

「심청」에 나타난 ‘한국적 발레’의 정체성에 대한 연구

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Abstract

A Study on the Identity of ‘Korean Ballet’ Constructed through 「Shim Chung」

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The concept of a ‘Korean ballet’ has been a focal point in the field of ballet in Korea ever since its introduction. However, any attempts at a concrete definition and condition have been ambiguous at best. In this context, this study examined the characteristics of ‘Korean ballet’ in Shim Chung and its significance in relation to the national identity of Korea. This study divides the work into two versions (Adrienne Dellas and Oleg Vinogradov) and two aspects (the internal and the external) in order to understand not only the original production itself but also the various meanings of its revisions, as well as the visual and textual meanings surrounding the work.

In the internal aspects of the work, the earlier version of Shim Chung is faithful to the classical ballet form (theme and construction), represents the typical image of Korea (costumes and sets), and separates Korean dance from ballet (movement and music). In its later, revised version, it remains faithful to the Western custom and the logic and structure of classical ballet, while more completely separating the two dances. As for the external aspects, namely the publicity and criticism, while the earlier version of Shim Chung emphasized ‘Korean ballet’ and ‘introducing Korea to foreigners,’ and used the tragic and dramatic images from Shim Chung for its visual publicity, the later version stresses ‘the internationally-acclaimed success,’ using images of Shim Chung that are bold and spectacular.

In the context of the four strategies of post-colonial representation, Shim Chung is basically syncretic in that it means to combine Western ballet and ‘Korean-ness’ but also reveals some variations of reversal and assimilative strategies depending on the emphasis. In the reverse-syncretic approach, one adopts the typical images of Korea and stresses the meaning of national identity in an attempt to overcome its inferior status; the assimilative-syncretic approach adopts the logic of Western ballet and turns its particular values into a universal one, with the intention of diminishing the gap with the West.

Based on this analysis, a conclusion may be drawn that the co-existence of sometimes-contradictory aspects within one strategy depends on the discrepant values of ‘Korean-ness’ between the general social concept and actual representation. In Shim Chung, the reverse-syncretic strategy works through the more concrete aspects of ‘Korean-ness’ while the assimilative-syncretic strategy uses more abstract concepts. However, complexities arise in the fact that the abstract aspects of ‘Korean-ness’ are epistemologically more valuable than the concrete ones. This results in the formation of an unstable identity of ‘Korean ballet’ since it is differentiated from Western ballet by its concrete (less fundamental) aspects, while its abstract (more fundamental) aspects are adapted to Western ballet. This is a common issue faced by post-colonial subjects in their attempt to define their identity through an act of differentiation from the West. Moreover, the opposite reactions between Korean critics and Western critics shows the significance and limitation of Shim Chung for its fundamental goal of ‘Koreanized ballet’ and ‘introducing Korea.’ Although it succeeds to create sympathy and pride among Koreans as ‘Korean ballet,’ it fails to secure those characteristics as their original qualities.

The issues in ‘Korean ballet’ do not confine itself to the matter of creating a good piece; it goes further to the matter of national identity because it clearly reveals the difficulties of the representation of a national identity in a multicultural context. I believe that the successes and the limitations of Shim Chung can be a meaningful example for the complex issues

surrounding Korean national identity. We cannot draw further meaning from Shim Chung through acclamation and support for its adoption of a Korean theme, or because it achieved success abroad. Only by examining its concrete characteristics can its meaning and significance be more amplified.

Keywords: Korean Ballet(한국적 발레), Shim Chung(「심청」), Universal Ballet Company(유니버설발레단), National Identity(민족 정체성), Postcolonialism (탈식민주의)

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