

Research on the general education mode of Xiangkun opera

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Abstract

With the rapid development of Internet technology, human society into the era of big data, education mode is also moving towards the road of change. The process of bringing Xiangkun into general education is the process of cultivating the confidence of national culture, the process of cultivating students' acceptance and acquisition of traditional culture, and a way to extend the form of Chinese traditional art. This paper combines specific teaching practice, explores the feasibility and mode of the implementation of the general education model of Xiangkun Opera from the local Kun opera introduction, the general education combined with local culture, the significance of Hunan Kunqu Opera into general education, the purpose of Hunan Kunqu opera into general education, the reform method of Kunqu opera general education mode.

Keywords: Internet; Region; Culture; Digital

I. The unique form of Kunqu Opera—the introduction of Xiangkun

Xiangkun is the abbreviation of Kunqu Opera in Hunan Province. It is one of the local operas in Hunan, which has homologous origin with Sukun in south of China and Beikun in north of China. As most of the entertainers and leaders come from Guiyang, Xiangkun is also called "Guiyang Kun Group". In 1957, it was officially named as Xiangkun[1].

Kunqu Opera originated in the Kunshan area of Suzhou during the Jiaqing Period of the Ming dynasty (1531-1541). During the Wanli period, the influence of Kunshan tune increasingly expanded and spread to surrounding cities. After that, Kunqu opera spread from the south to the north and appeared several branches such as Northern Kunqu Opera, Southern Kunqu Opera, Sukun Opera, Zhekun Opera and Xiangkun Opera. Then, after the liberation activities of China, each branch of Kunqu Opera established troupe for Kunqu Opera performance. Now there are seven main Kunqu Opera troupes in China, called the Northern Kunqu Opera troupe, the Kunqu Opera art group in Jiangsu Province, the Kunqu Opera troupe in Suzhou, the Kunqu Opera troupe in Shanghai, the Kunqu Opera troupe in Zhejiang Province, the Yongjia Kunqu Opera troupe in Zhejiang and the Kunqu Opera troupe in Hunan, respectively.

Xiangkun Opera integrates dance, music, art and performance. The charm of language and body gestures presented by Xiangkun Opera has

been recognized by people in domestic or in overseas. However, due to its strong professionalism and geographical restrictions, it is difficult for Xiangkun Opera to propagate. As a result, idea that Xiangkun Opera should be introduced in general education was proposed in order to solve the biggest dilemma of Xiangkun Opera at present. Then, Xiangkun could be understood, known and even loved by more people, and finally Xiangkun Opera can be inherited.

II. General Education

The idea of introducing Kunqu Opera to university general education came from Dongwu University (now it is called Suzhou University). Mei Wu, who is professional in Kunqu Opera, taught the courses of Kunqu Opera in this university. Students who are major in Kunqu Opera need to reach a high standard. They should know not only how to play, how to sing, how to perform and how to direct on stage, but also how to write scripts, how to manage music, how to comment the opera and how to do research on the opera[2]. In the summer of 1993, the Kunqu Opera education switched from qualified students to ordinary students. Kunqu Opera education became a selective course in the university. Students who choose this course can not only learn theoretic knowledge but also watch performances. This changes in Suzhou University proves that universities are the best places for Kunqu Opera activities[3].

In 2010, Kunqu Opera as an ancient art form were reintroduced into class by Peking University. The university establish course named <Classic Kunqu Opera Appreciation>. Students in Peking University treated this course as <the most popular selective courses> and <the most luxury courses>. In recent years, general education of Kunqu Opera has been launched in some universities in Jiangsu province, and has become a major feature of education of Jiangsu university. Nanjing University, Nanjing Normal University, Southeast University, Suzhou University, Suzhou Institute of Science and Technology and other institutions of higher educational institutes have set up elective courses including the History of Kunqu Opera, Kunqu Opera Appreciation, Kunqu Opera singing etc. Good responses have received within and across universities. Since 15th October 2015, Hubei university has tried to "let famous opera spread into the university, let university students get in touch with elegant arts, and let the students who are interested in drama get artistic edification". Caiping Cheng (national Han Opera inheritor), Wenhua Wang (vice

president of Wuhan Chu Opera theatre), Aifang Pan (Jingzhou Flower-drum Opera inheritor), Cheng Cheng (president of Huangmei Opera in the province theatre) and other four opera artists were invited to universities to present lectures of various operas in Hubei Province, which made students have deeper understanding on local operas.

As a general education course, Hunan Kunqu Opera is different from other Kunqu Opera in traditional education mode. The traditional education mode pays attention to the whole opera history which the opera belongs, the repertoire research of Kunqu Opera, and researches within the discipline category of the professional field. Having applied education function to Kunqu Opera, teachers do not only highlight its aesthetic function, education function and entertainment function. At the same time, the function of inheriting culture is focused[4].

III. The purpose of introducing Hunan Kunqu Opera to general education

Kunqu Opera contains various knowledge including literature, costume, dance, music and other contents in the cultural field. Having applied Kunqu Opera into practice, its artistic features present the necessity of choosing basic art education as compulsory courses[5]. Kunqu Opera's knowledge is suitable for students with different subject backgrounds. Students who do not have the theoretical and practical experience in operas can understand Kunqu Opera through the course, love Kunqu Opera, and even make contributions to the development of Kunqu Opera.

A. Popularize education in Xiangkun Opera and develop regional culture

The most apparent characteristic of Kunqu Opera is its richness, which requires not only visual language and auditory language but also body language. This richness makes it difficult to popularize. Xiangkun Opera, which is the representative of the regional culture, maintains more local characteristics. Regional culture is the heart of local cultural industry development and difference is the motivation to develop regional culture, either in tourism industry or cultural creative industries. Creations around regional characteristics can attract more people and many countries treat regional cultures as a symbol to propagate. For the tourism industry, the purpose of tourism is to experience different cultures and different feelings can obtain through different cultural environment. The image of a city represents the most important visual meaning of a city and it can convey the spirit of a city. Baudrillard said: "it is consumed

- but not by its materiality, but by its difference"[6].

A city is a product of accumulated history. Some material cultural heritage is not only a vivid embodiment of a city's cultural personality, but also cultural advantages that can make the city become a famous cultural place [7]. Bielefeld is a German city. When people tried to design an image system, then took the

abovementioned factors into consideration. People decided to use Sparrenburg as the core element of design to guide the audience to understand the history of the city. Xiangkun Opera, which is a cultural representative, can be fully symbolized. This symbolization process needs to extract professional knowledge and transform it into contents that are acceptable for the public. Although Kunqu Opera is an "intangible heritage", it is still a form of entertainment in fact and it has the nature of cultural commodity [8]. It has positive effects for Kunqu Opera propagating if people keep exploring its cultural nature. In addition, because of the associated effect, the surrounding cities can develop into a virtuous circle, which not only protects the traditional intangible heritage, but also nourishes traditional art with the commercial profits.

B. Applied Xiangkun Opera education into various subjects

Different research approaches can be introduced to study Xiangkun Opera, which can lead research idea and method to be unlimited. Having introduced Xiangkun Opera to general education can attract students with different education background to do research on Xiangkun Opera. Until now, all the research on Xiangkun Opera is based on music and melody. These researches belong to researches on contents and based on the performance practice. However, most researches with digital background are based on integration of different subjects. For example, modern digital art is a integration of computer programming language, visual design techniques, interaction design, brain cognitive science, etc. The integration of subjects is the future development. Only by attracting the attention of professionals from different backgrounds and fields can Xiangkun Opera be developed. The combination between art education with researches in different fields will more effectively indicate the importance of art education[9].

C. Develop basic art education based on regional cultural characteristics

Until now, all the contents of Chinese art basic courses come from German Bauhaus art and the course frameworks come from Japanese education. However, China has its regional cultural characteristics. Different lifestyles or different nationalities exist in different regions. Each unique region can have unique art form. For example, in Weifang city of Shandong Province, most artistic practice and representatives focus on kites. If local universities have related art courses, art of kites will not only be a handicraft industry but also a cultural symbol. Based on this symbol, people can develop cultural industry.

Art is the most effective way to express the education function of art. It enables all cognitive mechanisms to start and develop [10]. If universities located in the places where Xiangkun originated, universities can make use of geographic and cultural advantages to develop Xiangkun Opera education and to cultivate

people who are professional in Xiangkun Opera. Chinese traditional art varies a lot. Although industrialization has caused a number of traditional arts to be worn out and dissolved, the digital age has given each kind of traditional art a new opportunity and the popularization of Xiangkun Opera has scientific and technological support.

IV. The importance of introducing Xiangkun Opera to general education

A. Cultivate the audience of Xiangkun Opera

One of the important roles for popularizing Xiangkun Opera to multi-subjects is that cultivate audience with different backgrounds. This is similar to a painting appreciation. The number of viewers in some exhibitions may be exceeded to a comedy performance when environment and contents are not considered. The most possible reason is that nearly all the universities have a basic course called conceptions of art. However, the course's content comes from western artistic theories instead of Chinese traditional opera. It is essential to cultivate audience for Xiangkun Opera if Xiangkun Opera wants to develop sustainably. Education is the most effective way to cultivate audience.

The influence of Xiangkun Opera should be enlarged. People should pay attention to how to introduce Kunqu Opera to colleges and universities because college students usually have good cultural accomplishment and higher education in literacy[11]. If they are interested in traditional arts, such as Kunqu Opera, more audience can be attracted by Kunqu Opera. For example, <a dream in red mansions> was a film using Kunqu Opera characteristics. It obtained various awards around the world in 2015. Although its quality is similar with other general films, it suffered a Waterloo in film industry. Nearly all the cinemas did not want to include this film into their schedule. The performance was far behind other films, such as <Tiny Times>, <Gardenia in blossom>, in the same period. The reason is that most people do not understand Kunqu Opera. Although people want to take advantage of new media to show the charming of Kunqu Opera, it is in vain. In other word, the key points to develop Xiangkun Opera is to cultivate audience.

B. Apply audio and visual languages to Xiangkun Opera to cultivate students with a deeper understanding in Chinese traditional culture.

There are various types of traditional Chinese culture. Paper-cutting and New Year paintings intend to attract vision feelings. Shadow puppets intend to present dynamic attractions. However, the most representative one is the art of opera. Thinking in artistic expression can change our feelings. They make our lives more meaningful and help us see the world in a different way[12]. Watching and listening in different art are processes of decoding. During this decoding process, rhythms and visual feelings may evoke your experiences or analyze special symbols. No matter which kind of decoding process, it can bring joy in appreciation and deepen the

knowledge in some art forms. Lyrics, costumes and body languages used in Kunqu Opera has complicated meanings. If the audience cannot get related knowledge in advance before they watch a Kunqu Opera, they will not understand the information conveyed from the stage and lose interest in Kunqu Opera. However, if audience have basic knowledge in Kunqu Opera, they will try to read the charming of Kunqu Opera and understand the beauty of Chinese traditional culture.

V. Methods for introducing Kunqu Opera into general education

A. Symbolize the typical characteristics in Xiangkun Opera

Kunqu Opera has distinct vision symbols and recombination of these symbols can help Kunqu Opera display better. The motivations of developing art education with vision characteristics are that the main culture needs to be maintained and enlarged[12]. In April 2004, the Youth Version of Peony Pavilion, which is made by Xianyong Bai, performed around the country and this tour had significant impact. Although some professional comments said that the Peony Pavilion put too much in aesthetics and ignored the nature of Kunqu Opera. However, this film reached a success in normal audience and let more normal people get interested in Kunqu Opera.

Although debates always exist in the innovation process in Kunqu Opera, there is no strict limitation in vision display when Kunqu Opera is not on a stage. This provides special symbols in Xiangkun with methods and ways. The recombination of vision symbols can help Xiangkun propagate and solve the dilemma in propagating < A Dream in Red Mansions>.



Fig. 1: comments of film named <the Youth Version of Peony Pavilion> and < A Dream in Red Mansions> in national social media

B. Establish digital platform to propagate basic knowledge

The typical feature of the digital age is network and interaction. Xiangkun Opera, which is similar to other Kunqu Opera, is things difficult to understand. It needs to appreciate with static and this kind of art is difficult to combine with fast-paced information era. The most effective way to build a relationship between Kunqu Opera and more audience is establishing digital platform and using digital platform to propagate Kunqu Opera.

The establishment of digital platform is benefit for regional Xiangkun Opera education integration. The propagation in digital platform is convenient and easy to attract audience who are interest in Kunqu Opera. As a result, the number of viewers can be enlarged quickly.

Picture 3 and picture 4 presented below shows that our team had a one-year investigation in Xiangkun Opera troupe in Hunan province. Our team summarized three books named < repertoire of Xiangkun Opera>, <costumes of Xiangkun Opera > and <makeup of Xiangkun Opera > and produced a microcinema for classes named <the origin of Hunan culture—getting close to Xiangkun Opera> preliminarily. We have published this short video through the platform named microcinema for classes in Hunan province and won the second award. The next step for us is to finish the microcinema for classes completely publish it through platform named Chaoxingfanya. There are various modern teaching techniques and digital platform can help Xiangkun Opera education achieve remote education. We believe that having applied interactive contents and design, Xiangkun Opera can attract more attention.



Fig. 2: < repertoire of Xiangkun Opera>, <costumes of Xiangkun Opera > and <makeup of Xiangkun Opera >



Fig. 3: microcinema for classes named <the origin of Hunan culture—getting close to Xiangkun Opera>

Conclusion

The development of Xiangkun Opera needs the help from government, opera troupe and education institution. Each institution should play a part in the heritage and development platform[14]. The education institution can solve the problem of how to popularize Xiangkun Opera's basic knowledge. The digital platform, digital image processing software and modern video editing software can help Xiangkun Opera establish visionary symbol and propagate repertoire, which have direct relationship with both the professional and the public.

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