

# The dilemma and reflection of Chinese theatre arts education in universities

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**Abstract.** At present, the education of Traditional Chinese theatre arts in universities is lacking in both “software” and “hardware”, which is in the dilemma of being marginalized by teaching. There are many common problems in the bottleneck and causes of many kinds of theatre arts in the development of universities education, such as the shortage of teachers, the lack of interest of students, the weakness of scientific research, the poor environment of Traditional Chinese Theatre arts and so on. In view of the above problems, it is suggested to adopt multi-channel strategies to cultivate students' interest, improve the supporting Traditional Chinese Theatre arts curriculum, and optimize the traditional Chinese Theatre arts environment, so as to change the current dilemma of Traditional Chinese Theatre arts in universities.

**Keywords:** Traditional Chinese theatre arts, Education, Chinese universities.

## 1 Introduction

In the summer of 2018, the author and the research group completed the Online course shooting activities of the Traditional Theatre arts of Southern Fujian. During this period, the research group invited many famous actors and musicians of Traditional Theatre arts to participate in the development and explanation of the Online course preparing for university students, which also triggered a series of reflections on the Traditional Chinese Theatre arts in ordinary universities.

On July 17, 2015, the general office of the State Council issued the notice on several policies to support the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese Theatre arts, which clearly proposed that the general education of traditional Chinese Theatre arts in schools should be strengthened, and the education and teaching of excellent traditional Chinese culture, especially the content of traditional Chinese Theatre arts, should be strengthened in combination with the reality of school education. In other words, from the national level, it puts forward direct requirements for the inheritance of Theatre arts education. Only by doing a good job in the inheritance of Theatre arts education can we give play to the special effect of Theatre arts in the construction of spiritual home. However, in real life, what is the current

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situation of Theatre arts in general higher education? Is there a bottleneck? How will it develop in the future? These problems are worthy of deep thinking.

## **2 The dilemma of traditional Chinese theatre arts education in universities**

As the treasure of Chinese culture, traditional Theatre arts culture is broad and profound, and the students in universities have the responsibility of inheriting it. Under the background of promoting the overall quality education of college students in our country, traditional theatre arts education should have great achievements. However, in real life, the Theatre arts cultural literacy of contemporary college students is generally low.

In addition to the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, Shanghai Theatre Academy, Central Theater Academy, Shandong Academy of art, Inner Mongolia Academy of art and other universities with Traditional Chinese Theatre arts department, ordinary universities in China generally do not offer Traditional Chinese Theatre arts professional courses. Some schools set up Traditional Chinese Theatre arts appreciation courses in the Chinese department. Because the teachers in the Chinese Department generally lack the singing and acting skills, the corresponding recommended and introductory courses are in the majority, and the teaching method is relatively single, so it is difficult for students to feel the real charm of Chinese Theatre arts. Some universities hold Chinese Theatre arts clubs for students, but they generally lack professional tutors. Moreover, most universities do not have teaching venues such as stage or rehearsal hall, and teaching equipment such as costumes, facial makeup and props can not be fully equipped. In other words, Traditional Chinese Theatre arts Education in universities lack of “software” or “hardware”, which is in the dilemma of being marginalized by teaching.

## **3 The bottleneck and reasons of the development of traditional Chinese theatre arts education in universities**

In fact, there are some common problems about the bottleneck and causes of many kinds of Chinese Theatre arts in the development of higher education.

### **3.1 Shortage of teachers**

Since the beginning of history, the social status of theatre arts practitioners is low and their education is not high. Before the founding of the people's Republic of China, most of the theatre arts practitioners were illiterate, and they taught by the way of “oral teaching “. This is the historical background of the imbalance between the supply and demand of professional teachers and teaching demand. At the end of last century, a small number of secondary theatre arts schools in China were upgraded to undergraduate universities, The lack of secondary education in traditional Chinese theatre arts has led to a shortage of students in higher professional Theatre arts universities. It is also very difficult to recruit students from the society. It is an inevitable result that a large number of high-quality theatre arts actors can not be trained. Moreover, most of professional Chinese Theatre arts universities have no major in Theatre arts Education. That is to say, the actors trained by Chinese Theatre arts universities are mainly actors from various troupes who can be assigned to higher education institutions The number of staff is relatively small.

## **3.2 The students are not interested**

Under the influence of modern network and media, most of Universities students are not very interested in theatre arts. To cultivate college students' cognitive and aesthetic ability of theatre arts is not only the need to improve their comprehensive quality, but also the need of the whole society to cultivate the young generation of theatre arts audience. There are three reasons why young people don't like theatre arts:

### *3.2.1 The students can't understand the traditional theatre arts singing*

Due to the need of emotional expression in the traditional Chinese theatre arts, the rhythm of many traditional theatre arts singing is slow and the tune is long, or the tone is much higher than the natural range, so young people don't like it. Moreover, the traditional theatre arts are usually sung in local dialects, which are difficult for non-native speakers to understand, so they will be rejected.

### *3.2.2 Few high quality stage productions*

The younger generation will always be in the forefront of fashion. Traditional theatre arts is often dominated by Costume theatre arts, and few of them can reflect the thoughts and life of young people. The appreciation of historical dramas needs a certain amount of knowledge and age precipitation, and court dramas are easy to alienate universities students. A good play, such as the youth version of Peony Pavilion, directly caters to the needs of young people's love and marriage life. With love stories beyond life and death and classic theatre arts interpretation, plus the aesthetic pursuit of the screen, it has attracted the attention of many universities students and won the love and pursuit of the young generation of students. In order to attract more young people to join the ranks of drama appreciation, we should encourage them to create more ancient costumes and modern dramas with young people's life as the main line.

### *3.2.3 The impact of internet, TV shows, pop songs, idol dramas and video games*

There is no doubt that the rich and colorful network, TV variety shows, popular songs, idol dramas and video games are more attractive to most young people than traditional theatre arts. In this regard, we should strengthen the propaganda of theatre arts media, and cultivate the young generation's cultural confidence and national pride in the inheritance of theatre arts. When they consciously safeguard the inheritance and development of national theatre arts, regard it as their own mission and are willing to participate in the appreciation of theatre arts, they can see the beauty of theatre arts.

## **3.3 The environment of theatre arts education**

One of the most important reasons for the poor education environment of traditional Chinese theatre arts is that the art of traditional Chinese theatre arts has been engraved in history with the attitude of "entertaining people". Today, with the rapid development of modern media technology and Internet, its effect of "entertaining people" is naturally incomparable and marginalized.

But as a wonderful work of art in Chinese excellent traditional culture, theatre arts is not only an entertainment, but also an important medium for people to receive education since ancient times. Not only that, the high achievements of theatre arts culture, which lasted for thousands of years, bear the ideals and wishes of the whole nation from ancient times to the

present. As one of the representatives of excellent Chinese cultural tradition, its inheritance and development is an unshirkable responsibility. Therefore, only by creating a good atmosphere of Theatre arts Education in the whole society can the life of traditional theatre arts be continued.

### **3.4 The research theory of traditional Chinese theatre arts is weak**

Theory and practice have always been interdependent and promoting each other. Compared with other disciplines, the current research Theory on Chinese theatre arts is relatively weak. There are few academic journals of Chinese theatre arts, fewer high-quality articles, narrow research scope of published papers, and low total amount of scientific research achievements. To a certain extent, it limits the development of Chinese theatre arts industry, especially the education of Chinese theatre arts. Due to the weak scientific research of traditional Chinese theatre arts, it directly affects the practical link. Most of the traditional teaching methods of traditional Chinese theatre arts universities are still oral teaching, and there is no breakthrough in the teaching link. The systematic and scientific teaching mode reform needs to be further explored in the future.

## **4 Problem solving ideas**

In recent years, China has launched some policies to support the development and inheritance of traditional theatre arts, emphasizing the cultivation of national pride and cultural self-confidence, which is of direct help to the development of traditional theatre arts education. As for the above-mentioned bottleneck problems in the development of traditional Chinese theatre arts, we can reform from the following aspects:

### **4.1 Setting up Chinese theatre arts courses in most of universities**

The compulsory course of theatre arts appreciation should be set up in the education major of universities and universities. In this way, students majoring in education can be competent for the drama appreciation and education courses in the middle, primary and young stages. The university has set a good precedent, obtained the approval of the degree Office of the State Council, set up the undergraduate and master's courses of local folk music Nanyin, set up the undergraduate and master's courses of Nanyin in musicology and master of Arts in Nanyin singing, Nanyin performance and culture Industry and Nanyin culture promotion, and achieved remarkable teaching results, which made a great contribution to the promotion and dissemination of Nanyin. If there is no condition to set up the characteristic direction of theatre arts, at least the elective course of theatre arts can be set up.

### **4.2 Strengthen the reform of traditional Chinese theatre arts**

After the founding of the people's Republic of China, China's theatre arts reform policy of "changing theatre arts, changing people, changing system" has really made a big step forward in the cause of theatre arts. With the deepening of China's reform and opening up process, how to make the play have modern vitality and flavor, logical and literary, artistic simultaneously, and can be better accepted by universities students, is really a problem. As the most open-minded group, universities students have always been at the forefront of the times and are the best at accepting new things. There are many themes of traditional theatre arts and costume theatre arts, which can easily alienate young people living in modern fast rhythm. If universities theatre arts education can organically combine traditional and modern

elements, costume theatre arts and modern theatre arts can meet the taste of young people, teaching will achieve better teaching effect.

#### **4.3 Improve the education level of traditional Chinese theatre arts practitioners**

Since 1978, China's Theatre arts Education has made great progress, but as mentioned before, the graduates of theatre arts universities are not enough to meet the current market demand, the number of secondary theatre arts schools is small, and it is difficult to enter a higher school. In order to go to university, the graduates of Theatre arts secondary school must take part in the national cultural examination according to the current national regulations, which is a big obstacle for them. In China, the education level of theatre arts practitioners is generally low, which is an important factor for the low social evaluation of theatre arts practitioners. The author thinks that while the professional theatre arts universities strictly control the source of students, they should appropriately reduce the enrollment threshold and timely absorb the top theatre arts talents in the national, provincial and municipal theatre arts competitions. In addition, ordinary universities and universities can also recruit theatre arts talents from the society to promote the accumulation and cultivation of theatre arts talents.

#### **4.4 Promoting high quality stage productions of traditional Chinese theatre arts in universities**

In view of the fact that the students of ordinary universities and universities in China have relatively weak knowledge of theatre arts and do not understand the traditional techniques commonly used in theatre arts stage, if we can increase the interpretation and participation links of theatre arts into the campus at this stage, we can better enhance the students' understanding of theatre arts appreciation, improve their interest, meet the curiosity and participation of universities students, and cultivate their patience to appreciate theatre arts. Some theatre arts, such as Beijing Theatre arts and Kunqu Theatre arts, have been involved in campus activities for several years and achieved good results, which is worthy of promotion nationwide.

In addition, the campus community can carry out learning and promotion activities based on "ZheZiXi". "ZheZiXi" is a small play with its own integrity, which is cut, edited, interspersed and combined from the whole book. Its main pursuit is to increase the interest of performance and the aesthetic taste of the times. It is easy to cater to the taste of young audiences. For young students, the theatre arts is easier to appreciate and learn than the whole play, which is more suitable for promotion, rehearsal and learning in universities.

#### **4.5 Setting up amateur examination of Chinese theatre arts art for the society to create a harmonious education environment of Chinese theatre arts**

The convergence of the global village makes it easy for people to ignore many precious national essence. The cultivation of national pride and inheritance responsibility is one of the important soil for the development of Theatre arts Education in universities. Without this soil, the nursery of theatre arts is difficult to thrive, and young students will not have the consciousness and self-discipline of inheritance.

It can be one of the solutions to set up Amateur Examination of theatre arts art for universities and the society. All kinds of art examination, such as piano, vocal music, erhu, pipa, etc., have entered a healthy and orderly development track in people's social life, especially in children's and youth's quality education. If the national cultural department and universities can take the lead in setting up Chinese Theatre arts grading examination and training programs, and Chinese Theatre arts can carry out grading examination activities, it

will certainly promote the development of Theatre arts education in China in essence, and play a positive role in cultivating Chinese Theatre arts lovers in kindergartens, primary schools, middle schools and Universities, so as to cultivate a good Chinese Theatre arts education environment .

## 5 Conclusion

It is of great significance to attach importance to Chinese Theatre arts Education in universities for improving the comprehensive artistic quality of college students and carrying forward the essence of traditional art. The excellent culture of the Chinese nation is integrated into traditional theatre arts, and the rise of theatre arts education industry is the prerequisite for the revival of Chinese theatre arts culture. The Theatre arts Education in Universities is of great significance to improve the aesthetic cultivation of the whole nation.

In recent years, the decline of traditional Chinese theatre arts and the dilemma of Theatre arts Education echo each other, causing widespread concern of the government and people from all walks of life. At present, the state has also formulated many relevant policies in order to improve the current situation. The development of higher education of traditional Chinese theatre arts is a gradual process with a long way to go. It is expected that in the near future, Chinese theatre arts and its education will usher in a vigorous spring.

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