

C-Pop Aesthetical Characteristics and Aesthetic Significance

Xiuqing Fang¹⁾, Woochang Lee²⁾

Abstract

C-Pop(Chinese Pop music) has turned out to be Chinese mainstream music up to now. As a school of music, it not only enjoys distinguished charisma, aesthetical quality, and values of aesthetic significance but gain a vast number of audiences. C-Pop brought great impact to aesthetic theory of traditional music, traditional performance and creative idea, and aesthetic habit and method of traditional music, meanwhile, transformed moral ideas and outlook of values of the public, moreover, changed public manners and life styles.

C-Pop was rooted in relations between man and music and between music and society by using music aesthetical standpoint and method. Analysis on details of C-Pop aesthetical characteristics and aesthetic significance are also carried out with distinct view which provides C-Pop research with more ways of thinking and larger space in order to change the situation of C-Pop research lacks far behind its practice.

Keywords: C-Pop, Popular music, Chinese popular music, Aesthetical Characteristics, Aesthetic Significance

1. Introduction

As a terminology, C-Pop was spread into China from Europe and America in 1920s. It is a prevalent, popular, common, easy accepted music.[1] Therefore, C-Pop becomes universal and popular music which has extensive effect on the public.

C-Pop brought overwhelming changes on Chinese music patterns and realized transformation and image improvement from traditional music to modern form, which becomes point of qualitative changes with landmarks in Chinese music history, meanwhile, it also changed the pattern of Chinese culture profoundly, presented self-renewal vitality and colorful extension of Chinese culture, and became a strongly existing culture with social significance.[2]

Received (May 16, 2017), Review Result (May 30, 2017)

Accepted (June 7, 2017), Published (August 31, 2017)

¹Dept. Applied Arts, Graduate School of Kyung Hee University, 1732, Deogyong-daero, Giheung-gu, Yongin-si, Gyeonggi-do, Korea
email: fangziqing@naver.com

²(Corresponding Author) Dept. Post Modern Music, Graduate School of Kyung Hee University, 1732, Deogyong-daero, Giheung-gu, Yongin-si, Gyeonggi-do, Korea
email: Jazz@khu.ac.kr

As for C-Pop academic research, music theorists and music critics only put analysis and disputes of inclined issues with a certain degree on a music work or a category of works, or draw out C-Pop development tracks with historic view. In line with the situation, the article attempts to seek C-Pop characteristics systemically with music aesthetical view, meanwhile, have deeply discussion on C-Pop social effect, values, and significance in current social cultures.

2. C-Pop Aesthetical Characteristics

C-Pop really steps out its first pace only after China's reform and opening up. First, C-Pop of HK and Macau, as the leading role, stepped on the mainland. Second, the mainland C-Pop emerged. Third, C-Pop mushroomed prosperously with personality and became Chinese mainstream music gradually, turned out to be extremely popular public culture, and transformed into prevalent fashion trend.[3] With all the new aesthetical characteristics, new aesthetic connotation, new aesthetic ideas, and new aesthetic forms, C-Pop transfers into a new school of music.

2.1 Diversity of Aesthetic Forms

One of the C-Pop outstanding marks is its diversity if compared with other school of music. In its circle, a variety of music with styles, schools, and patterns are living together. It is not only combination of traditional music and modern music but also integration of foreign music and local music; it is not only mixture of elegant music and secular music but also amalgamation of different music, which turned toneless music into diversified one. With these dauntless creation and breakthrough, C-Pop became not only the new and original but gained new aesthetical characteristics and enjoyment, therefore, turned out to be wonderful music with colors.[4][5]

C-Pop does not stick to regular models in performance but focuses on personality. Whether they are certain singers or music bands, they have their own special performance styles in order to develop music into a school of their own examples. The personal performance not only transfers C-Pop into diversified aesthetic forms but makes it enjoy fresh vitality.

2.2 Humanization of Aesthetic Contents

With changes of the public outlook of values, living background of personal value orientation is faded with collective beliefs and purposes but replaced by more and more self-decision, self-selection, and self-realization,[6] therefore, personal self-consciousness, existential values, and promotion of individual character are fully revealed in C-Pop development increasingly.

C-Pop broke the stance of music aesthetics - the political awareness is top of everything in the Cultural Revolution of China and faded music metaphysical education functions but turned to focus on requirements of personal feelings and aesthetic demands, furthermore, embarked on road of personality.[7] C-Pop almost touched every corner of personality from daily lives of people to their internal anxiety, emotional lost, reflection on living conditions, and their re-examination, especially, love music of C-Pop touched every aspects of personal emotions from different views which shows that C-Pop actually closes to personality from another side.

Certainly, personality of C-Pop is concerned, is more important problem in presentation at most times which shows understandings and practices on music superiority and holiness. From The world peace calling, living environment of human beings, and attention to key social incidents, etc. Which are all exhibited in C-Pop, which not only passes all problems in the development process of human civilization but reveals re-examination and consideration of modern human being on traditional outlook of values, moral outlook, aesthetic viewpoint, and ideology, exhibits examination and consideration of modern human beings on living conditions and environment that makes C-Pop enjoy more extensive personality colors, cultural values, and aesthetic values.[8]

2.3 Popularization of Aesthetic Object

C-Pop not only faded music urbanization and covered people at all ages but penetrated into all parts of livings, therefore, it became entertainment mainstream and cultural existence which has to be faced by people.[9] The unprecedented C-Pop culture is not only the existing foundations but way of living and one of the final results is that it destroyed obstacles that are made by different cultural regions, different cultural contents, and different aesthetic viewpoint, which made it become popularized music forms, and furthermore, make the public to be real music aesthetic main body.

Popularization of C-Pop also takes on strong attendance in popular culture behavior. In

C-Pop aesthetic activities, the public is not music passive receiver but becomes the positive attendant, turns from pure acoustical music aesthetics to 'Action aesthetics' in certain degree. They are music receiver and performer at the same time. The point could be felt in the C-Pop square dance where attended by the public who are in selfless and in public keen KTV emotions.

Before the fact that the public became main body of music aesthetics, music itself are closing to the public gradually, that is, all forms of music are C-Pop-oriented with possibilities, even takes on a certain of fashion or vogue in order to meet the public aesthetic diversity and variability. In the process, it is C-Pop key method of popularization that makes classics turn to be secularization, elegance transfer to popularization, complication transit into simplicity, traditions change into modernization, which makes C-Pop break pride and prejudice and self-admiration of classical music and the so called elegant music and be more civilian oriented and gains aesthetical characteristic that suits to the more and the less cultured.[10][11]

2.4 Fashion-orientation of Aesthetic Package

With upward breakthrough of living standard, aesthetic capabilities, and aesthetic requirement, people pays more attention to seek beautiful things, therefore, seeking fashion becomes an important sector for people to realize their living rules of aesthetics and becomes a key path of materialistic and spiritual products to realize its values.[12] As products of times and objects of people to aesthetics, C-Pop penetrates into modern man's aesthetic proposal and consciousness appropriately and follows fashion closely.

In forms, dreaming lights and idyllic platform design reveals strongly fashion odor which makes C-Pop more colorful, it not only shows impact on people's auditory sense but shakes visual sense. In contents, it bumps with the breast of times, expresses rapidly on varies of lives with music-orientation, which makes modern man's emotional situation, trend of spiritual world, social changes reappear in C-Pop rapidly while the distinguished characteristics of times also makes it shining with fashion and colors of times.

In terms of C-Pop CD and DVD packages, we could feel fashion-oriented aesthetic package. Whether it is abstracted or absurd design tricks or simple or complicated and extravagant design method, they are all penetrated with fashionable and aesthetic understandings and pursuits, which makes C-Pop package exhibit strongly fashion odor, so the package itself is fashionable artworks. As fashionable and consumer goods, C-Pop not only follows fashion but stands in front edge of the livings as well as guides fashion trends, therefore, C-Pop itself is

fashion symbol and marks.

2.5 Speedy Changes of Aesthetic Rhythm

Why C-Pop is prevalent, the main reason is that it is updated with a rapid pace, which shortens peak cycles of singer's artistic life or a song, even turns to be a glory in a very moment. The brand new and rapid changes can match with people's pursuits to different music aesthetic activities and make C-Pop get thriving and long lasting life energy.

With current rapid transmission of media tools and simple transformation procedure, internet songs and singers become prevalent and rhythm of C-Pop aesthetics is speedy. Rhythm of C-Pop changed so rapidly, it is the artistic demand and internal power that makes it goes ahead with creativity. However, as decided by material foundations, the spiritual products are still marched head by peace of modern material production and meet modern man's rapid life styles. Rhythm of modern social material production certainly results of the peace of spiritual production while C-Pop speedy changes correctly match with rules of material production, meanwhile, C-Pop could simply and rapidly blend into modern man's emotional requirements and aesthetic demands which again responds with modern man's rapid living pace,[13] therefore, why C-Pop aesthetic rhythm could change rapidly, the reason is that it has internal integrity with rules of current productivity and production relations and it is the deep reason why C-Pop could change rapidly.

2.6 Commercialization of Aesthetic Values

Presently, with social market-orientation, C-Pop has turned to be one of spiritual products with most expensive commercial values when product-orientation becomes particular economic forms. The unprecedented C-Pop popularization turns it into the most valuable and cultural industry and cultural consumption and enjoys great commercial markets while other forms of music are not endowed.[14] Today, C-Pop is not separated from commercial operation in market predication, music creation and edition, singer improvement and package. In turn, commercial operation provides powerful fund with C-Pop as its guarantee and bulldozers commercial channels for realizing its music values. Under mixture of commercial-oriented situation and compared with music in the past, C-Pop enjoys remarkable double identity, it is not only artworks of fine arts but also seller's product, not only commercialization of works but also work-orientation of commodity, hence, sellers make use of its artistic values to make a

profit in order to realize commercial value, but in commercial operation, with the identity of a specific commodity identity, C-Pop realizes its artistic values.

With commercial combination, C-Pop never lost its artistic dignity and dependence under most conditions. The reason is, until today with social development, there is harmonious side under binary opposition between money and art. First, in current commercial society, people's aesthetic consciousness and creation not only takes on in spiritual products but also exhibits in material products, which turns product to be focus on practicability and aesthetic characteristics, even the aesthetic characteristics is greater than its practicability, which results that product itself is artworks. In other words, only products emerged with beautiful forms, can it be commodities and realized commercial values. In that way, if C-Pop wants to be 'Prevalent commodities' and realized its commercial values, it must be emerged with beautiful forms. Second, if music wants to be 'Prevalent commodities', it has no way to go except for realization with beautiful music. Even if music wants to be commercialization thoroughly, it must be took music aesthetics as the basic foundation and it is also the most important conditions.[15]

3. C-Pop Aesthetic Significance

C-Pop brought brand new music philosophy and music styles to Chinese music cycles, even had huge shakes on ideology sector, and deeply affected and changed us gradually. Certainly, as popularization culture with commercial colors, the most important valuable proposition on C-Pop is that it focuses on entertainment function but not education function and it is non-mainstream social ideology in nature, however, which has no effect on its specific aesthetical characteristics and connotation of humanity and it will realize music values in other sectors and formation function of aesthetic subjects.[16] From the point of view, C-Pop enjoys ground-breaking revolutionary significance whether it is in music cycles or in music aesthetic field and whether it is in living areas or in ideological sector.

Music as an art with psychological activities, such as emotions, experiences, feelings, and intuition as its core, it should be free and unrestrained, enjoyed infinite creativity and imagination, and obtained artistic vitality with forming outstanding art styles and music connotation.[17] Upon the point, C-Pop never sticks to certain styles or rules of a school of music but carries out artistic mixture by new creativity in order to form its personal music.

By facing C-Pop, boundary among schools, styles, and categories of music is not existed, rules and specifications of all music creation and performance are collapsed, and all forms of

music are emerged with possibilities. All in all, whether it is vertical music inheritance and horizontal reference and integration, whether it is internal or external music, to C-Pop, it is for forming its own music personality, reference of its own music logistics, reference of its own improvement, and reference of new music integration. The bold and creative logistics of music art by C-Pop, it not only brings thriving vitality of today's music but opens a wider art channel for diversity of future music creativity and performance, which makes people feel that music imaginary space is boundless and its creation space is endless.

4. Conclusions

Music, with aesthetic values as its most basic values, it enters people's spiritual world by the way of aesthetic viewpoint. The transformation function to people is realized by people's positive aesthetic experience but not depending on external forces. As an art with best emotions and imaginary space, it can enter into people's inner heart deeply and strongly, which makes people touch air within surrounding emotions by music, which also makes spiritual world change in certain sectors with certain degree. Music, as one of the earliest art forms, always is simplest and most effective cultural method for people to seek comfortable heart and express thoughts and emotions. Because music could touch people deeply and strongly, aesthetic experience could be gained from music and can last for longer times, that is, music effect to people is long lasting and endless.[18]

As a music form, effect of C-Pop to people with characteristics as above, moreover, its popularization is unprecedented with depth, hence, it has much more extensive effect on people if compared with music of other forms, such as, rings and ring back music of mobile phone can be as a part of rhythm or a part of songs in C-Pop. All these is looks like a common thing in today's life, actually, it becomes a miniature of changing people's behavior and way of life. From the point of view, C-Pop makes music popularization, meanwhile, the public is more music-oriented by a certain degree, while the process of music-orientation is procedure for the public to change way of life and way of behavior. Certainly, C-Pop changes to the public are step by step but not suddenly, it is accepted by the public willingly through its own charming. In the subtle process, the public closes to beautiful personality constantly in the process of touching beautiful music, therefore, life and living quality is promoted.

C-Pop aesthetic subject is the public, that is, its aesthetic purpose is public-oriented and music aesthetic requirements and entertainment demand, therefore, it faded ideology and will of power, eliminated value orientation of music aesthetic culture of serious proposition, which

makes C-Pop gain rich humanization and civilian colors and filled with humanistic spirit and humanistic care. In other view of angle, music aesthetic culture of serious and elegant proposition moves toward to entertainment and consumption culture and realized music popularization truly, which makes the public to be music aesthetic main body, therefore, they have richer aesthetic experience, aesthetic enjoyment, and new aesthetic confirmation. It is the real return of music spirit that started from the public and returned back to the public. It is the expression that calls the public as the public. It closed to the public to a greater extent and is the highest nature of the public - the connotation of philosophical proposition.[19]

It is important that C-Pop brought great impact to traditional psychology and temper. It shows humanistic care to the public in spiritual cycle, such as, extreme, bold and unrestrained personality, vanguard character with front edge of the times, beautiful personality with modern fashion colors, and other critical contents, which shake and meet the aesthetic viewpoint of the public, who will face their own society with new ideology.

Certainly, just like the effect that secular music played to against divinity and asceticism in middle ages of Europe,[20] but impact of C-Pop lacks theory and it could enter into the scope of thoughts by auditory sense and visual sense in order to make it enjoy rational significance, therefore, if the May 4th Movement of 1919 in China was looked as a point of qualitative change in Chinese cultural and intellectual history,[21] C-Pop is the point of qualitative change in Chinese music history. The former is elite consciousness of a minority of cultural man who against tradition with thoughts in cycles of culture, thoughts, and regimes. The latter is the public cultural attendant who uses music to against traditions in aesthetic viewpoint cycles, further, forms modern outlook of values, moral ideas, and aesthetic viewpoint. From the point of view, C-Pop becomes critical weapons in certain degree but more powerful critical weapons. Its social values exceeded the music values far and far but it is really the highest state of humanistic spirit of C-Pop.

References

- [1] J. B. You, *The History and Style of Pop Music*, Hunan Literature and Art Publishing Company, Hunan (2007)
- [2] X. Y. Zhou, *In the Culture Perspective of Chinese Pop Music*, Doctoral thesis, Soochow University, Suzhou (2013)
- [3] Q. H. Ju, *History of New Chinese Music*, Hunan Arts Publishing House, Changsha (2002)
- [4] Z. J. Jin, *Pop Under the Red Flag: Experience the Chinese Pop Music*, Beijing Music Publishing House,

Beijing (2002)

- [5] L. T. Lu, 100 Years Echo: Pop Music and the Times, Central Compilation Translation Press, Beijing (2001)
- [6] B. Etienne, The Philosophy of Marx, Verso, New York (2017)
- [7] X. Q. Fang, The Staging Studies About the History of School Music, Editorial Department of YIHAI (2016), Vol.65, No.12, pp.41-43.
- [8] H. L. Xiu and X. P. Luo, History and Aesthetics of Chinese music, China Renmin University Press, Beijing (1999)
- [9] Y. H. Wang, Modern History of Chinese Music, People's Music Publishing House, Beijing (2002)
- [10] L. Jonathan, Reification and the Aesthetics of Music, Routledge (2015)
- [11] K. Peter, Music, Language, and Cognition: And Other Essays in the Aesthetics of Music, Clarendon Press, Wotton-under-Edge (2007)
- [12] W. A. Theodor, Aesthetic Theory, Bloomsbury Academic, London (2013)
- [13] F. Ren, Analysis of Chinese Contemporary Popular Music from a Communication Perspective, Doctoral thesis, Shandong University, Shandong (2012)
- [14] S. Q. Wang, A Cultural Interpretation of Entertainment Fashion: A Collection of Popular Music Studies, Henan University Press, Henan (2015)
- [15] Q. Z. Liu, Review and Reflection on the Collection of Chinese New Music History, University of Hong Kong Asian Studies center, Hong Kong (1992)
- [16] S. Q. Wang, A Study on the Interaction of Music and Social Culture in Chinese Contemporary Urban Pop Music, Shanghai Education Press, Shanghai (2009)
- [17] D. Stephen, Musical Understandings: and Other Essays on the Philosophy of Music, Oxford University Press, Oxford (2011)
- [18] K. Lawrence, Interpreting Music, University of California Press, California (2010)
- [19] S. Roger, Understanding Music: Philosophy and Interpretation, Continuum International Publishing Group, London (2013)
- [20] P. Carl, A Treasury of Early Music: Masterworks of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Baroque Era, Dover Publications, New York (2012)
- [21] C. Z. Zhou, History of the May Fourth Movement: Modern China's Knowledge Revolution, World Book Inc., Beijing (2016)