

# Genre Selection of Stravinsky Under the View of History in Mid-term Creation

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## Abstract

Igor Feodorovich Stravinsky, a composer evaluated as one of the most influential 100 person in 20th century by Time, has vitally important position in western music field and even the entire art field. In his mid-term creation, he used a wide variety of polyphonic genre in Baroque Ages, showing the composer's view of history. This paper explains Stravinsky's inheritance of traditional genre elements with five genres as the research object.

**Keywords:** Stravinsky, Mid-term Creation, View of History, Traditional Elements, Fuga.

## 1. Introduction

The western scholar, R. Scholes, pointed out that Stravinsky learnt from the genre in Baroque Ages, which was obviously related to the fact that the formalist advocated to revive the poetics. Specifically speaking, there were deep subjective and objective reasons why Stravinsky "aimed" the selection of historical tradition at the musical forms in Baroque Ages. First of all, in the subjective sense, the "absolute music" nature of polyphonic genre in Baroque Ages, and the inevitable requirement of genre for using the "pure" counterpoint that "reflected the essence of music" accorded with Stravinsky's self-discipline view; moreover, in the objective sense, it was widely known that the music and polyphonic genre in Baroque Ages were the excellent cultural heritage in Europe. In the polyphonic music creation, Stravinsky could highlight the unique music language and composing skill and make the public understand them with the ancient genre as the background.

Then, what traditional elements of polyphonic genre in Baroque Ages did Stravinsky inherit? The specific reason is as follows.

## 2. Inheritance of the Traditional Fuga Element

Fuga was the top-level form of polyphonic music, which had a relatively rigorous, fixed "writing mode". The fuga

created by Stravinsky followed such "writing mode", and the structural elements were orderly organized on the whole in accordance with the traditional fuga principle.

It seemed that Stravinsky's inheritance of the traditional fuga elements was reflected in the compliance with fixed "writing mode", and it also integrated the unique composing skill and personalized musical language into the creation of fuga on the basis of following traditional fugue "framework".

## 3. Inheritance of the Traditional Invention Element

Invention was one of the polyphonic genres named and created by Bach, and from the third chapter of invention of *Piano Sonata (1924)* created by Stravinsky, it could be seen that it inherited many traditional elements of Bach's inventions.

The common structure of Bach's inventions was the dichotomy or trichotomy with representation, and this invention of Stravinsky also adopted the trichotomy with representation. In addition, fugato was a kind of fuga technique or music clip of fuga style. The first section of Stravinsky's invention was created in the form of fugato, and Bach's inventions also used the fugato, from which it could be seen that this invention was closely related to Bach's creating style. But it should be pointed out that Bach's fugato also contained the expanded section.

Therefore, Stravinsky presented the typical style of Bach's inventions, showing his inheritance of the traditional invention elements.

## 4. Inheritance of the Traditional Toccata Element

The first movement of Stravinsky's *Violin Concerto in D major*, toccata, showed the traditional style characteristics in many aspects. For example, the toccata in *Violin*

*Concerto in D major* and traditional toccata used the trichotomy structure. In addition, the theme showed the traditional related and lively characteristics of toccata. And in the second part, the rich change in rhythm and strength, as well as the "colorful" violin solo, presented the typical characteristics of toccata created by Bach. Moreover, the frequent transformation of texture also showed the style characteristics of toccata created by other composers in Baroque Ages, such as Alessandro Scarlatti.

Therefore, this toccata of Stravinsky showed the creating style of many composers in Baroque Ages, and inherited the traditional elements of toccata "comprehensively".

## 5. Inheritance of the Traditional Canon Element

Canon was a kind of polyphonic genre based on the continuous conductive imitation technique. The imitation part of the fourth movement canon of Stravinsky's *Cantata*, as the first reference to the music technique of serialism, was the continuous conductive imitation between parts on the basis of the serial prototype using retrogradation and reflection techniques.

Therefore, the introduction of continuous conductive imitation technique showed canon's inheritance in Stravinsky's *Cantata* of traditional elements.

## 6. Inheritance of the Traditional Passaglia Element

Passaglia was a kind of ancient polyphonic genre characterized by the variation, whose theme had the relatively dominant "writing mode". In the second movement of Stravinsky's *Sept*, Passaglia was much similar to the traditional style; in particular, it highly accorded with the length, structure, rhythm and speed of Bach's Passaglia. In addition, the tonality remained unchanged in each variation in traditional Passaglia with relatively stable subject. In this Passaglia of Stravinsky, the subject's tonality did not change, and the subject was stable in each variation. In addition, the tonal matching with string also showed the style characteristics of traditional Passaglia from a certain sense.

Therefore, Passaglia in *Sept* followed the dominant traditional "writing mode" and was much similar to the traditional style, showing the inheritance of traditional elements.

## 7. Conclusions

Overall, Stravinsky's inheritances of fuga, Passaglia and other traditional elements of polyphonic genre were mainly manifested in the compliance with the fixed or relatively dominant "writing mode", and that of invention, toccata and canon was reflected in highlighting the typical structure and technique.

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