go beyond the surface to hear the deeper meaning of the work. This was followed by another experimental piece of music, "Water Walk", which, like "4'33", was full of randomness and Zen ideas, but the difference was that Cage included more water sounding objects as instruments. Cage used 34 vocal instruments and a single track tape that lasted three minutes. The specific instruments were mostly water-related, namely bathtubs, toy fish, pressure cookers, ice cubes (and the electric stirrers used to crush them), rubber ducks, etc., but Cage also requested a grand piano and five radios. In addition to the auditory aspect of the device, when John Cage plugged in the mechanical fish and placed it on the strings of his grand piano, there was a mirror that reflected the shadow of the fish for the audience to watch, which also played a visual role. The score includes a list of props, a floor plan showing the positions of instruments and objects, and three pages with timelines (one minute each).

When the commentary first appeared on stage, John Cage began the performance with the same attitude as a serious musician. But there's a unique beauty and sense of humor to the work, and Cage still breaks with the music, using a lot of unusual objects to perform ridiculous things that are often the opposite or have nothing to do with their normal purpose. The very simple contrast between the strange things he does as a professional musician and the unusual use of objects is not fundamentally different from the twist in Shakespeare's work. As a result, the audience laughed and debated during the performance, and given these unique instruments and sounds, John Cage's "Water Walk" is undoubtedly an entertaining theatrical performance. However, the question of whether the work is musical remains controversial in the music industry at the time. "I think music is the production of sound," John Cage said before the show. He said at the end of the program that because he made a sound while playing the

piece, he thought it was music. "Water Walk" itself is full of drama, and its dramatic point is not the sound itself, but the performance of the sound. As he himself said, "Theater is something that involves both eyes and ears." Because in this work, people can see the combination of hearing and sight.

4. The Relevance of Specific Music to Philosophy and Its Contribution to International Cross-Cultural Communication and Music Education

4.1 The Relationship between Specific Musical Works and Philosophy

Tan Dun's Water Music is closely related to the element of water in Taoism. Water is regarded as one of the most important argumentative objects in Daoism. It not only represents one of the most basic and ubiquitous elements in nature, but also symbolizes the concepts of life and mobility. By studying the behavior and property changes of this particular substance in various situations, we can gain a deep understanding of the principles and laws behind human society and its values. In the Water Music series, Tan Dun uses a variety of water-element instruments to break out of the scope of traditional music, demonstrating the infinite possibilities that water can produce as a musical instrument. It is precisely because of the controllability and unpredictability of water element that this work not only shows the characteristics of experimental music, but also has the characteristics of accidental music. This means that any unexpected sound effects can appear on stage, and it is precisely because of this feature that each performance of "Water Music" is unique and cannot be replicated. Therefore, in this work, water reflects the "random" and "accidental" in Taoism, and everything happens as a result of nature, which is another important concept of Taoism - "let nature take its course". If it is cut from the Angle of "organic music", it is in line with the concept of "Theory that man is an integral part of nature". "Water Music" series works is a collection of traditional Chinese philosophy wisdom, artistic skills and modern and contemporary unique aesthetic pursuit as one of the outstanding works. This work successfully combines Chinese cultural heritage with contemporary art, once again making Chinese music one of the most high-profile representatives on the international stage.

At the same time, in the wave of postmodernism music, the works and musical philosophy of American composer John Cage became the "benchmark of postmodern music". His excellence lies in: first of all, his various experiments

and creations in music have a clear “purpose and direction of cultural philosophy [6].” First, through Zhouyi and Zen Buddhism, John Cage understands the idea that “everything changes”, that all existence is only the existence of “the moment”, and that the occurrence and change of all things and phenomena are “uncertain”. The “Yi” of Zhouyi means change and change. The core idea of Zhouyi is that the Great changes day by day, everything changes, and nothing in the world remains unchanged. John Cage learned from the book of Changes that there is only chance but no necessity in the world, and all changes are uncertain [7]. In addition to Chinese Zen thought, Cage also deeply studied Japanese Zen and Indian philosophical thought. The learning and fusion between these different cultures undoubtedly brought a major breakthrough for John Cage’s subsequent music creation. In “4’33”, he boldly put into practice the “changes” and “random” in Zhouyi. Every sound during the performance reflects that. The friction of the audience’s chair and the floor, the sound of coughing and talking, or the sound of the car outside the window can not be predicted, so all the sound sources of this work are accidental, that is, “random” in Zhouyi. At the same time, John Cage also interprets the “emptiness” in Zen through this accidental music. In Zen, everything in the world is fleeting, everything is possible and everything is uncertain. In answer to the question “What is Zen?” the famous Zen master Huai Rang said, “We can’t think it as a thing!” This means that it is wrong to give any interpretation, any definition of Zen, so Zen refuses to define any thing or phenomenon. This is the “ethereal” and “uncertain” character of Zen philosophy [8]. In Water Walk, John Cage also incorporated the concepts of “chance” and “random”. The sound of the instruments he uses in his performances is unique and unpredictable, and Cage also believes that the nature of the act of experimentation is actually the act of unpredictable results. The purpose of John Cage’s farcical “accidental music” is two-fold: First, he denies the rules and standards of Western traditional music, and uses contingency, randomness and uncertainty to oppose and subvert these rules and standards. “Cage’s later work is the product of this philosophy of attacking the foundations of Western music [9].”

4.2 Similarities and Differences in Music and Philosophy between Tan Dun’s “Water Music” and John Cage’s “4’33”, “Water Walk”

The differences between these works are mainly reflected in the instrumental arrangement and the use of music. In “Water Music”, although Tan Dun jumped out of the traditional musical harmony, the orchestra is still a very important part of the instrumental arrangement. Compared

with “Water Music”, John Cage is more courageous to go out of the traditional music category, no longer limited to the development of musical tone, but more daring to abandon important elements such as tonality, rhythm and present works that are better able to express their ideas to a certain extent. Another difference stems from the cultural background of the two composers. Tan Dun incorporated local witch culture in Water Music, while John Cage does not seem to have incorporated religious elements into either of his works. The same part is that they all incorporate Zen ideas. In Tan Dundi’s “Water Music” and John Cage’s “Water Walk”, they both use water elements to show the “random” and “accidental” connotation in Zhouyi. From the perspective of cross-cultural communication, this is undoubtedly a successful cultural exchange and integration. In these two experimental works, both composers pay more attention to the spiritual connotation of the works themselves, and create unique music based on the deep understanding of Zen culture.

4.3 A Brief Analysis of the Influence of Cultural Communication and Diversified Music Education

Through the above analysis, it can be seen that the traditional philosophy and culture of different countries and their connotation spirit have been integrated into their works by musicians of different countries and entered the vision of music learners in different countries through various media. This will undoubtedly play a great role in music communication and diversified music education. Integrating the traditional cultures of different countries into the works can promote cross-cultural communication and understanding. With the advent of the era of globalization, the mutual influence between different nationalities and different regions is deepening. By introducing Zen elements unique to other countries or regions into his own compositions, John Cage breaks the boundaries of music and promotes a more comprehensive and objective understanding of other peoples and their cultural backgrounds. Tan Dun also integrates the witchcraft culture of his native land and the Taoist culture of his motherland into Water Music, and also spreads his native culture to the world through his own creation, so that more people in the music industry can realize the unique combination of Chinese and Western culture and music.

In addition, it also plays an important role in diverse music education. Since each country has unique and valuable traditional art resources, it is necessary and effective to guide students to contact and understand the excellent artistic achievements of other nationalities or regions in the education process. By exposing the young generation to

diversity from an early age and respecting the differences and commonalities among them, we can cultivate their open and inclusive mentality, enhance their cross-cultural communication skills, and make them become truly global and comprehensive citizens in the future. Therefore, on the whole, the fact that “the traditional philosophy and culture of various countries and its connotation spirit have been incorporated into their works by musicians of different countries” indeed plays a positive and important role in promoting cross-border, promoting pluralistic communication and enhancing pluralistic consciousness on a global scale.

5. Conclusion

Through the analysis of specific music works “water Music” and “water walk”, we can see that musicians from different countries have integrated rich elements of traditional philosophy and culture in their creation. This way of cross-cultural communication and multi-music education not only promotes the artistic exchange between countries, but also enhances the vision and comprehensive quality of music learners in various countries. The traditional philosophy and culture incorporated in water Music and water walk have a long history, representing the unique and profound ideas of different countries. For example, “water Music” uses the symbolic meaning of “water” in ancient Chinese philosophy, while “water walk” also presents the random and accidental elements of Taoism through its own creation. The cross-cultural communication and diversified music education presented by these works also bring people a broader and open artistic vision. Both players and listeners can feel the differences and commonalities of artistic expression from different cultural backgrounds when they appreciate these works. Empathy is an important element of cross-cultural communication, and it is also a necessary element to get close to the hearts of the audience. In the cross-cultural communication of Chinese folk music, the empathic communication power of the works should be improved, based on the audience’s perspective, the creation and communication of popular music works should be close to the audience’s aesthetic taste, and the emotional identification of overseas audiences should be enhanced to arouse emotional resonance and enhance the cross-cultural communication effect [10].

Such an attitude of openness, tolerance, respect for diversity and promotion of mutual understanding and communication enables all regions of the world to participate,

draw inspiration and inspire creativity. Finally, in today’s highly interconnected global society and rapid development of information dissemination, cross-cultural communication works such as water Music and water walk are gradually becoming one of the necessary means for people to understand other civilizations and cultivate comprehensive literacy.

By appreciating these works, we can better understand and respect the rich history and unique value systems of other peoples or countries. At the same time, when we accept the differences of others and carry out cross-cultural communication with an equal mentality, we can also improve our comprehensive quality and better display our personal talents and local excellent artistic resources on the global stage. Music collections with traditional philosophical and cultural elements such as “water Music” and “water walk” are promoting cross-cultural communication and the development of diversified music collection with their unique charm, and playing a positive role in enhancing global vision and improving comprehensive quality.

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