

Studying the Jingzhou Huagu Opera for preservation

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Abstract

The research purposes are:(1) To study the Jingzhou Huagu Opera; (2) To construct the Jingzhou Huagu Opera guidebook; (3) To use the guidebook for preservation. The research methodology was ethnomusicological qualitative and quantitative research, gathering data by observation and interview three key informant expert on Jingzhou Huagu Opera and analyzing data by descriptive analysis.

The research findings were:(1) The music of Jingzhou Huagu Opera is closely related to the intonation of the local dialect. The operatic vocal music mainly includes Gao Qiang, Qishui Qiang, Siping Qiang, Daluo Qiang, and some single ditties. At first, the Jingzhou Huagu Opera was only accompanied by percussion music to render the atmosphere. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, the accompanying music was developed. Its accompanying instruments include drums, gongs, cymbals, huqin, pipa, Yanqin, flute and so on. (2) The existing repertoire of Jingzhou Huagu Opera can be divided into three categories, namely traditional opera, newly edited ancient opera and modern opera. With rich performance skills and broad story themes, it is close to people's life, especially good at interpreting tragic stories. (3) Use the guide book of Jingzhou Huagu Opera to promote and preserve activities in its popular areas, and put forward suggestions and measures.

Keywords: Jingzhou Huagu Opera; Preservation; Hubei

Introduction

Chinese opera is the treasure of the traditional culture of the Chinese nation. It has a long history and was formed in the Southern Song Dynasty in the early 12th century. It is a comprehensive art integrating literature, music, dance, art, performance, etc. In the process of spreading, it has formed hundreds of varieties in various regions of the country. According to 1982 statistics, there were 317 local operas. Among them, Jingzhou Huagu Opera is one of the main local operas in Hubei Province. It was included in the first batch of national intangible Cultural Heritage list approved by The State Council on May 20, 2006.

Jingzhou Huagu Opera takes root in folk culture and is the product of people's social life in Jingchu area (Man, 1992). Through Jingzhou Huagu Opera, we can more directly understand the world view, life customs, aesthetic taste and artistic creativity of the people in this area, namely their collective mentality and behavior pattern. In other words, Jingzhou Huagu Opera is not only an entertainment or artistic phenomenon, but also a local folk culture and part of social life. Therefore, the study of Jingzhou Huagu Opera should not only focus on the music and performance itself, but also pay more attention to the connection between this cultural phenomenon and people (Peiyi, 2013).

In addition, around the 21st century, with the rapid development of economic construction, China's traditional music is facing a crisis of survival and drama is in trouble. In this context, it is necessary for us to collect and sort out the materials of Jingzhou Huagu Opera to study the changes of its music and inheritance mode under the influence of social environment and to investigate the current situation, so as to effectively preserve and develop this cultural heritage.

Research Objectives

1. To study the Jingzhou Huagu Opera
2. To construct the Jingzhou Huagu Opera guidebook
3. To use the guidebook for preservation

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative and quantitative mixes method in which qualitative research is to study Jingzhou Huagu Opera and construct the guidebook, and the quantitative research is used right after the conference for Jingzhou Huagu Opera preservation in which generating the data on returning questionnaire till by the audiences, in order to know the feedback of the conference. The data will calculate by rating scale.

1. Interview: The practitioners of Jingzhou Huagu Opera, namely insiders, were interviewed to understand their music concept and behavior.

2. Observation: Researchers go on field trips to observe troupe or troupe members in daily life and performance activities, interview key informants, understand their artistic concepts and behaviors, as well as the status of performance institutions, and collect first-hand materials needed for research.

3. Descriptive analysis: The researchers transcribed the singing music of Jingzhou Huagu Opera into western music, and classified the artistic characteristics of the singing, as well as the composition of the band.

4. Compare: In the study of the change of the inheritance mode of Jingzhou Huagu Opera, this paper compares the practice situation of Jingzhou Huagu Opera performers in different times and analyzes the influence of social changes.

Research Findings

1. Music

Jingzhou Huagu Opera is rooted in the rich folk music soil of Jiangnan Plain. It has beautiful singing style and strong local flavor. It has formed its own singing characteristics through the creation, processing and refining of folk artists in the past dynasties, and absorbed other artistic nutrients. It is mainly divided into two categories, namely the main vocal and the single melody. The main vocal music has Gaoqiang, Qishui, Siping, Daluo. They are the most used singing tunes in the repertoire, and most of them are Banqiang style structure. They are good at expressing drama conflicts, characterizing characters and expressing different emotions. They are the main body of singing tunes in Jingzhou Huagu Opera. The single melody is evolved from folk minor tunes spread from local and other places, most of them are Qupai style structure, and the mood is relatively simple.

The music of Huagu Opera in Jingzhou is evolved on the basis of local languages and folk music. It is based on the tones of the local languages of Tianmen, Mianyang and Qianjiang, and its tone tends to be basically similar to that of Mandarin, but the four tones fluctuate and dance obviously. This kind of fluctuation between the tones of the big jump, constitute Jingzhou Huagu Opera music loud, rough style of melody. In addition, due to the proximity of Tianmen, Mianyang and other places to Wuhan, Jingzhou Huagu Opera artists often performed with Han Opera and Chu opera artists during the Republic of China period, so the singing melody constantly absorbed the local intonation of Wuhan, which added progressive melody to the high-pitched wind of Jingzhou Huagu Opera and enriched the singing color.

The language tone of Jiangnan Plain can be divided into two tributaries according to the water system: One is along the Tongzhou River, Qianjiang, Mianyang, Jianli, Honghu and other local languages for the characteristics of singing, called Zhouhe school; The other is along the Hanshui River area Tianmen, Jingshan, Hanchuan and other places for the characteristics of the singing style, called Xianghe school. Zhouhe school singing ups and downs, rough and simple; Xianghe school melodious and graceful, lyricism is strong. In the long-term artistic practice, as artists communicate with each other, they learn from each other in singing, and on the basis of maintaining their unique singing styles, the singing has developed from improvisational colloquial to smooth melodic direction.

In Jingzhou Huagu Opera, most male and female characters sing in the same tune. The same voice, in the singing style, the difference is relatively large. The roles of traditional drama are divided into three categories: Dan, Sheng and Chou. Dan is divided into dignified and gentle ZhengDan and charming Huadan, their singing melody is more gorgeous. Sheng is divided into elegant and handsome XiaoSheng, vigorous and veteran LaoSheng, whose singing melody is simpler than Dan's. Chou's character is more witty and comical, and his singing melody is even more simplified.

The main vocal range of Jingzhou Huagu Opera is about two octaves, in $g-g^2$, and the common vocal range is C^1-f^2 . According to the different voice conditions and roles of the actors, the same singing voice can choose different vocal ranges in the same key. Generally speaking, Dan and Xiaosheng have a wide vocal range, while Laosheng and Chou sing in the middle and low registers. Below is a Gaoqiang melody sung by Dan, who has a good voice. The range is $d-c^2$, close to two octaves.

27



幼 主 爷 锦 绣 (喂) 龙 (呃) 合 (哏)
You zhu ye jin xiu (wei) long (en) he (ye)
(Above lyric)

30



台 令 七 乙 令 台 令 台 大 大 大 各 大 汉 高 祖 (喂)
Tai ling qi yi ling tai ling tai da da da ge da hang gao zu (wei)
(Gong and drum rhythm) Emperor Gaozu of the Han Dynasty

34



斩 白 蛇 (呀) 时 去 (哏) 五 载 (呀 哏)
Zhan bai she (ya) shi qu (ye) wu zhai (ya en)
Five years have passed since the white snake was kill.

37



(上句连下)
东 (呃) 西 征 (乃 啊) 南 北 剿 (喂)
Dong (en) xi zheng (nai a) nan bei jiao (wei)
East West from the draft, the fighting north Conquests civil war

40



四 路 (喂) 安 (乃) 排 (呀) 张 子 房 (呃)
Si lu (wei) an (nai) pai (ya) zhang zi fang (en)
Four way arrangement, Zhang Zifang

45



背 宝 剑 (乃 嘿) 访 过 元 帅 (哏) 访 韩 信 (哪)
Bei bao jian (nai hei) fang guo yuan shuai (ye) fang han xin (na)
Carry a sword, visited the marshal, visit Han xin.

50



辅 汉 王 (呃) 拜 印 (乃) 登 (乃) 台 (哏)
Fu han wang (en) bai yin (nai) deng (nai) tai (ye)
Assisting the King of Han, official seal, go on stage.

55 (上句过门)
 那 韩 信 (乃) 受 了 印 (乃) 统 兵 的 元 帅 (哏) 哏)
 Na han xin (nai) shou le yin (nai) tong bing de yuan shuai (ye ye)
 Han xin was sealed and became the marshal in charge of the army.

60
 暗 渡 陈 仓 (哏) 明 修 栈 道 (哏) 霸 王 (哏) 难 (乃) 猜 (呀 哈)
 An du chen cang (en) ming xiu zhan dao (en) ba wang (en) nan (nai) cai (ya ha)
 The plank road is built openly and secretly, and the overlord is in trouble.

64 (下句过门)
 九 里 山 (乃) 十 面 埋 伏 (喂) 把
 Jiu li shan (nai) shi mian mai fu (wei) ba
 Jiuli Mountain, ambush from all sides.

68
 悉 阵 来 (哏 哎 哏 哏) 摆 (哏) 仓 冬 仓 冬
 E zhen lai (ye ai en en) bai (ye) cang dong cang dong
 (Gong and drum rhythm)

73
 仓 冬 冬 仓 冬 冬 仓 冬 冬 仓 冬 冬 仓 令 仓 令 仓 乙 令 仓 令 仓 乙 令 仓 逼 (哏) 霸 王 (哏)
 Cang dong dong cang dong dong cang dong dong cang dongdong cang ling cang ling cang yi ling cang ling cang yi ling cang
 (Gong and drum rhythm) bi (ye) ba wang (e)

77
 在 乌 江 (哏) 自 刎 (哪) 头 来 (哏)
 Zai wu jiang (en) zi wen (na) tou lai (ye)
 The overlord who was forced to commit suicide in Wujiang River.

2. Accompaniment instruments

Chinese opera accompaniment bands can be divided into Wenchang and Wuchang, that is, silk and bamboo music and percussion. Before 1949, Jingzhou Huagu Opera did not have Wenchang, but only accompanied by human voice and gongs and drums. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Wenchang band came into being in Jingzhou Huagu Opera, and gradually established modern opera composition techniques.

The establishment of modern bands varies depending on the group and performance needs. Generally, the band size of the county-level Jingzhou Huagu Drama Troupe consists of more than ten people. Accompanying instruments include drums, bantams, gongs, cymbals, jinghu, erhu, pipa, flute, dulcimer, etc. As shown in the picture.



Figure: Jingzhou Huagu Opera Band
Source: Photo taken by Wu Liang, 2023

(The musical instruments in the first row from the left are: Erhu, Jing Erhu, and Jing Hu; the musical instruments in the second row from the left are: Flute, Yangqin, Pipa, Drum, and Ban; the musical instruments in the third row from the left are small Gongs, Cymbals, and large Gongs.)

3. Tragic stories and performance styles

Since its birth in the late Qing Dynasty, Jingzhou Huagu Opera has a history of 200 years. During this period, the historical background and social environment have undergone great changes. Like other kinds of operas, Jingzhou Huagu Opera inevitably changes its subject matter and content. But no matter how the evolution, the expression of emotion is the eternal theme of the drama, which is the most attention of people as emotional animals, and changes only the way of life and thinking and external forms, especially in Jingzhou Huagu Opera.

There are many kinds of emotions, such as love, friendship, family, heroic, warm and tragic feelings. The dramas in the North are good at expressing heroic feelings, while the dramas in the South are good at writing elegance, while the Huagu Opera in Jingzhou Plain is good at expressing tragic feelings. Most of its representative plays are sad sounds, and the bitter feelings and hardships that can resonate with the masses at the bottom are the characteristics of the dramas, which are often vividly expressed. This has nothing to do with the origin of this art and the main audience it is facing.

Jingzhou Huagu Opera began as "Yanmen Huagu". As the name suggests, this is a folk "begging art". As a kind of grassroots art, from the beginning of its emergence, it reflected the sad life of farmers and people at the bottom of the old society. According to literature records, although the Jiangnan Plain area is rich and prosperous, it often suffers from floods, and the cultivated land is mostly turned into lakes. In the years of famine and war, they sang the Huagu tune to beg for food and busk to make a living, and the sad song is the portrayal of their life and heart, and can most arouse the resonance of the masses. Jiangnan Plain has always had

"listen to the Huagu tune, ill do not take medicine", it can be seen that its spiritual comfort for ordinary people. Until now, the Huagu Opera performance in the Jiangnan Plain area, every time the stage of the sad chamber sounded, the audience will clap, and the folk activities such as giving gifts are also mostly at this time. The sad tone of Jingzhou Huagu Opera has been fully developed, and a number of sad operas have been accumulated. Such as "Chen Shimei denied his ex-wife", "Qin Xuemei", "Water Man Blue Bridge", "Crossing Pu Bridge", "Lv Mengzheng", "Conch Dun", "Lost Gold Flowers", "Lotus Pond", "Daughter's blood", "Zhu's liver", "Dong Yong respectively", "Snail shrimp sisters", "Moon shining empty Mountain ", "Li Tianbao mourning", "tears of love", "Dou E Injustice", "Filial daughter Strange Injustice", "Meng Jiang Nv crying on the Great Wall" and so on. They are also the representative plays of the drama, active on the stage for a long time, we can see the artistic charm of Jingzhou Huagu Opera, its effect on mobilizing the audience's emotions and rendering the scene atmosphere is quite obvious.

The main tone of Jingzhou Huagu Opera, in addition to Beiqiang, Daoluo is also a special sad tone. Its melody is deep, and it is mostly used for middle-aged and elderly characters to tell painful stories and express their feelings of grief and anger. The Huanhuan evolved from it is more low and desolate, and often gives people a sense of spookiness and creepiness. There is also Baiyun, a variant of Qishui, whose emotions are depressed and sentimental, and more about the unfortunate past and the feeling of long-distance love. In order to tell the depressing feelings, the melody is mostly in the middle and bass regions. Music is the main means of expression of drama, and for local opera, it is also an important symbol to distinguish different kinds of drama. From the function of the singing music of Jingzhou Huagu Opera, it is not difficult to find that the play has a strong sadness color, so its theme is especially to write sadness. Even comedies or dramas with a happy ending should be interwoven to express sad feelings or scenes, and because it is born in the countryside and has a natural flavor of the countryside, Jingzhou Huagu Opera is good at expressing the sad stories of ordinary people at the bottom of the countryside, which is the constant characteristics of Jingzhou Huagu Opera subject matter.

Discussion

How to preserve and develop China's excellent traditional culture, including opera, has become an important issue before the Chinese government and people. As one of the four major local operas in Hubei, the development of Jingzhou Huagu Opera has also been stagnant and encountered crisis. In the 1990s, due to the popularization of televisions, DVDs, and later computer networks, people's cultural life became richer and there were more choices for entertainment. This resulted in a large loss of audiences for stage arts such as opera. The performance market of Jingzhou Huagu Opera has inevitably been severely impacted, especially in cities rich in cultural resources. In the past, Huagu Opera was loved by the masses both in cities and rural areas. Later, it gradually became difficult to sell tickets for Huagu Opera performances in cities. The troupe mainly targets the rural market, and its performance venues are mostly outdoors. However, due to the aging of the audience, compared with the past when Jingzhou Huagu Opera was performed in rural areas, the number of farmers' audience has also dropped sharply (Hongzhi, 1992).

In terms of performance income, performance groups funded by national and government financial allocations were once difficult to maintain in the mid-to-late 1990s because the financial funds they received were limited and the performance market was shrinking. The folk theater troupes active in rural areas are facing a test of survival (Jizhou, 2017). They have no financial support and rely solely on performances to survive. On the one hand, these folk theater troupes have to face the fact that there is a serious loss of young audiences and increasingly fierce market competition; on the other hand, they also have to deal with competitive pressure from other art forms.

Profit-seeking is the nature of the market economy, and the pressure to survive means that folk theater troupes do not have a long-term vision or strong financial strength to carry out long-term planning and reform the arts. The stage is crude, the content of the repertoire is outdated, the form is solidified, and there is a lack of professional and excellent screenwriters, directors and actors. These are common and long-standing problems in folk theater troupes and professional theater troupes. The above-mentioned issues also need to be paid attention to and discussed (Liang, 2005).

Recommendation

1. Practical Recommendations

Through the collection and review of literature, the researcher found that the current research results on Jingzhou Huagu Opera are mainly the analysis and introduction of its general musical characteristics and rules, and in terms of research scope, it is mainly based on the traditional opera before the 1990s. as its research object. Therefore, there is still room for research on the music of Jingzhou Huagu Opera: First of all, in the future, we can conduct longitudinal diachronic and horizontal comparative studies on the music of Jingzhou Huagu Opera.

2. Recommendation for future research

In addition, the research method of musical anthropology is also used to examine the symbiotic relationship between Jingzhou Huagu Opera music and the background culture on which it depends, and to observe the behaviors and concepts of the people on which this art relies. Regarding this drama, there are obviously many issues worth thinking about and solving.

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