

The Development of Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera

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Abstracts

The purposes of the research were to study The Development Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera. The research methodology was qualitative research which takes the Lei Opera troupe organization as the main research object and adopts the field survey method to analyses and discuss the development and inheritance of Lei Opera.

The research findings from the interview and observations showed that in recent years, the performance money of Lei Opera is still rising, and the lei opera performance market has shown a good momentum of continuous development. However, in the booming state of the performance market, it is worrying that the overall artistic level of Lei Opera has not improved too much in recent years, especially the overall level of lei opera actors is obviously behind the three operas of Cantonese opera, Chaozhou opera and Han opera. The main reasons for its existence: 1. The overall level of Lei Opera actors is not high, mainly due to the lack of artistic accumulation of drama and the poor family of drama, which is the biggest congenital deficiency of a young drama. 2. The nature of the troupe leads to the stability of the troupe team; 3. The degree of systematization and standardization of the musical art system and performing art is relatively low.

Keywords: Development of Ecosystem; Talent Cultivation; Lei Opera

Introduction

At present, there are three state-owned troupes in the lei opera industry, namely Zhanjiang Experimental Lei Troupe, Leizhou Lei Troupe and Xuwen County Lei Troupe, while the private troupe has hundreds of troupes. The talents of the thunder drama circle are mainly divided into professional talents and amateur talents. Lei opera was formally established in the 1960s. As a local opera, the qualities of professional actors are very different from those of amateur actors. The actors of the professional group were systematically and professionally trained, while in the early stage, the private group did not really imitate the adjacent Cantonese opera and Qiong opera, and walked through the world by "self-study" (Pan, 2019: 37).

However, the main interest of the audience in watching the opera is to read the story and listen to the singing, rather than the comprehensive level of the four skills and five methods. Therefore, the actors of the troupe usually practice singing skills, while they do not pay much attention to the learning and training of other skills. In the long run, it will form a bad appearance of "singing without thinking, doing and fighting". Due to the need of survival and development of the troupe, the performance tasks signed are extremely heavy, and the troupe has no time for the actors to study, study and improve in performing arts. Therefore,

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the operas that seek to survive in the pure market environment, the troupes that survive on Lei opera have stable state-run development, and the private troupe enterprises are in the business mode of self-responsibility for a long time (Zhang, 2005).

The development of drama lies in the development of talents. From 2020 to 2023, researchers conducted systematic observation and interviews in the Leizhou Peninsula area, in order to understand the outstanding problems of the development ecology and talent cultivation of Lei Opera, and to study the development direction and measures of the drama.

The research background for this study involves the examination of the current landscape of Lei Opera, a local opera established in the 1960s. Presently, the industry comprises three state-owned troupes and a significant number of private troupes. The talents within the Lei Opera community are divided into professional actors and non-professional actors. Professional actors undergo systematic and professional training, while non-professional actors, particularly those in private troupes, historically relied on "self-study" methods without formal training. However, there is an observed discrepancy in the focus of training between professional and non-professional actors, with more emphasis placed on singing skills rather than a comprehensive development of performance abilities. Moreover, due to heavy performance schedules and the survival needs of various troupes, there is limited time available for actors to engage in further study or improvement in performing arts. This context sets the stage for understanding the challenges and disparities within the world of Lei Opera.

Research Objectives

To study The Development Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera.

Literature Review

Lei Opera is one of the traditional Chinese operas, which originated in Guangdong Province during the Qing Dynasty. In recent years, the development of opera lies in the development of talents. Many scholars pay attention to the talent development of opera from all angles and provide a lot of reference value to Lei Opera. (Lovrick, 2011).

Opera, as a treasure in traditional culture, is facing a difficult situation of talent gap and talent shortage. The scarcity of talents has become a difficult problem perplexing the inheritance of opera and a bottleneck restricting the development of opera. It is urgent to improve the training system of opera talent and pay close attention to the construction of opera talent echelon (Niu Xiaozhi, 2014: 102-102.), Opera is a treasure of China's traditional culture, with unparalleled cultural value and spiritual value. Opera is facing the embarrassing situation of talent fault. The lack of Chinese opera performance talents has become the inheritance and development of Chinese opera in China. Although the theoretical framework of drama talent training is not put forward systematically, the analysis of the actual situation can also provide some reference for the discussion of the theory of drama talent training (Song, 2015: 30-30.).

Song (2016:38-39), discusses that Chinese opera has a long history and is a bright pearl in the long history of Chinese national culture. It is believed that the mainstream historical position of opera art is seriously challenged by the profound changes brought about by China's economic opening up. In the face of the inheritance and continuation of opera intangible heritage, it is still our opera workers to cultivate more opera art talents with Virtue and art. Chen Naihuan, in the clown- -On the Role and Performance of the clown (Chen, 2013: 221-223).

These documents discuss the theoretical problems of opera talent cultivation from different perspectives, and have certain reference value for understanding the basic principles and methods of opera talent cultivation, as well as guiding the practical work.

The literature review highlights the significance of talent development within Lei Opera, emphasizing its importance for the inheritance and development of this traditional Chinese art form. Scholars have identified a scarcity of talents as a crucial issue, with implications for the future of opera. There is an urgent need to address this talent gap through improved training systems and by focusing on the construction of opera talent echelons. Furthermore, the discussion emphasizes the cultural and spiritual value of Chinese opera and the necessity of cultivating more opera art talents in the face of economic changes. The theoretical discussions regarding opera talent cultivation provide valuable insights into the foundational principles and methods necessary for guiding practical work and addressing the challenges faced by Lei Opera in talent development and inheritance.

Research Methodology

Through qualitative research methods: by interview and observation, the research results of the outstanding problems of the ecological environment and talent cultivation are formed, for a more flexible and extensive data collection, semi-structured interviews were used in this study, Researchers will also record audio and video during the participatory observation process. The above literature and audio and video materials will be included in the scope of the research objects. and serve as the basis for discussing the development direction of the development and inheritance of Lei Opera.

Research tools: interview Form and observation form.

Data collection: The basic criteria for the selection of interview subjects are as follows: (1) they are closely related to the studied Lei opera; (2) they are interested in the study and can actively cooperate and share relevant experiences; (3) they agree to record the interview, allowing the researcher to write the relevant materials and to conduct one-to-one interviews with the artists, including recordings, notes, photos and videos.

Research Conceptual Framework

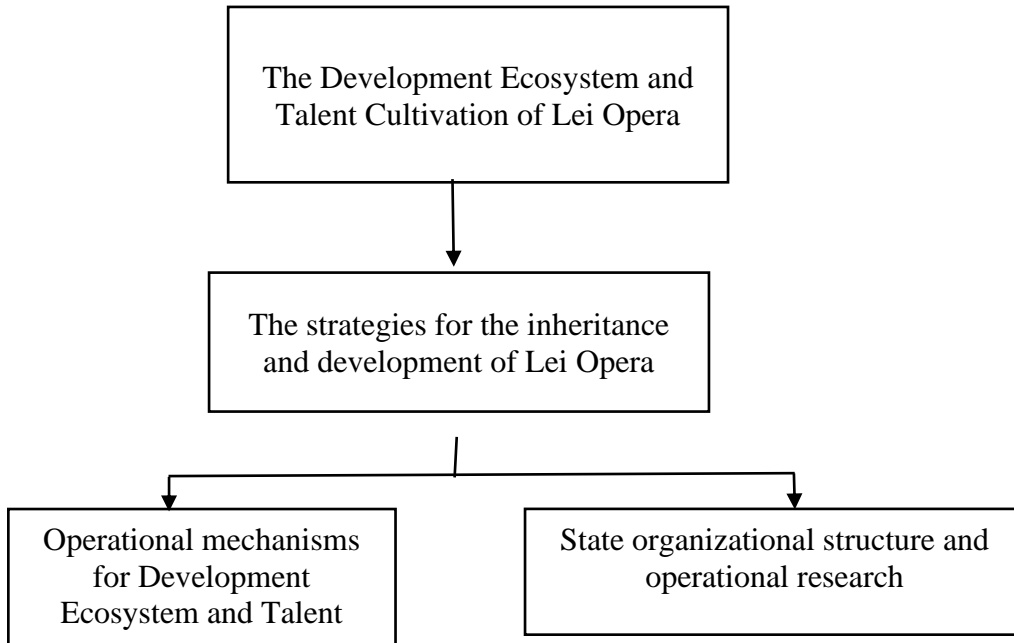


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Results

The Development Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera

1. Introduction of the organization of the Lei Opera troupe

In 1959, Zhanjiang Experimental Opera Troupe was established; in 1964, Zhanjiang Leizhou Lei Opera Troupe was renamed Zhanjiang District; in 1986, Zhanjiang District was renamed Zhanjiang Experimental Opera Troupe; in 2012, Zhanjiang Experimental Opera Troupe was renamed Zhanjiang Experimental Opera Troupe Co., Ltd., which is now the representative project protection unit of provincial intangible cultural heritage. Since the establishment of Zhanjiang Experimental Lei Opera Troupe Co., Ltd., it has done a lot of work in the creation, research, communication and popularization of Lei Opera, and has been contributing to the inheritance and development of Lei Opera.

The group has been responsible for the inheritance, research and development of Lei opera. The thunder dramas "Village Head", "Liang Hongyu" and "The Lady of Lingnan" were performed in Beijing in 1992, 2001 and 2015 respectively; among which "Village Chief" won the "Five One Project Award" of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Central Committee of the CPC Central Committee in 1992; Lin Fen, the leading actor of "Liang Hongyu", won the 19th Chinese Drama Plum Blossom Award; "The Lady of Lingnan" participated in the 4th National Minority Drama performance, and won the awards of excellent drama, excellent music singing design and excellent performance. In 2003, Liang Hongyu won the fifth Five One Project Award; in 2007, Diao Chan won the sixth Five One

Project Award; in 2017, Our Lady of Lingnan won the 10th Five One Project Award. In 2019, "Dig Treasure" won the 11th "Five One Project Award" of Guangdong Province. The troupe participated in the eighth, 9th, 11th, 13th, 14th art festival, and won the awards of outstanding play, outstanding musical singing, outstanding director, outstanding actor, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, ten young actors, with 20 gold, 36 silver and 47 bronze. The troupe has performed in Hong Kong, Macao, France, Malaysia, Fiji and other countries.

1.2 Zhanjiang Xie Yi Leizhou Opera Troupe

The troupe is a private troupe owned by Zhou Zhizhi. The performance venues are mainly in Leizhou area, with more urban performances for 300 years. During the epidemic period, there are more than 100 performances, including Xu Shaofen, Zhuang Mengmeng, etc, Sheng, Chen Rongfeng, Lin Hao, Chen Liang, Lin Feng, pine bamboo, Wushi, Jishi, Yang, tourists, etc., while relatively few in urban areas. Its plays are mainly used to buy plays that others think are better, and cannot be created by themselves. Without the epidemic, the annual net income is more than 100,000 yuan. Later, due to the epidemic, it is impossible to pay wages and other expenses, so it will be closed in 2022.

1.3 Troupe member structure

Above, the nature of the troupe is different, it has an obvious difference. 1. Zhanjiang Lei Opera Experimental Troupe has a long history, and the actors have graduated from professional colleges, so the performance skills are professional, while private enterprises are a group of lovers doing what they like together, and the requirements for actors are not high. 2. Professional troupes are state-owned, and people are willing to "seek stability mentality" to work in the original units. Private troupes, the salary is generally higher than the state-run, the business model is independent, the market to survive. Therefore, although it was created in a glorious period and was once brilliant, it was severely hit during the epidemic period and only lasted for four years.

In 2018, the number of state-owned and private troupes was 63, with the members of around 40, the largest and the backbone of the group, followed by people around 24 and 50. The picture shows as follows:

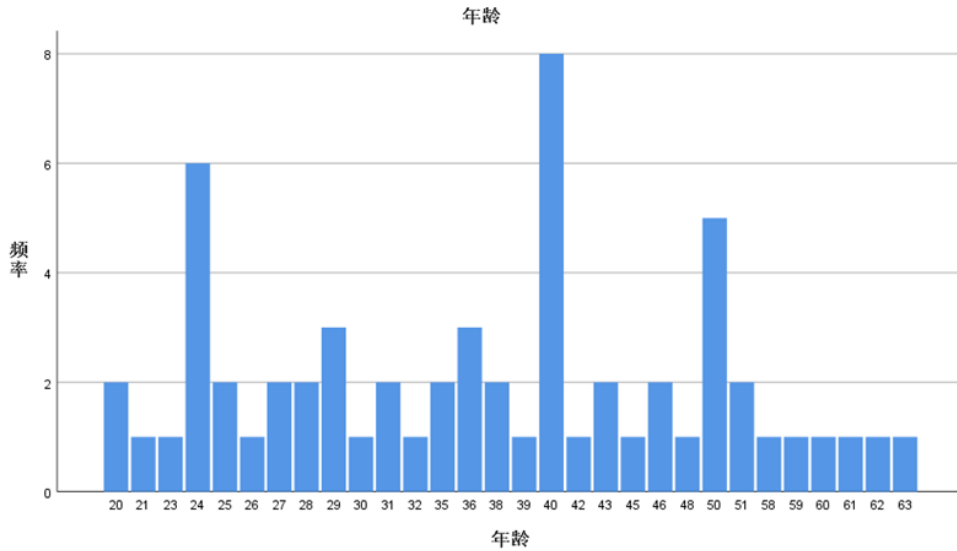


Figure1: Age summary table of state-owned and private theater troupes
 Source: Ye Zhanxia, 2024

The results show that 1.40 years old actors are the most stable team in the group, the main reason is that 40 years old face family pressure and show their best skills.2. The best age when you are young is at 24 years old. The age of 24 is relatively clear, everything is still under observation, and the mentality is relatively stable.3. Before the age of 40, the team is relatively not balanced, which shows that people go back and forth in the performance process, and the echelon is not obvious enough.4. After the age of 40, people are over 100, old people have no energy, and the golden period of performance has passed, the people of this team are relatively stable, and the number of people is almost the same.

2. Income of the troupe members for Development Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation

Zhanjiang Lei Opera Experimental Co., Ltd. is a state-owned theater troupe. There are two main ways of income, Government financial appropriation: State-run troupes usually receive government financial appropriation for the basic operation and maintenance of the troupe. The money can be used to pay for the actors, make performances, rent space, and buy props and costumes.2. Box office revenue from performances: state-owned troupes earn box office revenue by holding performances in theaters or other venues. This portion of the income is usually used to supplement the operating expenses and possibly for the development and improvement of the troupe.

However, Zhanjiang Xie ilei Troupe is a private troupe, with commercialization as its main goal, so its income may be different from that of state-owned troupes.1. Box office revenue: Similar to state-run troupes, private troupes earn box office revenue by selling performance tickets. This includes performances from theaters, cultural and art centers, commercial places, and revenue from audience tickets.2. Online platform live streaming and paid viewing income: With the development of the Internet, private theater troupes can also

perform through online live streaming platforms and earn income through audience paid viewing.

Therefore, the following differences occur in terms of income:

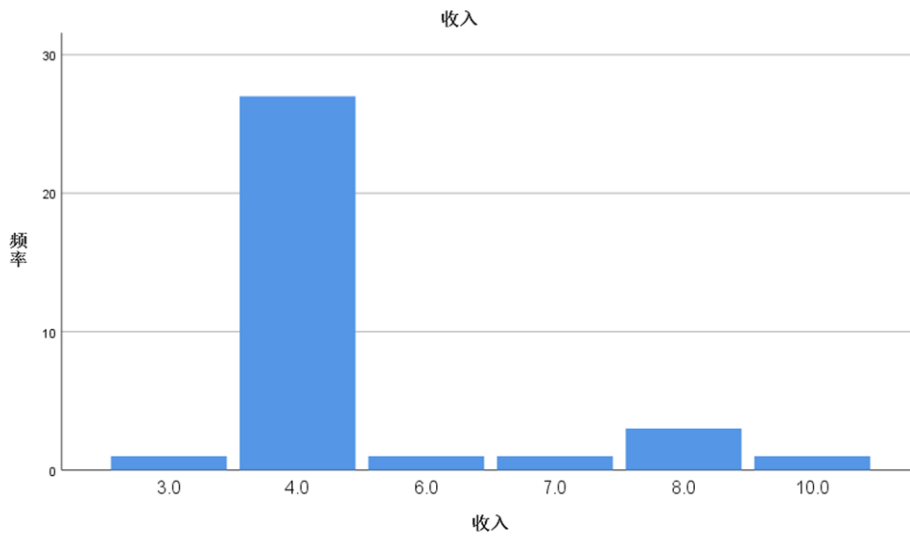


Figure2: Zhanjiang Experimental Lei Troupe Experimental Company
Source: Ye Zhanxia, 2024

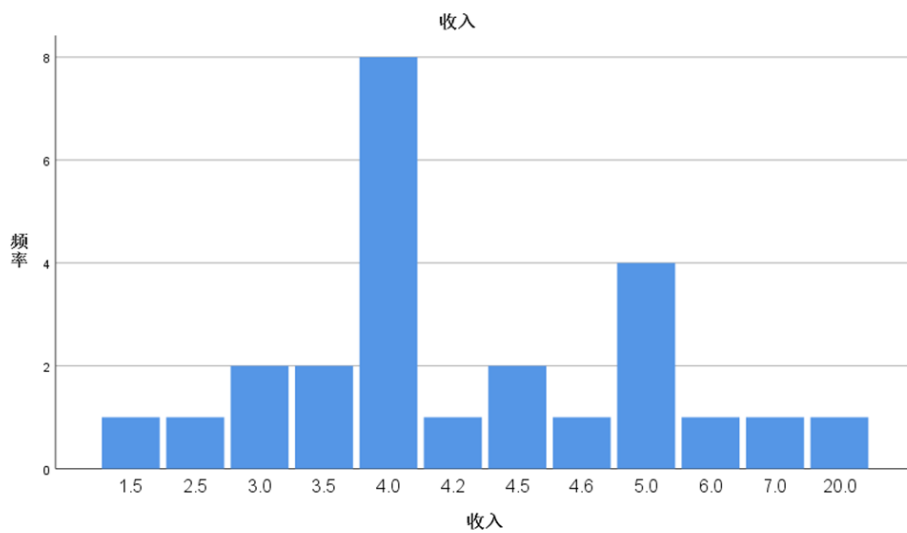


Figure3: Zhanjiang Xiilei Troupe
Source: Ye Zhanxia, 2024

The above table shows that the income of state-owned and private troupes is about 40,000, which also meets the unified requirements of the market. In terms of wages, private sector is much more than state-owned. State-owned wages are generally lower than those of private ones. The reasons are as follows: 1. Different modes of operation, leading to the biggest difference in wages. The state government allocates salaries for the state, and the private government performs on their own; 2. During the state government, the performance time is less than the private government, resulting in the income deviation; 3. Although the state-run troupe has a low salary, it is still an "iron rice bowl" in the eyes of young people, with full psychological security and willing to stay. 4. Private enterprises strive to perform more performances to obtain greater economic benefits. They will perform more than 20 or even 30 performances every month to maximize their income.

Most of the actors of Zhanjiang Experimental Co., Ltd. come from Zhanjiang Art School and Zhanjiang Bud Art School. The actors of Lei Opera are relatively standardized, so the performance opportunities of this group are relatively stable, and the actors can continue to work and live in this group. However, Zhanjiang Xie ilei Troupe, in order to earn money, cannot allow actors to study or study, and its living space is limited. See the illustration below:

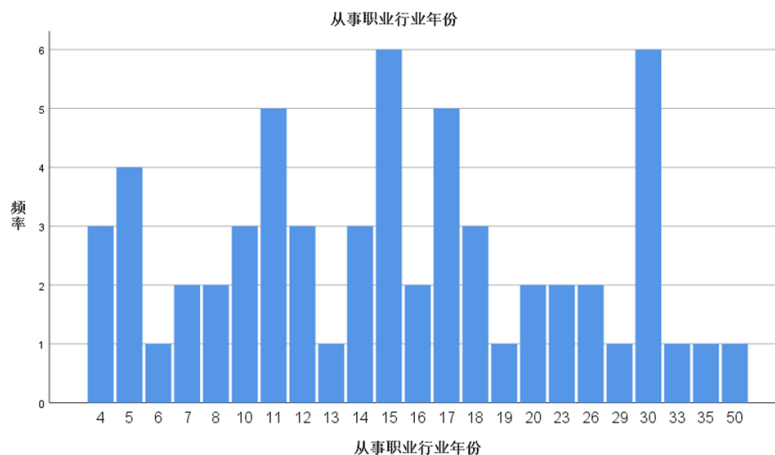


Figure4: Years of work in the industry
 Source: Ye Zhanxia, 2024

The above table shows that among the state-owned and private personnel, the 30 people are engaged in the most, followed by 15 years, 17 years, 18 years and 11 years, which are more than 10 years. It also shows that the drama, reform and restructuring led to a group of Leizhou lovers engaged in this industry, which is the performance of the government's attention and support.

Most of the actors and members of the private troupe are lovers, only zhengdan and Zhengsheng belong to professionals, and the state-owned troupe are relatively more professionals. This is also the expression of the local people's demand for Lei Opera, who think that watching the drama depends on zhengdan and zhengsheng. Relatively speaking, the state-run troupe has government support, has more opportunities, and has more opportunities

to perform on the influential stage, so it has won more honors. Although people have a relatively low salary in the troupe, it has its reputation influence and is willing to stay in the troupe, which is the beginning of its attraction. Its performance environment and living and working conditions determine the stability of artistic talents.

The task of high-level construction of Lei opera art is shouldered by three state-owned troupes, especially Zhanjiang Experimental Lei Opera Co., Ltd. They have many opportunities to perform, so they cannot afford to perform in other time, leading to a poor life. However, compared with private troupes, the living conditions of state-owned troupes are relatively better. First, state-run troupes have their own rehearsal venues and their own fixed assets. Secondly, the performers of state-owned troupes are more stable than private troupes, and the performance guarantee is better. Unlike private troupes, they are easy to dissolve once they are under operating pressure. Third, state-owned troupes have more or less some government grants, and some also have purchasing performances, which are much better than private troupes. Fourth, it is easier for state-owned troupes to apply for creative funds than for private ones. In recent years, the key new plays created and arranged by state-owned troupes have received financial support from provincial and municipal departments.

3. The Development Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera

The Development Ecosystem of Lei Opera refers to the intricate network of factors influencing the growth and sustainability of Lei Opera as a traditional Chinese performing art form. This includes historical, cultural, economic, technological, and policy-related elements that shape its evolution and impact. Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera pertains to the training, education, and professional development programs designed to nurture performers and practitioners within the realm of Lei Opera. This involves the cultivation of skills, knowledge, and expertise essential for sustaining and evolving this traditional art form.

The Development Ecosystem of Lei Opera faces challenges such as dwindling financial support, diminishing audience interest, and the impact of modern entertainment forms on traditional art. Talent Cultivation encounters issues related to declining numbers of young practitioners, lack of institutional support for training programs, and the need to adapt training methods to attract and retain new talent. The development and inheritance of Lei Opera The research findings from the interview and observations showed that in recent years, the performance money of Lei Opera is still rising, and the lei opera performance market has shown a good momentum of continuous development. However, in the booming state of the performance market, it is worrying that the overall artistic level of Lei Opera has not improved too much in recent years, especially the overall level of lei opera actors is obviously behind the three operas of Cantonese opera, Chaozhou opera and Han opera. The main reasons for its existence: 1. The overall level of Lei Opera actors is not high, mainly due to the lack of artistic accumulation of drama and the poor family of drama, which is the biggest congenital deficiency of a young drama. 2. The nature of the troupe leads to the stability of the troupe team; 3. The degree of systematization and standardization of the musical art system and performing art is relatively

Discussion

Research objectives was studying The Development Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera. the result consistent with (Chen,2010 : 46-47) However, in the booming state of the performance market, it is worrying that the overall artistic level of Lei Opera has not improved too much in recent years, especially the overall level of lei opera actors is obviously behind the three operas of Cantonese opera, Chaozhou opera and Han opera. The main reasons for its existence: The overall level of Lei Opera actors is not high, mainly due to the lack of artistic accumulation of drama and the poor family of drama, which is the biggest congenital deficiency of a young drama. The nature of the troupe leads to the stability of the troupe team; The degree of systematization and standardization of the musical art system and performing art is relatively low (Song, 2016 : 38-38).

Recommendation

1. Practical Recommendations

In order to make the Lei Theatre more appealing to a wider range of individuals, it is imperative that we push the boundaries, comprehend how youth are received, keep up with contemporary culture, alter performance formats, add live performances to new media broadcasts, and pay close attention to the needs of the audiences in these age groups. Development and inheritance, actor training follow-up is crucial. Generally speaking, the government can fund more in actor training, local theater competitions, and other related activities. In terms of publicity, it is advised that local industry's potential be fully utilized in all respects in order to maximize economic returns; theater groups should be invited into schools in order to teach kids about their hometown's culture and give them the confidence to identify their own culture. It is advised that instruction be formalized and subjected to daily evaluation.

2. Recommendation for future research

When considering future research on the Development Ecosystem and Talent Cultivation of Lei Opera, it is essential to explore various aspects that contribute to its historical significance, economic influence, training programs for performers, technological integration, globalization, and institutional support. By delving into these areas, a more comprehensive understanding can be gained, shedding light on the intricate nuances of this traditional Chinese opera form and providing valuable insights for its continued enrichment and promotion.

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