

Characterization of the Musical Composition of Mahler's Song of the Earth

Kexin Gu

School of Physical Education and Music, Qilu University of Technology (Shandong Academy of Sciences),
Jinan Shandong 250353, China

ABSTRACT

The famous Austrian composer Gustav Mahler completed the musical masterpiece "Song of the Earth" in 1909, which inherits the tradition of Romanticism and the color of modern music in the early twentieth century, and at the same time, the borrowing of Chinese poetry and national tunes from the Tang Dynasty has added soul and new flesh and blood to both the form and the content of the work. This paper is divided into three parts, the first part is a brief overview of the background of the creation of "Song of the Earth", the second part is a deeper study and analysis of the characteristics of the musical creation of "Song of the Earth" from the lyrics of the script, the musical style and the concept of creation, the third part is a study and analysis of "Song of the Earth" from the three aspects of the artistic value of the work, the promotion of the exchange of Chinese and Western music culture and the promotion of the development of the music translation industry. The third part summarizes the influence and significance of "Song of the Earth" in three aspects: the artistic value of the work itself, the promotion of Chinese and Western music and cultural exchanges and the development of the music translation industry. It is hoped that the author's analysis of the characteristics of Mahler's Song of the Earth can provide theoretical reference for other researchers in this field.

KEYWORDS

Mahler; Song of the earth; Characteristics of musical composition; Fusion of Chinese and western musical cultures

1 Introduction

The work "Song of the Earth" is the famous Austrian composer and conductor Gustav Mahler in the Romantic period, completed in 1909, Mahler at the end of his life created this profound philosophical conception, contains the spirit of traditional Chinese culture and national music vocal symphonic works, it is considered to be the most outstanding works of Mahler's music career, but also Mahler's summing up of the significance of life. It is also Mahler's summary of the meaning of life. The reason why "Song of the Earth" is still being respected by later generations is not only because of Mahler's superb compositional techniques and novel artistic concepts, but also because Mahler blended Chinese and Western musical cultures in the work, integrated ancient Chinese poetry and Chinese folk music, and expressed Mahler's love for nature and human society through the solo singing of the tenor and the alto (baritone), who sang in a Western vocal technique to express the hazy beauty of the Oriental mood, thus expressing Mahler's love for nature and human society, and the spirit of Chinese folk music. Mahler's philosophical insights into nature and human society and his thoughts on life. "Song of the Earth" elaborates on traditional Chinese culture and

national spirit from the perspective of Western music development, and as a link between Chinese and Western music and culture exchanges, it perfectly integrates Chinese and Western music and culture together, and the unique music style of the work not only provides a new creative direction for composers of later generations, but also provides research materials for scholars in the direction of music translation and music dissemination, and has a positive significance for the promotion of Chinese-Western music and culture exchanges. It also has a positive significance for the promotion of Chinese and Western music and cultural exchanges. This paper analyzes Mahler's "Song of the Earth" from three aspects: compositional background, musical creation characteristics and creation significance, hoping to provide theoretical reference for more vocal music lovers and music researchers.

2 Background of Mahler's Song of the Earth

"Song of the Earth" is a unique work in the world of music creation, the environment and inspiration behind its creation must be inseparable from the composer's time and life experience. Mahler's origin is not high, the family is poor but has a unique talent for music, in the conservatory learning career, especially for Wagner's opera and Bruckner's symphony deeply appreciated and diligently study, it is a lifetime are committed to art songs and symphony creation. 1897-1907 this decade ushered in the peak of Mahler's music creation career, but he was in the Vienna court theater as a conductor during the period of suffering from jealousy, repression and oppression of the conservative forces. However, during his tenure as conductor of the Vienna Court Theater, he was subjected to the jealousy, oppression, and framing of conservative forces, and these "anti-Mahler camps" launched a full-scale attack on Mahler in the literary and artistic circles, coupled with the unfortunate death of Mahler's eldest daughter, Maria, who contracted a malignant disease in 1907, Mahler's physical, psychological, and mental setbacks, and had no choice but to resign from his post, and he was forced to resign and leave, and was left to live for the rest of his life by his grief and his own illness. At the end of his life, Mahler created this world-famous work "Song of the Earth".

The turbulent times and twists and turns of life experience make Mahler's philosophical conception of nature, society and the meaning of life has its own unique understanding of the era of turbulence has no choice but to actively change the music creation to find a breakthrough in the direction of the late period of Mahler's music has been looking for exotic new tunes on the works of innovation, accidentally read by a friend to send by the German poet Hans Bettger translated by the German version of the Tang Dynasty poems in the compilation of the "Chinese flute". He happened to read the German version of the Tang poems "The Chinese Flute" translated by the German poet Hans Bethge, which was sent to him by a friend, and found that the encounters and state of mind of the Tang poets Li Bai, Meng Haoran, and Wang Wei matched Mahler's own life experiences, and that the implicit expression of emotions in the poems allowed Mahler to see his own shadow in the foreign cultures of a different space and time, and so he took the translated text of the Tang poems from "The Chinese Flute" as lyrics, and then added Mahler's own personal insights into life for a second composition of the symphony for voices, "The Song of the Earth". Mahler completed the work in 1909.

Mahler completed his "Song of the Earth", a "song-symphony", in 1909, and the origin of the name of this musical work is also very meaningful. Some people say that Mahler had completed eight symphonies before he composed "Song of the Earth", and this work should have been called "Symphony No. 9" according to the order, but in the Western music world, "nine" seems to portend a death spell, and composers such as Beethoven, Schubert, etc. were all completing their ninth symphonies before he finished his "Song of the Earth". Beethoven, Schubert and other composers

passed away after completing their ninth symphonies, so Mahler avoided using the number "nine" to name his symphonies. In my opinion, this is just a rumor. Mahler also completed his Ninth Symphony after he finished his Song of the Earth, so there is no need to avoid it, and Mahler was influenced by the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of the Western dualistic worldview, "Don't want heaven, want the earth", plus the "earth" connotations of the Tang poems, which inspired him to use the number "nine". The inspiration of the connotation of "earth" in the Tang poem, that the earth is the mother of all things and the root of all life, so he named this work summarizing the significance of his own life "Song of the Earth", which also shows Mahler's unique philosophical conception, and is one of the motives for the creation of Mahler's "Song of the Earth".

3 Analysis of Mahler's Song of the Earth's Musical Creation

As a famous musician and conductor at the end of European Romanticism, Mahler's musical works were mostly composed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in the time of social upheaval, but also the turning point of the new music era. Under such a social background, he utilized his mastery of European compositional techniques, his unique conception of philosophical ideas, coupled with the innovation of the lyrics, the connotation of the Chinese national music spirit and the break with the traditional symphonic structure, to create a work that has the traditional style of the late nineteenth-century Romanticism, but also with the twentieth-century expressive, versatile, and free style of music. -- "Song of the Earth". The following author will explore and analyze the music creation characteristics of Song of the Earth from three aspects: lyrics script, music style and aesthetic concept embodied in the work.

3.1 Scripts with Contextualized Lyrics

Ancient Chinese literati always love to express their emotions in a subtle way, no matter whether they are composing poems or paintings, they love to use different imagery to depict the mood to express their emotions, borrowing the lotus flower as a metaphor to support their noble character of being free from mud and mud, drawing the mood of the desert and the long river to express their feelings, and sighing about the insignificance of human beings in the universe. Bettger's Chinese language skills were not high enough to understand the ancient Chinese poems in which the poets were using objects to express their feelings, which led to his translation of the German version of the Tang poem "The Flute of China", which could only be roughly translated literally, but this did not affect Mahler's search for empathy in the poem. In the eyes of others, "The Flute of China" is just a translation of a Tang poem, but for Mahler, the images depicted in the book are very much in line with some of his experiences and his current state of mind, and he himself is like a microcosm of these poets in a different time and space. The lyrics and emotional expression of the six movements of Mahler's Song of the Earth can basically be found in these Tang poems. Mahler combined Chinese and Western music cultures and added his own philosophical ideas on the basis of which he made a second creation, reproducing another form of Chinese poems of the Tang Dynasty through the means of Western music.

Mahler's life was very difficult, his childhood was unfortunate, he was ostracized in his career, his daughters passed away one after another, and he suffered from serious illnesses in his later years, but he was convinced that everything is constant and people are bound to leave. In such a state of mind, the six movements of "Song of the Earth" express different emotions, with progressive emotions, from lamenting death to nostalgia for the beauty of life, to sighing at the injustice of fate, to seeing through life and waving goodbye to everything, which expresses the delicate emotion of cherishing life and beauty even though the fate is unjust, and these emotions are also expressed in

the lyrics. For example, the first movement of "Song of the Earth", "Song of Earthly Drinking", is based on the text of the Tang poet Li Bai's "Lamentable Songs", in which the German phrase "Dunkel ist das Leben, ist der Tod!" appears several times, which means "Life and death are as dark as each other, a darkness!" which corresponds to Li Bai's "Sorrowful Song", "Sorrowful, sorrowful, sorrowful!" Both of them are sad and angry about the injustice of fate, showing sadness and a relaxed attitude towards life and death. The lyrics of the second movement "Lonely Shadow in Cold Autumn" are from the Tang Dynasty poet Qian Qi's "Long Autumn Night", in which the German phrase "Meine kleine Lampe erlosch mit Knistern" means "The small lamps have run out, the lonely night is long", which corresponds to the mood expressed in "The Long Autumn Night", in which Mahler uses the imagery of "the lamps have run out" to express his loneliness and his feelings for The third movement, "Youth", is an expression of Mahler's loneliness and his perception of the approaching death. The third movement "youth" lyrics from the text of the Tang poem is still controversial, the academic community maintains a variety of views, one is that Li Bai's "Feast Taojia Pavilion," the second is that Li Bai's "Three Chapters of the Qingping," the third is that Li Bai's "Summer with Sima Wugong and the group of sages banquet Guting Preface," there is also the view that the selection is from the "Guests in the line," and so on. and so on. But according to the author's view, more inclined to the first point of view. The German lyrics in the third movement "Youth", "Auf des kleinen Teiches stiller Wasserfläche, zeigt sich alles wunderbar im Spiegelbilde", mean "Auf des kleinen Teiches stiller Wasserfläche, zeigt sich alles wunderbar im Spiegelbilde". The German lyrics "Auf des kleinen Teiches stiller Wasserfläche, zeigt sich alles wunderbar im Spiegelbilde", meaning "In the calm waters of a small pond, everything reacts marvelously in a mirror image", corresponds to the words of Li Bai's "Feast at the Taoist Pavilion", "The pool opens up to a mirror of the guts", and the relaxing and happy tune shows Mahler's nostalgic feelings for his youth. The fourth movement, "The Pool and the Mirror", is a delightful and light-hearted piece that expresses Mahler's nostalgia for his youth. In addition, the German lyrics in the fourth movement, "Beautiful Lady," the fifth movement, "Drunken Spring," and the sixth movement, "Farewell," are similar to those of Li Bai's "Picking the Lotus," "Drunken Rising in Spring," and Meng Haoran's "Staying with the Master at Night," as well as to those in "The Scholar of the Night," which is a poem about a young man's life in the city. Meng Haoran's "Staying in the Night Master's Mountain Room and Waiting for Ding Wu to Arrive" and some of the imagery in Wang Wei's "Farewell" poem overlap.

To sum up, the imagery in the script of Mahler's Song of the Earth overlaps with the poems of Tang poets. No matter who translated it, whether it was translated accurately or not, or what language it was translated into, it is undeniable that the direct translation of the imagery and the description of the scenery and the environment in the lyrics of Song of the Earth are all borrowed from Tang poems. The Tang poetry is one of the representatives of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and Mahler used western compositional techniques and concepts to compose the music to express his own state of mind and emotions, which is undoubtedly a perfect fusion of Chinese and western musical cultures, and also one of the characteristics of the music composition of "Song of the Earth".

3.2 Unique and Innovative Musical Style

Mahler's music creation is mainly symphony and art song, as a link between the 19th century Austro-German art tradition and the early 20th century modernist music, his music creation concept is not only influenced by Beethoven, Schubert, Bruckner and other Romantic composers, but also with the music style characteristics of the early 20th century Expressionism, neo-classicism and other genres. Most of Mahler's musical works are full of dramatic conflicts, focusing on the

expression of personal emotions and musical ideas. Mahler's innovative music composition techniques and forms of expression, not confined to the fixed mode of music creation, his composition of "Song of the Earth" in the lyrics and the combination of ancient Chinese poetry, works to join the solo form, highlighting the dominant motifs, modal tonal shift and harmonic changes are very dramatic color, emphasis on personal expression of emotion embodies the style of the early 20th century modernist music.

3.2.1 In the Form of Genre

The "newness" of the musical style of Song of the Earth is firstly reflected in its musical genre. Vocal music and symphony as two different music genres, in Mahler's creation of the two will be skillfully combined to form a new form of music, both art song and symphony music style, and Mahler's "Song of the Earth" subtitle for "a tenor and a baritone (or baritone) voices and orchestral symphony". On the one hand, Mahler was inspired by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which included a human voice, and included both a tenor and a baritone (or alto) in Song of the Earth. This unique form of the genre has the compositional characteristics of an art song, with the vocals and accompaniment complementing each other, but is different from an art song. In Song of the Earth, the piano is not the only accompanying instrument, and the vocal singing is only a part of the orchestra's composition. The two cooperate with each other, and each movement is divided into a vocal part and an instrumental part, and the human voice is more like an instrument in the orchestra, whose unique tone is fused with that of the other instruments, so as to reach a kind of novelty symphonic effect. On the other hand, this genre is similar to the structure of a symphony, with the difference that a symphony usually consists of four movements, whereas Song of the Earth has six movements in total, in which sonatas and rondos are used to position the symphony as a genre. Regarding the genre of "Song of the Earth", the music industry recognizes its genre in a variety of ways, with some scholars believing that this form of music should be referred to as a "song - symphony", and some scholars believing that this genre should be referred to as a "symphonic vocal suite". Some scholars believe that this musical form should be called "song-symphony", while others believe that this genre should be called "symphonic vocal suite" or "vocal symphony", in contrast, the author prefers this to be a "vocal symphony", after all, in terms of the actual musical creation, the addition of the vocal section After all, in terms of actual music creation, the addition of vocal parts is only an innovation in symphonic music creation and expression. In general, the views of scholars are not wrong, in that era, this new form of music belonged to Mahler alone, which is the fruit of his musical innovation.

3.2.2 In the Tonality of the Key

The "newness" of the musical style of Song of the Earth is also reflected in its tonality. The whole work is divided into six movements, and in the creation of these six movements, it can be said that it is a collision of Chinese and Western music and cultural concepts and expressions, and it can also be said that it is the expression of the Chinese national spirit under the perspective of Western music, which is especially embodied in the modal tonality of the work. For example, the first and second movements, as the key chapters of Song of the Earth, set the tone and emotional color of the whole piece, which is sad and melancholy. The recurring lyric "Dunkel ist das Leben, ist der Tod!" in the first movement translates to "Life and death are as dark as darkness, dark as darkness!" The melody of this phrase uses the Western major/minor system, and each time it appears, its melodic pitch is one semitone higher than that of the previous phrase. The three repetitions shift three keys, from G minor to A-flat minor and back to A minor, using the grayish color of the minor key to accentuate

the sadness, and using the gradually rising semitones to reflect the author's emotional outrage. At the beginning of the first movement, French horns and trumpets are used to play the thematic motif of the piece, which expresses Mahler's thoughts on life and his rebellious attitude towards unfair destiny. What is striking is that the interpretation of this thematic motif uses the five-tone tonal system of traditional Chinese folk music. The melody consists of the five tones of Gong, Shang, Angle, Chant, and Feather, which conforms to the Chinese folk music tuning and gives the melody a unique flavor and stylistic characteristic of Chinese folk music. The section is sung by a tenor, whose bright, high-pitched tone contrasts with the bleak mood of the piece, showing that Mahler, although resentful of the unfair treatment of fate, is still free and upward to face the hardships of life.

3.2.3 In the use of Harmony

The combination of major and minor modes and national modes gives "Song of the Earth" a unique musical style, and the interweaving of Chinese and Western musical cultures provides a new direction for Mahler's music creation, and also brings the audience a different listening experience. In addition to the novel experience of the auditory effect, the author's emotional expression, the skillful and diversified harmonic arrangement captures the audience's psychological emotions. The use of harmony in "Song of the Earth" retains the traditional harmonic techniques while making some personalized breakthroughs. For example, the large number of four and six chords and the use of compound chords in the movement weaken and blur the functional characteristics of harmony; the repeated use of four and five degree chords to create an empty acoustic effect expresses the author's penetrating state of mind that he can see through everything and forget about life and death; the sustained chords and the dissonant acoustic effect and chromatic progression of the harmonies in the movement emphasize colorful oppositions, create dramatic effects, and highlight the author's emotional changes; and the harmony in "Song of the Earth" has been used in a variety of ways. All of the above, Mahler dared to break the tradition, maverick compositional concept, attached to his music with appreciation, artistry and contemporary labeling.

3.2.4 In the Creation of the Theme

The "new" music style of "Song of the Earth" is not only the innovation of music form, the novelty of tonal and harmonic arrangement, but also reflected in the "new" theme creation. Song of the Earth" has six movements, the theme content, state of mind and emotion expressed in each movement are different and have their own characteristics, and the theme of each movement is centered on the content of the musical image portrayal. The change of state of mind in this work is driven by the instrumentalization of the vocal melody and the instrumental melody, and the combination of different voices and instruments with different timbres to promote the change of mood. From the first movement "Song of Earthly Drinking" in which the author uses French horns and trumpets with muted voices to express his attitude of drinking away his sorrows, to the second movement "Lonely Shadow in Cold Autumn" in which he uses violins and oboes with muted voices, to the second movement "Lonely Shadow in Cold Autumn" in which he uses violins and oboes with muted voices, to the second movement "Lonely Shadow in Cold Autumn" with muted voices. In the second movement "The Lonely Shadow of Cold Autumn", the violin, oboe and alto are used to pave the sad atmosphere of the autumn wind, and then in the third movement "Youth", the flute and oboe are used to play the melody of the Chinese pentatonic scale, which is easy and lively, and with the tenor's singing of the bright and light tone to express the author's praise for the beauty of youth. In the fourth movement, "Beautiful Lady", the flute and violin are used with the mezzo-soprano's soft and lingering tone to express the author's implicit introspection in recalling the

infinite reveries of love, and then in the fifth movement, "Drunken Spring", the woodwinds and tenor sing the melody "Life is like a dream". The fifth movement "Drunken Spring" uses woodwinds and tenors to express the state of mind of "life is like a dream", and then the sixth movement "Farewell" uses mezzo-soprano to express the feelings of life, and is accompanied by gongs, woodwinds and other instruments to create a low and mournful atmosphere, creating a change of mood.

The themes of the six movements are divided into vocal and instrumental parts, which jointly promote the continuous progression of emotions. The vocal and instrumental parts are not divided into primary and secondary parts, but are not in conflict with each other, mainly due to the fact that Mahler will be the dominant motivation in the whole work throughout the composition process. The emphasis on the dominant motive can make the structure of the work not too loose and strengthen the wholeness of the music. For example, in the first movement, the dominant motive appears 10 times, in the tight rhythmic pattern and rests, chromatic progression and tonal shifts, the dominant motive appears like a specific symbol to capture the direction of the melody and mood to set the tone for the whole piece. In the sixth movement, for example, the dominant motive appears thirteen times, from the prototype of the dominant motive to its metamorphosis, and the rhythmic shifts provide the impetus for the music and drive the mood. The repetition and change of the dominant motifs in Mahler's music also reflects the philosophical idea of opposition and unity, making the work musical and philosophical at the same time. With its natural and clear thematic motifs, its ingenious variations, and the deep impression it creates in each movement, as well as its combination with traditional Chinese poetry, *Song of the Earth* is undoubtedly a marvelous piece of music, both from a Chinese and a Western musical point of view.

3.3 Unique Compositional Concepts

Mahler's "Song of the Earth" is a unique work both in China and in the western music perspective, not only in the characteristic musical form, compositional techniques and harmonic use of this work, but also in the composer's individual creative concepts and its unique aesthetic characteristics.

3.3.1 Individualized Beauty of Emotion

Everyone is a unique individual, even in the same era, but also due to the influence of their life experience, high level of thinking and literary literacy and so on, have a different degree of fineness of the inner feelings.

Mahler is an emotional person, his inner feelings are so rich that he experienced the suppression of some people in the music industry, the death of his beloved daughter and the doctor's diagnosis of his own condition when the pain will be much more than others. At the same time, he is an extremely rational person, although through the ups and downs, but has never been self-sacrificing, until his death did not give up his love of music creation, he was influenced by Nietzsche and other philosophers, penetrate the law of the conservation of energy in all things, no matter in the natural world or the human society, life and death is the invariable law of the world, and will ultimately return to the "earth". Mahler saw through everything in the world.

Mahler looked back on his own life after seeing everything in the world, even life and death, and these mixed feelings found their expression after he saw Bettger's translation of *The Chinese Flute*. This work not only reflects the inner bitterness and loss of the restless intellectuals in the political turmoil of Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but also expresses Mahler's depression, loneliness and sadness at the blows of fate in his life, which is why Mahler admitted that *Song of the Earth* is the "most personal" musical work he had ever composed. So Mahler admitted that "Song of the Earth" was the "most personal" musical work he had ever composed.

3.3.2 Misty Poetic Beauty

In addition to the use of western compositional techniques and concepts, the lyrics of *Song of the Earth* are particularly ingenious, with the beauty of meaning and misty beauty of traditional Chinese poetry and culture. The musicians of the Romantic period were in a sense literary and philosophical, and they believed that poetry was the key to philosophy. Mahler formally had a unique preference for poetry and personalized understanding of the art of song creation, he believed that music as a form of personal expression of emotional and poetic content, and the Romantic period of artistic creation principle is to focus on the expression of emotional beauty and poetic beauty.

Mahler used the western music language to express the misty beauty of Chinese poetry in the western land, which has a remarkable significance for the spread of Chinese traditional poetry and the development of western music. The characteristics of poetry in traditional Chinese culture are different from those of Western poetry, which focuses on writing "reality", but Chinese poetry focuses on writing "meaning", utilizing the technique of expressing one's own feelings through the use of objects to express one's aspirations and emotions. Mahler's *"Song of the Earth"* combines Western music with ancient Chinese poetry, using the hazy mood of the poetry to express his unknown emotions, expanding the meaning of the poem, improving the expressive power of the music, opening up the imagination of the appreciators, and shaping a distinctive image of the words and music. This "East-meets-West" way of creation makes this musical work have the beauty of ancient Chinese poetry, poetic spirit and poetic haziness.

4 The Significance of Mahler's *Song of the Earth*

As a representative of the musicians at the end of the German-Austrian Romanticism, Mahler's musical works have the creative style of the late nineteenth century, but also with the early twentieth-century music genre, he believes that the music does not distinguish between national boundaries and nobility, and is immensely tolerant of any musical form and content. He combines the ancient Chinese poems with western vocal music and symphonic music to portray a distinctive musical image, express sincere emotions and rich philosophical concepts. He combines ancient Chinese poems with Western vocal music and symphonic music to portray distinctive musical images, express sincere emotions and philosophical concepts with deep meaning, and creatively herald the arrival of a new musical era with brand-new musical forms and musical languages.

4.1 The Artistic Value of the Work Itself

From the point of view of *"Song of the Earth"* itself, the artistic value of the "Chinese elements" it contains is worth exploring more deeply. Although in this musical work, the lyrics are not written in the original poems of the Tang Dynasty poets, but in the translation of the Tang Dynasty poems in the book *"The Chinese Flute"*, it is still possible to see Mahler's love for ancient Chinese poetry and all that he has done for the broader development of the Western music culture. Mahler incorporated his love and propaganda for the excellent traditional Chinese poetic culture into his musical works, telling the world about the greatness of Li Bai and the high realm of his life in the form of music, and letting the world know the implicit and introverted nature of the Chinese people's bones through his poems, not only creating musical treasures for the world's musical treasury, but also propagating the excellent traditional Chinese culture and transmitting the spirit of the Chinese nation.

Mahler, in the musical creation of *"Song of the Earth"*, fully demonstrated the concept of "acceptance aesthetics", he used his subjective aesthetics of the environment at this time to review

the objective object formed by the artistic creation of other places, which fully embodied his inclusiveness in music creation and thought, and brought the artistic value of "Chinese elements" to the world in his works. Chinese elements" in his works to maximize their artistic value. Due to the differences in musical languages between China and the West and the limited level of Bettger's Chinese language skills, this translation of *The Chinese Flute* is unable to fully express the rhythmic nature of ancient Chinese poetry and the haziness of its mood, and can only strive for the accuracy of its vocabulary and the integrity of its poetic meaning as much as possible. Mahler was not a literary scholar, translator, or Chinese linguist, and what attracted him to *The Flute of China* was not only the subtlety of the Chinese language, but also the connotations of China's excellent traditional culture and national spirit. From the point of view of Mahler's attempt to add "Chinese elements" in *Song of the Earth* and its great success, the fusion of Chinese and Western music cultures is a new development trend of music, which is a useful exploration for the development of world music.

4.2 Promote the Exchange of Chinese and Western Music and Culture

At the beginning of the 19th and 20th centuries, the West was in political turmoil, and both the music and literary worlds were actively looking for a way out for their own development. At that time, a lot of composers set their sights on traditional Chinese culture and Chinese folk music, trying to enrich the form and content of their musical creations with exotic scales and cultures, so as to lead the way in a new direction of musical development and create a new era of art. The success of Mahler's "Song of the Earth", a musician of the late Romantic period, aroused the interest and attention of Westerners to traditional Chinese music and culture, and promoted the research process of Chinese traditional folk music. Puccini, also a representative composer of late Romanticism, borrowed the tune of the traditional Chinese folk song "Jasmine Flower" in his opera "Turandot", which is also a good story in the achievements of Sino-Western musical exchange.

The musical and cultural exchanges between China and the West did not start at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, but the Western musical creations in this period really pushed forward the process of the musical and cultural exchanges between China and the West. The creation of these successful musical works and the affirmation of their artistic standard and value by the people in the later generations marked the far-reaching spread of Chinese traditional music culture, its great influence and its high status in the world music stage. The successful use of these "Chinese elements" in Mahler's "Song of the Earth" further strengthens the necessity and urgency of cultural exchange between Chinese and Western music.

4.3 Promote the Development of Music Translation Industry

In a sense, the emergence of music translation has made a great contribution to the promotion of the exchange of Chinese and Western music cultures, and the two are mutually reinforcing. Earlier, the difference between Chinese and Western music languages made it impossible for many excellent Chinese literary works to go out of China, and it was difficult for them to have a place in the world's culture and art. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, when Mahler was living, some Chinese philosophical ideas, excellent literary works and folk songs had already been brought to the Western lands through the missionaries and other groups of people from China, for example, *The Art of War* and *The Orphan of Zhao*, etc., which were also translated in their own languages by various European countries. However, due to the limited Chinese language proficiency of some translators and missionaries at that time, the contents of their works were limited to introductory translations, and the grammar was more inclined to Western language habits, which made it difficult to ensure that the essence and connotations of traditional

Chinese culture were conveyed. Taking Song of the Earth as an example, the unique artistic expressions of Tang Dynasty poems, such as the creation of mood, subtle and restrained lyricism, and the use of picaresque techniques, are not expressed in the translation. Therefore, when Mahler's "Song of the Earth" was introduced into China, while people were proud of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, they were also prone to "misinterpretation" of the emotions and concepts expressed in this work, and it was a pity that they were unable to fully understand Mahler's true feelings at that time. However, it is precisely because of this regret in people's hearts that drives the development of the music translation industry. The more accurate the music translation is, the more it can truly restore the composer's innermost feelings, and truly realize that music has no borders.

5 Conclusion

As a musical work, the artistic value, influence and significance of Song of the Earth have far exceeded the work itself. The fact that this work has been widely performed and sung since its inception is not only an affirmation of its superb compositional techniques, but also an infection of Mahler's positive attitude towards life and philosophical summarization of the meaning of life, and more importantly, it is the "Chinese elements" embodied in the work that have made people all over the world refresh their understanding of traditional Chinese culture. More importantly, the "Chinese elements" embodied in this work have renewed people's understanding of traditional Chinese culture, given a great impetus to the development of the music translation industry and the dissemination and exchange of Chinese and Western music cultures, and become a model for the intermingling of different cultures in the world.

Reference

- [1] WANG G. An analysis of the artistic characteristics of mahler's symphonic suite <Earth Song>[J]. Yellow River Sound, 2023, 9: 94-97.
- [2] ZHANG F. Exploration of Chinese cultural elements in Mahler's song of the earth in musical communication[J]. Tomorrow's Style, 2021, 13: 70-72.
- [3] LIU L B. A review of domestic research on Mahler's "Song of the Earth"[J]. Music Composition, 2012, 11: 148-150.
- [4] FU Y W. Analysis of the music composition of Mahler's "Song of the Earth"[D]. Xi'an: Xi'an Conservatory of Music, 2007, 6: 77.