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The Evolution of Chinese Opera Performance: A Case Study of Qian Opera

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to study the evolution mechanism of Chinese opera performance using Qian Opera, which has strong local characteristics, a long history, and is loved by the people of Guizhou, as a research sample. The research method is to select the two classic and contemporary representative plays, "Qin Niangmei" and "Tianqu," and use research methods such as literature research and field surveys (interviews, observations) to carry out the changes and development of performance forms in a comparative study. The research results show that the performance form of Qian Opera will form a performance pattern with a fixed paradigm and beautiful features in a specific period, region, cultural category, and context. In addition, the past performance patterns (performer side) will create new performance forms due to the change in aesthetic form (audience side) to meet the aesthetic requirements of the contemporary era. The research results can help excellent artists break through certain limitations of the formula in their creative thinking and create their own personalized and standardized art.

Keywords: Chinese opera, Qian opera, Performance form, Evolution mechanism

Introduction

Guizhou Opera is a characteristic opera type in Guizhou, China. It originated from the playing and singing performance form of Wenqin Opera. It was formally named in the 1960s and has been developed since the 1960s. The content of the performance is mainly to show the lives of real people. The performance form has always adhered to the local ethnic



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characteristics of Guizhou. In terms of the classification of art performance forms, Qian Opera can be classified as folk performance art.

Looking back at the definition of folklore performance, in terms of the common understanding of folklore performances, scholars at home and abroad basically agree that folklore performances are cultural exchange activities among people in a region, a nation, or a specific language environment. In terms of the differences in folklore performances, different scholars think more about folklore performances as an artistic medium of people's communication and the differences in performance content, functions, characteristics, and performance methods. This research focuses on the historical development process and historical development laws of folklore performance forms in specific contexts, so Qianju opera, a local Chinese opera, is specially selected as a research sample to study the evolution mechanism of Chinese opera performance forms.

In the course of its historical development, Chinese opera has developed a variety of performance patterns. Artists refine and process real-life phenomena through their own artistic patterns, forming operas with regional, language, national, and individual characteristics of the artist. culture and art. As Yang Yinliu said, Chinese opera, as a comprehensive stage art that integrates many art categories, was closely related to folk customs, society, and regional and national characteristics at the beginning of its birth. The changes in its interpretation form both reflect the local national characteristics and the people's spiritual outlook and artistic aesthetic concepts. Therefore, we might as well examine Chinese opera art from the perspective of artistic aesthetics. As a social activity, the aesthetics of opera is an interactive relationship between the aesthetic subject (audience) and the aesthetic object (performer) of opera. The change in the aesthetic value of drama is the result of long-term interaction between the performer and the audience in the long history of time. We can find that the social attributes of opera performance determine that the aesthetic value of opera art cannot be changed without a true reflection of social reality. The performance form and performance patterns as a means of performance always change with the change of aesthetic form.

Research purposes

1. To study the evolution of the Chinese opera performance and influence factors of the Chinese opera change.
2. To study the connotative relationship between "performance form, performance pattern, and aesthetic form".
3. To provide theoretical innovation and create artists standard with the aesthetic requirements of contemporary performances.

Research Framework

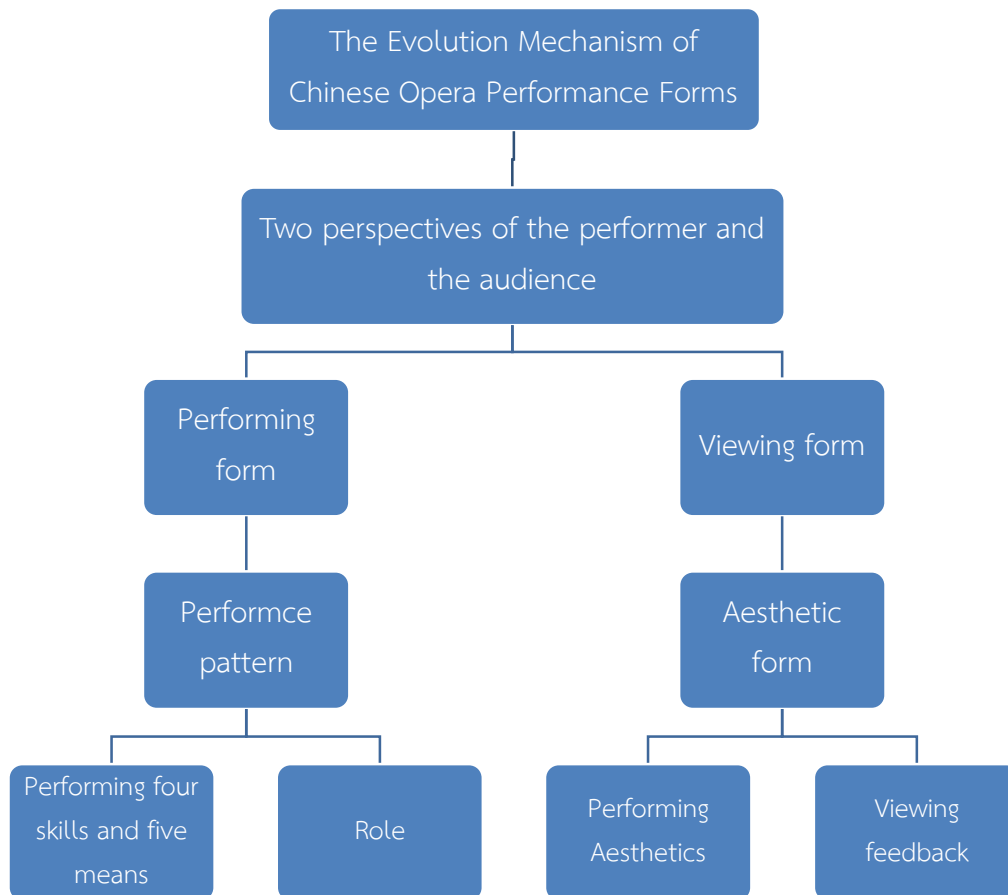


Figure 1 Research framework on the evolution mechanism of Chinese opera performance forms

Research methodology

1. Documentary Research

Literature review

As a kind of social activity in a specific environment, folk performances have various forms. Rituals, dramas, storytelling, dance, playing, singing, and vaudeville are all forms of folk performances. Folk performances reflect the spirit of the people in a specific environment. Beliefs, values, and customs of life. (Zhang Geng, Guo Hancheng, 2013). This research focuses on the historical development process and historical development laws of folklore performance forms in specific situations, and the core purpose of this research is to



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should go or stay. Yang Yinliu (1981) described the creation process of ancient Chinese musical works (including opera, song and dance, playing or singing without accompaniment, rap, singing the tune without the words, etc.) in "The History of Ancient Chinese Music". He believed that opera (drama), as a long-term collective creation and processing of complex creative activities, is constantly developing and changing forms with the changes of society and the changes in the cultural requirements of the people (recipients). At the same time, Yang Yinliu also believes that drama is closely related to folk customs, society, and regional and national characteristics at the beginning of its birth. The change to its deductive form must be the evolution process of the local people's collective artistic processing and artistic re-creation.

Look at the performance form and evolution mechanism of Chinese opera from the perspective of artistic aesthetics. From the perspective of subjective aesthetics, Xue Yongwu (2015) argues that the relationship between aesthetics and the audience reflects human beings as subjective aesthetic objects. In terms of aesthetic value, it is a portrayal of experiencing the reality of life. From a philosophical point of view, looking at the performance form and evolution mechanism of Chinese opera, Suvorov (1985) stated in "Dialectics of Materialism" that the development of things in the objective world follows the law of cause and effect, that is, the three-stage law of development of things "the unity of opposites—interchange of quality and quantity—the negation of negation". It is particularly appropriate to quote it to explain the relationship between the three aspects of Qianju Opera's "performance form—performance pattern—aesthetic form".

2. Field studies

Interview

The interview was conducted on the basis of the interview form prepared in advance by well-known performing artists, composers, and theoretical scholars related to the art of Guizhou Opera, through interviews with the interviewees Zhu Hong, Yu Daling, and Liu Hao, three Guizhou Opera artists, to collect interview data related to Qian Opera content by means of audio recording and text recording. Please refer to Appendix I, Appendix II, and Appendix III for the interview forms.

Observation

The observation process is mainly carried out by watching stage plays and film and television drama videos (VCDs, online videos, etc.) related to Qian Opera art, followed by on-site observation. The observation location is Qian Theater in Guizhou Province. Use text-recorded commentary to collect observation data.



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Research results

The theory and aesthetics of opera are produced in the process of interacting with the practice of opera creation. It is not only a summary of the creation activities, but also a guide and guidance for creation and performance viewing (aesthetic) activities. (2018)

Suvorov (1985) expounded the law of the development of things in the objective world in the "Dialectics of Materialism". That is, the relationship between the "performance form", "performance pattern", and "aesthetic form" of Qian Opera should conform to the philosophy of dialectics of materialism, the three-stage law of development of things, "the unity of opposites—interchange of quality and quantity—the negation of negation". This is the general law of the development of things that follows the "law of causality" in the development of things in the objective world, which shows that the development of things does not advance in a straight line but rises in a spiral. The principle of negation of negation has important guiding significance for people to correctly understand the tortuous and forward nature of the development of things. On the basis of the materialistic concept of material reflecting consciousness, Qian Opera performance as an artistic activity, its performance form develops into a performance pattern in a specific period, region, cultural category, and context. The aesthetic form and change will affect and change the performance pattern over time. The art of Qian Opera should conform to this law in the development process of the relationship between the "performance form", "performance pattern", and the aesthetic form. Therefore, the entire study of Qian Opera should be guided by this theory, to observe and study the changes in the performance of Qian Opera in history and apply it to the contemporary creation and performance of Qian Opera.

Research results: The law of unity of opposites and the interchange of quality and quantity is reflected in the relationship between performance pattern and performance form conversion.

1. In a specific period, region, cultural category, and context, the form of opera performance will take on a performance pattern with a fixed paradigm and the aesthetic characteristics of the era.

In reality, there are contradictions in everything, and they have the relationship of unity of opposites. Performance form and performance pattern are two sides of the art development process of Qian Opera. The performance form is the embodiment of the "quantity" attribute, and the performance pattern is the embodiment of the "quality" attribute. Relatively diverse and infinitely changing performance forms and relatively fixed performance forms (i.e., performance patterns) are two forms of the development process of performance forms. The latter is the refinement, summary, and classification of the



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former, while the formation of the latter means the former's demise as a form of performance. Therefore, the two are relatively opposed, but the formation of the latter is also the rebirth of the former as a form of performance pattern, so the two are also in a unified relationship.

Performance form and performance pattern are the relationships between development and evolution, and they are two stages of a process in the development of performance form. The process of forming a performance pattern by a performance form is the first negation of a performance pattern by a performance pattern. The scattered performance forms at this stage formed a systematic and fixed performance pattern with the aesthetic characteristics of the era. This is the first stage of the evolution of the performance form.

For example, singing with different ranges, volumes, and timbres is a form of performance. Then the performance pattern is that the actor connects these different vocal ranges, volumes, and timbres of singing voices to express the character, feelings, and mental state of the characters through the vocal technique, making it pleasant to the ears, coordinating with each other, and forming a kind of music for voices in Chinese opera (a system that categorizes singing characteristics).

Example: As a form of performance. Qian opera singing is all sung in Guizhou dialect, and its voice, rhyme, and tune have distinct characteristics, but they are not systematic. These scattered singing voices and minor tunes are categorized, and the complete set of songs is arranged in a specific style (beat) and according to the rules of level and oblique tones of ending words and the rhyme of even sentences to form the upper and lower sentence patterns, which form the music for voices in a Chinese opera system (i.e., performance pattern).

Research results: The law of "negation of negation" is reflected in the relationship between performance pattern and aesthetic form change.

2. The past performance pattern will create new performance forms due to changes in aesthetic forms to meet the aesthetic requirements of the current era.

In the second stage, the performance pattern is changed again due to the change in aesthetic form to conform to the current aesthetic habits of people. This is a second negation, which is the negation of the performance pattern by the aesthetic form. The denial is based on the original performance pattern, adding and changing new performance forms. This is a change required by the newness and creative connotation of performance. But this negation also inherited the content of the performance pattern's first negation of the form of performance, so it is called "the negation of negation". The second negation is the inheritance and development of the first negation, rather than simply abandoning it.



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