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## Rational Thinking and Artistic Presentation Analysis of Narrative Dance Creation from the Perspective of "the "5W" Model of Communication

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### Abstract

Lasswell's 5W model of communication can extract the core elements of events comprehensively, efficiently, and accurately, which is exactly the key part of narrative dance. This article combines the experience of choreography and draws on the 5W model to analyze and apply it in the process of narrative dance choreography. That is, how to combine the author's creative inspiration with the 5W model and finally implement it into dance art works. This interdisciplinary perspective organically integrates the rational thinking and artistic presentation of dance choreography.

**Keywords:** Narrative Dance, 5W mode (Model), Choreography and Creation, Rational Thinking, Artistic Presentation

### Introduction

Dance creation has always been regarded as a product of "inspiration" by the public, and there have always been many ways of thinking about dance creation's so-called



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference  
"Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"  
21March, 2022

"sensitivity" or "rationality." It is generally believed that perceptual thinking mainly relies on social experience and self-intuition as the basis for thinking, while rational thinking mainly uses general laws to deduce the essence of things and their internal and external connections. Indirectness and abstraction are their distinctive characteristics. Excellent dance works should be the product of relatively perfect coordination between rational thinking and artistic presentation. For example, Plato's "ideology" believes that absolutely eternal ideas constitute the knowable world, and people's perceptual cognition of the outside world is just the sensible world that is imitated. Therefore, it does not have direct truth. Excellent artists are never satisfied with mere simplicity, imitating or reproducing the forms of beauty, such as sculpture, color, etc., but try to express the general essence of things by grasping the beauty itself, that is, the concept of beauty (Su Hongbin & Liao Yusheng, 2014).

In 1948, the "Structure and Function of Social Communication" was published by H.D. Lasswell, who proposed the communication process and its five basic elements: who, what, and to whom, in which channel, with what effect (Laswell, 2012). This is the famous Laswell "5W" model. This model is concise and clear, covers the main areas of communication research, and can be called a classic in the communication process model, laying the basic content of communication research consist of control analysis, content analysis, media analysis, audience analysis, effect analysis, and the other five aspects. In 1958, the former Soviet Union scholar J. In addition, Braddock added two other elements through the article "Extended Laswell's Formula," namely: in which situation and for what purpose. Obviously, Braddock took into account the influence factors of the communication environment and communication motivation in the propaganda activities, forming a more complete and scientific 5w model (Le Liwen & Luo Leilei, 2002). These views were later summarized by the British writer J.R. Kipling. His words are: "Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How," which is the so-called "5W1H" model.

This article is based on multiple research results by Laswell and others on the 5W model of communication, specifically analyzing five aspects of application methods, namely the "who and to whom" of the trinity in choreography, "what and for what" of motivated character behavior, "when and in which situation" of the creation background and works times, "where and in which channel" of the fit of the "space" of performance and



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference

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21 March, 2022

choreography technique, "why and with what effect" of the purpose and effect of creation.

This article attempts to show that throughout the entire choreography process, the use of 5W model can help the works be more thoughtful and artistic. For example, in the choreography concept of narrative dance, choreography staff can use the 5W model to guide their thinking before, during, and after choreography and can more rationally choose the theme and choreography technique of the works. The author has verified, through excellent works cases and his own choreography practice, that the "rational" thinking mode and perspective can rationally and efficiently extract the core elements of the event and help form "sensual" excellent dance works.

## 1. Who and to Whom—the trinity of characters, actors, and audiences in dance works

### 1.1 Character image

The character images of dance works can be classified mainly according to the following three methods: the first category is the primary image and the secondary image; the second category is the prototype image and creative image; the third category is the explicit image and the invisible image. The second-round creative image is constructive to the prototype image. Among them, the second-round creation image is constructive to the prototype image. It should be noted that the character image cannot be created completely according to the prototype of the field survey. Usually, multiple reconstructions should be carried out according to the dance theme.

The significance of elements such as the transformation of the prototype image and the creative image, the principle of primary and secondary image formation, and the relationship between the explicit image and the invisible image, for the creation of the character image depends on whether the follow-up can generate a story based on the image, whether it can create contradictions between characters, whether it can deepen the theme, and whether it can expand the meaning of dance vocabulary. Take the dance works "Father" created by the famous dance choreographer Wang Ge as an example: Wang Ge's investigation into a teahouse in Sichuan found that it was the old man who spent the longest time in the teahouse, and the old man is the prototype and explicit image of the works. The reason why the elderly stay in the tea house for such a long time is the social problem of the "empty nest". Therefore, the works depict the details of the life of the



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference

"Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"

21March, 2022

empty-nester in the tea house, such as chatting, watching dramas, and reading, and extend the image of the "old man" to the image of "father", which more successfully uses elements such as the conversion of the prototype image of the works and the creative image, the principle of primary and secondary image formation, and the correlation between the explicit image and the invisible image, and the works have received favorable comments.

### 1.2 Actor

According to the rational thinking of "who" in the 5W model, when we are conceiving narrative dance works, including dance movement vocabulary and even the choice of dance theme, we must fully consider the actor's expressive ability and pay attention to the actor's "second creation" of the works. The meaning is that actors are required not only to master the appropriate vocabulary of movements and dance themes, but also to be able to exert their subjective initiative and give new expressive power to their works.

### 1.3 Audience

In dance creation, special consideration should be given to the audience for the appreciation of dance art, and the "popularity" of the works should be reasonably set according to the audience's appreciation ability and aesthetic taste. The dance competition is aimed at the judges, and the creation of works often focuses on the so-called cultural nature. The dance party is aimed at general audiences, and the creative works should be easy to grasp. The creation of works for travel dance evenings must take into account the tourists' curiosity and psychology. That is, dance creation not only considers the ideological and artistic quality of the works, but also considers the "box office selling point" and "viewing rate" according to different appreciating groups.

## 2. What and for What-the behavior and motivation of the characters in the works

### 2.1 The characters' behaviors and motivations in the works

According to the book "Semiotics of Drama Text and Performance", it is stated that the dialogue between characters is the core of drama. In view of the difference in artistic expression, the "character behavior" of dance works is the "character dialogue" of drama, so character behavior is the core of narrative dance creation. For how to set up the character's behavior, we should start thinking about the following questions: what is the



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference

"Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"

21March, 2022

motivation for the character's behavior? What is the reason that hinders the character's behavior? and how to design the character's behavior and motivation.

It can be seen that an in-depth analysis of character behavior and motivation is helpful for setting dance structure, arranging body movements, and even creating dance music. The choreography for the dance works "Chicken Feather Letter" by Xie Fei of Northeast Normal University mainly tells the story of a group of captured Chinese who transferred the "Chicken Feather Letter" during the Anti-Japanese War. Therefore, the design of the narrative structure of the character's behavior and motivation is closely linked to the "chicken feather letter transmission". After the dance language explains the environment and the characters, there is the tense transmission behavior: the transmission of the lovers, the romantic transmission, the sacrifice of the lovers, the transmission again, the success of the transmission. The dance vocabulary is created based on the behavior and motivation of the characters, such as precision. Various plots of facial expressions and covering "surrender" were designed.

## 2.2 The expression of character behavior and motivation

The way characters in dance pieces express their behavior and motivation is primarily determined by their body movements. How real-life characters are refined into stage images, how daily language is converted into dance language, how body movements are arranged, and so on, directly affects the distinctiveness, accuracy, and uniqueness of the characters' behavior and motivation in dance works, which is the focus and difficulty of dance creation.

The vocabulary of body movements should not enter into the inertial "narrative" and "lyric", "danceable" and "undanceable" and other experience limitations. The art of dance is lyrical, but it can also be narrative. The key depends on how you narrate. For example, the dance works of Northeast Normal University, such as "Chinese Mother", "Chicken Feather Letter" and "NanjingLiang", are excellent works with a complete narrative and strong appeal.

The "homogenization" of dance vocabulary and the "fuzziness" and "uncertainty" of body movements are common problems in the choreography of narrative dance at present. If dance creation is not developed around the 5W model, that is, if there



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference  
 "Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"  
 21March, 2022

is no in-depth analysis of image, behavior, motivation, background, and other elements, the dance vocabulary designed in this way may be like a "universal food stamp", which is not highly recognizable, and the body movements are placed in any works and roles, losing its distinctiveness, accuracy, and uniqueness. It can be seen that in-depth analysis of the behavior and motivation of the characters in dance works is the premise for choreography personnel to perfectly reflect the artistic value of their works.

### 3. When and in Which Situation-Time Setting, Times and Timeliness

#### 3.1 Time setting of dance works

Time setting is of great significance to dance performances. The choreography personnel can set the background time of the works according to the theme expression needs instead of fieldwork. The scene show "The Name of the Republic" in the large-scale music and dance epic "Road to Rejuvenation" has been written on the time setting, which has produced a clever and shocking effect. We can see that the repertoire overlaps the time of the artillery roar with the time when the new country's title is announced at the founding ceremony. One is that the "breaking" of the war is in sharp contrast with the "standing" of the new China, which strongly contrasts the atmosphere, and the other is the rational design. The "contradictory point": in order to let all fighters clearly hear the national title of New China, the correspondent raised the antenna, but exposed himself and caused sacrifice; the behaviors and motivations of the characters in the works are set relative to time, forming a perfect fit or cleverly misplaced, so they are more dramatic, contradictory, and more able to set off the emotional atmosphere.

#### 3.2 The times and timeliness of dance creation

Articles should be written about current events, and poems should be written about reality. Under the great historical conditions of the construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, how the content and form of dance works correspond to the great era is a major issue for choreography personnel.

Times mainly refers to choreography personnel creating works that are loved by the public based on society's needs for dance art; it also refers to works that can withstand the baptism of time and their artistic value is passed on from generation to



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference  
"Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"  
21March, 2022

generation. For example, the ideological nature of choreography can be profoundly influenced by the ballet "Swan Lake" and the Chinese classical dance drama "Yellow River", and humanistic sentiments such as Wu Xiaobang's "Hunger" and Dai Ailian's "Lotus Dance" are embedded in the works passed down through the world. Although the historical contexts of the ballets "White Haired Girl" and "Red Detachment of Women" are relatively unique, the conflicts and transformations of contradictions reveal their universal value, and the way of telling the story has become a classic.

Timeliness mainly refers to the practical significance of dance works. Throughout the classic dance works of various eras, without exception, they closely follow the pulse of the times and attract the "flow" of the times. Even dance works with historical themes must be "reported" with timeliness, that is, have an impact on reality. The significance of the times: the simple reproduction of ancient texts fails to express the unique insights of the choreography personnel on the times, and cannot resonate with the audience and lose the meaning of creation. Eventually, it is forgotten by the times. For example, Wang Ge's "Song of Everlasting Regret" uses Tang Dynasty stories to point out era and social issues and wins the favor of the audience, so it has a strong timeliness.

#### 4. Where and in which channel-the fit of "space" and choreography

Bourdieu explained the concept of "field" in "Practice and Reflection" as follows: "A field can be defined as a network or a configuration of objective relations between various positions (Bourdieu, 1998)". The field of dance works is produced by the interweaving of people (including choreographers, actors, characters, audiences, etc.) and space (including the "place" of the dance story, the regional nature of the theme of the works, and the characteristics of the performance venue, etc.). In this type of multi-dimensional "space", how to form an organic configuration between "space" and "person" requires appropriate choreography techniques.

##### 4.1 The coherence between "place" in the dance story and the narrative perspective

In dance creation, the image and behavior of the characters are affected by the geographical environment of the dance story. The "place" of the dance story is the



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference  
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21March, 2022

"fulcrum" of the subsequent structure of the dance, which further provides reasonable scenes, events, and the relationship between the characters. Historical texts and field research are some of the sources of the "place of occurrence". In actual choreography, the "place of occurrence" can be appropriately adapted, collaged, or other unconventional settings, so that the dance works are innovative.

In the face of changes in the "place" of the dance story, a reasonable narrative perspective can maximize the narrative value of the "background". French literary theorist Genette's narrative theory proposed three narrative perspectives: zero-focus perspective, outer-focus perspective, and inner-focus perspective.

The zero-focus perspective, that is, the "all-knowing God perspective", in which the narrator > the characters. Such a narrative perspective is conducive to the audience's overall grasp of the plot, pushing away the aesthetic distance, that is, conducive to understanding the background of the complex and grand dance story. For example, in the dance works "Chinese Mother" by Northeast Normal University, the story is set in the anti-Japanese environment. The Japanese invaders have caused great harm to the Chinese people, but the Chinese mother is willing to "reconcile" her hatred and raise and return the Japanese children. The cruelty of the war contrasts with maternal love. In order to fully express the theme of the works, choreography personnel need to describe the complex and grand historical background of the War of Resistance against Japan, so as to better express the maternal love of Chinese mothers across the country. Therefore, they adopted a large number of zero-focus narrative methods, such as group dances similar to narration, to achieve better results. Good results.

The inner-focus perspective, that is, "the same point of view" in which the narrator=the characters. It is usually presented in the first person and third person. Such a narrative perspective is conducive to shaping the image of the characters and drawing in the aesthetic distance, which is conducive to empathy between the audience and the plot. Also, take "Chinese Mother" as an example. All "mother-daughter interactions" are basically narrated from the first perspective. This narrative perspective delicately expresses the psychological changes such as the mother's hatred, sympathy, care, and reluctance, and the audience is more easily moved by the great maternal love.



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference

"Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"

21March, 2022

The outer-focus perspective, that is, the "external point of view", in which the narrator < the characters. This kind of narrative perspective generally stays at what the narrator sees and does not enter into the level of expression of consciousness of the character. The narrative technique of outer-focus perspective is less used in Chinese narrative dance. We can refer to Pina Bows's "Muller Coffee House" and other dance dramas.

#### 4.2 The use of dance creation's regionality and narrative language

Regional culture has a unique aesthetic and value, and the in-depth exploration of regional cultural resources is helpful to the innovation of "staying owning what others do not have" and the ideological nature of "Consolidate the foundation and protect the origin of things" in dance works. In recent years, narrative dance works that use regional cultural elements in choreography have occupied a larger share of the performance market, for example, Zhang Jigang's Shanxi Merchants Dance Drama "A Handful of Jujube", Yang Xiaohe's Henan Songshan Shaolin Temple theme "Wind Shaolin", and Zhou Liya, Han Zhen's Lingnan cultural dance drama "Shawan Past" and so on.

The regionality of choreography not only refers to the place where the dance story takes place, but also the positive significance of regional culture to deepen the theme. Therefore, in the choice of dance narrative language, it is like one cannot speak "Mandarin" while wearing the cloak of "dialect". This requires choreography personnel to screen the "iconic" narrative language of the regional culture.

For example, "A Handful of Wild Jujube" embodies the two characteristics of "Shanxi Culture" and "Shanxi Merchants" through elements such as Shanxi Bangzi, Qitai Yangko, Sheepskin Jacket, and Tuan Fan. "The Past in Shawan" tells the story of the "Three Masters of the He" Lingnan musicians in the background of the ancient town of Shawan in Lingnan during the Republic of China and adopts traditional famous songs from Lingnan, such as "Race Dragon Wins Championship" and "Rain Beats Bananas", showing a close relationship between regional culture and talents.

Regionality is not only limited to traditional culture; modern regional narrative language also has high artistic value. For example, in 2018, the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and Dance Association launched the "Deep Life and Root the People" activity. The artist conducted field research in Inner Mongolia and finally created "War Horse", "We



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference

"Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"

21March, 2022

Saw the Wild Goose", "Little Battelle and Joy" and "Walking Four Directions" and other dance works of different styles. These works give the modern meaning of Mongolian symbolic elements; that is, the dance vocabulary uses the easy-to-understand "Mongolian Mandarin" form, which is easier to appreciate by the public and expands the influence of Mongolian dance art.

### 4.3 Characteristics of performance venues

There are many types of dance performance venues, such as simple stages, large-scale theaters, and natural venues. Take Mei Shuaiyuan's live performance, Huang Qiaoling's Eternal Love series, Wang Chaoge's See You Series, and other repertoires as examples. The performance venues are built according to the content of the works. Every angle and even the audience can become a stage, including the use of multimedia technology, the raised and lowered stage, and the auditorium moving, thus creating a special viewing experience. It can be seen that dance vocabulary, spatial layout, and actor scheduling should fully consider the characteristics of the performance venue, which is conducive to the appreciation and commerciality of dance works.

## 5. Why and with What Effect-Choreography purpose and effect

### 5.1 Creativity and "artistic truth"

Conception is the soul of dance pieces, and dance creativity is the key to dance conception. A good idea should generally have the four elements of "Who, What, When, Where, etc.". Innovation is one of the criteria for judging the superiority of dance creativity.

The formation of dance creativity stems from the choice of "truth", that is, from the unity of opposites between the "truth" and the "false" of art. "True" means that dance works reveal the essence of life, and "fake" means that dance works are conceived on the basis of the truth to form a new "artistic truth". The four elements listed above are the core of dance works, and changing one of them may change the "artistic truth" of the works.

Han Zhen's dance works "I'm Waiting for You" shows the memory of the military wife waiting for her military husband. Analyze the elements of the works. If the behavior of "waiting" (what) is changed to that of "the hard life of single mothers", the tone,



The 15<sup>th</sup> National and International Conference  
 "Global Goals, Local Actions: Looking Back and Moving Forward 2022"  
 21March, 2022

conception, narrative perspective, structure of the works, and narrative language of the whole works will be majorly changed, forming completely different dance works. Therefore, when we lack creative inspiration and distress, try to change any element of the dance prototype, such as who (image), what (behavior), when (time) and where (place), and a new world of dance creativity may appear.

### 5.2 Humanity and the expression of performance

It is one of the purposes of dance creation to arouse the audience's human nature. The selection, angle, structure, and vocabulary of dance creation can closely focus on this creation purpose. From the discussion on the theory of human nature and humanitarianism in the 1980s to the discussion on the subjectivity of literary works and other humanistic spirits in the 1990s, they all involved the basic theme of liberation and restoration of human nature. The results of the discussion became one of the trends in literary and artistic creation in the new era. The maternal spirit of "Chinese Mother" and the social issues of "Father" discussed in the previous article are examples. Good narrative dance works can completely arouse the audience's human thinking.

### Conclusion

In summary, before creating a dance work, it is necessary to consider who (audience and actors), where (performance site and regionality), why (the human nature of the work), and when (the timeliness of the work). When creating, consider who (the actor), when (the time when the work occurs), where (the place where the work occurs), and why (the character behavior of the work). In recent years, the author has used this theory to create works such as "Children, Grab the Teacher's Hand", "Witness", "Things in the Bedroom", "Song of Xinmiao in Shibadong" and other works, which have been verified. Dance choreography draws on Lasswell's 5W model in communication studies, which can improve the artistic authenticity and work efficiency of the works and can choose the themes, themes, and choreography techniques of the works more rationally. This rational thought about dance creation makes the presentation of dance works more efficient, more accurate, and more advanced. The analysis of these key elements is of great significance for dance creation.

