

Research on the development of African American popular music

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Abstract: American music matured relatively late, and its style was not formed until the early 20th century. In the development and evolution of American popular music, black music has played an important role that cannot be ignored. In this regard, this paper takes American black pop music as the research object, respectively from the early black music, the formation of blues music, the vigorous development of pop music, the rise of Hip-hop music and other different perspectives, to carry out in-depth analysis and exploration of its development path.

Key words: America; Black pop music; Blues music; Hip-hop music

The roots of black American music can be traced back to black African music. From the 17th century to the 19th century, a large number of black people migrated to the United States and integrated the traditional African music with the white European music, forming a whole set of unique music system. So it has a new name, called African American music. Its formation has a profound influence on the development of American pop music and even the world pop music.

I. The early black music

1. Early Black Music from the colonial period

Art comes from life. The early black music forms are similar to the labor chant, including Shouting on the spot, beating on the beat, calling, rapping, etc., mainly used to express the depressed mood during work. This simple, free and primitive way of Shouting and singing was called field Shouting. This type of singing is often falsetto and has a fluctuating, West African sound.

According to the lyrics, the field shouts are mostly improvised orally, used to express black people's demands for food and religious beliefs. In their busy working life day after day, field Shouting undoubtedly became the best means to vent their inner emotions. Music, sound from the birth of also, its original feeling in the heart of the matter also. In the 17th century, due to long-term material scarcity and inner emptiness, the musical form of field Shouting can be used to express their inner sadness and bitterness.

2. Negro spirituals

In the 19th century, a musical form emerged in the black religion, the spiritual. First of all, spirituals have a certain religious character in terms of their vocabulary. Therefore, most of the writers of black spirituals were African Americans who believed in Christianity. At first, spirituals were an oral form of music used to convey Christian values, etc.

During the colonial period, certain social circumstances prevented blacks from singing spirituals in church as whites did. They had no permanent singing places and few opportunities to sing in church. Most of the time, they sang heartily in the rubble of the village community and in the fields, telling the sufferings in their hearts. Sometimes they gather together to sing in chorus, and sometimes they sing alone. Since most of these songs are used to express the inner distress of black people, they contain a lot of interjections used to vent the inner emotions of black people, such as crying, moaning, etc. Although the content described in each spiritual song is different, the black people's suffering mood is indeed unified. Like other styles of black music, black spirituals have a distinctive African musical syncopation rhythm, which seems to be inherent in the black blood.

II. The formation of blues music

The blues is a form of music that originated in the African-American community and flourished in the United States. According to the existing research results of the academic circle on the black music, there is no accurate conclusion on the origin of the blues music, and it is difficult to verify the exact time and place of the blues. Scholars at home and abroad agree that blues music originated from the Mississippi Delta generation in the early 20th century. At the end of the 19th century, slavery was abolished in the United States, and the black slaves also walked out of the plantation of the slave owners and obtained certain personal freedom, and the scope of activities was further expanded in Mississippi. After continuous migration, many of them could play music more freely in a wider range of venues. From this perspective, the outbreak of the Civil War created favorable conditions for the performance and dissemination of black music, which also promoted the formation of the blues genre to a certain extent.

Although the current academic community has not reached a consensus on the specific formation time of the blues music style, it can still be divided into the approximate time range of the formation of the early blues music through the analysis of the existing research results. For example, the New Grove Dictionary records that as early as the early 20th century, black Americans began to use the blues as a musical expression. "The Rise and Fall of the Blues in Early African America" (Zhang Kuo) points out that according to scholars' research and discussion on the formation time of the blues music, it can be basically confirmed that the blues music was formed in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. In the History of African American Music (Eileen), it is mentioned that WC Handy published "Memphis Blues" in 1912, which aroused the public's wide attention to the blues as a musical form. After that, WC Handy published "St. Louis Blues" in 1914, which made the Blues vocal music genre spread around the world. And the blues really has pop music properties to enter the market,

or from the 1920, Mamie Smith published the first blues album - "Crazy Blues" came out. In short, according to the existing research results, although the blues vocal music genre had existed before the first record appeared in 1920, there were no specific music materials left. After 1920, many blues singers began to make their own recordings, which resulted in more blues compositions being preserved.

III. The vigorous development of jazz

Jazz is not a unique style of African American pop music. In the course of its formation and development, it combines African music culture and European traditional music. By the 1920s, with the continuous development of industrial technology, a large number of labor force poured into the industrial cities in the north. During this period, black musician Louis Armstrong, a representative figure in the history of jazz, was born. He had a long and successful jazz career, throughout which he performed consistently and received wide acclaim. Louis Armstrong was not only a jazz singer, but also an excellent trumpet player. In his music, he was often both singer and player. During the Chicago Jazz period, Louis Armstrong played with two bands, five Hot and seven Hot, which achieved great success and gradually developed into the backbone of Chicago jazz.

With the development of jazz into the swing period, its musical style also produced a series of new changes. Swing is a style of music with a dance character, played by a big band. Entering this phase, a large number of white jazz musicians appeared, such as Benny Goodman and Fletcher Henderson. The contribution of these white musicians to the development of jazz is undeniable, but the role of black music such as Ella Fitzgerald and Fletcher Henderson in the development of jazz is also self-evident. Among them, Fitzgerald, as a female jazz singer, is an important representative of rhyming singing. This improvisational singing style, which uses syllables instead of lyrics and instrumentalized vocals, has gradually become a classic jazz singing style. During the Great Depression, swing music became the spiritual backbone of the American people. However, with the outbreak of World War II, swing music gradually declined, and the bebop period gradually arrived.

Bebop got its name from early bebop phrases that included the words "bebop" or "Ribop", also known as Ribop or Bop jazz. The decline of swing in the 1940s gave a boost to the development of Bebop. During this period, jazz music also underwent great changes, both in playing technique and musical concept. Bebop no longer accompanied the dance, but paid more attention to the personalized music and playing skills. In the history of jazz music, the appearance of bebop can be said to be a major revolution. In this revolution, Tronios Monk, Dizzy Gillespie and other black musicians occupied a major position in the development of jazz.

IV. The rise of Hip-hop music

Hip-hop, a form of music, was born in the 1970s from the poor black class in the United States. Hip-hop culture includes many elements such as music, dance, and visual arts. But scholars differ on what constitutes it. According to scholar Yuan Yue, hip-hop culture consists of three elements: music, graffiti and break dancing. While Chen Min proposed that hip-hop culture consists of four elements: DJ, MC, graffiti art and hip-hop dance. Art comes from life, and the art culture emerging from the slums of American blacks can be classified as the artistic expression of music, dance and visual art in general.

In terms of music performance, hip-hop culture includes DJ, MC, RAP and other musical and artistic elements, among which the full name of DJ is Disc Jockey, literally meaning the knight of the record, so DJ can be understood as the host who controls the record. The original form is to control the atmosphere of the scene by controlling the record in the dance party. With the development of The Times, it also includes the production of hip-hop music and other aspects of work. The word MC is also a common noun in hip hop music. "It is short for English Master of Ceremony or Microphone Controller, which means party host or microphone controller, both of which have the same meaning and refer to the person who controls the microphone at the scene". Therefore, the relationship between MC and Rap is closely related. Rap is called rap music, also known as rap, which is characterized by rhythmic and rhyming lyrics. In the early stage, rap music was often impromptu by picking up the microphone in accordance with the rhythm given by the DJ. Later, with the continuous development of music production, many rappers mainly recorded records without improvisation. Therefore, there is a certain difference between Rapper and MC, MC can be said in addition to rap to host and control the overall situation, while Rapper is mainly engaged in the production and performance of rap music, so not every rapper can be called MC, but rap must be an essential skill of MC.

Street Dance is the main form of dance art in hip hop culture, as the name suggests, it is a dance form produced in the street, English generally written street dance, B-Boying, Break Dancing and other forms, usually translated as street dance or break dancing. This is a street dance form that appeared in the black community in the 1970s. The Street dance art in hip hop culture was shown in the movie Street Dance Boys directed by Selvin White. The artistic charm and cultural embodiment of American black street dance were shown in the film, and the intensity and antagonism of street dance were shown. Zhang Erao believes that "Street dance because of its strong aggression, the movement range is very large, it looks very exaggerated. The earliest street dance was a set of moves used by two gangs to show each other their strength and boost morale, and later it gradually developed into a unique dance form." Therefore, it can be said that street dance is a native black culture and art in the United States. Its expression through body language not only reflects the charm of dance art, but also has a certain symbolic significance in black gang culture.

In a word, black music plays an important role in the development of American pop music. Whether it was field shouts and Negro spirituals in the early days, blues, jazz, or Hip-hop in the later years, we can find traces of them in modern pop music. No matter how popular music develops, the essence of black music is bound to live on.

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