

## THE STUDY ON THE INHERITANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUNAN DAOZHOU DIAOZI OPERA

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera is more than just a folk performance art; it is a cultural treasure that portrays the interaction of music, society, and cultural power in Chinese society. **Objective:** To study on the inheritance and development of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera. **Methods:** The researcher used data from numerous secondary sources to assess and synthesize the study's findings. Documentary research data includes books, other documents, and written records. this investigation. The documentary research approach necessitated gathering information from books and articles that identified ten relevant sources, all of which were verified for trustworthiness by specialists. This paper investigates the historical evolution of Hunan melodic opera in China, its context in various periods of Chinese history, and suggests rules for maintaining and propagating the country's traditional folk music. **Results:** Chinese folk music is an integral part of China's rich traditional culture, the spiritual lifeline and inner core of the country, and the foundation for our long-term stability in the face of global cultural instability. This is because, according to Mei Wang (2020), our country's methods for integrating and preserving regional opera traditions are uncertain. We must constantly increase the processes for building and sustaining traditional opera culture, followed by the construction of systems to preserve it. This study is congruent with the findings of Juan Xue (2017), who discovered that the inheritance and development of Chinese regional opera is an important and rich cultural history, with practical implications that can effectively promote the inheritance and development of traditional styles. **Conclusion:** The study's findings reveal that Diaozi Dao opera is used to transmit the local community's identity, shared memories, and worldview. Music and performance not only reflect social and historical contexts but also serve as a forum for negotiating meaning between tradition and present change.

**Keywords:** Traditional music; Hunan Diaozi Opera; Inheritance and development

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Due to its long history, the key repertoires of Daozhou diaozi Opera are always passed down by word of mouth, and the scripts have not been compiled into books. Nowadays, the actors of key repertoires have problems such as aging and lack of contact, which require us to actively explore and protect. Only in this way can the key repertoires of Daozhou diaozi Opera bloom with more colors like flowers.

Daozhou diaozi Opera rarely praises emperors and generals, but mostly expresses the joys and sorrows of grassroots people. Therefore, it is deeply loved by the grassroots people.

As a member of the traditional music family, opera is a unique culture formed in the precipitation of historical and cultural development. When we immerse ourselves in folk music, we can not only experience the charm of music through the ups and downs of the tone but also feel the changes in the history of this national society. Chinese opera is mainly composed of three different art forms: folk dance, rap, and comedy. It originated from primitive singing and dancing and is a comprehensive stage art style with a long history. (Luoxi, 2021) After the Han, Tang, Song, and Jin dynasties, a relatively complete opera art form was formed. It is a complex of literature, music, dance, art, martial arts, acrobatics, and performing arts, with more than 360 types.

Its characteristic is that it aggregates numerous art forms into a single standard, reflects their respective personalities in a common nature, and is a microcosm of the national social history and culture. (ouyang chaoyang, 2021, p1) The excavation, organization, and innovation of Daozhou diaozi Opera have laid a solid foundation for the protection and inheritance of local opera schools and the application for key national intangible cultural heritage projects. With the approval of the People's Government of Hunan Province, Daozhou diaozi Opera has been listed as a key intangible cultural heritage protection unit.

Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera is typically passed down orally, and the plays have not been collected into books. Currently, actors who are familiar with key plays confront obstacles owing to aging and a lack of communication. As a result, significant research and preservation are required so that the key plays of Daozhou Diaozi Opera might thrive even more vibrantly. Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera does not generally celebrate emperors and generals, but rather depicts the pleasures and sufferings of ordinary people, and is so popular among the working class. Is a unique cultural asset that arose as a result of historical and cultural growth. Immersing ourselves in its folk music allows us to not only enjoy the music's attractiveness through the rise and fall of melodies, but also to sense the changes in the country's social history. Chinese opera combines three separate creative forms: folk dance, song-based storytelling, and humor. It is a complete and long-established theatrical art form that evolved from traditional singing and dancing. Following the Han, Tang, Song, and Jin dynasties, a rather complete type of opera art emerged. It combines literature, music, dance, art, martial arts, acrobatics, and performing arts, with over 360 categories. Its distinguishing aspect is the incorporation of multiple art genres into a single standard. Reflecting the distinctive qualities of each style in nature, and as a vital element of the nation's history and social culture.

Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera has established a solid foundation for the preservation and continuation of local opera schools, as well as its application to be included in the national major intangible

cultural heritage project. The Hunan Provincial People's Government has approved the listing of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera as a significant intangible cultural asset protection unit.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

To study on the inheritance and development of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the study on the inheritance and development of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera consists of the following concepts and theories.

### The Origin and Development of Chinese Opera

This section reviewed the definition of related concepts in this study. Spoken-drama-plus-singing is now a concept of negative criticism of Chinese opera. It means incorporating several arias or chorus songs in the form of a play to match the plot (Liu, 2009). A simple musical accompaniment emphasizes the scope of the storyline's development. As Japan sought to invade China in the 1930s, several operas with anti-Japanese themes appeared. To promote opera, composers began using the form of spoken drama plus singing to express people's determination to resist the Japanese. It is a new modern opera dominated by theatrical performance with Chinese characteristics, operas of this type have the advantage of being easy to compose music, and the music layout is flexible, which is more convenient for actors who have poor musical abilities (Ibid). A publicity campaign can be completed in a very short creative cycle, allowing the play to have songs, which is undoubtedly an improvement. It is called an opera only for publicity purposes. The history of Chinese opera can be traced back to the Three Kingdoms Period (A.D. 220–265) when a form of opera called Canjun was popular among the public. Chinese opera became more formalized during the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618–907), under Emperor Li Longji (reigned A.D. 712–756). Emperor Li Longji founded the first known opera troupe in China - the "Pear Garden" - and today's opera professionals are still referred to as "Disciples of the Pear Garden". Many regional opera forms in modern China draw on a tradition extending at least as far back as the twelfth century A.D. when opera was performed in the large public theatres of Hangzhou, capital of the Southern Song Dynasty (A.D. 1179–1276). The most popular form at the time was nanxi (literally "Southern drama"), characterized by sung or spoken dialogue written largely in rhyme. Beginning in the thirteenth century A.D., a northern form of opera called Yuan Zaju which was usually divided into four acts - developed into a sophisticated theatrical style and gained prominence. Yuan Zaju differed from the Nanxi style in that the main character sang a solo using a single major rhyming scheme, while all other characters spoke their lines. Zaju typically featured three major roles: a woman (dan); an older, usually venerable, man (mo); and a young man (sheng). Comic roles (chou) also played a part, providing ironic commentary on the events taking place. Yuan Zaju used mime, makeup, costumes, and roles - all the ingredients that characterized the southern Nanxi style.

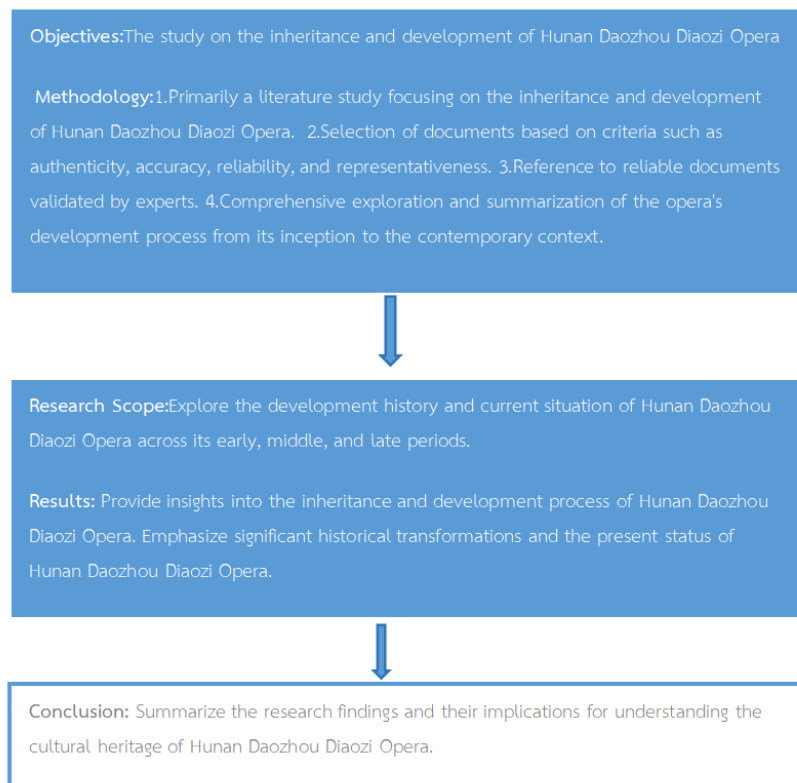
#### 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study "The study on the inheritance and development of hunan daozhou diaozi opera" contains a conceptual framework that is explicitly linked to its title and research objectives, emphasizing "inheritance and development" rather than just reporting historical occurrences. The study of early, medium, and modern historical development serves as an analytical framework for explaining the dynamics of Diaozi Opera inheritance and transformation in various social and cultural situations. This research paradigm is founded on the concept of musical anthropology, which regards music and performing arts as integral parts of culture, inextricably tied to history, society, power structures, and local communities. Daozhou Diaozi Opera is regarded as a cultural process that conveys information, skills, and meaning throughout time, rather than a static art form.

According to this framework, the research will examine the relationship between three major components: (1) the historical and social contexts of each period (early, middle, and contemporary); (2) the forms and mechanisms of Diaozi Opera inheritance, such as oral transmission; and (3) the transmission of knowledge, skills, and meaning over time. The framework investigates (1) the roles of folk artists, the community, and the state; (2) Diaozi Opera's development and adaptation processes in terms of performance form, content, music, and institutional status as an intangible cultural heritage; and (3) Diaozi Opera's development processes in terms of performance form, content, music, and institutional status as an intangible cultural heritage.

These frameworks demonstrate that separating development into early, middle, and present periods is not an end in itself, but rather a tool for understanding how historical and social factors in each era influence transmission and development. Time and environment are structural variables, whereas transmission and development are essential variables that directly address the research questions. As a result, the study framework offers a systematic review of the relationship between the past, present, and the process of cultural transmission. This enables the study to not only explain the history and current position of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera, but also to analytically explain the mechanisms, conditions, and elements that influence the existence and growth of this local opera form, as stated in the title and aims of the research.

Figure 1  
*Conceptual Framework*



## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**1. Population and Sample.** This article is a literature study, this study's population consists of academic publications linked to Zhou Diaozi Opera, Chinese regional opera, and the concept of the inheritance of intangible Chinese cultural heritage, such as books, research papers, academic articles, and government policy documents. The research sample consists of 10 materials chosen through purposive sampling for their relevance to the research aims, academic legitimacy, content accuracy, and representation of information about the development, transmission, and evolution of Zhou Diaozi Opera over time.

**2. Variables.** This study does not seek to investigate quantitative causal linkages, but rather to conduct a qualitative analysis, which can be described as follows. The key variable is the Diaozi Opera inheritance and development process, which includes knowledge transmission methods, changes in performance styles, and the roles of people engaged. Contextual variables include the historical, social, cultural, and state policy contexts of each time (early, middle, and present eras), which influence Diaozi Opera's inheritance and development procedures.

**3. Research scope.** Content Scope is the purpose of this research is to investigate the evolution and transmission of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera, from its inception as a performance art to its development and institutionalization to its current status as an intangible cultural heritage. The research focuses on Daozhou City, Hunan Province, with the spread and influence in adjacent areas serving as a supporting context. Time Scope: The study spans from the Tang Dynasty to the present, explaining the continuity and changes in the transmission and development process.

**4. Research Tools.** The research tool utilized in this study is a Document Analysis Form, which the researcher created as a guideline for reading, analyzing, and categorizing information in documents. It covers important topics such as history and development, transmission patterns, the roles of community and state, musical and performance features, as well as present issues and development strategies. This program enables systematic data analysis in accordance with the research objectives, utilizing data from over ten sources, research articles, and related literature.

**5. Data Collection.** Data was gathered through a secondary examination of published academic sources, such as books, scholarly articles, theses, and research reports on Zhou Diaozi Opera and local Chinese opera. The researcher reviewed, evaluated, and synthesized the data using descriptive content analysis to extract crucial information and systematically explain the transmission and development of Zhou Diaozi Opera over various time periods, in accordance with the research framework.

## 6. RESULTS

The evolution of the development and inheritance of Daozhou Diaozi Opera is a process rich in historical and cultural background and has gone through different stages.

### Early Period - The Origin of Diaozi Opera

Daozhou Diaozi Opera originated in the Tang Dynasty more than a thousand years ago. According to legends of artists such as Fan Enyou, the emperor of the Tang Dynasty liked to sing and watch tunes. He often summoned talented singers to rehearse singing and personally performed drums. When rumors about this spread, folk artists in Daozhou cried with joy and followed suit.

During the festival, dragon lanterns, lions, and flower lanterns were accompanied by the rise of rap art such as folk songs, slang, and minor tunes. (Lifang, 2014) Later, when the clown performed a minor tune or a pair of minor tunes, it gradually became a form of singing and dancing.

Daozhou Diaozi Opera has a strong breath of life, and the lyrics and dialogues are simple and humorous, which is deeply loved by the masses. With the progress of the times and the in-depth processing of literati, performance methods such as lectures, conversations, and duets have gradually formed and are performed on stage in the form of dramas. The themes are often folk loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and righteousness, and the singing is half drama and half tune, reflecting the thoughts, emotions, and wishes of the working people from multiple angles. There are more than 200 plays, including "Li Jin Farm", "Zhang Jindong Borrows Wife", "Land Sends Son", "Wang Yi Lectures", etc. In terms of artistic form, it absorbs the performance techniques of other plays, combines local language habits and customs to innovate, and forms

a play with distinct local characteristics. The lyrics are concise and rough, easy to understand, close to life, close to the characters, and the plot is touching. The language is mainly in the local dialect, humorous and interesting. During happy events and festivals, rural people often invite troupes to perform for three to five days or even ten and a half months.

Because its main storyline reflects folk life and praises the working people, it is often despised and banned by feudal officials. There is no record in the chronicles of the dynasties, and it is considered too vulgar and indecent. Over time, the tune opera has been valued. (Tangfang, 2016) According to the newly compiled "Dao County Chronicles", Daozhou diaozi Opera, Qi Opera, Peking Opera, Puppet Show, etc. are popular in the county, but Daozhou diaozi Opera is the most active.

Middle Period - Development of Diaozi Opera It can be seen from the inheritance records of Daozhou Diaozi Opera that the Diaozi Opera has a history of more than one thousand years. Especially during the Republic of China period, Diaozi Opera troupes were particularly popular, and many professional and semi-professional troupes performed frequently.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China, diaozi opera has received great attention. The Dao County Party Committee and the County Government instructed the County Federation of Trade Unions to recruit diaozi opera artists to form the Xinmin Opera Society. In 1950, Lingling District hired more than ten former Daozhou diaozi masters, including Zhang Xiaqing, He Yuqing, Fan Enyou, Feng Xiangchang, Tu Shengqing, He Guoyu, and Yang Caicai, to form the Lingling Huagu Opera Troupe, and became the main actors of the troupe. Daozhou diaozi and Qiyang Xiaodiao opera were organically integrated to form the local school of Lingling huagu Opera.

The costumes, props, and makeup of Daozhou diaozi are the same as those of other costume dramas. The repertoire of diaozi opera is rich and colorful, which can be divided into four categories: walking cards, minor tunes, paired minor tunes, and silk string minor tunes, with a total of 324 repertoires. There are two kinds of music: literary music and martial arts music. Literary music is generally composed of plucked, rope, and three-stringed instruments, and is also equipped with flutes and low-string instruments. According to the needs of the plot, a piece of music can be varied to achieve the best artistic effect. Martial music includes small drums, tide drums, large cymbals, small cymbals, large gongs, small gongs, etc.

Today - The current situation of Diaozi Opera

#### 1: Establishment of Daozhou Diaozi Drama Troupe

According to the representative inheritor Mr. He Congqing, the Dao County Cultural Center organized a literary youth team in 1979 and hired five veteran artists, Tu Shengqing, He Lingyun, Gong Dongbao, Gong Youbao, and Feng Xiangchang, to teach Daozhou diaozi Opera to the Mangtouzhai Amateur Troupe for one year. Starting in 1980, He Chongqing organized the Daojiang Town Huagu Opera Troupe and served as the troupe leader. Later, the Daojiang Town Huagu Opera Troupe was disbanded and renamed the current Daozhou Diaozi Opera Troupe. The troupe now has an auditorium in Mangtouzhai Village as a rehearsal venue. The auditorium was built with more than 1 million yuan in voluntary donations from villagers, spontaneous fundraising, and village funding. When mentioning the troupe's daily expenses, he

said that the troupe currently has no public funds, and most of the expenses are paid by the actors themselves. (Luo Qian,2021)

2: The government included Diaoxi Opera as a key project of intangible cultural heritage

There is a rule in Daozhou diaozi Opera that anyone who wants to learn from a master must first set up an incense table and bow to Emperor Tang Ming, the founder of the opera before they can start learning. Many folk artists from Daozhou performed in Guangdong, Guangxi, and other places, and gradually took root in various places, especially in Guangxi, where the performance frequency was the highest. Therefore, Tune Opera has been widely spread in Guangxi. As a result, the Guangxi art community took the lead in excavating, sorting, and adapting folk tunes, naming them Caidiao, and organizing rehearsals and group performances. Then, they were filmed and sold in large quantities in the form of CDs. Looking at all the storylines of Caidiao, it can be said that the tunes of Daozhou are similar in content and the melodies are roughly the same. To remove the dregs of Daozhou diaozi Opera, take its essence, and carry it forward, the county cultural department often sends professionals to strengthen the guidance and training of folk artists, organically integrate with emerging literature and art, bring forth new ideas, and form a group of amateur troupes to tour villages and villages during festivals to activate popular culture.

The discovery, organization, and innovation of Daozhou Diaozi Opera have laid a solid foundation for the protection and inheritance of local opera schools and the application for key national intangible cultural heritage projects.

In 2010, with the approval of the Dao County People's Government, the Daozhou Diaozi Opera became a key county-level intangible cultural heritage protection list. The following year, with the approval of the Yongzhou Municipal People's Government, Daozhou Diaozi Opera was listed as a municipal key intangible cultural heritage protection unit. In 2012, with the approval of the Hunan Provincial People's Government, the Daozhou Diaozi Opera was listed as a key intangible cultural heritage protection unit.

Figure 2

Henan Zheng school culture such as "instrument".



Source: Zhuweicheng

The function of next generation inheritors, presentation styles, and the sociocultural context in which they exist. Hunan Daozhou Diaozi opera's present inheritance methods remain essentially master-apprentice transmission, with an emphasis on learning through observation, repetition, and oral instruction. Many major plays and melodies go unrecorded, leaving a substantial amount of knowledge attached to individuals. However, the inheritance process has begun to shift from instructors' private settings to semi-public spaces such as community opera companies, cultural centers, and state or municipal government-sponsored short-term training programs. This demonstrates an effort to transition from an informal to a more structured system.

In terms of new generation inheritors, the study discovered that their numbers are small, and the majority are driven by cultural ties and local identity rather than economic considerations. Some new generation inheritors play an important role as cultural intermediaries between elder artists and contemporary culture, working to learn ancient traditions while also incorporating modern knowledge such as digital technology, performance management, and internet media. While employed for distribution and advertising, the tradition's continuance is uncertain, as many new generations of successors are unable to make opera performing their primary job. Contemporary Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera is adapting to current audiences by changing its presenting style, content, and performance context. This includes reducing performance durations, selecting key scenes or scenes for performance, simplifying language and style, and presenting it in new contexts such as cultural festivals, tourism promotion events, and educational activities,

rather than just performing at traditional ceremonies and community festivals. These adjustments represent Hunan Daozhou Diaozi opera's efforts to sustain audience numbers while also expanding its social reach in today's world. In terms of concerns and obstacles in tradition transmission, the study identifies several major aspects. To begin, the lack of a systematic record of information about the script, melodies, and performance skills makes transmission unstable and susceptible to loss. Second, monetary constraints and artists' inability to find work discourage subsequent generations from seriously pursuing tradition. Third, competition from modern entertainment mediums draws focus away from traditional performing arts. Finally, there is no clear and mutually agreed-upon solution to resolving the contradiction between retaining historic forms and the necessity for adaptation.

In conclusion, this further research demonstrates that the current transmission of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera is a transitional process. Continuity and transformation. The survival of this opera style is dependent not only on conserving the original form, but also on the ability to strike a balance between conveying ancient information, establishing new successors, and adapting to the current socio-cultural context. This is a critical element that accurately captures the spirit of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi opera's heritage and growth.

## 7. DISCUSSIONS

This research reveals that the transmission of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera in a contemporary environment is not exclusively based on traditional methods, but rather on a process that includes master-apprentice transmission, state institutional backing, and local community adaptation initiatives. The study emphasizes that, while oral transmission and practical training from elder artists remain critical to transmission, these processes confront considerable constraints owing to contemporary socioeconomic conditions, affecting knowledge continuity and the number of new successors. New successors take on a new role, transitioning from traditional "inheritors" to "cultural intermediaries" who must bridge the traditional performance style with contemporary social contexts, particularly through presentation adaptations, shorter performance lengths, and expanding performance scope to cultural festivals and educational activities. This is consistent with Luo Qian's work, which emphasizes that transmitting local opera in the era of intangible cultural assets involves more than just conserving form; it is also about negotiating meaning between the past and present. However, our study goes further this conclusion by emphasizing that such conversations take place at the operational level of new successors and are frequently hampered by resource constraints and job security.

The research also demonstrates that, while state policies protecting intangible cultural heritage have elevated Diaozi Opera's symbolic and legal status, they have limitations in supporting real-world transmission processes, particularly in terms of income generation and stable career paths for future generations of inheritors. In China, cultural heritage protection focuses on registration rather than long-term knowledge transmission systems. This study emphasizes the gap between institutional policies and

community-level activities, which has frequently been neglected in earlier research. Furthermore, the study shows the dynamic link between the state, community, and inheritors. The government serves as a policy framework and resource supplier, the community as the social space that maintains Diaozi Opera relevant in daily life, and the inheritors carry major responsibility for sustaining and updating the performance art. This threefold interaction demonstrates that transmission is more than just a cultural process; it is also a social and political process that involves power, resource allocation, and cultural value determination.

The inheritance and development of Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera discovered that Chinese folk music is an integral part of China's rich traditional culture, the spiritual lifeline and inner foundation of the nation, and a fundamental basis for our stability in the face of global cultural turmoil. This is because, according to (Wang, 2020). The strategies for integrating and conserving regional opera traditions in our country remain uncertain. We should constantly enhance the mechanisms for constructing and preserving traditional opera culture, as well as develop new methods for preserving traditional opera culture. This finding is consistent with the findings of (Juan, 2017). Who discovered that the inheritance and development of local Chinese opera is a vital and valuable historical and cultural asset, with practical implications for promoting the inheritance and development of traditional styles.

## 8. ORIGINALITY AND BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

This study contributes original knowledge by examining Hunan Daozhou Diaozi Opera from the perspective of cultural anthropology, emphasizing music as both a carrier and reflection of cultural structures, historical contexts, and ideological meanings. Through systematic document analysis of ten expert-verified sources, the research reveals that the inheritance and development of Daozhou Diaozi Opera are long-term, dynamic processes shaped by historical periods, social environments, and regional characteristics. The findings highlight that the evolution of Daozhou Diaozi Opera is not uniform but varies across different localities, each possessing distinct modes of transmission and artistic expression. As a local opera form facing the risk of extinction, Daozhou Diaozi Opera represents the fragility of traditional culture and underscores the urgent need for protection, rational inheritance, and sustainable development. Moreover, this research advances the body of knowledge by proposing a balanced approach to traditional culture—one that respects cultural heritage while maintaining critical reflection. It clarifies that inheriting traditional culture does not imply uncritical revivalism, but rather a thoughtful process that integrates cultural confidence, historical awareness, and contemporary social needs. In this way, the study enriches understanding of how endangered local operas can be preserved and revitalized within the broader context of global cultural diversity.

## 9. RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Community involvement: Investigate the roles and methods through which local communities can actively participate in the preservation and development of Hunan Daozhou diaozi Opera to ensure its sustainable continuation.

2. Comparative analysis with other local operas: Conduct a comparative analysis of Hunan Daozhou diaozi Opera with other local operas to identify best practices and better understand its unique characteristics.

3. Performance techniques and training: Research and document the performance techniques and training methods of Hunan Daozhou diaozi Opera to develop effective training programs for new performers, ensuring these techniques are preserved over time.

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