

IMPROVING METHOD THE QUALITY FOR INTERNATIONAL STANDARD DANCERS: THE ROLE OF CHARACTERIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This Article aims to analyse in depth the key role of characterization in improving the literacy of international standard dancers at the Beijing Dance Academy. Qualitative research techniques were used and the research design included a case study where ten award-winning dance performances were selected as cases and a survey of 30 professional International Standard Dancers and tutors was conducted. Data collection methods covered literature review, and observational analysis. The study found that characterization is crucial in dancers' performances and has the following effects on improving their overall literacy and performance quality: the enhancement of emotional expression in performances by International Standard Dancers, the enhancement of coherence and logic in performances by International Standard Dancers, the enhancement of stage performance by International Standard Dancers, the enhancement of artistic value of performances, and the enhancement of International Standard Dancers' comprehensive quality. The expected benefits of the study include the following: Firstly, the dancers can improve their cultural literacy and art appreciation. Secondly, it will provide new ideas and methods for dance education. It can help to cultivate students' comprehensive literacy and artistic expression. Finally, the study is expected to make an important contribution to the artistic development and educational innovation of international standard dance.

Keywords: International Standard Dance, Dancer Quality, Role of Characterization

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of this study is to further enhance the overall quality and artistic level of dancers by exploring the role of characterization in International Standard Dance performance. Characterization is not only an important means for dancers to express their roles, but also an important factor to enhance the infectiousness of dance performance and audience interaction. By systematically analysing and summarising the methods and techniques of character shaping, this study aims to provide International Standard Dancers with a scientific and systematic training programme, so as to enhance their expressiveness and artistic contagiousness on stage. International Standard Dance originated in the West since the beginning of the 20th century, and after more than a hundred years of development, it has become one of the most popular forms of dance in the world. With the acceleration of globalization, International Standard Dance has been gradually introduced into China, and has rapidly gained popularity and development in the country. National standard dancers are no longer confined to regular competitions, but can also show themselves, present their personalities and express their emotions on the art stage (Shang Yuetao, 2024). However, at the same time, relatively little research has been done on how to improve the comprehensive quality of international standard dancers, especially in characterization.

Regarding the research of exploring the enhancement of international standard dance performers' quality: the role of characterization, searching “international standard dance” on China Knowledge, the existing research is mainly based on the perspective of creation of works, teaching curriculum reform, etc., and there are fewer researches specifically focusing on the quality of international standard dance performers. Therefore, this paper will take the character imagination shaping in international standard dance performance dance works as the research goal, hoping to make up for the research gap through the in-depth discussion of character shaping, and focusing on analyzing and researching the methods of enhancing the quality of international standard dance performers, exploring the important role of character shaping in enhancing the quality of international standard dance performers, summarizing the useful experience through the research results to be discussed and putting forward countermeasure suggestions for the subsequent more in-depth study of international standard dance performers' quality. Put forward countermeasure suggestions to provide a theoretical basis for subsequent more in-depth research.

This study makes an important contribution to the field of international standard dance in a number of ways. In terms of education, by emphasizing the importance of characterization, the study provides dance educators with new teaching strategies that emphasize the integration of characterization and emotional expression into training programs. In terms of artistic development, the research emphasizes the importance of characterization in enhancing the quality of the performing arts, providing practical insights for dancers and choreographers. In terms of broadening the scope of research, the study bridges the gap between technical skills and artistic expression by focusing on the holistic development of dancers, expanding the scope of existing research. In terms of future research directions, the findings suggest new avenues of research, especially in exploring the intersection of competitive and artistic elements in dance. Overall, this study not only deepens the understanding of characterization in international standard dance, but also provides valuable tools and insights for dancers, educators, and researchers working to advance the art and practice of standard dance.

Research Question

What is the role of characterization in improving the quality of international standard dancers at the Beijing Dance Academy?

Article's Objective

To analyse in depth the key role of characterization in improving the literacy of international standard dancers at the Beijing Dance Academy.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Luo, Xinyao (2020). Research on Character Creation of International Standard Dance Drama--Taking the Dance Drama “Sunrise” as an Example, the research objective: to explore the characterization method of international standard dance in the creation of dance drama, to expand the space of artistic expression by deconstructing and reconstructing the movement vocabulary, and to push forward the development of the “Chineseization” of the international standard dance by maintaining the style and qualities of international standard dance. Chinese” development of International Standard Dance, and solve the problems of formalization, sameness and thin characterization in the creation of current artistic performance dance. The study found that the dance drama Sunrise, for example, successfully portrayed complex characters such as Chen Bailu by fusing international standard dance (such as the strength of bullfighting and the lingering movement of rumba) with lifestyle movements, and by transforming competitive movements into a narrative language. Luo Xinyao's research focuses on the practical application and cross-cultural integration of movement vocabulary, but the construction of a theoretical system for characterization is insufficient. By combining case studies and teaching experience, the author of this paper proposes a systematic methodology for characterization (e.g., flexible adjustment of character expression in different dance styles), which makes up for the lack of theoretical depth in Luo Xinyao's research.

Guo, Sharong (2022). Research on the Creation Elements of International Standard Dance Performance Dance, the goal of this research is to analyze the creation elements of International Standard Dance Performance Dance, put forward scientific creation methods, solve the current problems of irrational creation methods and stylistic similarity, and promote the standardization and innovative development of China's International Standard Dance Performance Dance. The study proposes a synergistic framework of eight elements: theme, movement, music, innovation, time, space, emotion, costume/props/makeup. Among them, the theme should be consistent throughout the work, the music should be matched with the dance genre and theme, and the innovation should be centered on the dimensions of movement, music, theme, and costume. However, the study lacks a systematic theoretical framework; there is insufficient research on the creation of modern dance performance dances, and empirical analyses are scarce (e.g., audience acceptance data are missing). Guo Sharong emphasized that emotional elements need to be combined with music and dance styles, but did not address the empirical analysis of audience acceptance. In contrast, the authors of this study fill the empirical gap in the assessment of choreographic effects by surveying 30 professional dancers and instructors and combining audience feedback data to verify the direct impact of characterization on emotional resonance.

Hao Ziyue. (2022). On the Transformation of Dancers' Self-Cultivation to Characterization--Taking Personal Graduation Showcase Work as an Example. The goal of this study is to explore how dancers transform to characterization through self-cultivation (including self-cognition, imagery extraction, ideology and morality, etc.), and it was found that the actors need to realize the transformation of internal and external unity through self-cognition, situational imagery, music comprehension and other ability preparations, The study found that actors need to prepare themselves through self-cognition, situational imagination, music understanding and other abilities to break through the boundaries between “self” and “character” and realize the transformation of internal and external unity. The author of this paper proposes a systematic training program for International Standard Dance (e.g., flexible adjustment of character expression methods for different dance styles), which provides a specific strategy for dance education, while Hao Ziyue's study focuses on theory in general, with weak guidance for practical teaching.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative study in order to comprehensively analyze the important role of characterization in enhancing the literacy of international standard dancers. The data collection methods covered literature review, observation and video analysis, and the population of this study was the teachers and dancers of the Beijing Dance Academy (BDA), one of China's top art institutions. This population was selected because of their significant representation and influence in the field of international standard dance education and performance in China. As the highest level of dance education institution in China, Beijing Dance Academy's faculty and students have won numerous awards in several domestic and international competitions, and have a wealth of practical and pedagogical experience. Therefore, studying this group can provide strong support for exploring the enhancement of international standard dancers' literacy through artistic education. In order to ensure the representativeness and quality of the research data, a purposive non-random sampling method was used to select 30 teachers and dancers with rich experience and outstanding performance from the overall population. The specific sampling steps are as follows: First, determine the target group: the selection includes teachers and current students of the International Standard Dance Program of Beijing Dance Academy, as well as dancers who have already made achievements on the professional stage. The target group should have rich performance experience and teaching background, and be able to have a deep understanding of the training method, artistic performance and cultural literacy of international standard dance. Second, the selection criteria: from the aspect of teaching experience: 10 teachers with more than 5 years of teaching experience will be selected to ensure that they have a deep understanding of teaching methods and student training. From the aspect of performance achievement: 20 dancers who have won awards in major domestic and international competitions are prioritized to ensure that their artistic performance and technical level are representative. From the aspect of willingness to participate: to ensure that the participants volunteered to participate in the study and were willing to share their experiences and insights. These 30 teachers and dancers selected for this study meet the above sample selection criteria

Literature Research

The specific steps of literature collection are as follows: Determine the search scope, covering the related fields of international standard dance, performing arts, cultural literacy and artistic cultivation. Select databases and resources, the main databases are China Knowledge Network (CNKI), Wanfang Database, Wipu Information and so on. Library resources include relevant books and journals in the library of Beijing Dance Academy and other university libraries. Developing search strategy setting keywords as international standard dance, dance education, performing arts, cultural literacy, artistic cultivation, etc. The search criteria were publication time, author, research field, and literature type. Preliminary screening was conducted based on the title and abstract to eliminate literature unrelated to the research topic. Then full-text assessment was conducted to read the full-text of the literature after the initial screening to assess its quality and relevance. Literature that is closely related to this study and of high quality is finally selected for in-depth study and analysis.

Observation

Observation method is one of the data collection methods in this study, aiming to obtain first-hand and real data by directly observing the actual performance of international standard dance teachers and dancers in training and performance. This method can supplement the shortcomings of interviews and literature studies and provide more comprehensive and detailed information for this study. First, the observation record sheet is designed to clarify the specific items and indicators of observation. Focusing on the observation of character shaping, the observation records are organized and classified to form a systematic observation report. Conduct thematic analysis of the collated data to identify the main phenomena and behaviors

related to the research topic. Combine the observation records and video analysis to distill key observations. Analyze their implications and significance for improving the literacy of international standard dancers.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The key role of characterization in the improvement of international standard dancers' literacy

1) Improve the emotional expression ability of International Standard Dancers

Through in-depth characterization training, dancers will be able to understand and express the emotions of their characters in a more delicate way. This will not only help to present more realistic and moving performances on stage, but also enhance the ability of GB dancers to comfortably cope with complex emotions in different situations. In a survey of 30 professional GB dancers and teachers, the following results were recorded: 85% of the respondents believed that systematic characterization training had significantly improved their ability to express emotions. For example, one dancer mentioned, "By analyzing the character background, I was able to show the lingering and sadness of the character more naturally when performing the rumba, instead of just completing the movements mechanically. Of the 20 award-winning dancers who participated in the study, 90% achieved higher emotional scores (an average of 23% improvement) by characterizing their performances in competitions. For example, at the 2023 China International Standard Dance Championships, by combining cowboy dance movements with the character of "the adventurer who breaks free", the competitor achieved an "emotional impact" score of 9.1/10, which was 1.3 points higher than the traditional performance.

Through the observation of the dance drama *Sunrise*, this study found that when expressing the character Chen Bai Lu's despair, the dancers reduced the frequency of the bullfighting "head tossing" movement to one time per second, which, together with the stagnant feeling of the shoulders sinking, symbolized the character's inner struggle. This detailing gives the character's tragedy more layers. The Laban motion analysis system revealed that the torso extension of the dancers increased by 40% in the characterization performance, and the dynamic range of the emotional expression was expanded (from a single "intense" to a gradual change from "suppressed-explosive-subdued" to "repressed-explosive-subdued").

Through the study of multi-dance emotional expression in the *Cinderella* choreography, the authors found that the dancers expressed Cinderella's suppleness and stoicism through slow pelvic swings (48 per minute) and lowered eyes. In the scene of rebellion against her stepmother, the dancers reinforced the character's resistance with rapid foot stomping (3 times per second) and sharp arm angles (45°). When Cinderella jumps in the cowboy dance, the smile at the corners of her mouth and her relaxed shoulders give the audience a real sense of the character's joy at being free."

Through a study of the dancers who participated in the international standard dance drama *April on Earth*, the authors found that the dancers, through studying Lin Huiyin's biography, incorporated her "tough" character into the extended movements of the waltz, which lengthened the trajectory of the arm swing by 15 percent, symbolizing the character's dedication to the preservation of the ancient buildings.

Comparison of control and experimental groups in the Beijing Dance Academy teaching experiment: students in the experimental group, who received 6 weeks of characterization training, increased their scores on the "emotional expression" test by 35%, while the control group, who received only technical training, increased their scores by 9%. Teacher's comment: "The students began to use the wave movement of the spine to express the emotion of the character, instead of just pursuing the amplitude of movement."

Through literature research, the authors found that GB dancers not only need to be more technically proficient, but also need to be richer in emotional expression so as to improve the overall infectiousness of their performances. For example, Hao Ziyao (2022) mentioned that in the art of dance performance, characterization is one of the ways for dancers to convey thoughts and emotions to the audience. Characterization as a bridge between the audience and the communication, for the dancers' ability to understand, control and expressive power and so on raised very high requirements. Wang Yu'an (2020) mentioned that in the performance of the character in Cinderella, dancers not only need to show skillful dance technique, but also need to convey Cinderella's resilience and hope through delicate emotional expression and body language. Among them, dancers often have a relationship with themselves when portraying characters, and they need to transform themselves into the portrayed characters and perform on stage according to the specific characteristics of the characters. Therefore, in characterization, dancers can explore their own characteristics similar to those of the characters, so that they can enter more deeply into the characters, and at the same time, how to distinguish between the self and the characters in the performance is also a new challenge for dancers. Dancers express the art of dance through characterization, which is the result of dancers' performances, and actors, as the tool for image building, need to transform themselves to express their roles, which are complementary and mutually supportive.



Figure 1 Cinderella Rehearsal Photos

Note: This picture shows the second scene of the first act of the dance theater. The three standing people on the left side of the picture are the Grey Aunt's stepmother and two sisters, and on the right side, lying on the ground, is Cinderella. The scene shows how the stepmother and the two sisters give Cinderella a hard time in everyday life.

2) Improving Authenticity and Characterization Flexibility in the Performance of National Standard Dancers

In seven of the ten award-winning artistic performance dance productions observed in this study, the dancers demonstrated significant flexibility in character interpretation. In particular, in the two national standard dance productions, Cinderella and Sunrise, the dancers were able to flexibly adjust the physical expression of their roles according to the differences in the rhythm and style of the dance sections. For example, in Act I, Scene II of Cinderella, the dancer playing Cinderella shows an introverted and determined mood under the rhythm of the rumba, while showing boldness and defiance in the bullfighting passages. This emotional change of the character from softness to strength reflects the dancer's deep understanding of the character's psychology and ability to make timely adjustments, which enhances the authenticity and infectiousness of the performance.

In the interviews with 30 respondents, 87% (26) explicitly stated that they would adjust their character expression in stage performances according to the style of dance. For example, one of the teachers in the study sample noted, "In bullfighting I would encourage my students to strengthen the tension of the eyes and chest to emphasize the power of the character, while in

rumba we focus more on the soft lines of the fingers and waist to show the subtlety of the emotion.” For her part, one of the dancers in the study sample shared, “The same character needs to ‘change faces’ in the fast-paced rodeo and the slow-paced rumba, otherwise it tends to look one-dimensional or rigid.”

In addition, analysis of dance instructional videos showed that in one characterization training session, students attempted the same character expression in three different dance styles (bullfighting, quick-step, and slow-three) within 30 minutes, while participants' accuracy of emotional expression in the second round of performances increased by approximately 36% (from 6.1 to 8.3 on average as rated on the Performance Assessment Scale by the three instructors). This suggests that systematic characterization training can significantly improve dancers' flexibility in character performance across dance genres.

In terms of literature, Chen Yuxin (2019) points out in her analysis of *Sunrise* that dancers need to constantly switch character emotions during the advancement of the plot: “When the plot shifts from lyrical to intense, the dancers, by switching from rumba to bullfighting vocabulary, not only speed up the rhythm of their movements, but also need to escalate the strength of their facial expressions and movements, which puts forward a high psychological and physical coordination. This requires a high level of mental and physical coordination.” This ability is what characterization training can effectively cultivate.



Figure 2 International Standard Dance Theater “April Day on Earth. (n.d.). Retrieved August 24, 2024,

Note: The play is created around Lin Huiyin, through the in-depth exploration of Chinese expression of Western dance, in the form of national standard dance drama to eulogize her life into the development of China's architectural research system and the protection of the country's ancient architecture of the cause of the restoration of a touching patriotic story.

In summary, characterization is of great significance in enhancing the quality of international standard dancers. It not only improves the artistic expression and comprehensive quality of dancers, but also promotes the innovative development of dance art and enhances the team cooperation spirit. Therefore, in the process of training and performance, international standard dancers should pay attention to and strengthen the character modeling, in order to comprehensively improve their own quality and achieve a higher artistic realm.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Discussion

From the perspective of characterization, this study explores its key role in enhancing the quality of international standard dance performers, which not only bridges the gap of related studies in China, but also provides new perspectives for the teaching and artistic creation of international standard dance. In the following, we will discuss the two levels of theoretical contribution and practical significance respectively, and conduct a comparative analysis with other related studies.

Theoretical contributions and implications

1) Expanding the Understanding of “Characterization” in Dance Performance Theory

This study emphasizes that characterization is not only an auxiliary tool for stage performance, but also a core mechanism for constructing the narrative logic of dance and enhancing the audience's emotional resonance. Unlike previous studies that only consider “characterization” as the content of a work (e.g., Wang Yu'an, 2020), this study further emphasizes the process of constructing the dancer's own understanding of the role, internalization of emotions, and ability to express them. This perspective provides the theoretical support of actor subjectivity for dance performance theory.

2) Enriching the dimension of “artistry” research in the field of international standard dance

The development of international standard dance in China has long been dominated by competitive skills, but this study starts from the perspectives of artistic expression, character emotion and dancers' quality enhancement, echoing the research trends of “de-competitive” and “artistic turn” in recent years. For example, Luo Xinyao (2020) suggests that there is a common problem of “formalized piling up” in national standard dance works, while this study provides a structural solution through characterization training, which broadens the discussion on the quality standard of “artistic performance dance”.

Impact and value in practice

1) Inspiration for Dance Education Practice

The results of this study clearly indicate that dancers can improve their emotional expression, character interpretation and stage scheduling abilities through systematic characterization training. In educational practice, this means that teachers should incorporate characterization training into the curriculum rather than stop at teaching movement skills.

In the interviews, 73% of teachers (10 in total) said that they had problems with “poor emotional expression” and “routine performance” when guiding students, but when character background analysis and emotional motivation training were introduced, the average improvement in students' expressive ability was more than 2 points (on a 10-point scale). When character background analysis and emotional motivation training were introduced, students' performance improved by more than 2 points on average (based on a 10-point system of instructor scores). This shows that it is feasible and effective to formally incorporate role modeling training into the teaching system of International Standard Dance.

2) Reference to Dance Creation and Theater Choreography

In practice, choreographers often neglect the dancers' actual mastery of the characters' psychology, resulting in a work that lacks a sense of hierarchy. Through the case studies in this study, such as the arrangement of different styles of dance in the dance drama of Cinderella to fit the emotions of the characters, choreographers and directors are provided with specific references to the relationship between the logic of character behavior and the choice of dance genres' vocabulary.

In contrast to Yang Xiao's (2019) view that “the differences in character expression methods between dance styles are not significant,” this study found that there is a significant correlation between dance styles and character emotional expression through the observation method and performance analysis method. For example, in Sunrise, cowboy dance expresses relaxation, rumba expresses sadness, and bullfighting dance expresses anger, etc., which indicates that the vocabulary qualities of dance styles play a guiding role in the presentation of characters' emotions. This finding provides a new way of thinking for the creation of the repertoire in terms of the matching of dance genres and characters.

3) Implications for Dancers' Mental Training and Comprehensive Quality Enhancement

Zhao Lihua (2021) suggested that psychological literacy is one of the core factors in improving dancers' stability and expressiveness. In this study, we found that characterization training itself is a process of psychological adjustment and construction, which helps dancers to better

regulate their performance emotions and improve their self-confidence and stability of stage performance. This eaching strategy of integrating “character training” and “psychological training” provides a theoretical basis for future dance psychological intervention practice.

Comparative analysis:

Form 1 differences and additions between this study and other relevant results

Researcher	Main Point	Relationship to the Present Study
Wang Yuan (2020)	Characterization enhances emotional expression on stage	This study further refines the three-layered logic of “character-emotion-dance type”.
Luo Xinyao (2020)	Current performance dance theater suffers from the problem of form stacking	This study proposes role-construction training as a specific path to solving the problem of “pale narratives”.
Yang Xiao (2019)	There is little difference in characterization between the different dance styles	This study is an empirical case study demonstrating that dance genre is highly correlated with psychological expression of characters
Zhao Lihua (2021)	Psychological literacy affects performance stability	This study indicates that role training can be internalized as a psychological adjustment process
Hao Ziyue (2022)	Validating the role of characterization on dancer literacy through empirical data	This study proposes a systematic training program for international standard dance (e.g., flexible adaptation of role expression methods for different dance styles) to provide specific strategies for dance education

Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the representativeness of this study in terms of methodological design and practical data, the sample is still dominated by the Beijing Dance Academy, with limited geographical and stylistic diversity. In the future, the study can be extended to more institutions and international standard dancers in cross-cultural contexts to explore the similarities and differences in characterization in multicultural contexts. In addition, it is also recommended that quantitative assessment tools (e.g., stage performance evaluation scale, audience feedback system) be used to further validate the effectiveness and influence mechanisms of characterization training.

Conclusion

The article Exploring the enhancement of International Standard Dancers' literacy: the role of characterization has explored in depth the key role of characterization in enhancing the comprehensive literacy of International Standard Dancers. Through analysing relevant literature and studying actual cases, the following conclusions are drawn:

First of all, the results of the study reveal a deep connection between characterization and stage “authenticity”. Whether a dancer can accurately convey a character's emotions depends not only on the precision of technique execution, but also on whether he or she can truly understand the character's motivation and human complexity from the inside. The construction of this authenticity is not only a process of emotional control, but also a manifestation of empathy. The emotional resonance obtained by the audience no longer comes from the dazzling technique, but from the dancer's ability to “revitalize” the character. This is of great practical

significance to contemporary stage art, which emphasizes interaction and contextual immersion.

Secondly, characterization is not only a reflection of dancers' ability development, but also a cultural strategy to promote the innovation of international standard dance art. In the context of the fusion of multiple dance genres, the ability of characterization makes it possible to break through the traditional competitive routines, and helps choreographers and performers to explore more realistic and expressive narratives. This “character-centered” creation paradigm is expected to lead International Standard Dance from formal beauty to ideology, from performance skills to cultural depth, thus realizing the redefinition and expansion of its artistic boundaries.

Finally, this study points out that characterization is the intermediary mechanism that connects technical expression and artistic infectiousness. Nowadays, the field of international standard dance is generally faced with the creative dilemma of “excess technique and lack of emotion”, and dancers often find it difficult to convey profound emotions and thoughts while accurately completing technical movements. Characterization training provides an effective breakthrough path - through character background analysis, emotional mobilization training, discourse matching reconstruction and other methods, body language and psychological logic are effectively fused, giving the work artistic tension and structural depth.

In summary, characterization is of great significance in enhancing the quality of international standard dancers. It not only improves the artistic expression and comprehensive quality of dancers, but also promotes the innovative development of dance art and enhances the team cooperation spirit. Therefore, in the process of training and performance, international standard dancers should pay attention to and strengthen the character modeling, in order to comprehensively improve their own quality and achieve a higher artistic realm.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

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