

# The Significance of Local Accent Version of Four Dreams of Linchuan on the Innovation and Development of Local Opera in Fuzhou

## —Take the Second Section Peony Pavilion for Example

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**Keywords:** Four Dreams of Linchuan; Xuhe high-pitched tunes; Fuzhou tea-picking opera; Inheritance and innovation

**Abstract.** As a grand ceremony is held to mark the 400th anniversary of Tang Xianzu, the local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan is created and rehearsed in Fuzhou city Tang Xianzu's home town. This opera uses classical Xuhe High-pitched Tunes, the big method of freehand for Chinese ink painting and the stage art & scenery full of fantastic color, integrates the artistic essence of multiple operas, forms its unique tunes & vocabulary and artistic style and makes some significant breakthroughs in opera theory, singing style and stage art. Taking the second section of local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan Peony Pavilion for example, this paper discusses the inheritance and innovation in the creation of the local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan from the aspects of writing and directing of the play, creation of the opera music, the signing & acting and stage design. Since the "four dreams of Linchuan" of Tang Xianzu a famous dramatist during the Ming dynasty came out, it has produced an significant national and international impact. From the conception of script to the style of the script words, a goodly number of scenarist, director and other opera workers adapted "Four Dreams of Linchuan" to the stages of a variety of operas with different opera tunes such as Yue opera, Kunqu opera, Jiangxi opera, tea-picking opera, full-length play and opera highlights. In a word, the version adapted of "Four Dreams of Linchuan" is beyond count. So it is clear that the boundless art attraction and eternal aesthetic implications of Tang opera has been a rich cultural wealth of Chinese nation and the theatrical world in the world. As a grand ceremony is held to mark the 400th anniversary of Tang Xianzu, the local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan, written by L.S. Cao a professor of Shanghai Theatre Academy, directed by the famous director W.W. Tong from Shanghai Yue Opera, is created and rehearsed in Fuzhou city Tang Xianzu's home town and performed in National Grand Theater, Tsinghua University, Peking University and all parts of our country. The classical Xuhe high-pitched tunes, the big method of freehand with Chinese ink painting and the stage art & scenery full of fantastic color brought a memorable art feast for the audiences from home and abroad. The successful performance of Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan aroused people's thorough discussion and consideration on its writing and direction of script, music creation, singing & acting and artistic innovation.

### Script: Respect for the Origin

Opera is a literature art and a performing art, it has the characteristic of accumulating from generation to generation, takes the text transmittance of classical opera. The small changes in the aspects such as opera form characteristic and text structure appeared in the process of opera adaptation, is reflection of the dynamic formation process of the relationship between the original and the adapted Four Dreams of Linchuan to form a special perspective of examining the development history of opera. As the treasure of legendary plays, the Four Dreams of Linchuan with immortal fame in people's minds, written by Tang Xianzu a playwright during the Ming dynasty, has great structure and complicated plot, even the adapted Fuzhou tea-picking opera version Four Dreams of Linchuan has 32 scenes[1]. If the four sections of Four Dreams of Linchuan shall be adapted to a complete opera drama and performed in a certain unit time, with keeping the

plot complete, it is very important to manage the relationship between the literal script and the stage script, combine the scenes and cut the words of script. The creative staff of Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan know well that it is the key point of opera innovation focusing on conception of the text structure of script, writing of script and stage art, and firstly combine the four famous plays of Tang Xianzu to not only present the classical scenes of each play but also reflect Tang Xianzu's journey of heart when he created the four dreams through these classical scenes. For example, when the second section Peony Pavilion is about to begin, we have been shown the dimming sky, Tang Xianzu wearily appeared on the stage, coughing weakly. He viewed the new White Camellia Hall with the lamp and said, "There are all articles between heaven and earth, but the wonderful places must be found by ourselves...but I don't know why I never forget a person...write it as the story Du Liniang died at Dusk after hearing the story that the daughter of a satrap met her lover and died with grief. Liniang, Liniang, you must be the second dream of White Camellia Hall"[2]. This clearly show Tang Xianzu's creative inspiration and creative motivation when he is creating Du Li-niang. After that, the whole plot path is performed in the forms of four scenes "The Deserted Garden", "Dream", "Ghostdom Judgement" and "Back to Life" through official Hu's second entry to make the audiences to learn about the original story of Peony Pavilion in just half an hour. In a word, this is a successful attempt to integrate the four dreams to a play. The associate director of Faculty of Humanities, Party School of the Central Committee of C.P.C., Mei Jingzhong in the play comment symposium of the local accent Four Dreams of Linchuan said "Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan has special perspective and reasonable and balanced scenes arrangement with association of activity and inertia, includes all the essential part of the original and is a great play with heart". This play can make the audiences to understand the overview of Four Dreams of Linchuan and appreciate the amazing charisma of Tang Xianzu's opera in about two hours.

### **Directed: Combining Classical and Modern**

**Classical Xuhe High-pitched Tunes Regain their Past Glory 400 Years Ago.** The development of ancient opera has close relation with the transformation of drama tune. Since Tang Xianzu's Four Dreams of Linchuan came out, "it was sung in every family and chanted in every house, and it make the price of The Romance of West Chamber to be lowered". later Kun opera integrated the romantic feelings of "Four Dreams" with its gentle and exquisite singing style perfectly and harmoniously. But Tang Xianzu was born in Linchuan of Jiangxi, and "Four Dreams" was created after he retired from office[3]. Tea-picking opera was very popular in Linchuan during the Qing dynasty, therefore, Tea-picking opera is the representative local opera in Linchuan. Of course, in Tang Xianzu's home town, his opera will be performed on the stage of Tea-picking opera. Tea-picking opera was an opera without Qupai style. With the local popular picking tea ditty as the basis, it absorbed the folk popular ballad and yangko, and absorbed and referred to the tunes and performing skills of other operas. Tang Xianzu's "Four Dreams" was created with Qupai style. According to historical documents, Tang Xianzu's Four Dreams of Linchuan was written for "artists" of his home town, and song with the old "Yihuang tone". At that time, the Yihuang tone was a branch of Haiyan tone by combining Haiyan tone with the local language. "Haiyan tone" originated in Haiyan of Zhejiang, was the first of the four great characteristic melodies of southern opera during the Ming dynasty. In the 40th year of the region of the Jiajing Emperor, Tan Lun brought "Haiyan tone" in his home town Yihuang and formed "Yihuang tone" through reform and innovation when he was a great minister of war. Because of the invasion of Japanese pirates, Haiyan tone was lost in Zhejiang and other places. In Liujia Village, Ganzhu Town, Guangchang County of Fuzhou, Haiyan tone was always maintained to sing Meng Jiangnu. Early 80s of last century, some scholars investigated and analyzed the style of singing and operas of Guangchang Xuhe opera with the method of finding the ascription of tones . The results is that the 18 Qupai of Guangchang Xuhe opera are the remains of Haiyan tone which are sheep on the slope, Little Red Peach, Rouged Lips, A Tiger Go Downhill, Not A Way, The Return of Ruan the Native, Zao Luo Pao, Hanging From the Branch in Jiangtou, Xiang Liu Niang, The Tune of Intoxication, Cotton

Batting, Anonymity and One Article[4]. Xuhe high-pitched tone has complete sentence structure and euphemism sweet melody. Its tune not only inherited the singing features of Geyang tone but also combined the remains of Haiyan tone of Yihuang tone. To show the original appearance of Tang Xianzu's play when it was performed for the first time, the remained tone of Haiyan tone of Fuzhou Xuhe high-pitched tone was used to sing the Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan as the main singing mode rather than Fuzhou picking tea ditty, yangko, folk ballad, dialectal intonation and music style. Or the tunes elements similar to the tunes for the original Four Dreams of Linchuan were used to sing the adapted Four Dreams of Linchuan. The aria Sheep on the Slope before fall asleep in the second segment "The Deserted Garden" of the second section Revive After Death of the local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan is a good example: "Not disorderly in the longing for love is difficult to send, then, suddenly, in the pregnant person bitterness, for I have baby chan. Pick the noble one, in the spirit as soon as possible. Very good marriage, threw the youth's far. My mood who see sleep, the rope the shy. Want to deep and remote dream Sheibian. And a spring dark flow. In delay, this Zhonghuai that place. Flooded frying, perimeter, in addition to the design"[5]. This aria adopted the most typical Qupai Sheep on the Slope of Haiyan tone appraised by expert, and the tonality is D yu six tones, i.e. hexachord with bianzhi. Bianzhi is one of "Two Changes" of ancient musical scale between Jiao and zhi. it was said in Historical Records-Jin Ke that "Gao Jianli beats the zhu, Jin Ke sing in time to the music, the guests cry in a small voice". In other words, the six tones with "bianzhi" that recur again and again can add desolate color to the whole music, with the soft Xuhe high-pitched tunes and classical song words, the whole tune become halting and graceful. That illustrated that Du Liniang was a flesh and blood woman with distinctive character and gentle expression. In addition, the lead singer has made a valuable contribution to the successful performance of the local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan. As Du Liniang, Wu Lan has a sweet voice, exquisite performance and handsome appearance. Based on the precise comprehension and expression for the role, she displayed Du Liniang's view point of love to the most that "for love, the living can die, and the people disappointed for life can live". As the director of this play W.W. Tong said in an interview, "Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan was created in order to make the audiences to not only faithfully appreciate Tang Xianzu's original play but also fully enjoy the special glamour of art and strong local character of Fuzhou Tang Xianzu's home town". Some people think that it itself is a breakthrough and a challenge to adopt Xuhe high-pitched tunes as the main singing tunes for Four Dreams of Linchuan, and this is of very importance for the inheritance and development of the tune which has almost been lost.

#### **Fashionable and Modern Tune Elements Improve the Audibility of Classical Opera.**

Traditional Guangchang Xuhe high-pitched tunes is soft and tactful, and its singing form is that one singer singing as many performing with gong, drum and clappers rather than wind and stringed instruments. In other words, the singer sing a few words, then the assistant chanting will be implemented by the players out of the stage with the same measure or octave, and there is no instrumental music for accompaniment. In the premise of inheriting and respecting for the singing form and tune mode of the original play, Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan adopted the modern craft of musical composition, made the music melody to be constantly changed in the aspects of rhythm, modal tonality, texture and harmony through the contrast, variation and repetition of music for the structure to present the turning of different kinds of mood in order to enrich and develop the music and integrate music of the whole play, exactly expressed the development of story and the characters feeling and brought a fresh feeling for the hearers. Zao Luo Pao Du Liniang song in the garden in the second section Revive After Death is a good example. Firstly, Du Liniang song, "Flowers are so beautiful", then the assistant chanting was carried out by other assistant players, "so beautiful". In this way, the beautiful melody constantly sublimating the colorful spring on the stage to present the wet dream of Du Liniang. When Du Liniang song "only for the old walls", the male assistant and the female assistant song with two-part harmony and wordless melody to accompany her to make the music melody to be full and the musical image to be vivid. And when Du Liniang song "floating and rosy clouds, and gorgeous pavilions, the gentle

wind and little rain decorated the ship as the smoke”, the four-part harmony chorus with compound voice was implemented again and again, and the melody was changed from the major key to the minor key to make the music to be bright and tactful. When Du Liniang song “the mountain bursts into bloom with rhododendrons, and the rosa rubus are very beautiful”, at the end of each sentence, there is the vowel lengthening “a” of female voice and two-part harmony to separate the rhythm to reflect that Du Liniang raised her longing for love because of the enlightenment of private education. The application of multiple singing forms is a breakthrough for the traditional singing mode with the single assistant chanting and single melody to make the music level to be more brighter and the musical texture to be more rich. The chorus was used to develop the music with the decomposed forms of harmony from two-part to four-part, and the modern method and skills of sound production were adopted for singing and sound production, the modern notes also were added in the aria. These made the musical melody to have obvious stereo perception and sense of color, presented the organic combination of classical allusion romantic charm and modern aesthetics and integrated modern aesthetic ideas and artistic techniques on the basis of keeping the classical aesthetic feeling of Xuhe high-pitched tunes with the musical texture of the whole play. This stressed the times features and meet the aesthetic taste of the modern people, and people were easy to construct a bridge of the emotions. At the same time, in the aspect of accompaniment, the symphony combined the national musical instrument with the western instruments was adopted, and some bright western instruments were added to improve the musical expression of Xuhe high-pitched tunes.

### **The Stage Arts: Modern Stage and Temperament Elegant**

Opera is a comprehensive stage art consisted of many elements with singing as its main form. It combines the stage art design, light design, sound design, garment design etc., Or the art of time and space art. It has both the liquidity of time and spatial extending characteristics. In aspect of the processing of plot, the contradiction and conflict are shown through the design of time and space to make the audiences to fell the impact of feelings and thoughts, and the charm of stage craft and aesthetic commerce is revealed. Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan focuses more on innovation in aspects of stage setting, stage art, music, scenery and dancing, and enhances the modern thinking. In aspect of stage art design, the simple furniture in Ming dynasty is organically combined with modern space; in aspect of garment design, the fashionable garment with light color in Ming dynasty is adopted. For example, wearing light yellow garment, Huo Xiaoyu is very slender and beautiful; with a light pink garment outside and a rose red garment inside, Du Liniang has the temperament of gentleness, elegance and connotation under the light of stage. In addition, the light design is very good. It not only can play the role of shifting center of gravity for stage dispatch to make the statistic scenes to be vivid and full of fantastical colour of imagination, but also can create an atmosphere and artistic conception required for the processing of plot. For example, when Du Liniang sighed in the curtain, “Depressed...”, and then appeared on the stage lonely and wistfully, the dim stage lights created a scene full of plaintiveness and confusion. When Du Liniang said, “ I will never know that the spring is so beautiful if I do not go to the garden”, she had been shown a colorful world, the peony ink paintings in the sky cleverly created a poetic atmosphere in the spring, the charming light captured the fantastical colour full of imagination, Du Liniang was touched and full of tears, and begin to enter into her sleep for “dreams”. As she said, “where did we have met, it seems to that we are family with each other, but we have never said a word”. At the same time, the simple Ming-style furniture on the stage can not only make the audiences to know the time and region of story but also reflect the excellent acting part of performers. Their excellent performance made the audiences in Beijing to be obsessed, and there was warm applause during the play. Especially the scene of flora’s dancing, it gave the simple stage a following sense. With the dancing of 16 floras, scenes scheduling and modern technologies, the auxiliary functions of sound and light were enhanced, and the stage became more colorful. The introduction of dancing of the floras made the whole play to present a performing system that “Singing is combined with dancing, and the same attention is paid to acting as singing”.

In summary, Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan not only inherited the tradition but also integrated the aesthetic ideas of modern people, and it was presented on the stage with modern stage device and style of art to be harmonious and smooth wholly. As Mr Bai Xianyong said, “We should respect for the classical but not be subject to them, use the modern but not indiscriminately. Everything shall be created on the base of the the classical”[6]. With the traditional Guangchang Xuhe opera as the base, Fuzhou local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan carried out a combination of the historical tradition of local opera and the modern cultural spirit serving as a link between the past and the future, changed the single point an image that only Kunqu is a reflection of Tang Xianzu’s image, exactly shaped a great man of culture who is the honor of China more meaty image of Tang Xianzu, and lastly made us to appreciate the artistic charm and characters of local accent version of Four Dreams of Linchuan with combination of classical art and modern art.

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