

Revelatory Reflections on the Creation of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) Triggered by Dance Forms



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Abstract: Influenced by the sea silk culture, Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) and its characteristic dance possess exceptional charm. Not only do they highlight regional characteristics, but also carry profound history. This article conducts an in-depth analysis of the performance characteristics and artistic style of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) dance. This article conducts an in-depth analysis of the performance characteristics and artistic style of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) dance. Through a detailed discussion of its historical development and performance programme, it triggers thought-provoking reflections on the creation of Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) dance. Through a detailed discussion of its historical development and performance programme, it triggers thought-provoking reflections on the creation of Liyuan Opera (梨园戏). The article fully showcases the artistic value of Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) dance and offers a novel perspective for the innovative development of traditional culture. The article fully showcases the artistic value of Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) dance and offers a novel perspective for the innovative development of traditional culture. Simultaneously, it arouses greater interest and attention from more people to this unique art form, and Simultaneously, it arouses greater interest and attention from more people to this unique art form, and further promotes the inheritance and development of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) and its dance.

Keywords: Chinese Drama; Drama; Dance; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Quanzhou Liyuan (梨园戏) Dance

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1 Introduction

Liyuan Opera (梨园戏), originated in Quanzhou, Fujian Province, is one of the oldest extant opera genres. During its long history, Liyuan Opera has been deeply influenced by the folk culture of Fujian and Guangdong. Through the evolution of localisation and dialectisation, it has incorporated abundant artistic and cultural elements, finally formed the artistic style of Liyuan Opera (梨园戏), which is independent of its own style and has absorb a wide range of strengths [1]. As an important representative of local opera in Quanzhou, Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) was listed on

the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008, which is not only an affirmation of Liyuan Opera itself, but also a recognition of its profound artistic value. Being considered as a cultural phenomenon spanning thousands of years, Haisi Culture carries rich historical connotations and unique artistic charms. The dance of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) showcases the essence of Chinese traditional art, moreover, it is a bright landscape in the Haisi Culture. Liyuan Oper (梨园戏) a dance play an indispensable and crucial role in the

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Liyuan Opera (梨园戏). Its unique performance formula, basic characteristics, and various types all provide rich artistic research materials for this study.

At present, domestic research on the dance of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) has achieved certain results. For example, the book *Fundamentals of Liyuan Dance Forms* (Tian Li) offers an in-depth theoretical discussion on the dance elements of Liyuan Opera, which shows that scholars have a more systematic understanding of the forms and basic movements of Liyuan Opera dance. However, these researches mostly stay at the theoretical level, and there are no many cases of practical application in teaching. This may be due to the fact that the inheritance of Liyuan Opera is mainly concentrated in Quanzhou, and the complexity and uniqueness of its dance movements place high demands on both researchers and performers.

In terms of research breadth, domestic research on the dance of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) not only involves analyses of dance movements and forms, but also expands into the historical and cultural background associated with it, its inheritance and development, as well as comparative studies with other art forms. For example, Rose Huang (2017) reveals the uniqueness and aesthetic commonality of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) in theatre stage performances through a comparative study of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera and Japanese Kabuki and other traditional Asian stage performance forms. This cross-cultural comparative study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the artistic value and cultural connotation of Liyuan opera (梨园戏) dance.

From the perspective of the research field, although the historical origin and performance characteristics of Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) dance have been discussed, there is still a lack of research in modern teaching and innovative combination. Especially in today's multi-cultural fusion, how to combine this traditional art form with modern dance elements to create works that maintain the traditional charm and are full of contemporary is a subject that researchers urgently need to explore.

This paper discusses the dance form, historical development, and performance formula of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera (梨园戏) in the HaiSi Culture, triggering a revelatory thought on the creation of Liyuan Opera. This study will start from the origin of the "three schools" of Liyuan Opera (梨园戏), gradually revealing the artistic charm of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera dance. Through the analysis of the performance formula of Liyuan Opera dance, this study

could understand its rigorous structure and abundant connotation; the study of the basic characteristics of Liyuan Opera dance will be helpful in grasping its unique artistic style and expressive force; and the classification of the Liyuan Opera dance types will enable this study to more clearly understand the unique status and value of the Liyuan Opera dance [2]. In exploring the unique value of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera dance, this study will not only focus on its artistic expression, but also dig deeper into the cultural connotation and spiritual essence behind it. This study believes that through such a research, it can not only provide strong theoretical support for the inheritance and development of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera dance, but also provide significance for the creation and development of theatre art in China and even in the world.

2 Quanzhou Liyuan Opera - A Treasure of Haisi Culture

In the bright history of Chinese civilization, Haisi Culture is a brilliant pearl that cannot be ignored. Haisi Culture, that is, the culture of the Maritime Silk Road, is a unique cultural phenomenon developed along the Ancient Maritime Silk Road. It was centred on the South China Sea, with Guangzhou and Quanzhou as its starting points, and then led to India, Southeast Asia, and as far as West Asia and even the east coast of Africa, carrying a profound history of Sino-foreign traffic, trade and cultural exchanges. Quanzhou, as the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road, is an important hub for cultural, commercial and trade exchanges between China and other countries, and its unique geographical location has nurtured a rich cultural heritage and art forms. Focusing on the Maritime Silk Road Culture, the long-established Quanzhou Liyuan Opera is still radiant on the cultural stage today.

Liyuan Opera, as a treasure of Han Opera in Fujian Province, is originated from Quanzhou in Minnan during the Tang and Five Dynasties period, and through the development of the Song and Yuan periods, it reached the artistic peak in the Ming and Qing dynasties, being widely spread in Minnan and Southeast Asia. The reason why Liyuan Opera is called "Seven Classes" [3] is that it has inherited the seven types of characteristics of the Southern Opera: Sheng, Dan, Jing, Mo, Chou, Wai and Tie (these all behalf different masks and roles). Quanzhou Liyuan Opera has preserved and continued the seeds of the Ancient Southern Opera, especially the singing and dancing performance of

the traditional repertoire with far-reaching origins, which originally belonged to the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties, and due to the competition and merging of the three schools of "Xia Nan," "Shang Lu," and "Qi Zi Ban," the "Eighteen Sheds" of the Liyuan Opera was gradually formed [4]. In the course of history, although they differ from each other in schools, they have maintained their own unique characteristics [5]. In their performances, they use the "Quanqiang", which is sung in the Quanzhou dialect and have built up a set of self-contained and colourful performance routines. These routines are mainly composed of the "Eighteen Steps of Kemu" dance movements, commonly known as the "Parent Steps", and the "Kejie". There are different historical origins behind the formation of these genres: "Shang Lu" was introduced to Quanzhou by sea from Wenzhou Miscellaneous Opera in Zhejiang Province; the "Little Liyuan" originated from the operatic players in the court of the Tang and Song palaces, which was dispersed to the public of Quanzhou; while the "Xia Nan" is based on the development of the folk dances and short operas of the Quanzhou area. [6].

The dance forms of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera is a brilliant pearl in the Haisi Culture. Its dance movements are both rigorous and emotional. The naive and sorrowful "Shang Lu", the rough and rustic "Xia Nan", and the fresh and delicate "Little Liyuan", all show the deep perception and artistic reproduction of life by the people of Quanzhou. These dance forms not only possess unique aesthetic value, but are also an vital part of Quanzhou's Haisi Culture. They convey the historical memory, cultural tradition, and artistic pursuit of Quanzhou' people in the form of body language [7].

The three schools of Liyuan Opera have significant differences in terms of historical origins, division of roles, acting forms and artistic styles. However, it is these differences that make Liyuan Opera more colourful and attractive. They compete with each other, learn from each other, depend on each other, jointly promoting the development of Liyuan Opera art. In the Yuan Dynasty, the three schools were finally unified, forming the Liyuan Opera with a unique performance style. This unification not only preserved the essence of each school, but also made the Liyuan Opera reach a higher level in art [8].

The Liyuan Opera did not stagnate after the unification, but continued to draw nourishment from other local opera styles while maintaining its own values. For example, it learnt rich performance techniques from puppetry, absorb-

ing vivid performance styles from Gaojia Opera and drawing inspiration for music and dance from Kunqu Opera and Yiyang Opera. The absorption, digestion and organisation of these nutrients have enabled the Liyuan Opera to maintain its uniqueness while constantly innovating and developing.

After an in-depth historical examination and artistic analysis of the three schools of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera, this study has gained a deeper understanding of the value of this unique cultural heritage. Each of the three schools, Shang Lu, Xia Nan and Xiao Liyuan, has its own characteristics, and its operatic forms and artistic styles have particular charms. The Shanglu Opera's Zhuwen, with its simple and mournful expression of emotions and rigorous dance movements, demonstrates Quanzhou people's profound perception of life and their ability to express their emotions. The Xia Nan Opera "Lu Mengzheng", on the other hand, with its rough and rustic style and the characteristics of folk dance, outlines the distinct life atmosphere and spirit of Quanzhou area. And the masterpiece of Xiao Li Yuan, Chen San Wu Niang, showcases another charm and artistic pursuit of Quanzhou Li Yuan Opera with its refreshing and delicate dance movements, as well as its poetic expression of emotions. In these opera works, this study can infer that Quanzhou Liyuan Opera is not only an art form, but also a profound reflection of the people of Quanzhou on their life, history and culture. Its dance forms not only have aesthetic value, but is also an significant part of the Maritime Silk Road Culture, witnessing the cultural deposits and historical accumulation of Quanzhou as the starting point city of the Maritime Silk Road [9]. Through the study and appreciation of Liyuan Opera, this study can better understand and feel the unique charm and far-reaching influence of Quanzhou's HaiSilk Culture. Therefore, the value of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera lies in the richness and colourfulness of its artistic expressions while in its connotation and symbolic power as a cultural symbol. It carries the historical memories, cultural traditions and artistic pursuits of the people of Quanzhou, which is a kind of precious cultural heritage that deserves to be treasured and inherited by this study.

3 Dance in Liyuan Opera

Liyuan Opera dance performance is elegant and delicate, with a set of extremely rigorous performance procedures, called "Eighteen Steps of Kemu", also known as "Parents Steps", is the basic performance procedures of Liyuan

Opera dance [10]. The “Eighteen Steps of Kemu”(the Chinese meaning is some steps and gestures) has been passed down from generation to generation for a long time, and there always have different views on it. According to the oral statement of Cai You Ben and other famous masters of the Little Liyuan in the 1950s, it could be understood as follows [11]:

Scraping Section (Figure 1): treating people with courtesy or addressing a superior in an honourable manner.

Spreading Section (Figure 2): used to express the meaning of "what to do".

Hands Up Section (Figure 3): for narration.

Accusing Section (Figure 4): used for expressing anger towards someone or something.

Pointing Section (Figure 5): indicating everything with the fingers.

Sideways Pointing Section (Figure 6): indicating a person or object that is not present.

Lifting Section (Figure 7): used for doubt, surprise or rhetorical questions.

Putting Section (Figure 8): used for joy, pleasure or approval.

Over-brow Section (Figure 9): used by women to praise themselves or others.

Droopy-handed Section (Figure 10): showing excitement, activity, and lightness.

Pressing the heart Section (Figure 11): the posture of the Sheng and the Dan when they come out of the march.

Transition Section (Figure 12): for signalling and stage scheduling.

Xiang Gongmo Section (Figure 13): expressing cheerful, pleased or angry.

Insane Section (Figure 14): showing trance, sore feet and limp hands.

Stomping Section (Figure 15): used for indignation, sadness, or hatred to the core.

Swing Section (Figure 16): indicating joyful or anxious moods.

Turning Section (Figure 17): a turning movement, used for stage dispatching.

Urgency (Figure 18): running around in a hurry, also known as "intervening".



Figure 1 Scraping Section



Figure 2 Spreading Section



Figure 3 Hands Up Section



Figure 4 Accusing Section



Figure 7 Lifting Section



Figure 5 Pointing Section



Figure 8 Putting Section



Figure 6 Sideways Pointing Section



Figure 9 Over-brow Section



Figure 10 Droopy-handed Section



Figure 13 Xiang Gongmo Section



Figure 11 Pressing the heart Section



Figure 14 Insane Section



Figure 12 Transition Section



Figure 15 Stomping Section



Figure 16 Swing Section



Figure 17 Turning Section



Figure 18 Walking round the stage Section

Liyuan Opera, a treasure of traditional Chinese opera, owes its unique stage charms to its exquisite performance formula and rigorous figure training. Although the stage is small, it requires the actors to be very delicate in their postures and steps, resulting in unique performance routines such as “Turning” and “Transition”. In Liyuan Opera, the fusion of dance and life has reached the point of perfection, and the performance formulae like “Eighteen Steps Kemu” and “Kejie” are both standardized and malleable, most of which originate from life. Through refinement, transformation and combination, they form an abundant stage language. Whether it is the hand posture, sitting posture, or the form of step, all of them are full of sculpture-like artistic beauty, which is breathtaking [12].

Performers of Liyuan Opera have undergone strict performance norms and stance training from the age of 7, and all their moves and postures are in line with the characteristics of Liyuan Opera dance performance. Even in a static state, they are required to “Stand with poise, sit with grace”. All their movements and postures are in pursuit of physical perfection, which has been fully embodied in the performance of Liyuan Opera, so that people in the appreciation of the opera while feeling a kind of enjoyment of beauty [13].

The performance formula of Liyuan Opera is not static, it is both normative and plastic, and can be flexibly adjusted according to different repertoires and roles [14]. This flexibility makes the performance of Liyuan Opera more diversified and able to cope with all kinds of complicated stage situations. At the same time, the performance formula of Liyuan Opera also possess a strong normality, which ensures that the actors can achieve a high degree of tacit understanding and unity during the performance, so that the whole stage emerges a harmonious sense of beauty.

Quanzhou opera has many kinds, with peculiar styles and complete performance system, and it is integrated and symbiotic with Quanzhou traditional folk dance. Incorporating Quanzhou opera elements in dance creation can not only add something unique, interesting and ornamental to the dance, but also promote the inheritance and development of Quanzhou opera culture [15]. On the numerous and complicated opera stage of the world, Liyuan Opera plays an irreplaceable role with its unique charm and deep historical holdings. This article profoundly discusses the performance formula and figure training of Liyuan Opera, as well as its status and value in Chinese traditional culture. From the “Eighteen Steps Kemu” to the “Kejie”, every action is an incarnation of life, while every scene of the play is a literary expression. Through strict training and unremitting

efforts, the actors of Liyuan Opera have sculpted every action into an artwork, making the audience feel a spiritual baptism while enjoying the performance. The performance formulae of Liyuan Opera are both normative and flexible, making the stage colourful and full of vitality. In modern society, although the Liyuan Opera is no longer the mainstream, its unique charm remains unabated and still grabs the attention of countless audiences. Liyuan Opera is not only an art form, but also a kind of cultural inheritance and innovation, which carries the cultural memory of the Chinese nation and conveys the quintessence of Chinese culture. It is believed that Liyuan Opera will continue to blossom and bring more joys and touches to people in the years ahead.

4 The Inspiration of Dance Form on the Liyuan Opera Creation

The dance performance of Liyuan Opera has distinctive features and style. Specifically, it can be divided into programmatic, folk, virtual and narrative natures. The mission of the opera is to “portray the person, describe the event, get the spirit, and perform the meaning”. And all of this has been done by combining the body movement in Liyuan Opera. Liyuan Opera uses the body movement to externalize the inner world of the performer, revealing his/her personality characteristics, making it intenser and more vivid than emotions, character, interests, and behaviors of the real-life human. Only by making full use of these characteristics and features can the Liyuan Opera dance create its unique style of performance [16], which also provides a lot of inspiration for the creation of the Liyuan Opera theatre.

4.1 Programmatic Nature

The programmatic nature of Liyuan Opera dance is reflected in its strict norms and standardization, with certain procedures and laws from the characters' movements to their expressions [17]. This programmatic nature stems

from the artists' continuous absorption of various performance elements and skills, following the three major principles of rhythmization, dramatization and entertainment. In terms of rhythmisation, the various gestures, movements and dances in Liyuan Opera show a variety of rhythmic changes between strength and weakness, and are closely linked to the music. Dramatisation, on the other hand, transforms folk song and dance performances into more advanced and complex theatrical means, which are used to show specific characters, situations and conflicts [18]. In Liyuan Opera, there are not only programmed movement performances that run throughout the character line and follow the characterisation of the play, but also dance performances that simply show the dynamics of the dance posture and dance techniques according to the progress of the play. These two types of dances in Liyuan Opera can be simply summarised as: programmed dance figures and performative dance segments. Skillful performance segments show the actor's skills through dance, portray the character, show the inner emotion, and at the same time render the atmosphere and narrate the course of events. They enrich the image of the characters and bring the audience audio-visual enjoyment and space for reflection [19]. Song and dance, on the other hand, requires singing, reciting and acting to complement each other, expressing feelings of joy, anger, sadness and happiness through musical singing and dance movements, and even assisting in the expression of emotions with the help of props such as fans and umbrellas. Throughout the performance process, the rhythm of the music and the rhythm of the body are in harmony with each other, influencing each other, and realising the perfect expression of art in the audio-visual resonance [20].

The above expressions of the programmatic nature of Liyuan Opera dance reminds us of following certain artistic rules and performance laws when creating. This programmatic nature not only ensures the normality and beauty of the performance, but also makes it easier for the audience to understand and accept. In creation, we can draw on this formulaic nature to construct works that are both in line with the laws of art and full of novelty.

Table 1 Summary table of the repertoire in which a specific performance formula occurs

Programme	Form of Expression	Specific Program	Performances
Little Liyuan "Gao Wenju - Passing through Yinfu"; Great Liyuan "Yue Lin - The	pas de deux	"The Eighteen Lohan Section"	Gao Wenju completes the following nine body movements in the footsteps of a running horse: cutting off the fan, holding the fan, carrying the fan, turning the fan, dragging the fan, waving the fan (whip), raising the fan (whip), lifting the jade belt, drawing bit, etc.; the attendants follow the horse with a stick and cooperate with Gao Wenju to make the dance postures, including leaning on the stick, combining the sticks, and jumping and pinching the stick;

Programme	Form of Expression	Specific Program	Performances
Jailer's Newspaper			The "Eighteen Luohan Section" performed by the Jailers consists of "Happy to See Buddha Section", "Shan Cai One-legged Section", "Dharma Master Section", "Consecrating Lamp Section", "Consecrating Melon Section", "Plundering Lion Section", "Pick Turnip Meridian Section", "Long-brow Master Section", "Gyanyin Seat Section", "Consecrating Fruit Section", "Emperor Wu of Liang Crawling Section", "Washing Ears Section", "Maitreya Showing Belly Section", "Hidden Tiger Section", "Flying Bamboo Hat Section", "Consecrating Incense Section", "Subduing Dragon Section", "Flying Cymbal Section";
Gao Wenju - the Journey in Yuzhen	solo dance	"Eighteen Umbrellas Section"	Umbrella Holding, Umbrella Arching, Umbrella Throwing, Umbrella Catching (also known as the "Dongbin Pei Jian" section), Cutting Mountain Umbrella, Turning the Umbrella with One-hand, Lotus Umbrella Sampan Walking, Umbrella Dragging by Turning the Hand, and Umbrella Catching behind the Back;
"Chen San - Umbrella Staying	pas de deux	"Snatch the Umbrella"	Pulling Umbrella Section, Turning Circle with Floppy Foot Section, Snatching Umbrella and Running Round the Stag Section, Snatching Umbrella and Watching Section, Snatching Umbrella Section, Snatching Umbrella and Walking Section, Clamping Umbrella Section, Stepping Umbrella Section," and other sections of the steps, which gave rise to such things as kicking umbrella, pulling umbrella, grasping umbrella, holding umbrella, picking up umbrella, stepping on umbrella, patting umbrella, and turning around akimbo;
Liu Zhiyuan - The War Against Melon Goblin	pas de deux	"South Pouch"	Inviting Punch, Put Hand, Prodding Hand, Inverted Hand, Double Hanging Hand, Scratching Hand, Pushing Hand, Single Hand, Curved Arm Punch, and Retracting Punch;
Liu Zhiyuan - The Three Ladies Snatch the Mallet	pas de deux	"Snatch the Mallet"	Raising Hand and Grabbing Mallet Section, Grabbing Mallet Section, Kicking Mallet Section, Slanting Body Roundhouse Mallet Pulling Section, Mallet Dancing Section, Mallet Raising Roundhouse Section, and Mallet Champering Section;
Liu Xiu - The Great Return	pas de deux	"Waving Flag"	The "Waving Flag" consists of eight programmes and nine movements. The eight programmes include: Snake Sticking out its Tongue (Pulling Flag), Turning Round and Lighting the Fire after Crossing the Mountain, Steaming Cage Gan Ke (Horizontal Placement of Flag), Pulling the Ox across the River (Putting Flag behind and Drag), Pulling the Shoes the Strings (Wielding Flag from under the Shoes), Buffalo Pressing a Cave (Imitating a Water Buffalo by Pushing forward with Its Horns), Pig Mother Showing Her Harmony (Waving the Flag Horizontally) and Cockroach Entering the Sky (Imitating the Flexibility of Animals Jumping in the Air). The nine movements are: Buffalo Pressing a Cave, Cockroach Entering the Sky, Guanyin Sitting on the Seat, Monkey Holding a Bee, Turning Round and Lighting the Fire after Crossing the Mountain, Pig Mother Showing Her Harmony, Nezha Turning over the Sea, Pulling the Ox across the River, and Steaming Cage Gan Ke.

4.2 Folk Nature

The dance of Liyuan Opera has a distinctive folk nature. Folk dance is favored by Liyuan Opera Dance due to its vibrant vitality and the characteristic of being appreciated by both the refined and the popular. In the long development process of Liyuan Opera, it has continuously absorbed many excellent folk dance nutrients, such as the "Shoulder Pole Section", "Horse Riding Section", "Crab Hands Section", "Ox-Cart Water", etc.; some even directly put the folk dance in the plot for adaptation and application. For example, the two traditional folk dances in the traditional Liyuan Opera play Zheng Yuanhe, "Patting the Chest" and "Kicking the Ball". Its "Lotus Flower Drop" act of Zheng Yuanhe preserves the "Chest-beating Dance", a folk dance popular in southern Fujian. "Chest-beating dance", also known as "Seven Sounds", "Beggar Dance". Dancers

always wear grass circlets, with bare upper body, barefoot and dancing, which has happened as early as in the Southern Song Dynasty. Zheng Yuanhe' fifth play "Kicking the Ball" dance records:

[Painted face character]: Oh, Miss Yaxian, Madam Li said that there are good guests outside, so you'd better go out to throw the ball or play shuttlecock to entertain them.

In addition, some of the excerpts from the Liyuan Opera has absorbed some ditties from other places. For example, "Fengyang Flower Drums", "Peach Blossom Wherry", "Shijiu Lane" and so on.

Folk dance provides a constant source of artistic nourishment for the Liyuan Opera, and it is also one of the reasons why the opera is so popular among the masses. In the Yuan Dynasty, Gong Shitai said in his poem "Quanzhou Road": "Maritime merchants only seal their ships upon arrival, and foreign envoys who come to pay their respects

can also be given horses. The city is filled with jewelry and drunken songs and dances, and people are enchanted by this bustling scenery, drinking heartily.” During the reign of Emperor Daoguang in the Qing Dynasty, Shi Hongbao, a native of Qiantang, wrote in his book “Min Miscellany”: “In Quanzhou and other places, there were branch societies that rotated day and night, performing performances along the streets. People served dishes, extended their connections with relatives and friends, exchanged gifts with each other, and only stopped at the end of the month”; these Liyuan Opera traditional legacy with historical and cultural beacons and the spirit of traditional aesthetics is still full of vitality, demonstrating the cultural connotation of the Liyuan Opera [21] through a variety of ways. These records show that Liyuan Opera had a wide and large audience at that time. One of the main reasons for this is that the Liyuan Opera expressed the real life known to the people in the form of folk songs and dances preferred by the people.

Artistic creation should be rooted in the folk and absorb its nutrients. The folk elements in the dance of Liyuan Opera make its performance more grounded and easier to resonate with the audience. In creation, we should focus on drawing inspiration from folk culture, so that the works are closer to the masses and reflect their lives and emotions.

4.3 Virtual Nature

Liyuan Opera dance is characterized by virtuality, focusing on the virtual view of time and space of stage through movement. It fully adopts virtual symbols, using abstract body movements to express the inner emotions of characters and narrate the storyline. For instance, the highly symbolic movements represented by “walking round the stage”. At the same time, tools such as umbrellas, fans, sticks, etc. and skillful stances can also take virtuality into reality to convey true emotions, or turn reality into virtual to express the inner state. This method of expression makes the actor's emotion more implicit and profound, demonstrating infinite space and time. This also reveals that we should give full play to our imagination in creation and use the technique of “interplay of reality and virtuality” to enrich the content and form of our works, which can move people's hearts more than the direct lines and doxology.

4.4 Narrative Nature

The dance of Liyuan Opera is subject to the artistic nature of the opera “Storytelling through Dance”, showing a distinctive “narrativity” [22]. Various actions of Liyuan Opera

dance are in accordance with the portrayal of the characters in the play. whether it is “touching the head sideburns, rolling up the sleeves and scraping, leaning against the window, or looking up to see, looking down to find, and even the externalization of the intense and complex psychological and emotional activities, such as the hardship and helplessness of Zheng Yuanhe when he was driven out of the brothel by the bawd and wandered on the streets, or the emotional interweaving of Yaoqi’s excitement on the way to find his mother when he found out about her whereabouts, etc. Through dance movements and expressions, we can vividly narrate the storyline and show the characters’ personality. We should pay attention to the narrative of the work when creating, so that the audience can feel the charm of the story and the vividness of the characters while enjoying the dance.

5 Concluding Remarks

The ancient city, Quanzhou, Fujian Province, with a long history for millennia, is the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road. It was successfully declared as a non-heritage in 2021. There are many non-heritage cultural elements here that are worth exploring [23]. Its local opera, Liyuan Opera, is known as the “living fossil of Southern Opera of Song and Yuan Dynasties”, and with its unique dance language, it has vividly interpreted countless aspects, as well as sorrows and joys of the human world. Through the detailed division and in-depth analysis of its dance types, this study can easily find that both the programmatic dance postures and the performance dance segments contain profound artistic and cultural connotations. They not only show the artistic charm of Liyuan opera dance, but also reflect the unique charm and rich connotation of Chinese opera art. The dance of Liyuan Opera shows a unique artistic attractive with its programmatic, folk, virtual and narrative features. Among them, the basic performance procedures such as the “Eighteen Steps of Kemu” reflect the rigorous structure and rich connotation of the Liyuan Opera Dance; at the same time, the folk elements incorporated into the dance make it closer to the masses and popular among the people. In addition, the Liyuan Opera Dance shows its unique narrative style through the virtual symbolism of the stage time and space view, as well as the vivid narration of the storyline with dance movements and expressions.

Through the in-depth study of Liyuan Opera Dance, we have obtained the following enlightenment into the opera creation: firstly, the creation should follow the law of art to

ensure the normality and beauty of the performance; secondly, it is necessary to be rooted in the folk culture and absorb the folk sustenance to make the work closer to the masses; furthermore, to give full play to the imagination and use the technique of the “interplay of reality and virtuality” to enrich the content and form of the work; finally, it should focus on the narrative nature and narrate the storyline through the lively. Finally, we should pay attention to the narrative, through vivid dance movements and expressions to narrate the storyline and portray vivid characters.

As a treasure of Chinese traditional culture, the dance form of Quanzhou Liyuan Opera not only showcases the essence of Chinese traditional art, but also provides valuable inspiration for modern opera creation. On the path of art in the future, we should continue to deeply excavate and study the artistic value and cultural connotation of Liyuan Opera Dance while integrate its wisdom into modern theatre creation, so as to promote the inheritance and development of fine traditional Chinese culture. At the same time, we also look forward to more artists and scholars to pay attention to and study this unique art form of Liyuan Opera, and jointly contribute to the writing of more splendid artistic chapters.

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