

On the Cultural and Social Values of the Chinese Epic Opera "The Long March"

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Abstract

As an integrated art form, opera originated in Italy and has been introduced to China for more than 100 years. The art of opera has taken root in China and it has been combined with the local musical style of the Chinese people to create a unique genre of national opera with Chinese characteristics. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese opera has once again stepped into a golden age of development, and many excellent opera works have been produced.

This paper selects the large epic opera "The Long March," which has been newly composed in recent years and is representative of the new era, as the research object. It adopts the methods of documentary research, interview, logical analysis and empirical summary to analyze and investigate the musical composition and social influence of the opera "The Long March." In this way, it summarizes the cultural and social values of the opera, and extends the discussion on the influence of the opera on the creation of Chinese opera in the new era. The topic and research perspective of this paper are innovative and of significant academic and research implications, and also have strong practical and realistic implications. It is expected that the discussion of the value of this work will provide a theoretical reference for other researchers in this field.

Keywords: Chinese epic opera; The Long March; Cultural value; Social value; Impact

Introduction

As one of the jewels of the world's art treasures, opera is the most artistic art form, and it originated in Italy during the late Renaissance in Europe. Later, this art genre was increasingly perfected in its format through continuous reform and development. It was in the 1920s that Western opera was formally introduced to China and had a significant impact on China's music scene. As a result of continuous development and refinement, opera had basically matured in China by the 1930s

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and 1940s. With the production of *The White-Haired Girl*, the artistic level of Chinese opera production rose to an unprecedented height. After the founding of the People's Republic of China, a series of outstanding operas, such as *Red Coral*, *The Peasant Takes a Wife*, *The Red Guards on Honghu Lake*, and *Sister Jiang*, were produced. At this time, Chinese opera production came into its first flourishing period. In the 1980s, Chinese opera began to recover from the desert period. A number of excellent opera works were produced, such as *Regret for the Past*, *The Savage Land*, *The Daughter of the Party*, and *Zan Yuen (Boundless Grasslands)*. These works marked the arrival of another boom in Chinese opera production. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the art of opera in China has been thriving. *Struggles in an Ancient City*, *Sunrise*, *The Dawns Here Are Quiet*, *The Long March* and other classical operas have been created one after another, making this art form a vibrant one on the road of development.

This paper selects the opera "*The Long March*," a representative opera newly composed in recent years, as the object of study. It analyzes the musical composition, characterization and shaping of the opera as well as its impact on society, and summarizes its cultural and social values. At the same time, the influence of the opera on the production of Chinese opera in the new era is illustrated. Through the analysis and interpretation of these issues, it aims to fully reveal the value and significance of this work.

Chapter 1 The cultural value of the epic opera "*The Long March*"

The epic opera "*The Long March*" was composed to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Long March by the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. The production not only caused a great sensation in the Chinese music scene, but also became a highly publicized event in the foreign music scene. The opera "*The Long March*" has been hailed as "a milestone of Chinese national opera with revolutionary themes in the new era" and "a classic of Chinese national opera in the new era," where it naturally has significant artistic value. Any work of art that can become a classic has its cultural and social values, and has a significant impact on the production in related fields in the same period and even in the future.

The opera "*The Long March*" occupies an important place in the history of Chinese opera. It draws on the elements of Chinese folk music, while incorporating the techniques of Western opera composition. Based on this, the opera is different from the classical Chinese folk opera and the avant-garde modern opera, but it takes a different approach to an opera form that meets contemporary Chinese aesthetics. After its premiere, the opera became a huge success and was highly recognized by all sectors of society. As a result, the opera "*The Long March*" carries high cultural values, which are mainly manifested in the following four aspects.

1.1 Carrying forward the traditional Chinese culture

The opera "The Long March" incorporates a large number of traditional Chinese cultural elements in terms of musical characteristics, dance style, language characteristics, singing style and stage art. The deposits and elegance of traditional Chinese culture are demonstrated by the reference of Chinese folk music, the use of Chinese classical instruments, the application of local dialects, the integration of Chinese folk dances and the stage decoration in Chinese painting style. These Chinese elements not only enrich the opera itself, but also carry forward the essence of the traditional Chinese culture and highlight the profundity of the traditional Chinese culture.

From the perspective of literary creation, the work manifests the revolutionary spirit of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, who are never afraid of difficulties and sacrifices, and it demonstrates the Red Army's fearless heroism that man can conquer nature. At the same time, it expresses the strong cohesive force of the Red Army and promotes the glorious course, great achievements and historical significance of the Long March by the Communist Party of China. Because of this, the work is undoubtedly of vital practical significance for carrying forward the Chinese national spirit and enhancing national self-confidence.

From the perspective of music composition, the work draws on a vast number of elements of traditional Chinese culture and folk music techniques, which fully reflects the subtleties of national and folk Chinese culture, demonstrates the charm of traditional Chinese art, and also contributes to the development and transmission of traditional Chinese culture. In addition, its fruitful artistic achievements have been widely recognized in the world of culture and art, which has played a great role in strengthening the cultural confidence of the Chinese nation.

It is vital to carry forward the traditional Chinese culture. It can help us better preserve and pass on Chinese cultural genes, enrich people's spiritual life, and promote unity and cultural exchanges among all ethnic groups in China and the world. The traditional Chinese culture is the fruit of thousands of years of Chinese history and culture, and it is extremely diverse, with profound connotations and a wealth of wisdom. They are an integral component of China's history and culture in its development. At the same time, we can better recognize and understand our own culture, thus increasing our cultural self-confidence and identity, as well as strengthening the cohesion and centripetal force of the Chinese nation and transmitting positive values. Meanwhile, it allows for a better understanding of and respect for the cultural differences and diversity among different ethnic groups, so as to enhance the unity and communication among all

ethnic groups. More people can get to know and learn Chinese culture, so that these valuable cultural heritages can be better passed on.

1.2 Showing the great value of China's modern revolutionary history

The opera "The Long March" is a historical work with distinctive Chinese characteristics, a realistic reproduction of the historical scenes, characters and all the hardships during the Long March of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. It vividly illustrates the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese Communist Party and the Red Army during the revolutionary war period, which was not afraid of bloodshed and sacrifice, and it also reveals the historical process of the revolution of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. Based on this, it not only facilitates an in-depth understanding of modern and contemporary Chinese history, but also helps to carry forward the excellent traditions and spiritual culture of the Chinese nation.

The opera "The Long March" integrates the history of the Chinese Revolution and the Long March of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army into the history and spirit of the whole nation, emphasizing the persistent and indomitable spirit of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army in the revolutionary struggles. In addition, it represents the firm belief and determination of the Communist Party of China in leading the workers and peasants in the revolution and strengthens the national pride of the Chinese people. Such revolutionary spirit remains of great cultural value and social significance in today's society. In the current development of China's economy and society, people also need to be equipped with this spirit of bravery and courage to go forward, in order to constantly inspire their unremitting efforts to achieve national prosperity and people's well-being.

The heroic, tenacious and persevering revolutionary spirit of the Red Army's Long March is expressed on stage through the art form of opera. The opera "The Long March" was produced to achieve this goal perfectly. By presenting the opera on stage, it allows a wider audience to appreciate the work more visually and to learn about its culture, spirit and connotations. It also helps to stimulate the patriotism and national pride of the Chinese people, thus better reinforcing patriotic education.

The history of revolution in modern and contemporary China represents the history of profound changes in China's political, economic, and cultural spheres, laying the foundation for China's path toward modernization and initiating a new course of modernization in China. The opera "The Long March" is a tribute to the heroism of the Red Army and the spirit of the Long March, and demonstrates the selfless dedication and firm belief of the Chinese people in their struggle for national liberation, democracy and freedom. The spirit of

the Red Army's struggle has inspired future generations to make continuous efforts to drive the progress and development of Chinese society.

1.3 Exploring the innovation and development of Chinese opera creation

The opera "The Long March" is a classic work of Chinese national opera in the new era, which has set off a trend of "passing on national culture and carrying forward the spirit of the Long March" in the Chinese music scene. It is so attractive not only because it is a successful work of art, but also because it is a work of art distinct from other similar genres and subjects. The opera "The Long March" is unique from the classic national operas of the past, and is even more distinctly distinguished from Western operas. It is a bold experiment in many aspects, and on the basis of inheritance, it has made innovations and created a style of opera that is in line with contemporary Chinese aesthetics.

First, it goes beyond the traditional model of opera creation. In the past, operas were created according to the genre of opera, but Chinese national operas are basically based on folk singing, and most of the music in the opera is based on the five-tone mode or seven-tone mode of Chinese national style in its melody, modulation, tonality, harmony and orchestration. Bel canto opera is basically composed in the Western major and minor tonal system, and some of them may be composed in the European Gregorian mode, twelve-tone system or atonal music. The music of the opera "The Long March" is composed in alternating the Chinese national five-tone mode and the Western major and minor tonal systems. The five-tone mode is used extensively, and the major and minor tonal systems are also used extensively in the opera. This breakthrough in the use of mixed modes allows for a more diverse and expressive musical style of the opera "The Long March."

Second, it draws on the experiences of Western opera creation. The opera "The Long March" is a Chinese national opera, and its music should be composed mainly in the national five-tone and seven-tone modes. Yin Qing not only breaks this traditional pattern, but also boldly borrows from methods of Western opera composition to enhance the dramatic conflict in music. The aria "In the Cold Night" is a beautiful and heartfelt song sung by Political Commissar Peng to express his admiration to his soldiers after the battle of Xiangjiang River. It is sung in bB major and then shifts to C major. After that, in the four lines of "Your blood, dyeing the Xiangjiang River red, your cries, heroically defending your ideals", the tune is changed at each line, thus creating an artistic effect that advances layer by layer and deepens. Such an effect cannot be achieved by Chinese five-tone modes. The composer did not use a technique of virtuosity in the

composition, but tried to bring out the high emotion of the Red Army to the maximum. In terms of harmony and orchestration, he also boldly borrowed the orchestration techniques of Western operas. The opera "The Long March" not only retains the musical elements of Chinese style, but also adds the elements of Western music, thus greatly enhancing the artistic impact of the work, by learning from these techniques of Western opera composition. At the same time, it also displays the composer's excellent composing skills, demonstrating his pioneering spirit of boldness in drawing on others and innovation.

1.4 Promoting cultural exchanges among ethnic groups

The opera "The Long March" is highly artistic because it blends Western classical music and modern music composition techniques on the basis of traditional Chinese music, thus developing a unique style of music that combines the East and the West. The work enjoys a high position in the Chinese opera circles because of its outstanding achievements in terms of artistry, innovation and influence. It has toured several times in many cities in China with the opera houses packed to capacity, and has been highly recognized by the public, allowing audiences from different regions, nationalities and groups to appreciate the artistic charm of the opera. In particular, audiences from all over China rushed to the Nanjing Grand Theatre during the performance season of the China Opera Festival to attend the opera and to enjoy the feast both visually and aurally. The opera has played a major role in promoting cultural exchange between different ethnic groups.

The opera "The Long March" has also had a huge impact abroad and is considered one of the representative pieces of Chinese opera in the new era. Its unique artistic characteristics fully demonstrate the distinctive charm of traditional Chinese music. Because of its dissemination abroad, it has played a positive role in promoting Chinese opera in the international arena. At the same time, it also facilitates cultural and artistic exchanges between China and foreign countries, allowing more people to know more about China's revolutionary history. Also, it pushes Chinese culture to the international arena, and presents the charm of Chinese history, culture and art to the rest of the world. From a cultural point of view, its value is not only embodied in its own artistic creation and performance, but also in its contribution to the transmission of Chinese culture and the promotion of cultural exchange in the world. It contributes greatly to enhancing the influence of Chinese culture in the global arena. Also, it facilitates cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries, increases mutual understanding and respect among different cultures, and is instrumental in the dissemination of Chinese culture and the development of cultural diversity worldwide.

Chapter2 Social value of the epic opera "The Long March"

Through the profound portrayal of the Red Army, the opera "The Long March" vividly recreates the hardships of the Red Army during the Long March. It shows the noble and firm revolutionary faith and the courageous revolutionary spirit of the Red Army, and demonstrates the revolutionary ideals and beliefs of the Red Army that they stand for the truth and forge ahead without fear of sacrifice and for the benefits of the masses. It enables people to gain a deeper understanding of the historical background and development process of the Chinese Revolution, so that they can better transmit and carry forward the spiritual qualities of the revolutionary martyrs, which is of great importance to the progress of Chinese society. The Long March of the Red Army is a major event in the history of the Chinese Revolution. The revolutionary spirit of hard work, perseverance, valor, unity and cooperation demonstrated by the Red Army during the Long March is of great significance to our social construction and personal growth today. The Long March has not only had a profound impact on the Chinese revolution, but also played a vital role in inspiring the world revolution. The Long March spirit, which is reflected in it, is the spiritual motivation and valuable treasure for our pursuit of truth and progress toward victory, so it carries important social value.

2.1 Promoting the Long March spirit

The Long March spirit represents the noble qualities and struggle spirit of the Chinese Workers' and Peasants' Red Army on the Long March, as they courageously march forward, persevere, stand up to sacrifice, unite and work together, and struggle bravely. As an integral part of the spirit of the Chinese Revolution, the Long March spirit is of great historical and practical implications. The core of the Long March spirit is "being willing to sacrifice everything for our nation and people when facing difficulties and obstacles, seeking truth from facts and proceeding from reality." It is a heroic spirit of fighting for national independence and people's well-being, reflecting the firm belief, selfless dedication and courageous attitude of the members of the Communist Party of China. Moreover, it inspires generations of Chinese people to struggle tirelessly to realize the Chinese dream. The Long March spirit is also the keynote of the opera.

First, it can reinforce faith. Promoting the Long March spirit can inspire people to establish their beliefs, be determined, go forward in spite of difficulties, never retreat in the face of setbacks, and carry forward the revolutionary struggle spirit of indomitable and hard work. It also helps to inspire people to pursue truth, freedom and democracy. The Long March spirit is a steadfast belief and faith, as well as an infinite love for the career and the courageous pursuit of victory. We can have the courage to climb to the top and achieve greater success only if we believe that we can win.

Second, it can refine the will. The Long March lasted two years and covered 12,500 kilometers. Faced with numerous difficulties and dangers, the Red Army, with firm faith and amazing perseverance, climbed over snow-capped mountains, trekked across vast grasslands, and finally completed this great strategic transfer victoriously. Thus, the Long March became a miracle in the history of the world revolution. The courage and spirit of the Red Army to overcome obstacles and hone their wills has important implications for our personal growth and career development today. In the face of setbacks and failures, the only way to exercise our will and strengthen our determination is to maintain the spirit and courage to persevere and rise to the challenges. For this reason, the opera "The Long March" implies such a spirit that we need to learn and draw on.

Third, it can enhance self-confidence. The difficulties and challenges that the Red Army encountered during the Long March were beyond our imagination, but with their firm belief and strong self-confidence, they finally overcame the difficulties and attained the final victory. Therefore, self-confidence has great importance. People with self-confidence can usually cope with challenges and stress better and are more likely to succeed. Those who are confident are more likely to establish good interpersonal relationships with others and to gain the respect and trust from others. With self-confidence, people can easily strengthen their self-esteem and enhance their sense of self-worth. As those who are self-confident can easily affirm their ability and self-worth, such self-respect and self-worth will further enhance their self-confidence, thus forming a virtuous circle and enabling them to become stronger. Thus, it can be seen that enhancing self-confidence plays a vital role in the growth and development of individuals.

2.2 Enhancing confidence in national culture

The opera "The Long March" is one of the most important masterpieces of literary and artistic works on Chinese revolution. Through the vigorous promotion of the opera, it has sparked an ideological trend of "carrying forward the Long March spirit" and "enhancing the confidence of national culture" among the public. National culture is the foundation of a nation and the crystallization of national wisdom and creativity. By enhancing the confidence of national culture, we can better inherit and promote our own culture, so that the world can better understand and identify with it. At the same time, it can also prevent the loss and disruption of culture, thus playing a role in the protection and transmission of excellent national culture. The cultures of various ethnic groups also exchange and learn from each other. By improving the confidence of national culture, people can know more about the cultures of other nationalities, improve the communication and recognition with other nationalities, and promote the development of cultural diversity.

National culture is a cultural resource of a country and an essential component of the country's cultural soft power. By enhancing the confidence of national culture, it can improve the country's cultural confidence, strengthen its soft cultural power, and contribute to its foreign exchanges and cultural exports. A nation with cultural self-confidence will definitely value its cultural traditions more and make more efforts to pass them on and promote them, thus protecting and passing on the treasures of national culture. In this way, its culture can shine brightly in the world's cultural treasures. The nation will also attract and inspire other nations through its own soft power of culture and enhance its international reputation and status.

The opera "The Long March" conveys profound thoughts and emotions through the artistic charm of the musical composition and the wonderful interpretation of the performers, so that it can display the essence of Chinese culture and history in the international arena. In addition, the work promotes international cultural and artistic exchanges, enhances the influence of Chinese culture in the international scene, and contributes to the dissemination of Chinese culture and the diversification of world culture.

2.3 Enhancing national pride and cohesion

The opera "The Long March" illustrates the revolutionary spirit of the Red Army to unite and advance bravely under extreme difficulties, and inspires the Chinese people to maintain their determination to persevere and strive hard in the face of hardships. By continuously strengthening people's collectivism, it can enhance social cohesion, gather the strength of the whole society to form a shared goal, and thus propel the development of the country and society. It portrays a group of admirable and lovely heroic characters in an epic form. These heroic characters exhibit the indomitable national spirit and the revolutionary belief of fighting for ideals all their lives, which can stimulate people's national pride and continuously boost national cohesion. At the same time, it can inspire people's moral awareness and sense of social responsibility, and continuously improve their cultural and moral qualities, which bears great practical significance to the ideological construction and development of Chinese society.

National pride and national cohesion can motivate individuals' self-confidence and self-esteem, and make them more enthusiastic and confident to pursue their dreams and goals. As a result, individuals can better integrate into society, bring their talents into play, and contribute to the development and progress of society. National pride promotes national unity and reinforces common perceptions. Based on this, people can value and protect their national interests, cherish and pass on their national cultures, traditions and history, and be concerned about the innovation and creation of their national

cultures, so as to better facilitate the development and transmission of their national cultures.

In conclusion, the opera "The Long March" presents high values of art in music and performance. As a result, the opera also contributes to the enhancement and development of social culture by raising the aesthetic interest and appreciation of the audience. The spirit of selflessness and no fear of sacrifice of the revolutionary pioneers, as expressed in the opera, features a strong humanitarian tone. Such a spirit can instruct people to actively pass on the humanitarian spirit in human civilization, which is of great significance in improving people's self-cultivation and fostering sound social values.

Chapter 3 The influence of the epic opera "The Long March" on the creation of Chinese operas in the new era

The artistic connotations of the opera "The Long March" include the "the Long March spirit" required by the times and the rich social values necessary to "enhance the confidence of national culture," along with a number of breakthroughs and innovations in its musical composition. It also makes extensive use of modern technological means, such as virtual stage technology, in its performances. These achievements are at the forefront of the art scene, and will definitely have a great and profound impact on the creation and performance of Chinese operas in the future.

3.1 Starting the trend of diversification of national opera creation

The opera "The Long March" applies an unconventional approach by incorporating folk style singing, bel canto, and popular music singing style into one opera for the first time, thereby forming a scenario in which a variety of singing styles coexist. The composer's unprecedented practice integrates traditional Chinese musical forms with those of Western operas. He retains the ethnicity of folk singing while incorporating elements of bel canto, fully demonstrating the diversity and inclusiveness of Chinese arts. Through the fusion of different singing styles, it broadens the innovation and expression of music arts, making its musical form distinctive, refreshing and infectious. The music has become more diverse in expression, displaying the diversity and innovation of music arts. At the same time, it also enriches people's aesthetic experience and cultural awareness. In this way, it expands the audience of the opera "The Long March," attracts listeners to a greater extent, and also enhances the dissemination and influence of the work. Given this, a wider audience is more likely to accept it.

3.2 Pioneering the "Chinese arioso" style

The opera "The Long March" expands the expression of opera creation, in which recitative is a distinctive highlight. Recitative is a form of singing in large vocal works such as operas and oratorios, and

it is a form of chanting similar to recitation, which can be adapted to the rhythmic and melodic style depending on the characteristics of the language performed. The recitative in Western opera often has many bytes spat out quickly on a single note. Although this style of recitative features pitch and rhythm, it tends to convey a sense of flatness and straightforwardness. The Chinese national opera generally replaces the recitative with dialogues, and generally speaking, the Chinese bel canto opera draws on the characteristics of the recitative of the Western opera, but they are basically the same. In order to highlight the pronunciation of the Chinese language, some composers have also used the techniques of distortion and exaggeration to present the dramatic aspects of the recitative on the basis of intonation. The recitative in the opera "The Long March" does not replicate the model of the recitative in Western operas, but rather it develops a new model. Lou (2016) argues that the recitative composed by Yin Qing does not adopt the distortion and exaggeration techniques of modernist opera in Chinese language tones, but takes a singing tone that is acceptable to Chinese audiences. In fact, it is an "arioso" formed by fusing the recitative with the aria. Based on the pronunciation characteristics of Chinese characters, level and oblique tones with four tones, he combines the performance style of recitative with the melodic nature of arias, thus creating a "Chinese-style arioso" with Chinese elements and an extremely singable style. Both the singer and the listener will never find it boring, which is undoubtedly a bold attempt, and could be described as an innovation. No matter how music is composed, it is considered good music as long as it sounds beautiful and easy to understand, and can capture the hearts of listeners and render their emotions in a certain way, so as to achieve the composer's creative purpose. The ultimate goal of music creation is to touch the audience with the work.

3.3 Leading the application of modern technologies in opera production

The opera "The Long March" is a work of art that is closely integrated with modern technologies. Virtual reality technology is employed in the performance, presenting three-dimensional scenes and visual effects on the stage by means of three-dimensional technology and simulation technology, which greatly enhances the audio-visual enjoyment of the audience. Multimedia projection technology is also used in the performance to integrate the historical background, cultural background and other images with the performance elements, which can help the audience to gain a deeper understanding of the plot. Modern lighting equipment is also applied in the opera performance, which creates varied and colorful stage effects through changes, movements and combinations of lighting, so that the performance becomes more vivid and enriched. Modern sound

equipment is also essential in the opera performance. The use of modern sound equipment allows for precise control and adjustment of sound effects, allowing the audience to enjoy the clearest and most realistic music and singing. Due to the extensive use of these electronic and technological means, the performance delivers a more stunning effect, and the artistic experience of the audience is significantly enhanced.

Conclusion

The epic opera "The Long March" is one of the masterpieces of Chinese opera arts, and it stands out for its highly artistic and ideological qualities. The cultural and social value of the epic opera is indisputable, which has established its distinguished position in the history of Chinese opera. Its great success has been recognized by the whole society. Even in foreign countries, the opera "The Long March" has a great influence. Its ideological and artistic qualities are not inferior to those of Western classical operas, but it has many innovations that are not found in Western operas. In these respects alone, it has already made its way into the ranks of the world's classic operas. The innovative thinking and inspiration of this work is most important, as it opens up a new way of thinking and mode of Chinese opera creation, which will profoundly influence the direction of opera creation in China in the future. In addition, future opera composers are bound to create more and better opera works based on such a sound foundation, thus contributing to the development of operas in China.

The opera "The Long March" is not only an exemplary exploration of the innovation and development of Chinese opera creation, but also a positive contribution to the promotion of China's traditional national culture. Its several tours in China have facilitated cultural and artistic exchanges among various ethnic groups, and at the same time enhanced our confidence in our national culture and strengthened our national pride and cohesion. The great success of the opera has enabled the art of Chinese opera to showcase the unique charm of the traditional Chinese music to the world, and has played a great role in advancing the cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world. In the meantime, it has made a positive contribution to the transmission of Chinese culture and the internationalization of Chinese opera art.

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