

A Research of Inheriting Intangible Cultural Heritage and Promoting Aesthetic Education—Take Huai Opera as an Example

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Keywords: Huai Opera, intangible cultural heritage, aesthetic education, Chinese traditional culture

Abstract: Huai Opera holds a very important position in intangible cultural heritage. It is of great significance to carry forward Huai Opera in the new era. This study first introduces the background and development of Huai Opera, and summarizes its aesthetic value. Next it adopts questionnaire survey and literature survey to collect the difficulties in the the development of Huai Opera, analyzing the problems. Finally, some suggestions are put forward in order to develop the Chinese traditional culture of Huai Opera.

1. Overview and Development of Huai Opera

1.1. Overview of Huai Opera

Huai Opera, also known as Jianghuai Opera, Huai Xi, etc., is an ancient local opera genre. The music of Huai Opera adopts unique fine-tuning, with a graceful and melodious opera singing as its main feature. Huai Opera actors employ traditional masks and costumes during their performances, conveying their emotions and inner world through exquisite stage techniques and movements. The script of Huai Opera is based on dialects, with humorous and witty language and ample local characteristics. The plot of Huai Opera is diverse, which covers different themes such as historical stories, palace drama, rural life, and family disputes.

Huai Opera holds a significant status in Chinese opera industry and is known as one of the four major types of Chinese opera. It is not only highly loved by the audience, but also has a positive impact on the development of other types of opera. Huai Opera, with its unique artistic style and performance form, enriches the cultural tradition of Chinese opera.

1.2. Development of Huai Opera

As a component of Jianghuai culture, Huai Opera can be divided into the following stages in terms of its development in opera singing: (1) Incense Tune (1900-1927) mainly played incense tune, huai tune, etc. The performance did not have string accompaniment, but only large gongs, small gongs, sound boards and bamboo root drums. The rise of Huai tune laid the foundation for the

singing style music of Huai Opera. (2) Laola Tune (1927-1939) drew inspiration from the techniques of Peking Opera, with new tunes emerging. And the tunes was integrated into the instrumental accompaniment. Laola tune is a supplement to the Huai tune function and lays the foundation for free tune. (3) Free Tune (1939-1949) initially formed a transformation of new tunes with the increasing development of melodies, diversifying single falling sounds and enriching singing styles.

Nowadays, with the development of the singing style of Taizhou Huai Opera, batches of new dramatists and musicians have entered the theater troupe, carrying out a series of inheritance and innovation work, including but not limited to saving music heritage, arranging traditional tunes, attempting to separate male and female voices, and adopting novel singing forms.

2. Aesthetic Education Value of Huai Opera

"The focus of drama education is not on educating professional actors and artistic accomplishment, but on using elements of drama, such as context, scene, plot, role-playing, emotional experience, etc. to convey emotional values and related teaching content to students, and cultivate students' sound personalities and qualities." The famous drama educator Zhang Xiaohua said. Thus it can be seen that in the process of immersing themselves in the charm of Huai Opera, youth can not only be affected by the distinctive singing style, tone, melody, and the aesthetic value presented by Taizhou Huai Opera; You can also literally feel the strong local flavor and the quintessential traditional culture of Taizhou Huai Opera. While intangible cultural heritage—Huai Opera develops and blooms in its inheritance, it also subtly cultivates the sentiments of our group members and cleanses our souls.

As a treasure of excellent traditional Chinese culture, Taizhou Huai Opera is based on the dialect of Jianghuai Mandarin, presenting the cultural characteristics of northern Jiangsu. It is not only an excellent ideological, political, and cultural resource, but also a favourable teaching tool for educating students' aesthetic awareness and perspectives. Youth should conscientiously implement the requirements of the *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Strengthening the Aesthetic Education Work in Higher Education Institutions in the New Era* issued by General Office of the CPC Central Committee, profoundly understand the educational value contained in Taizhou Huai Opera, implement the fundamental task of cultivating morality, promote the inheritance and development of excellent traditional Chinese culture, and enhance the sense of identity and pride in Chinese culture.

3. Investigation and Study of Huai Opera

3.1. Domestic and Foreign Literature Research

Huai Opera, as an important part of Chinese traditional opera art, has attracted wide attention in its inheritance and development in recent years. In terms of domestic literature, *Thoughts on the Status Quo, Inheritance and Development of Huai Opera Art of Intangible Heritage*^[1] published in the periodical *Opera Monthly*, *Discussion on the Historical Evolution and Development of Huai Opera Art*^[2] by Professor Shan Shi, and *Discussion on the Cultural Model of Huai Opera Generation* by Professor Zhu Yujiang^[3], conduct an in-depth discussion on the historical origin, performance skills, repertoire selection and other aspects of Huai Opera, and analyze the importance of Huai Opera in contemporary society and its artistic charm. Expert CAI Xiuli's *The Need for Practical Measures for the Inheritance and Protection of Huai Opera*^[4] and Li Ruyi's *Inquiry into the Inheritance and Development of Huai Opera Art*^[5] also analyze the problems and difficulties in the inheritance of Huai Opera from the perspective of the existing Huai Opera troupes,

and put forward some countermeasures and suggestions for inheritance and innovation. At the same time, the article *On the Popular Cultural Matrix of Huai Opera*^[6] on the official website of Huai Opera shows that Huai Opera, with its nature of popular culture, has a good mass foundation, which is conducive to the group members to take it as the object and promote Huai Opera art into the campus, so as to show the local characteristics of Taizhou Huai Opera and promote the process of the group members' project.

In terms of foreign literature, Atanda Yemi's *Between illusion and reality in the post-pandemic experience: Theatricalities of Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels on stage*^[7] explains the importance of technological innovation in drama production; Shevtsova Maria also mentioned in *The 2023 Theatre Olympics in Budapest*^[8] that drama, with its unique broad perspective and change of position, plays the interpretation of political, social and cultural environment and has unique value in terms of social history, culture and art. It can be seen that Huai Opera, as one of the representatives of China's excellent traditional culture, has high appreciation and academic value, and should be widely inherited and promoted, so as to respond to the requirements of the country's development of aesthetic education and realize the dual purposes of opera education "inheritance" and "educating people".

3.2. Questionnaire Survey

In order to learn about students' understanding level of Huai Opera culture and their willingness to further understand Huai Opera culture, this study selected a questionnaire to learn about students' understanding level and willingness of Huai Opera culture. The questionnaire was prepared on the questionnaire board and distributed to other college students in Taizhou by the team. The subjects were college students over 18 years old from Taizhou, Nanjing, Yancheng and Xuzhou of Jiangsu Province.

A total of 106 questionnaires were distributed by the team members, 97 valid questionnaires were recovered, and 97 questionnaires were statistically analyzed.



Figure 1: How Huai Opera enters the campus

Regarding the question of "college students", understanding of "Huai opera", 19.81% of the students chose not to understand it at all; 65.09% of the students chose to know little about it, accounting for the majority of the total number; 13.21% of the students knew a lot about it, and only 1.89% knew a lot about it. It shows that Huai Opera is less popular and well-known in colleges and universities.

Through the questionnaire survey, the group members found that almost all students supported the school's "opera into campus" and other activities. In addition, the group members also put forward other suggestions on how to improve the popularity of Huai Opera. (See figure 1) It can be seen that the mode of Huai Opera knowledge competition is relatively unpopular, and people are more inclined to enjoy Huai Opera at close range. Most of the students chose the options of

"publicity is not big enough", "college students' interest is not high enough" and "it is difficult to invite professionals", indicating that Huai Opera is not attractive enough to college students, and the spread of Huai Opera has a long way to go. (See Figure 2)

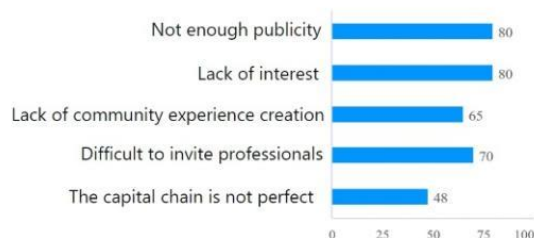


Figure 2: The problems may happen

Although the publicity of Huai opera in colleges and universities needs to be improved, according to the survey, almost all students have a positive attitude towards the influence of Huai opera on campus, and can also recognize the significance of Huai opera aesthetic education culture.

3.3. Investigation Result

In the process of the investigation of college students, some students believe that although Huai Opera is not widely spread in colleges and universities, the contact in life and study is relatively small, but as college students still hope to have a deep understanding of some Huai opera culture, and Huai opera into the curriculum of aesthetic education, to further inherit Huai opera and promote the development of Huai opera; Some college students believe that although the current attention to Huai opera is not high, but they are willing to contribute to the spread of Huai opera, and actively learn Huai opera culture, in order to enrich their extracurricular life. During the survey and interview of English major students, they are full of longing for Huai Opera to enter the campus, hoping that Huai Opera can be closely related to their own lives, and can use their professional knowledge to let more people know about Huai Opera, and even let international students have a certain understanding of Huai Opera intangible cultural heritage.

In addition, in the process of investigation and research on Huai Opera, the group members learned a lot of valuable information and knowledge for the inheritance and development of Huai Opera culture by contacting some famous Huai opera actors. They have a soft spot for Huai Opera culture and are interested in performing arts since childhood. In the stage performance, they pay attention to the spiritual internalization of the role and delicate stage performance, emphasizing the transmission of emotion; In terms of inheriting Huai Opera, they proposed to pass on the charm of traditional culture to the audience through performances and inherit the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation. In terms of the future development of Huai Opera, they proposed to integrate modern elements while maintaining the original traditional charm and artistic style, and cooperate with other regional operas to jointly promote the development of Huai opera and Chinese opera.

4. Manuscript Preparation

4.1. College students do not have enough interest and enough time to learn about Huai Opera

In the process of the investigation and research of Huai Opera, the team members used the questionnaire to investigate and understand the problems related to the inherit of Huai Opera. First, according to the result of investigation, among the 106 students, 65.09% of the college students know little about the Huai Opera. The number of students who know much or complete knowing

Huai Opera is very few, only accounting for 15.1%. During the process of deep investigation, the team found 80 college students are not interested in it and have no time to know it. This shows that Huai Opera is not attractive enough to college students. Due to the low understanding of Huai Opera, they can not find the beauty of Huai Opera and have no great interest in it. In addition, college students are busy with schoolwork, which also leads to the lack of time to understand Huai Opera. In order to solve this problem, the team members will hold some creative activities closely related to the college students to stimulate the interest of college students in the research of Huai Opera.

4.2. The lack of routes of Huai Opera transmission

According to the investigation about how college students comprehending Huai Opera, the result indicates that Of the 106 students, only 91 students were found to learn about the Huai Opera only through the performance of the Huai Opera Troupe. The transmission way of Huai opera seems to be very few. Facing with this problem, the team members also put forward more transmitting ways of Huai Opera. First, in the current society, the information world has developed fast. Therefore, we aim to adopt the inheritance mode of combining tradition and modernity, and use we media, Internet +, TikTok and other major platforms to promote Huai Opera. What's more, the team members found that the college students in the campus activities supported this, so the team members plan to let the students know some knowledge of Huai Opera, to the people around them, so as to further broaden the dissemination of Huai Opera. Finally, considering that the life of college students is closely related to the Internet, there is a certain lack in beauty. In order to respond to the national requirements for the development of aesthetic education, the team members took the way of combining Huai Opera and aesthetic education as a new way of communication to promote the two-way communication of Huai Opera and reputation.

4.3. The Lack of Excellent Huai Opera Script

In the process of investigating and studying Huai Opera, the team members found that after a hundred years, the script of Huai Opera had not changed substantially, and there were only a few excellent scripts of Huai Opera. However, many scripts of contemporary Huai Opera lack some deep charm, and only pay attention to spreading the surface content of Huai Opera to the public, while ignoring some deep and meaningful content of Huai Opera itself to express. Because of the lack of excellent scripts, the inheritance of Huai Opera also faces the challenge of transformation and innovation. Therefore, many foreign scholars began to pay attention to the combination of Huai Opera and other art forms, so as to fully optimize the content of Huai Opera and enrich the significance of Huai Opera itself. The team members also communicated with professional Huai Opera personnel, consulted them about excellent Huai Opera scripts and the essence of Huai Opera culture, and then passed these to the public, so as to produce more excellent Huai Opera scrip

4.4. The Scope of the Survey Was Small

The research areas of the are mainly Taizhou, Nanjing, Yancheng, Xuzhou and other places with some Huaiju cultural foundation, the survey is small, the 106 points of the team survey are all undergraduate students from these areas, the crowd and people are small, and the audience is small. In order to solve this problem, the team members will use the advantages of the Internet to spread Huai Opera to the wider public, and investigate more people in more areas, so as to improve the survey penetration rate of Huai Opera. Suggestions on inheritance of Huai Opera

5. Suggestions for Huai Opera Heritage

5.1. Establishing Arts Education Courses to Deepen Understanding of Huai Opera

Combining Huai Opera with arts education courses in universities can enable a wider audience to understand and appreciate Huai Opera, thereby promoting the integration of Huai Opera culture into campuses. Additionally, inheriting Huai Opera culture should embrace an innovative spirit, combining its content with contemporary themes, creatively transforming excellent Huai Opera cultural elements, and innovatively developing them to effectively narrate modern Chinese stories in the form of Huai Opera.

5.2. Increasing Avenues for Huai Opera Dissemination

Integrating new technological advancements with Huai Opera practices, such as MR and VR interactive technologies, which are gradually maturing, can further broaden the avenues for Huai Opera dissemination. This interaction fills a missing link in the current process of opera dissemination, effectively expanding the avenues for Huai Opera dissemination. Simultaneously, integrating Huai Opera culture with arts education courses in university classrooms formally introduces Huai Opera culture to students, enhancing their appreciation for beauty, and elevating the level of arts education.

5.3. Creating Outstanding Huai Opera Scripts

Huai Opera lacks scripts closely related to contemporary times, which may not appeal to younger audiences. Therefore, active promotion, encouragement, support, and guidance are necessary for Huai Opera creators to base their work on modern practices, integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture with contemporary stories, and narrating Chinese stories through Huai Opera. Collaborating with professional Huai Opera societies to gain expertise, thoroughly understanding Huai Opera culture, and documenting it is essential.

5.4. Increasing Government Attention to Enhance Huai Opera Cultural Dissemination

As a precious gem of traditional Chinese culture, Taizhou Huai Opera showcases the cultural characteristics of northern Jiangsu with its distinctive dialect. It serves not only as an excellent ideological and cultural resource but also as a beneficial teaching tool for cultivating students' aesthetic awareness and viewpoints. Government support can effectively enhance Huai Opera's publicity by implementing actor training programs, promotional strategies, and establishing Huai Opera cultural museums to revitalize Huai Opera culture and expand its influence and dissemination.

6. Summary and Outlook

By expanding the scope of surveys through university internet media and other means, we aim to gather data from regions lacking a foundation in Huai Opera culture and various age groups, thus improving the scientific accuracy of survey data. After devising specific solutions, our group will gradually implement these measures and integrate Huai Opera with arts education to promote its dynamic development in the future.

Acknowledgement

This paper is supported by Jiangsu Provincial College Students' Innovative Entrepreneurial Training Plan Program (202312917044Y)

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