

Study on the External Communication Strategy of Chinese Opera

A Case Study of the Return of Classic Intellectual Property “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” to Russia

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Abstract—In recent years, with the attention of the state to culture and the improvement of overseas demand for Chinese culture, Chinese opera has achieved unprecedented development, and a large number of mature works have begun to go abroad to communicate with the outside world, and achieved good results. As a pioneer of the times, the National Grand Theater boldly launched the foreign classic intellectual property, and through careful artistic reprocessing, created the Chinese opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet”, which gained high recognition when returning to Russia, providing an effective new mode of innovation for Chinese opera to go out and express foreign stories. As the research object, this paper has analyzed the strategy of cross-cultural communication of Chinese opera. At the same time, in view of the current situation of Chinese opera, this paper puts forward solutions in order to provide reference for enhancing the international competitiveness of Chinese opera and the soft power of Chinese culture.

Keywords—Chinese opera; cross-cultural communication; strategic research; “The Dawns Here Are Quiet”

I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese opera, originating from the West, is an artistic manifestation of both Chinese and Western cultures. It not only contains the cultural connotation of the Chinese nation, but also conforms to the aesthetic orientation of Western audiences. Beethoven once said, “Music is a higher inspiration than all wisdom and all philosophy”. Opera, as a superb art form, is full of intense affection, which makes people have rich and colorful associations, and has the charm of transcending national boundaries and cultures. Through the external dissemination of Chinese opera works, telling Chinese stories and infecting the world with Chinese music, it plays an increasingly important role in displaying the soft power of national culture and enhancing the national discourse power. With the increase of creative practice, Chinese opera has gradually become an effective carrier of promoting cultural exchanges with foreign countries.

The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” is an original Chinese opera created by the National Grand Theatre in commemoration of the Seventieth Anniversary of the victory

of the “World Anti-Fascist War”. This opera boldly uses the classic intellectual property of the Soviet Union, “The Dawns Here Are Quiet”. According to the development of the original story plot and by means of the combination of realism and romanticism, it tells the story of five beautiful lives - the story of the Soviet Red Army female soldiers who died one after another in order to fight against the German aggressors in a fierce battle of great disparity of power during World War II, eulogizing their persistent and optimistic character and the spirit of sacrifice. The play premiered in 2015 and then repeated many times in China. It was performed in Moscow and St. Petersburg in September 2018, and was highly praised by Russian citizens and media.

As a typical case of cross-cultural communication, the opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” has made great achievements in cultural integration, theme remodeling and narrative expression. In order to further explore the issue of enhancing the overseas dissemination of Chinese opera, the research group has taken the dissemination of the opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” in Russia as a case and perspective, and analyzed ways to enhance the soft power of Chinese culture through the overseas dissemination of Chinese opera, and provides strategic suggestions for building a cultural power of China.

II. RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLES

Using methods of in-depth interviews, media reports and text analysis of netizens' messages, the research group tried to explore the Russian audience's acceptance of Chinese opera in an all-round way, and defined the study as two basic research issues: first, the current situation of transmission of Chinese opera in Russia represented by the opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet”; second, the factors influencing the dissemination of Chinese opera in Myanmar.

The content of in-depth interview is set up with Lasswell's 5W theoretical model. Through in-depth interviews with 20 Russian audiences, 17 questions are set to explore the influence of Chinese opera on the daily cultural life of Russian people. Russian audiences' source, watching frequency, plot and role preference and understanding of the

opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" are discussed respectively. Based on questionnaires and cross-cultural communication theory, this paper analyzed the range of target audience, communication channels and recommended content of transmission in Russia, and then discussed the current situation of transmission of the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" in Russia and the audience's contact psychology.

Interviewers are two Chinese students from Moscow State University and St. Peter State University, who have a solid foundation in Russian. The interviewees included 10 students from Moscow and 10 students from St. Petersburg, university teachers and civil servants. The interview group used full-time recording to ensure the integrity and accuracy of information.

At the same time, the research group also analyzed the text of the Russian mainstream media reports on the two performances in Moscow and St. Petersburg and the text of the comments of netizens. This paper probed into the acceptance of Chinese opera by the local people in order to provide reference for the overseas dissemination of Chinese opera.

III. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULT

Communication effect: highly recognized. In this survey, 85% of the respondents thought the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" was particularly wonderful, and 15% thought it was good. A total of 25 Russian media reported on the two performances, of which 100% of the media gave positive comments on the performances. Most of the media considered the opera novel, and 50 people participated in the comments, with a thump-up rate of 89%.

Communication audience: likes of all ages. Questionnaire setting mainly focuses on demographic variables such as "age", "education level" and "gender". In the age distribution of the respondents, 10% were 5-17 years old, 31% were 18-28 years old, 28% were 29-50 years old and 23% were over 50 years old (shown in "Fig. 2"). The distribution of audiences in different age groups has little difference. Thus, the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" has aroused widespread social concern in Russia, not limited to a certain age group. The main reason is that "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" is a well-known classic intellectual property in Russia, and many people in Russia like opera. And the play is actually performed by Chinese people. How on earth do Chinese people deduce this classic intellectual property? This question has aroused public curiosity.

Communication channels: mainly theatre channels and Chinese channels. In terms of transmission channels, 20% of the respondents received performance information through websites, 5% through television, 10% through newspapers, 15% through theatre posters, 30% through the promotion information of the Chinese Embassy in universities, and 10% through friends.

Communication impact: Promoting cultural exchanges and transmitting positive energy between the two countries. The research group set up relevant questions on the

audience's cognitive, attitudinal, psychological and behavioral levels. The results showed that 50% of the respondents believed that the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" could improve the mutual understanding between the two cultures; 35% thought that the positive energy conveyed by the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" could inspire people; 15% thought that the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" does have an impact on their daily lives.

IV. THE SUCCESSFUL FACTORS OF THE OPERA "THE DAWNS HERE ARE QUIET" IN RUSSIA

A. Smart Integration of Chinese and Western Cultural Elements to Elevate Artistic Charm

The opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" skillfully mixes the elements of Russian traditional culture, mainly Russian native elements in the selection of characters and stories, with Chinese elements for packaging and presentation, which promotes the integration of Chinese and Western cultures.

In the setting of characters and story scenes, there are Russian elements everywhere: Soviet World War II uniform, brown hair, Pushkin poems, the stage with the vast Russian land as the background, the tall birch forest, Russian church, warm cabin are full of strong Russian color. These Russian elements are not so abrupt in Chinese actors. Instead, they are closely integrated with the actors in their exquisite acting skills. On this oil-painting-like stage, they poetically express their desire for a better life and peace.

Song is the most important element in opera, which determines the success of opera. All the songs of the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" are composed by the composer according to the plot, displaying the artistic charm of China. In the theme song "Russia, My Hometown", the composer used the classic Russian melody to melt the song style of the Soviet Union's patriotic war. The Russian people are not afraid of the evil war, and their deep love for the motherland and peaceful life is expressed vividly by the Chinese composer, which makes the Russian people resonate.

Five female soldiers have different personalities. The composer has created five female soldiers' personalities vividly by certain means, which is a highlight of this play. Beautiful women warrior Ranka has a fire-like love-hate personality. She loves a family Major, but they can't be together and separated. In order to protect her comrades in the most critical moment of the battle, Ranka sang "Katyusha" with great justice, leading the enemy to the end and sacrificing herself generously at last. In order to express the pain and helplessness of her separation from loved one, she also expressed her belief in fighting with loved one on the battlefield. The composer created an aria music, which fluctuated in a wide range of voices. Lyric melody and bold and unrestrained dance rhythm pushed forward one by one, creating a beautiful, enthusiastic and romantic image of Ranka, and also giving vent to her deep sorrow.

The whole opera uses Chinese songs, Chinese expressions and Russian ethnic elements to push all kinds of emotions into climax time and again. In the process of

integration, the two elements enhance the artistic appeal of the work and arouse the resonance of the audience. At the same time, the Russian people feel the hatred of war and the yearning for peace and a better life of the Chinese people. It can be said that this “made in China” Russian war opera not only retains the original Russian style, but also reflects the Chinese cultural spirit and new era style in all aspects.

B. Making Use of Cultural Proximity to Arouse Resonance

The theory of cultural proximity was first put forward by Strouhal. It refers to the audience's acceptance of content close to the culture, language and customs based on their familiarity with the local culture, language and customs. In cross-cultural communication, the production of works should take into account the similarities and differences of languages between countries, distance, personnel exchanges and the close degree of commodity exchanges. When all other conditions are equal, the audience will prefer the content of programs similar to their own culture [1]. It can be seen that cultural proximity is the key factor for the success of cross-cultural communication.

The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” effectively grasps the strategy of cultural proximity. First, on the historical level, the two countries have similar history, and the sincere performances of Chinese actors have conquered the Russian people. In the interview, an older man told us that her father had died in World War II, and the story in the opera seemed to happen beside her. Although many years have passed since the war, she's still deeply moved by the opera. Secondly, on the subject level, the subject adopted is very familiar to the people of both countries. It is also the collective memory of generations of Chinese and Russian people. The novel “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” was published in 1969. It was moved to the big screen by a Soviet director in 1972. After its release in China in 1980, it became popular all over the country and became one of the most familiar Russian movies for Chinese audiences. It was also made into operas and TV dramas in the following decades. Thirdly, in terms of dubbing, a large number of episodes familiar to the Chinese and Russian people, such as “Katyusha” and “Footpath”, have been used. This will make it easier to close the gap between the two peoples and create more resonance.

C. Promoting Universal Values and Enhancing the Sense of Identity

Cultural commensurability, refers to that in the process of cross-cultural communication of cultural products, communicators need to strive to find “the maximum common denominator” between them and different cultural groups, and tend to use a way and principle of communication that can be understood by both sides, so as to reduce various elements that are not conducive to communication [2]. Opera in the narrative should also tend to low context, convey some universal values, so that different cultural groups can achieve understanding, generate identity, and arouse as much resonance as possible.

The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” here shows the universal values in the following two themes: first, hatred of war and yearning for a better life. The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” is based on the theme of World War II. During World War II, Russia and China suffered from the brutality of Fascism. The common people of the two countries are deeply touched by the disaster brought about by the war, which is the common pain of the two peoples. The hatred of war and the yearning for a better life are not only the aspirations of the people of China and Russia, but also the common aspirations of most people in the world. The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” combines many stage elements, such as songs, language and lights, to create different images of women soldiers before dawn war, and to dig deep into the ruthlessness and cruelty of war, such as the disappearance of fresh life. Although no gunshot was heard, the audience was moved, inspired and empowered by it. In today's complex international environment, unilateralism, trade protectionism and world hegemonism are still prevalent, and Russia and China are facing economic, political and military pressures in all aspects. How to withstand the pressure and create a better life through hard work is the aspiration and pursuit of the people of the two countries. In this context, the overall expression of the opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” meets the requirements of the times, and thus has a great impact on Russian audiences. Second, it is the beauty of human nature. People are always full of emotions. The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” depicts all kinds of emotions expressed in the context of war. It is these emotions that support the women soldiers to persevere until the end and win. Despite the sacrifice of the last five female soldiers, the beauty of human nature is always hidden in the hearts of the audience. The first half of the play focuses on the tenderness of the female soldiers, while the second half throws it directly into the cruel war, which makes the audience feel a strong contrast. This expression is more tense and resonates with the audience. The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” shows the beauty of human nature and the theme of people's desire for a better life and peace. It can make the audience feel more intimate, and also can be recognized by the audience of different cultural backgrounds.

V. THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE OPERA “THE DAWNS HERE ARE QUIET” TO THE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION OF CHINESE OPERA

In recent years, great progress has been made in narrative mode, stage design and distribution marketing of modern operas, but there are still a series of problems in the process of cross-cultural communication of operas. On the basis of the successful experience of the opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet”, the author summarizes the following three enlightenments, hoping to bring some reference to the cross-cultural communication of Chinese opera.

A. Insisting on National Aesthetics and Promoting Cultural Self-confidence

If opera was introduced into China from the West a hundred years ago as a gift to Chinese art, then after a

hundred years, the contemporary national opera has its own characteristics in content and form, and it shines brilliantly on the world stage, which is not only a manifestation of cultural self-confidence and development, but also a feedback to the world opera art. As a Russian literary classic, "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" here is presented by Chinese artists in the form of opera and can perform on the biggest stage in Russia. It can be said that without enough cultural self-confidence, there can be no such unique experience, nor can it be a work that evokes emotional resonance between Chinese and Russian audiences and highlights the level of production of Chinese international dramas. Russian audiences feel the highest level of art in China today. Therefore, cultural self-confidence and nationality are not only "the root" of national opera, but also the key to the acceptance of national opera by overseas audiences. When the works have a high degree of cultural self-confidence and distinct national style, they are bound to break through the barriers of heterogeneous cultural differences.

One of the most important reasons why the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" has been successful at home and abroad is that it has not neglected the aesthetic choice and value orientation of opera's own nationalization. The powerful and emotional music compiled in the opera deeply touched many audiences on the spot. While the music was permeated with distinct Russian temperament, it also reflected the feelings of Chinese composers and the aesthetic pursuit of the opera. In fact, the exchange process of Chinese and foreign opera culture is also the integration and blending process of national cultural choice, spiritual connotation, aesthetic pursuit, aesthetic function and other aesthetic styles. Only when Chinese opera is compatible with others and forms a brilliant aesthetic spirit, can it truly stand in the world opera forest [3].

B. Reducing Cultural Misunderstanding and Conveying Universal Values

The development of cultural globalization requires closer exchanges and cooperation among countries. However, in the process of cross-cultural communication, due to the cultural differences between communicators and audiences, cultural globalization will cause barriers to communication and interpretation, which will lead to cultural misunderstanding [4]. The differences in language, history and values are the main causes of cultural misunderstanding. At the same time, accent, subtitles and translation will also interfere with the ornamental effect of operas, which will lead to the decline of the value of cultural products. The opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" actively seeks the convergence of Oriental and Western cultures. It considers the stage design, narration and performance thoroughly and cooperates with foreign countries actively, which greatly reduces cultural misunderstanding. At the same time, the opera advocates universal values such as the love of the country, the yearning for peaceful life and the beauty of human nature. Therefore, when spreading Chinese opera to the outside world, it is necessary to consider how to reduce the influence of cultural misunderstanding, focusing on other countries' system, values, history, behavior and living

customs, etc. to show common values for audiences in different cultural backgrounds, and to maximize the recognition or understanding of audiences in other countries.

C. Actively Participating in International Exchanges and Cooperation and Attaching Importance to Marketing

In today's highly globalized economy, the international co-production of opera has become an important production mode. First, international cooperation in opera can maximize the sharing of resources. Through joint creation, it is able to acquire the culture and resources of different regions. The National Grand Theatre has a long history of cooperation with the Malinsky Theatre, the largest theatre in Moscow. The Malinsky Symphony Orchestra joined in the performance of the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" in Russia, which became a highlight. In addition, the ballet sections showing the beautiful posture of female soldiers in the play were performed by professional ballet dancers of Malinsky Theatre, and the performers of the Opera and Dance Troupe of the Western Military Region of Russia also performed with Chinese singers on the same stage. The in-depth cooperation between Chinese and Russian artists has increased the diversity and richness of the opera art. Secondly, participation in international exchanges and cooperation can deepen mutual recognition. Through cooperation, it is able to know Chinese opera art level more objectively and understand the local audience's comedy more accurately, which is conducive to the creation and dissemination of art works. The opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" is to explore a new mode of development for Chinese and Western operas to learn from each other, blend with each other and work together through cooperation, leading Chinese operas to go global.

"Liquor fragrance is also afraid of deep lanes." One of the topics that Chinese operas are facing now is how to effectively disseminate. This requires new articles to be made in the development, promotion and cultivation of overseas markets. The opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" has been widely promoted in Russia not only through cooperation with the Malinsky Theatre of Russia, but also through the platform and resources of the Malinsky Theatre, giving the Russian people an opportunity to understand Chinese opera. At the same time, the opera "The Dawns Here Are Quiet" has also been made into a 4K panoramic opera film, which is expanding the scope of opera dissemination and reducing production and appreciation cost, enhancing viewing experience, and thus attracting more overseas audiences. With the change of China's diplomatic environment, the overseas dissemination of Chinese operas also ushered in a historic opportunity that cannot be missed. It is suggested to make use of the opportunity to develop Chinese original operas and promote the external dissemination of Chinese opera in an all-round way.

VI. CONCLUSION

Opera is a language that the world understands, and Chinese opera uses this world language to communicate silently with the outside world. China can achieve mutual understanding and recognition in mutual cultural exchanges.

The opera “The Dawns Here Are Quiet” successfully integrates Chinese traditional culture with Western culture, while entertaining the public and it also promotes universal values, which has great reference significance for the cross-cultural communication of Chinese opera. With the acceleration of the global marketization process, Chinese opera needs to achieve rapid development. In creation, it is suggested to adhere to the aesthetic style of national culture, constantly innovate the forms of expression, further improve the exchange and integration of Chinese and Western cultures, strengthen cultural self-confidence, and uphold the purpose of “artistry, popularity and internationalization”. At the same time, it is necessary to actively carry out international cooperation and diversify the overseas market in order to achieve greater success.

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