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## Research on Inheritance Strategies of Local Drama Genres - Taking Baling Opera in Hunan as an Example

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### Abstract

This article takes Baling Opera, a major Hunan opera variety, as an example, focuses on the problems existing in the inheritance and protection of local major operas from the perspective of cultural identity, and puts forward constructive suggestions for the living inheritance of local major operas. The research objectives of this article: 1. To analyze the development status of Baling Opera, a major local drama; 2. In order to explore the relationship between cultural identity and the living inheritance of local major dramas; 3. To propose countermeasures for the living inheritance of local major dramas. This article uses field investigation and interview methods to understand the current development status of Baling Opera and the survival dilemma of local operas. Secondly, it analyzes the relationship between cultural identity and the living inheritance of local operas through literature reading. Finally, it proposes countermeasures for the living inheritance of local operas. This will not only inject new vitality into the local drama genre, but also actively promote the cross-disciplinary dissemination of the local drama genre, and provide constructive suggestions for the living inheritance of the local drama genre.

**Keywords:** Baling Opera, Cultural identity, Living inheritance

### Introduction

Chinese opera art is the most representative and most unique cultural heritage in the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. As an indispensable part of Chinese opera art, the inheritance of local drama plays a crucial role in the diversity development of Chinese culture. The Ministry of Culture of the PRC issued the Implementation Plan for the Protection and







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inheritors and 4 municipal representative inheritors. On the other hand, due to the shrinking performance market, artists' livelihoods cannot be guaranteed, resulting in fewer and fewer young people learning Baling Opera, and temporary shortage. The successive deaths of old artists have left some of the stunts of Baling Opera uninherited, posing serious challenges to the inheritance and protection of the opera. The inheritance situation is worrying.

Table 1: Statistics of Baling Opera Inheritance Units

Name of drama genres	Number of opera troupes	Public institutions	Enterprises and folk troupes	Inheritors
Baling Opera	1	1	0	7

In recent years, the performance market of local operas has gradually shrunk, the audience group has sharply shrunk, and Baling Opera actors have become older. The average age of the middle stage actors is about 55 years old, and the reserve actors are currently insufficient. The value and foundation of opera art lie in its close connection and interaction with the audience. Without the participation and support of the audience, the art of opera will lose its meaning and value. Baling Opera has a group of loyal audience, mainly concentrated among middle-aged and elderly people aged 45 to 70, who has a relatively high level of recognition of the art and culture of Baling Opera. Some classic works have become well-known masterpieces among the middle-aged and elderly people. On the contrary, the influence of Baling Opera among young people is very weak, and it does not generate strong recognition. Through a filed inspection of the Baling Opera Inheritance Research Institute, it was found that the number of performances and the age of the actors of the Baling Opera Troupe have changed. Since the 1990s, the market demand for Baling Opera has turned from the previous prosperity to a lukewarm one. The age of the audience has gradually increased, and the number of performances has also decreased sharply.

## 2. Survival dilemma of local drama genres

1) Homogeneity of opera repertoire. With the rapid development of social economy, the popularity and influence of local drama have also increased. In some areas, the drama forms gradually lost its unique characteristics in the process of continuous pursuit of tradition and development, and began to borrow from the mainstream drama and other art forms unilaterally, which is mainly due to the lack of accurate understanding and positioning



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of local drama forms. There have been changes in singing, narration, performance form and personal characteristics, which has led to the embarrassing situation of "four dissimilar", thus reducing the recognition of local dramas.

2) Aging audience groups. Local operas often have strong local characteristics and national cultural connotations, and have special emotional value and cultural identity for the elderly who were born and raised here. However, young people are more inclined to modern culture, and they are relatively unfamiliar with the cultural background and values of traditional opera. Due to the changes of the times, modern entertainment methods such as self-media, movies, TV, etc. have attracted the public's attention, resulting in Baling Opera no longer being performed frequently. At the same time, the singing method of Baling Opera remained unchanged and the repertoire was updated slowly, which also gradually reduced the audience's interest.

3) Single inheritance and protection modes. At present, the protection of local dramas is mainly focused on the protection of production, especially the revival of traditional theatrical pieces, the creation of scripts, and the cultivation of subsequent talents. However, the understanding of the living inheritance of dramas was not thorough. In the promotion of the opera market, the increase of the number of the target audience, the shaping of the opera brand and other aspects, the public usually lacked an in-depth understanding of it. They often failed to realize the potential gap between the younger generation and the art of opera. Meanwhile, the communication strategies and methods they use appear were relatively single and boring, which made local operas occupy more positions in people's memories, records and discussions, and has not really become a part of the public's daily life.

**3. The relationship between cultural identity and the living inheritance of local drama genres**

1) Local opera is an important carrier of cultural identity. In the process of inheritance and development of local opera, cultural identity was closely related to it. Local opera had strong local characteristics and rich cultural connotation, containing the cultural essence accumulated and created by local people for a long time, and it was the accumulation of local history and culture. Local operas showed the living habits, values and aesthetic taste of local people through the form of art.

2) Cultural identity is the momentum for the inheritance and development of local opera. Local operas are usually popular locally and are deeply loved and recognized by local people. By watching local operas, local people can feel the rich local culture and historical



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atmosphere, thus developing a strong sense of cultural identity that will encourage local people to pay more active attention to and inherit the drama, and become the momentum for the inheritance and development of the drama.

3) Cultural identity plays a vital and fundamental role. Local opera is a cultural phenomenon deeply rooted in a specific cultural background and community life, which not only represents the form of artistic performance, but also carries rich cultural connotations and social values. The lyrics, performance forms and artistic styles of local operas are closely related to the cultural environment in which they are located. Baling Opera repertoire always promotes truth, goodness and beauty, rewards good suppression of moral evil, and teaches people "benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom and trust", while showing their desire for a better life, which makes the local drama have a unique artistic charm and a profound social foundation.

#### 4. Countermeasures for the living inheritance of local drama genres

1) Strengthen the role of dialect link and deepen the local cultural environment

Local drama has become an expression of identity due to its unique language expression, performance techniques, vocal qualities and cultural depth integrated with the local culture of drama. This identity not only reflects the cultural holders' identification with local operas, but also reflects their identification with their hometown culture. Therefore, local operas play an important role in inheriting and developing local culture. Especially for people who are wandering in a foreign land, their deep feelings for dialects and hometown dramas are a reflection of their identity. When they hear opera music that combines dialect charm and local characteristics, they will have a strong sense of identity and homesickness. Sometimes my eyes filled with tears, sometimes I was excited, I would hum along with the music, and I was immersed in the music for a long time. This phenomenon shows that cultural identity is a powerful spiritual force that closely connects people to their culture and identity. As a carrier of identity, local operas play an important role in inheriting and developing local culture. For people who are wandering in a foreign land, their deep affection for dialects and hometown dramas is a reflection of their identity. This cultural identity is not only a spiritual force, but also a positive motivation that can encourage people to maintain and inherit their own cultural traditions.

The emergence of local drama is closely related to the dialect and cultural environment of the region. Dialect is not only a symbol of regional culture, but also a core language expression method, which serves as a bridge between opera and local culture



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owners. Therefore, the inheritance and development of local opera must be closely related to local culture, and at the same time, the core position of dialects in local opera must be fully recognized. Only in this way, with the continuous development of the times, the unique charm of local drama will not be reduced or disappear. In order to promote the development of dialect-based local operas and other art forms, local government departments and relevant departments can take some measures. On the one hand, policies can be introduced to encourage and support the inheritance and development of local operas, such as setting up special funds and providing performance venues. On the other hand, media propaganda can be used to arouse the public's attention to dialects and enhance their sense of identity and belonging to local culture.

2) Create a drama masterpiece to highlight the local characteristics of the drama

Danner clearly stated that "when unique and attractive techniques of any art forms were abandoned in favor of other forms of art, its intrinsic value would inevitably be diminished" (Danna, 2016). He believed that if its unique and attractive skills were abandoned in any art form, its intrinsic value would be diminished. This view also applies to the inheritance and evolution of local small operas. If local operas are desired to stabilize their position and continue to develop in contemporary society, they need to choose a distinctive development path and establish their own unique "brand", that is, to create contemporary "competitive products" with unique style and high artistic value", which can reflect the uniqueness and value of local operas, thereby attracting more audiences and attention.

3) Leverage celebrity effects to expand the market based on the modern new media environment

In the process of inheritance and development of local drama, we not only need to pay attention to the depth of art and the uniqueness of the region, but also increase market share in the modern new media environment using the influence of celebrities. Through new media channels such as the Internet, social media, and short videos, local dramas can break through geographical restrictions and expand their audience. Moreover, the interactive characteristics of new media also provide audiences with more convenient ways to participate, such as online ticket purchase, comments, likes, etc., which can collect audience feedback and needs in a timely manner and provide reference for the improvement and promotion of dramas. Celebrity effect also has a positive effect on the expansion of local small operas. The popularity and influence of celebrities can attract more attention and audiences to local small operas. For example, well-known actors, and directors are invited to participate in the creation



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and performance of local small operas, and the influence of celebrities are introduced into the promotion of local operas, which can increase visibility and influence.

### Discussion

If local drama is desired to be passed down, it must be deeply rooted in its unique cultural background, the role of dialect as a connecting link shall be strengthened, and the identity of drama culture shall be promoted through the identity of local culture. Respecting cultural attributes is the prerequisite for the development of local operas. When developing specific strategies, we should focus on creating outstanding works of theater, demonstrate its uniqueness, and attract young audiences using innovative media methods to revitalize small local dramas. Regional dramas are not permanent, and they are undergoing a continuous process of innovation, breakthrough and integration. In order to ensure the sustainable development of local drama forms, we need to abandon its shortcomings, absorb its essence, and shape its inherent and unique values that should be respected.

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