

THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN MUSICALS ON CHINESE MUSICALS

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Abstract: This article deeply analyzes the influence of American musicals on Chinese musicals in terms of creative concepts, artistic styles, industrial models, and talent cultivation. By sorting out the development trajectories of musicals in both countries and conducting a comparative analysis of typical works and industrial practices, it reveals the opportunities and challenges brought by American musicals to the development of Chinese musicals. Furthermore, it discusses the coping strategies and development directions for Chinese musicals in the process of learning from American musicals, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical references for the continuous progress of Chinese musicals and promote the prosperity and development of the local musical industry.

Keywords: American musicals; Chinese musicals; Influence; Development strategies

1 INTRODUCTION

Musicals, as a captivating and dynamic form of stage art, have long been celebrated for their unique ability to weave together the diverse threads of music, dance, and drama into a single, harmonious tapestry. This multifaceted art form has not only captured the imaginations of audiences worldwide but has also left an indelible mark on the cultural and commercial landscapes of many nations. The United States, with its rich history and vibrant creative scene, stands out as a pivotal player in the global musical theater industry, particularly through the iconic institution of Broadway. This legendary avenue in New York City is not just a street; it is a symbol of the pinnacle of musical theater excellence, a place where the brightest stars of the stage come to shine and where the most innovative and influential musicals are born[1-2].

Broadway's musicals have transcended geographical boundaries, becoming a cultural phenomenon that resonates with audiences from all corners of the globe. The stories told through these productions, often a blend of the deeply personal and the universally human, have the power to move, inspire, and challenge viewers, regardless of their cultural background. This global reach has not only popularized American musicals but has also significantly influenced the development of musical theater in other countries, none more so than in China.

China, with its ancient and rich cultural heritage, has been experiencing a renaissance in its own musical theater scene, thanks in part to the increasing frequency of cultural exchanges and the progressive opening up of its cultural market. As American musicals have made their way into the Chinese cultural sphere, they have not only entertained but also served as a catalyst for change and innovation. The Chinese audience, once only familiar with traditional forms of theater such as Peking Opera, has now been exposed to the grandeur and spectacle of Broadway-style productions. This exposure has sparked a curiosity and desire to understand and emulate the elements that make these musicals so compelling[3-4].

The influence of American musicals on Chinese musicals is multifaceted. It encompasses not just the adoption of certain stylistic elements, such as the integration of song and dance into the narrative, but also extends to the broader creative and industrial practices that define the success of a musical. The narrative structures, character development, and thematic depth found in American musicals have provided a new framework for Chinese creators to explore and adapt to their own storytelling traditions.

Moreover, the industrial model of Broadway, with its focus on professional production values, marketing, and audience engagement, has offered a blueprint for the Chinese musical industry to follow. This includes the development of a robust infrastructure for the creation, production, and distribution of musicals, as well as the cultivation of talent in various disciplines, from performance and composition to stage management and production design.

However, the journey of Chinese musicals has not been one of simple imitation. Instead, it has been a process of creative adaptation and synthesis, where the essence of American musicals has been merged with the unique cultural sensibilities and artistic expressions of China. This has led to the emergence of a distinct Chinese musical genre that, while acknowledging the influence of its Western counterparts, remains true to its own cultural identity and creative vision.

The challenges faced by Chinese musicals in this process are not insignificant. They include the need to balance commercial success with artistic integrity, to navigate the complexities of cultural translation, and to develop a sustainable model for the production and promotion of musicals that can compete on the global stage. Yet, these challenges also present opportunities for growth and innovation, as Chinese musicals continue to evolve and mature as an art form[5-6].

2 THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF AMERICAN MUSICALS

2.1 Development Process

The origin of American musicals can be traced back to the operettas and vaudeville shows in the late 19th century. After a long period of evolution and development, a unique style and a mature industrial system have gradually taken shape. The period from the 1920s to the 1940s was the golden age of American musicals, during which a large number of classic works emerged, such as "Show Boat" and "Oklahoma!". These works innovatively integrated music, dance, and plots, laying the basic style and artistic status of American musicals. Since then, American musicals have continued to develop, with themes becoming increasingly diverse, covering a wide range from historical stories to modern life, from romantic love to social issues. Meanwhile, technological means have been constantly updated, and stage effects have become more magnificent. Mega-productions like "Cats" and "The Phantom of the Opera" have caused a huge sensation worldwide, further consolidating the leading position of American musicals on the world stage.

2.2 Characteristics

2.2.1 Diverse and integrated artistic styles

American musicals skillfully integrate various artistic elements. The musical styles are diverse, including pop, rock, jazz, and classical music. The dance forms are rich, such as ballet, modern dance, and tap dance. The dramatic plots are compact and full of tension. Through exquisite arrangements and performances, a highly infectious stage atmosphere is created, meeting the aesthetic needs of different audiences.

2.2.2 Highly commercialized operation model

Broadway musicals are famous for their mature commercial operation. From production, promotion to performance operation, a complete industrial chain has been formed. Producers attach great importance to market research and audience feedback, precisely position the target audience, attract a large number of audiences to buy tickets through large-scale advertising campaigns, star effects, and long-term and stable performance schedules, aiming to maximize box office revenue. At the same time, they also focus on the development of derivative products, such as records and peripheral merchandise, to further expand profit channels.

2.2.3 Strong sense of innovation

American musicals have always maintained an innovative spirit in theme selection, forms of expression, and technological application. They continuously explore new story themes, experiment with new music creation techniques and dance choreography forms, and actively apply advanced stage technologies, such as multimedia projection and special effects lighting, bringing audiences a brand-new audio-visual experience and keeping the art form of musicals full of vitality and attraction.

3 THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN MUSICALS ON THE CREATIVE CONCEPTS OF CHINESE MUSICALS

3.1 Expansion and Innovation of Themes

The rich and diverse themes of American musicals have opened up new ideas for Chinese musical creators. In the past, the themes of Chinese musicals were relatively single, mostly concentrated in the fields of traditional historical stories and folk legends. Influenced by the United States, Chinese musicals have begun to venture into themes that are closer to contemporary social reality, such as modern urban life, youth campus, and workplace struggles. For example, some musical works reflecting young people's pursuit of dreams and emotional confusion have emerged, making musicals more able to resonate with contemporary audiences, broadening the audience groups and market space of musicals.

3.2 Reference to Music Creation Techniques

The advanced music creation techniques of American musicals have brought new changes to the music of Chinese musicals. American musical music pays attention to the popularity and singability of melodies, and skillfully uses elements such as harmony and rhythm to enhance the expressiveness and appeal of the music. Chinese musical creators have begun to learn from and reference these techniques, integrating modern pop music elements on the basis of maintaining certain ethnic music characteristics, making the music more easily accepted and loved by the audience. For example, some musicals adopt more concise, lively, and rhythmic melodies, combined with electronic music sound effects, creating a fashionable and dynamic musical atmosphere and improving the overall music quality of musicals.

3.3 Emphasis on the Logic and Attractiveness of Plots

The meticulous construction and refinement of plots in American musicals have made Chinese musical creators attach more importance to the logic and attractiveness of scripts. In the past, some Chinese musicals had problems such as simple plots and unreasonable plot developments. However, American classic musicals attract audiences with their exciting and suspenseful plots. In the process of creation, Chinese musicals have gradually learned from American experiences, strengthening the creation and modification of scripts, focusing on the shaping of character images, the setting of plot conflicts, and the transitions of stories, making the plots fuller, more coherent, and more fascinating, thereby improving the artistic quality and enjoyment of musicals.

4 THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN MUSICALS ON THE ARTISTIC STYLES OF CHINESE MUSICALS

4.1 Diversification of Dance Choreography

The rich variety of dance choreography in American musicals has promoted the diversification of dance styles in Chinese musicals. American musical dances integrate the characteristics of multiple dance schools and are flexibly applied according to the needs of plots and characters, creating unique visual effects. Chinese musical dance choreography has begun to break away from the traditional single ethnic dance mode, actively introducing elements of modern dance, jazz dance, street dance, etc., making the dances more energetic and expressive, better integrating with music and plots, and enhancing the rhythm and visual impact of stage performances, bringing audiences a more wonderful visual feast.

4.2 Modernization of Stage Design

The advanced concepts and technological applications in stage design of American musicals have promoted the modernization process of stage design in Chinese musicals. American musical stage design focuses on creating a realistic scene atmosphere and fantastic visual effects, using high-tech means such as 3D projection and automated stage devices to make stage pictures more vivid, vivid, and hierarchical. Chinese musicals have gradually learned from the United States in stage design, increasing investment in stage technical equipment, adopting advanced lighting designs, multimedia displays, and creative props to create more exquisite stage pictures, improving the overall artistic texture of musicals and enabling audiences to better immerse themselves in the world created by musicals.

5 THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN MUSICALS ON THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE MUSICALS

5.1 Enlightenment from Commercial Operation Models

The highly commercialized operation model of American musicals has provided valuable experience for the development of the Chinese musical industry. Broadway musicals have mature strategies in market positioning, marketing promotion, and ticket sales. The Chinese musical industry has learned from its experience and begun to pay attention to market research. Based on the needs and preferences of audiences in different regions and age groups, targeted marketing promotion plans have been formulated, brand building and publicity and marketing efforts have been strengthened to improve the popularity and influence of musicals. Meanwhile, in terms of ticket sales, diversified sales channels and flexible ticket price strategies have been adopted, such as online ticket sales, membership systems, and package ticket discounts, to attract more audiences to enter the theater and promote the prosperity and development of the musical market.

5.2 Expansion and Improvement of the Industrial Chain

The complete industrial chain model of American musicals has inspired the Chinese musical industry to develop in a diversified direction. Besides the performances themselves, American musicals have rich practical experience in copyright operation, derivative product development, and integration of culture and tourism. The Chinese musical industry has gradually realized the importance of expanding the industrial chain and has begun to strengthen the protection and operation of musical copyrights. Through authorized performances, transfer of adaptation rights, etc., the value of musical works has been maximized. Meanwhile, derivative products related to musicals, such as music albums, commemorative albums, and dolls, have been actively developed to increase income sources. In addition, some regions have also attempted to combine musicals with the tourism industry, creating musical-themed tourist routes and scenic area performances, further expanding the development space of the musical industry and promoting the coordinated development of related industries.

6 COPING STRATEGIES FOR CHINESE MUSICALS IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING FROM AMERICAN EXPERIENCES

6.1 Maintaining Local Cultural Characteristics

In the process of learning from American musicals, Chinese musicals must adhere to their own cultural roots and ethnic characteristics. China has a long history and cultural tradition and rich artistic resources, such as traditional operas, folk songs, and folk stories, which are unique creative materials and cultural deposits for Chinese musicals. Chinese musical creators should deeply explore the connotations of local culture and skillfully integrate traditional cultural elements into the creation of musicals, making the works have a distinct Chinese style and cultural identity, avoiding the phenomenon of "wholesale Westernization" in the process of learning, and thus creating original Chinese musical brands with international competitiveness.

6.2 Strengthening the Construction of the Talent Training System

The development of American musicals benefits from its complete talent training system, which has cultivated a large number of outstanding musical professionals. For Chinese musicals to achieve long-term development, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of the talent training system. On the one hand, in colleges and universities, the curriculum settings of musical majors should be optimized, practical teaching links should be strengthened, and attention should be paid to cultivating students' comprehensive artistic literacy and innovation ability. On the other hand, social forces should be encouraged to participate in musical talent training. Through holding various musical training classes, workshops, and master classes, more learning and communication opportunities should be provided for musical practitioners to improve the overall level of Chinese musical talents and provide solid talent support for industrial development.

6.3 Encouraging Originality and Local Innovation

Based on learning from American experiences, Chinese musicals should vigorously encourage the creation of original works and local innovation. The government and relevant institutions should increase support for original musicals, set up special funds and awards, etc., to stimulate the enthusiasm and creativity of creators. Meanwhile, creators should be encouraged to go deep into life, take root among the people, pay attention to contemporary social reality and the emotional needs of the people, and create musical works with the spirit of the times and local characteristics. In addition, research on the theory and practice of musical creation should be strengthened to explore musical creation methods and styles suitable for China's national conditions and promote Chinese musicals to move forward continuously on the road of originality.

7 CONCLUSION

The influence of American musicals on Chinese musicals is multifaceted and profound, bringing new opportunities and challenges to Chinese musicals in fields such as creative concepts, artistic styles, and industrial development. By learning from the successful experiences of American musicals, Chinese musicals have achieved certain progress and development in aspects such as theme selection, music composition, stage performance, and commercial operation. However, during the development process, Chinese musicals should also maintain a sober mind, attach importance to inheriting and promoting local culture, strengthen talent cultivation and the creation of original works, and explore a development path for musicals with Chinese characteristics.

Looking ahead, with the vigorous development of China's cultural and artistic undertakings and the deepening of international cultural exchanges, Chinese musicals are expected to continue to grow and develop through learning and innovation, form unique artistic styles and industrial advantages, shine more brightly on the world musical stage, make positive contributions to enriching the global cultural and artistic treasure trove, and also bring more high-quality musical works to Chinese audiences to meet the people's ever-increasing spiritual and cultural needs. In conclusion, the influence of American musicals on Chinese musicals is a testament to the power of cultural exchange and the universal appeal of storytelling through music and dance. As China's musical theater scene continues to grow and develop, it stands at the crossroads of tradition and modernity, Eastern and Western influences, ready to carve out its own unique path in the global musical theater landscape. The future of Chinese musicals holds great promise, as they draw inspiration from the best of what the world has to offer while remaining steadfast in their commitment to their own cultural heritage and creative expression[7-8].

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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