

Modern Dance “Body – Mind Teaching Method” Rooted in National Culture

Min Yuan¹

¹ School of Music, Guizhou Normal University, Guiyang, Guizhou, China

Correspondence: Min Yuan, School of Music, Guizhou Normal University, Guiyang, Guizhou, China.

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Abstract

As dance programs in higher ed works to de-center Euro centric styles, learning how dance in China draws upon Confucianism would be a valuable addition to the field. Philosophical perspective, this paper describes modern dance teaching that values the national symbolic experience of the dance body and constructs the national cultural thinking of the dance individual as an experiential practice of college arts education that focuses on the performance of students’ spiritual existence.

Keywords: modern dance, Confucianism, ethnic culture

1. The “Body” of Modern Dance Teaching Asks the “Way” of the “Heart”

Higher education trains students to neither limit themselves to their own cultural horizons nor blindly follow the claims of other cultures, neither deny and criticize their own cultural traditions nor adopt a closed attitude towards other good cultures. The essence of modern dance is to rely on innovative, abstract and free dance forms to express the inner and conceptual world of the dancer, which is contemporary and innovative, and is an important part of the dance curriculum of higher art education. The author has been engaged in dance practice teaching in colleges and universities in ethnic areas for many years. From exploring the construction of the mind to the expression of the body, the teaching of modern dance rooted in ethnic culture has opened a new mode of teaching reform in colleges and universities in ethnic areas. Chinese Confucianism has revealed a lot about the body, mind and body, and nature to later generations. In the philosophical history of China, it is pointed out that “all things are without waiting for anything other than themselves”, and “nature” is used to explain. In the Chinese Confucianism, it pointed out that “all things are nothing outside of themselves”, and used “nature” to explain the generative role of “Tao”, and gave everything in the world a natural individuality (Fang, 2008). In other words, guided by traditional Chinese philosophical thought, modern dance can use the most direct “natural” feeling, so that students can understand the aesthetics of national life from the heart, and then start to dance expression, i.e., dance teaching that integrates body and mind, and both form and spirit.

In 2018, the author co-founded a university modern dance group troupe and took the job of dance creation. With the aim of contacting nature, exploring the treasures of local ethnic culture, and returning to the basics of modern dance practice teaching for students to build ethnic cognition of “body – mind” as the teaching goal. The teachers use practical teaching outside the classroom to build a field of nature, and guide students to touch, feel, think, conduct and create. They found that when the body perceives all things in nature, following’s idea of “body”, the story of concrete thinking creates a line of action that embodies the unique body cut, the feedback of perceiving nature from the primordial nature of “Tao”, and the perception of touching the origin of life. The students are guided through the fluidity of movement, i.e., “qi”. Applying the theoretical basis of Zhuangzi’s concept of “body”, the “natural” concept of “self-generation and self-transformation”, and the individuality of everything “born alone and without any borrowing”, we open up the students’ mind to the “qi”. The individuality of all things is the basis of the Chinese Confucian concept of “body”. The school of this dance group is a

practical teaching base for intangible cultural heritage, and many students from minority groups are born with a sense of freedom and natural attributes that are similar to those of modern dance. We have turned the back of the school into an outdoor rehearsal space for his students in their daily training. When the classroom interaction of dance education is moved from indoor to outdoor, from “imitation” to “creation”, students are encouraged to actively touch everything with their bodies, and to perceive “nature” through the interaction of their minds. The expression and transmission of dance movements has become a kind of life ontology transmission, reflecting the students’ own cognition of national culture and nature worship. The experience of national symbols in the dance body is an important part of our modern dance teaching to cultivate students’ dance practice. Unfolding in the temporal dimension with the art form of dance expressed in the language of images, conveying national symbols in a broad sense, through the visual perception of the physical presence of all visible forms from the universe, nature, creation, touching all areas of human national cultural activities. In the teaching process, teachers focus on allowing students to experience the migration, farming, fish catching, tree climbing, bird catching, hooping, batik and other ethnic cultural life experiences of ethnic minorities. Outdoor practice and ethnic life state experience courses become regular training courses for the Dance Group. Students are allowed to experience ethnic symbols in the mountains and dirt, and use contact experience training to transmute their own physical dynamics of ethnic symbols. Neuro-education believes that the main factor determining human cognitive development is the learner’s ability to operate mentally and transform information. When the object of the teaching experiment shifts from indoors to outdoors and perceives the temperature of all things natural, in the formation of the cognitive operation ability of the integration of the meaning of emotion, the student can develop the ability to practice art based on this element of behavioral thought.

2. Teaching Exploration of “Shape” and “Mind”

The “shape” here refers to the appearance of the body. For the dancer, the appearance of the body can also be said to be the result of the perception of the “mind”. For the dancer, the appearance of the body can also be said to be a reflection of the body’s dance movements due to the perception of the “mind”. The argument of individual thought is reflected in the “Form - Qi - God” view of the body, which reflects Chinese philosophical “two layers of analysis beyond form and within perception, reflecting the connotation of the body in Chinese Confucianism” (Chen, 1983). The author has gained experience of ethnic integration by teaching dance practice in colleges and universities in Guizhou minority areas. The process of constructing the national cultural thinking of dance individuals, from outdoor improvisation, national activities field practice to artistic practice, is an important part of the teacher guiding students to complete the awakening of their own national consciousness. The Department of Dance of the university modern dance group, the first two years of dance teaching content set throughout the Southwest minority dance course, minority dance course, the original intangible cultural heritage dance course, with the study of historical and cultural value of minority music and dance culture, giving minority regional cultural symbolic characteristics. Enhancing the connotation of the knowledge of the native ethnic culture expands the students’ individual embodied cognition and objectification of ethnic symbols, and forms the students’ active analysis of the cultural values of the ethnic group they live in. This is the source of “heart” perception in education. The modern dance teaching that takes the dynamic symbols of ethnic culture as the motive for creation, cultivates students’ ethnic cultural aesthetics, and then roots in ethnic culture is the journey of “form” and “heart” of this modern dance teaching. The journey of “form” and “heart”.

Rooted in ethnic culture, the Dance Company’s practice works “You-Sheng”. The innovative choreography and aesthetic approach of new perspectives, the collision of tradition and modernity, the framework of innovative thinking, the perfect illusion of the Miao national temperament. The book *Chinese Philosophy in the Perspective of Life* takes life as the theme and refers to philosophy as “reverence for nature and perception of life”, and this is an extension and expansion of this view (Li, 2013). The author found in teaching: the student-centered teaching practice is helpful to cultivate students’ open think. Teachers use ethnic thinking and experiential teaching to let students feel the multi-culture of modern dance. The author’s representative teaching outcomes: the work “You-Sheng” is based on the symbols of the life of the Miao people in Guizhou, starting from the primitive state of life of the Miao people, reflecting the process of the Miao people from labor to creation. The Miao are a farming people, and the dance uses body language to represent the brocade chicken pecking rice, which finds food for the Miao, indicating the continuation of life and the growth of all things in nature. In the practical teaching, the body of modern dance and open thinking of nationality are used to feel the culture of Miao nationality. The work is interpreted from the externalized farming culture to the inner “simplicity and freedom” of the Hmong people, depicting the “regeneration” of the Hmong culture in the new era with the contrast of time and space, showing the advanced evolution of life and the revival of traditional culture in full swing in the development of poverty eradication. When the teacher implanted the ethnic culture in the creation, the simple, natural, hard-working and heroic Hmong men were shown in the male actors’ life-affirming calls. This “heart” is shaped by the softness and strength of the movements, reflecting the “form” of the continuity of life. The female dancers use the emotional attachment of the ethnic attributes to subtly engrave into the audience’s heart the

delicacy of the Miao woman's heart and her infinite longing for a better life in the future. On the basis of inheriting the traditional culture of the Miao people, grafting ethnic elements and popular dance elements into the expression of modern dance, which is a modern dance teaching innovation of the world culture and a new journey of modern dance into and out of Guizhou. The dance work presents the essence of Chinese folk song and dance culture in modern dance choreography mode, and the accurate grasp of artistic style traces the roots of Chinese folk culture in a fashionable way, which is also a zero breakthrough for Guizhou universities. Responding to the call of the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, it responds to the pulse of the times, advances with the times, pushes forward, combines the excellent culture of Chinese Miao traditional art with the cultural trend of the new era, and creates dance works loved by the masses. The work inherits the excellent traditional culture of the Miao ethnic group, and brings out a unique way of teaching modern dance and choreography "outside the form and within the consciousness" in Guizhou colleges and universities, firmly establishing the national self-confidence of local dance students in Guizhou.

3. Construct the National Cultural Thinking of Dance Individuals

The most representative Western philosopher who explores the meaning of the body, using phenomenology to dissolve the dichotomy of consciousness and body, proposing the intersection between the body and the space of its existence, and the concept of non-spiritual and non-material "flesh", which is "a pre-scientific and pre-logical, and a pre-conceptual and topological ontology of the world". It is "a pre-scientific and pre-logical, a pre-conceptual and topological ontology of the world", "a mother body before the differentiation of matter and spirit, subject and object, consciousness and object", with "ontogeny and creation in the sense of genesis" (Locke, 1989). In the book *The Visible and the Invisible* uses the term "reciprocity" to describe the "ontological and creative nature of the subject and object". He uses reciprocity to dissolve the dichotomy between subject and object, by which he means that the human body has two identities, the "perceived body" and the "perceiving body" (Luo, 2008). The body is the subject of perception and the object of perception. In addition, we propose the reciprocal nature of the human body: the "intuited body" and the "intuited body". Then we think about teaching and learning, indoctrination and guidance, imitation and creation in education, and that the student's body is no longer the teacher's conceptualized body, nor is it the body under the teacher's experience, but a phenomenological body in the present learning activity. In the art education of universities in ethnic areas, this dance troupe also tries to root students' bodies in the soil of minority cultures in the practical teaching of modern dance, for the teaching of unfamiliar abstract modern dance, students' bodies embodied in the modern dance choreography course are no longer empty, but more the bodies with cultural attributes and spiritual perception in the activities of ethnic survival. By looking at modern dance learning from the perspective of the interaction between the ethnic body and the localized environment, learning is neither a "watering down" type of information processing for the central system nor a mechanical "transporting" type of cognition of external knowledge by students. The construction of the national cultural thinking of dance individuals can not only evoke the students' exploration of the historical process of the national culture they live in from the direction of dance curriculum thinking and politics, but also give a conscious national consciousness to the body cognition influenced by the external environment. Thus, the construction of cultural identity, cultural self-awareness and cultural self-confidence throughout the important lead of the cultural system. Building students' national cultural exploratory and experimental modern dance thinking teaching provides more possibilities for the modern dance practice courses in colleges and universities. A modern dance body theater "MIAO" co-created by this Dance Company in 2019 with the assistance of teachers and students interprets the powerful physical performance of students after building up their own national cultural thinking, rooted in the national culture of modern dance "Body – Mind" teaching enables students to deconstruct their self-perceived national symbolic body.

4. The Entire Dance Theater Is Divided into the Following Chapters

4.1 *The Beginning, The Beginning*

Dance uses the most primitive body state to construct a kind of "origin period", the human beings have a Renaissance in the Axis Age. The beginning of the dance drama is the animal dance of the human body with avant-garde electronic music. When the body starts to wriggle in the rhythm, we try to create a channel in the life construction of the audience and the actors. In the creation of this clip, the director takes the actors to the mountains, takes off their jackets, and feels the soil. The experience gained through the outdoor training of the actors and the information of the local national culture are reorganized to obtain the actor's own subjective tailoring dance motivation. The actor's experience and feelings are used to enrich the director's creative concept, and then through the objective work performance, the initial state Perfect interpretation with soil and body.

4.2 *Sharp and Sharp*

Using the pointed hat representing the special folk custom marriage culture in the young Miao branch of Guizhou Miao as a symbol of life art, it represents the transformation of a woman from a girl to a woman, and also represents a solemn sense of life rituals. It is part of the female adult ceremony Kind of life evolution. The

meaning of life is the result of using art to objectify emotional life. The creative process of art is a process of symbols, a process of giving emotions a form. In this process, the inner life has an external form, thus obtaining the expression of the national body.

4.3 Combining, Combining to Form a Body

In the theory of the origin of life of the Miao nationality, “Maple Tree Song” is a set of creation epics about the origin of thousands of things. The thinking and answers about the origin of thousands of things and the origin of mankind confirmed that the ancestors of the Miao nationality always believed that the birth of mankind was the product of long-term material development, which is a national philosophical thought. In the process of independent creation, students rooted their bodies in the cultural concept of “creation” of the Miao nationality: Liquidambar formosana tree was originally in the fairy house in the sky, and then fell from the sky. It has found the relationship between the body and nature, and adopted the movement construction of the duet dance, which not only expresses the nature worship of the Miao ancestors, but also vividly transmits the Miao legends with the physical texture of modern dance.

4.4 Round, Round and God

The Miao ethnic group’s epic has bred a very rich germination of philosophical and social thought. The Miao ethnic group worships maple for generations. “In”, the ancestors of the Miao nationality carried out a beautification of maple with great utilitarian value: they believed that maple was born in heaven and earth, and the maple became a butterfly mother, and the butterfly mother gave birth to the ancestor Jiang Yang, and thus the Miao nationality was born. A large number of historical records record that the battle of Miao ancestor “Chi you” Zhu lu was captured and killed by the Yellow Emperor and turned into maple. The circular sacrificial dance scene, the choreographer asked the actors to walk around the stage with a maple tree on their backs, with sacrificial rites.

5. Conclusion

The body has two functions: “knowing” and “sense”. Dance is a kind of expression. “Knowing” can only grasp the world of appearance, while “sense” can reach the ontological world represented by will. The reform of the modern dance course of the Dance Department of this dance group is to recognize the students’ visual representations and psychological experiences through the use of the material carriers of traditional national symbols to form symbolic modern dances with unique national element visual expression and aesthetic emotions. The understanding and analysis of national culture will construct students’ cognition and aesthetic concept of national culture, and then form the structure of the unity of national culture and emotion with body and mind. Modern dance teaching reform rooted in national culture is a process of exploring higher art dance education in ethnic areas, and the balanced development of students’ body, mind and expression. Therefore, based on morality and humanity, guided by socialist core values, with the goal of improving students’ aesthetics and humanistic literacy, promoting the spirit of Chinese aesthetic education, educating people with beauty, beautifying people, and cultivating people with beauty, rooting in national culture. The exploration of modern dance teaching and practice in colleges and universities is a reformative study of local college art education that cultivates students’ national symbolic personality emotions and ideological consciousness in the trinity of aesthetics, morals, and science.

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