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JING-CHU: THE MAKING OF PEKING OPERA

By

Han-ching Liu

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ABSTRACT

JING-CHU: THE MAKING OF PEKING OPERA

By

Han-ching Liu

“Jing-chu: The Making of Peking Opera” uses a made-for-television documentary to introduce the essence and stylization of Peking Opera to a western audience.

As one of the oldest theatrical performances in the world, Peking Opera engaged singing, dancing, music playing and martial arts into a synthesis of various stage aesthetics. It is performed with almost no set. It is more like a symbolic art form instead of a representational stage performance.

This video documentary is intended to provide a guide to the major aspects of Peking Opera. It does not assume the audience to have any knowledge of Chinese history or civilization. Instead, it will begin with all the basic concepts of Peking Opera help the audience to understand this unique and diverse cultural legacy while providing for the purposes of education, entertainment, commercial viability, and aesthetic vitality.

This written thesis is a supplement to the video program, which explains the motivation, video design, and creating theories of the author. The results of a group evaluation and its implications are also presented.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION -	1
CHAPTER 1 - WHAT IS PEKING OPERA.....	4
CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
CHAPTER 3 - VIDEO PROGRAM DESIGN.....	22
CHAPTER 4 – EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, and RECOMMENDATIONS... 	44
APPENDIX A	53
APPENDIX B	55
FOOTNOTE	72
BIBILOIGRAPHY.....	73

INTRODUCTION

Known as China's national opera, Peking Opera, which originated in the late 18th century, is a synthesis of music, dance, art and acrobatics. It is the most influential and representative of all operas in China. Peking Opera has been the nationally dominant form of theater in China for almost two hundred years. The song, music, dance, pantomime, story and speech form together into a unique form of art. From late Chou dynasty, Chinese theater may be said to have had a generally continuous existence. ¹

In the Yuan Dynasty, (around early 16th century) the performing form "Tsa-chu" (a variety drama) was developing in a miniature of the classical Chinese theater. In the middle of the Ching dynasty, the special opera theater performing style in Peking was the most popular one. Therefore, Peking Opera was named after this style and it soon spread over all of China. Based upon traditional Anhui Opera, it has also adopted repertoire, music, and performing techniques from Kun Opera and Qinqiang Opera as well as traditional folk tunes in its development, eventually forming its own highly stylized music and performing techniques. Peking Opera has been developing for two hundred years. It has assimilated more ingredients from other traditional arts and still keeps its own classical form. Today, Peking Opera still plays an important role as a living monument of world theater.

Peking Opera features intricate body movement techniques, and makes full use of colorful, gala stage costumes and props to set off the refined dance movements. Traditional Chinese Opera has certain connections with performance arts today. For example, many modern Taiwanese dance groups take features from the traditional Chinese Opera to enrich their dance and some musicians or singers take Opera music to feature a new form of art. Even Chinese martial arts have some attributes similar to traditional opera movements.

The western world's knowledge of Chinese theater has largely been derived from the old Beijing style of performance, commonly known as Peking opera.² Besides that, there is not so much information of the aesthetic principles of this form. However, Peking Opera has a totally different performing concept from Western theater. In a video interview with Mr Jen, a lighting/stage designer of Kuo-kuang Opera Troupe in Taiwan. He pointed out the basic difference between Chinese and Western theater:

"To me, the reality in the western theater is to build by magic, by hiding, by shadow, everything on the stage, we want it look like real."

"For Chinese Opera, it's totally different, we don't make reality on stage, we give you the subject for the audience to imagine it into reality. The reality in the traditional Chinese Opera theater, is not made on the stage, it is made by the audience and in the audience's mind."

“So the stage, the scenery, the props are only the tools for the audience to imagine, or are only the tools to let the audience relate it. It will be more like guide for the audience to see the details, make the reality, that’s why the light is always bright, so the audience won’t miss any part on the stage.”

Since Peking Opera has a highly stylized performing way, It can hardly be automatically and universally understood. It is a language which has to be learned. The audience needs to understand certain conventions and rules before viewing Peking Opera in the theater.

The purpose of this video documentary is to provide an understanding of the basic aesthetic attributes to the western audience. In other words, this program will help the audience appreciate Peking Opera. The documentary video is about the history, actors, story, roles, training process and performance at one of the most famous Peking Opera troupes in Taiwan, the National Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe. The video will also present videotaped performance from other Peking Opera training schools and troupes in Taiwan. These include the Academy of Fu-hsing Dramatics Arts School, and the Contemporary Legend Theater performing their latest works.

This paper is a supplement to the video program.

Chapter 1

WHAT IS PEKING OPERA

1. Origin of Chinese Classical Theater

Chinese drama usually involved performing a story by dancing and singing. Dancing can be traced back to the Shaman's rituals of the Chou dynasty.³ Shamans were important in Chinese religion and society.

A shaman may be defined as a priest or intermediary recognized as possessing special powers to invoke and communicate with spirits and gods. These rituals usually combined dancing and singing for the invocation of spirits, and the invocation was sometimes intended to entertain.

After the late Chou dynasty (around 500 B.C.) court jesters began to perform. Court entertainers were also called "You" or "Chang". They were people who entertained their dukes and princes by witty contributions to ordinary conversation.

Later in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). The "horn butting game" flourished. Originally a way of fighting, under Emperor Han, Wu-di (140-80 B.C.) it became one of the "hundred games", which involved enacting simple combat plays on various subjects. The performance was probably like today's combat and magic plays.

Through the late period of the Three Kingdoms (220-265 A.D.) and Six Dynasties (222-589 A.D.). The Chinese dancing and singing performance moved on to another stage due to the contact of India through the importation of Buddhism. Puppets and masks began to be used in comic shows.

During the Tang period (618-906 A.D.), thriving commerce and more settled times helped the growth of theater. According to tradition, Emperor Ming Huang, who reigned from A.D. 712-756 of the T'ang dynasty was the founder of the Chinese theater. Tang history tells us that Ming-Huang established the first music academy in his Pear Garden and trained three hundred court musicians and hundreds of women attendants in it and called them all "pupils of the Pear Garden", which was probably the first theatrical profession. A number of dances in the nature of musical sketches, using flute, clappers, and drums for their musical instruments, flourished during the dynasty. In general, these performances were only limited to dancing and singing; however, stories, one of the most important elements of theater, were still left out.

The Sung dynasty (960-1276 A.D.) is famous for its dramatic literature. A lot of stock dramatic documents from the past decades also enriched the theater development. In a book on customs and manners of the Sung dynasty, the different forms of popular entertainment are said to be "story-telling, humorous talks, shadow plays, ballads, songs, farce, and puppets. On the other hand, dramatic poetry and music were also evolving at this period. Chinese dramatists

were all poets because all dramas were written in a particular style of poetry. The development of the Chinese drama and the evolution of Chinese poetical styles are closely related to each other.

At the arrival of the Yuan dynasty (1277-1367 A.D.), various theatrical elements developed in the preceding centuries joined to create the first four-sectioned Chinese dramas. Afterwards, the Ming dynasty (1368-1643 A.D.) marks a most important chapter in the history of Chinese drama and theater. More than four hundred playwrights produced over fifteen hundred plays, ranging from one act skits to more than fifty scenes. As a performing art, Ming theater, with its polished singing, intricate choreography, and splendid costumes has been rarely surpassed.

Regional dramas had been greatly developing as moved into the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.). From a historical point of view, the economic condition of the whole country was booming in this period (around 1790-1850 AD). Transportation had improved to enable all the theatrical troupes to be able to travel around. Moreover, more and more people were interested in these performances, and they were willing to pay to support these troupes. From the social point of view, the whole society had been deconstructed, and ordinary people were seeking for a mental entertainment to release their thoughts.⁴ (The History of Peking Opera, p99). This reinforced the interest in plays, and that also

brought a deeper connection of the audience and their beloved theater troupes. Opera moved closer to the common people.

The Peking Opera is the most highly developed style of the system of regional drama style known as Pi-huang. The term Pi-huang is a combination of two words, Xipi and Erhuang, both of which are the names of drama style. The two styles Xipi and Erhuang share many features with each other. In both there are "standard"(zheng) and "counter"(fan) tunes. The difference between the two is that the strings of the bowed fiddle, and consequently the music as a whole, are pitched one-fourth or two-and-a-half tones higher in "counter" tunes than in "standard". In general, scenes emphasizing serious or sad feelings are more likely to use Erhuang while those which are happy or exuberant will use Xipi. For instance, "quick meter" music, which must belong to Xipi style, is often found in scenes featuring excited discussion. ⁵

Peking Opera was born in a combination of the two main regional styles, Xipi and Erhuang in Beijing. The beginning of the lasting Pi-huang tradition in Beijing can be dated to 1790. In that year the four big Huiban opera Troupes entered the capital and combined with Kunqu opera, Yiyang Opera, Hanju opera and Luantan in Beijing's theater circle of the time. The occasion was the eightieth birthday celebrations for the Qianlong Emperor.

Through a period of more than half a century of combination and integration of various kinds of opera there evolved the present Peking Opera

(around A.D.1840-1860), the biggest kind of opera in China. The special singing style of Peking Opera utilized these regional singing tones and established its own characteristics, and its development dominated the history of eighteenth and nineteenth century Chinese theater.

2. The Content of the Peking Opera

The content of Peking Opera derives from novels of the Yuang and Ming dynasties or even earlier. The repertoire of Peking Opera is mainly engaged in fairy tales of preceding dynasties, important historical events, love stories, folk tales and other legends. These are all important sources of Peking Opera and they enrich the topics of Peking Opera.

For the content of performance, Peking Operas are generally and traditionally categorized into civilian and military. The civilian items cover tales of righted injustice, love stories and family matters. Singing performance plays a great part in civilian items. For example, "The butterfly dream" is a lively satire on the inconstancy of women. Military dramas are tales of war, uprisings and heroic exploits. These plays focus more on fighting, acrobatics, and martial arts performance. For example, the "Romance of the Three Kingdoms", based on a novel is a typical military opera. These plays can also be divided according to styles, such as comedy, farce, slapstick, and tragedy.

3. Main Elements of Peking Opera

Peking Opera is a synthesis of stylized action, singing, dialogue and mime, acrobatic fighting and dancing to represent a story or depict different characters and their feelings of gladness, anger, sorrow, happiness, surprise, fear, and sadness. In a way the movement works which like a live sculpture. In these main elements within Peking opera will be broken down and examined according to the aesthetic principles.

(1) Four primary role categories in Peking Opera

The characters must have their images vividly manifested. They are loyal or treacherous, beautiful or ugly, good or bad. Stage characters are classified according to types. They are interesting to an audience as types quite as much as the individuals of the immediate drama in which they may be playing. Each has a traditional make up that is well known to theater habitués.⁶ There are four major roles in Peking Opera: male, *Sheng*; female, *Tan*; painted face, *Ching*, Comedian, *Chou*; and there are a number of variant sub-categories in each of them according to their age, social status or characteristics. That is to say, these roles are archetypal presentations by which a surface contrast between positive and negative, good and evil is established through the stage action.

a. Sheng:

The male group can be separated into four divisions: warriors are Wu-sheng, intellectuals are Wen-sheng, young men are Hsiao-Sheng, and old men are Lao-sheng. These are not mutually exclusive categories.

b. Tan:

Tan are females. Before the present century, there were separate dramatic troupes made up entirely of men or entirely of women. Since the debut of the Republic of China in 1911, women have added their glamour to the stage by playing female parts along with men. Tan roles are subdivided into Ching-yi, Hua-tan, Hua-shen , Lao-tan and Wu-tan. Ching-yi expresses the traditional ideal of womanhood, with trembling, mincing steps and downcast eyes. She usually demonstrates women with remarkable grace. In contrast to the virtuous female types, Hua-tan portrays women with charm or bewitching grace. Lao-tan are usually elder women. Wu-tan is a role who is clever with the sword. She is able to handle acrobatic assignments like a young boy.

c. Ching:

These are usually brave warriors, evil ministers, upright judges, and loyal statesmen, with a colorful pattern of painting make-up. These characters symbolize strength and power in fighting and thinking

d. Ch'ou:

Chou is the clown or comic of the Chinese stage, making people laugh by his funny actions. Chou's performance is really interesting in Peking Opera. The role "Ch'ou" is just like the comedian, he is not necessary a fool. He usually makes people laugh by making fun of himself or others. He needs to know everybody's role on stage, sometimes he has to imitate other roles to make the audience laugh. Sometimes he acts like a narrator as well as an outsider of the drama, to inform the audience what's going happening on stage. Unlike other roles which use poetical language for lyrics, Ch'ou uses everyday speech in order to make the audience laugh.

(2) Music and vocal expression

The musical style of the Peking Opera is called *Pihuang* as mentioned earlier. The performance is accompanied by a tune played on wind instruments, percussion instruments and stringed instruments. It serves a strictly theatrical function and has no place as concert music. Singing is used to indicate human emotions and psychological reactions, melodramatically conveyed through the range of mood offered by the metrical arrangements of the two principal musical styles.⁷ Each role category is vocally identified by specific qualities of pitch, volume, and enunciation. The method of singing is completely stylized within the patterned relationships created by the string and percussion accompaniment, together with choreographic forms in which every gesture is predetermined.

(3) Gesture and movement

For each role category there are prescribed methods for every kind of physical action pertaining to human behavior. Theater people usually list them for technical purposes under the following headings: foot movements and pace, leg, hand and fingers, sleeves, pheasant plume, and beards. In all Peking opera acting forms, every step, gesture, head movement posture, and combat form are minutely defined. For example, hand gestures are used symbolically to express emotional reactions and provide a continuous pattern of movement while an actor is singing. They are also given great emphasis in expressive mime techniques whereby simple actions like opening or closing of a door or the threading of a needle become visually attractive interpolations within the total action of a theme played out through a combined element of music, song, and dance.

(4) Costumes and makeup

Opera costumes all fit tidily within a limited grouping of basic styles, the variations on a basic style being due to color, pattern, and whether they are to be worn by male or female characters, who frequently use robes of the same name, basic cut, and symbolic function. For example, painted "red" indicates uprightness and loyalty, and white is craftiness and cunning. Facial makeup on the Peking opera stage ranges between the highly conventionalized, dependent on a heavy use of powder and paint, to practically no makeup at all. The makeup highlights and exaggerates the principal features of the characters.

To sum up, the main purpose of acting in Peking Opera is to produce an artistic effect rather than be true to life. It is the ideal, not the real that is intended to be emphasized. The aim is to present the show as artistically as possible without details of true life. However, the audience follows the stage convention and rules to view the play via these abstract ideas. These are presented not only by intonation, such as "speech through melody, gestures through dance" but also in bodily movements such as conventional gait and sleeve movement. There are striking differences from the sounds and actions of daily life. Actors and actresses follow the performing stylization and rules. Any expression of feeling, a smile, a frown, a sigh, an indication of surprise—must be conventionally given in accordance with special music. If an actor can make his audience feel and appreciate what he means to present in the play, it is sufficient. The performers try to convey the show through their singing and acting, and the stage or props are all minor compared with the actions. Thus, the stage property can be as simple as a table and two chairs, and that can represent a very real situation by the actor's acting.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REIVIEW

Documentary Defined

Documentary has as its root word “document”, which entered the English language by the mid-fifteenth century with two chief derivations from its Latin and Old French roots. It means to teach and/or provide warning, and with evidence or proof.⁸ John Grierson, whose British documentary film unit exposed social problems in the 1930s, coined the term documentary in 1926 in a review of Flaherty’s film *Moana*. Grierson wrote, “Moana, being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth and his family, has documentary value”.⁹

Grierson’s definition of documentary was “the creative treatment of actuality.”¹⁰ Grierson’s emphasis was on editing. Paul Rotha said “ the use of the film medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality” seems to allow for nonactuality.¹¹

William Van Dyke’s view of documentary is film intended to bring about change in the audience—change in their understanding, their attitudes, and possibly their actions.¹²

“Unlike the fiction film, the documentary film takes its content from the perceptible behavior of people in relation to their society. It does not fabricate

characters or situations but lets the unrehearsed drama of daily life unfold before an audience.”¹³

“Documentary” suggests fullness and completion, knowledge and fact, explanations of the social world and its motivating mechanisms. More recently, though, documentary has come to suggest incompleteness and uncertainty, recollection and impression, images of personal worlds and their subjective construction.”¹⁴

“...documentary filmmakers have in common their desire to record actuality. They select and shape representations of that actuality in order to (1) communicate insights, achieve beauty, and offer understanding (Flaherty) or (2) improve social, political, or economic conditions (Grierson)”.¹⁵

Michael Rabiger states “Documentary is a construct of evidences. It aims to induce in its audience the progression of its maker’s experience as they grapple to understand the meaning of particular events.”¹⁶

The definition of documentary varies according to the purpose and approach of the film makers. Most agree the documentary’s emphasis is on factual material instead of pure entertainment or fictional film. However, the “actuality” of documentary has been challenged, as Bill Nichols stated “ ...control does define, in a backhanded way, a key element of documentary”.¹⁷ If we view

documentary as a text, a film maker can simply approach the viewer via this text, and a viewer should be able to build his or her own engagement with the text itself. Thus, a documentary film maker needs to make proper use of the “control” of the text, and present the text as a representation of the reality for the audience. A filmmaker’s decisions and approaches dominate the way he or she presents the text to the audience.

Modes of Documentary

Film theorist Bill Nichols has identified four modes used in documentary film for structuring its representation of events. These are expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive.¹⁸ These categories of documentary occur historically, and each mode has its influence on each other. Each of them can react against each other or be incorporated in a new manner. The four modes in some ways represent the appropriated functions of the non-fiction film.

The ***expository mode***, which derives from the work of Flaherty, provides a solution to a problem or moves toward a needed conclusion. “The expository text addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world.”¹⁹ Therefore, an unseen “Voice of God” commentary or an on-camera voice of authority dominates the whole program, and footage or visuals only serve as illustration or explanation. “The expository mode emphasizes the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgment”.²⁰ The expository mode often establishes a sense of dramatic involvement around

the sense for a solution, and the viewer's entry into the text with a problem-solving expectation.

Observational documentaries refer to "direct cinema" (Erik Barnouw)²¹ and "cinema verite"(Jean Rouch)²². Direct cinema is a method of documenting the participants or subjects with a hidden camera, and these people are usually unaware of the camera's presence and cannot modify their behavior when the film has been taking. The other approach, "cinema verite" encourages the interaction between the subject and the filmmaker. It allowed the director to initiate the events and to film it as the participants are willing to be filmed.

The *observational mode* of documentary, as Nichols addresses, depends on the "work of realism and it's ability to render the impression of reality". It has a "sense of the historical world as we experience is, on a quotidian basis". "The observational mode stresses the nonintervention of the filmmaker. Such films cede "control" over the events that occur in front of the camera more than any other mode".²³ Observational mode employs sync-sound and long camera takes. It first appears when technology produced portable sync-sound equipment capable of long takes in the 1960s. The emphasis on this mode will be on the individual as a process, a crisis, or other "present tense" experience. This method will hide the presence of the filmmaker or the authority, and provide an effect of an absent presence of observation. It tends to strengthen the representation of the "reality effect" with less interruption of the subjects and lets

viewers find a revealing point of view through these non fabricated material. As Nichols points out “our tendency to establish a repertoire of imaginary relationships with characters and situations prospers on condition of the filmmaker’s presence or absence.”²⁴

Interactive films, according to Nichols, are derived from Dziga Vertov’s kino-pravda and Jean Rouch’s direct cinema. Different from the observational mode, the filmmaker intervenes and interacts with the participants. Filmmakers negotiate the interaction and control the participation in certain degrees. The key difference will be that “we observe an implanted conversation”,²⁵ “ Interactive documentary stresses the images of testimony or verbal exchange and images of demonstration”,²⁶ “Interaction often revolves around the form known as the interview” “ The interactive text takes many forms but all draw their social actors into direct encounter with the filmmaker.”²⁷ In other words, all the interaction between social actors, or participants and the filmmaker are prearranged. The filmmaker maintains a logical continuity of these individual viewpoints and commentary through editing. The filmmaker’s observation, known as the idea of “metaobservation”, will extend to the process of exchange between themselves and their subjects and

An interviewee’s commentary will be used in an expository text. The visible presence of the filmmaker and the prearranged appearance of the social actors achieve a conjunctive effect to place the viewer in direct relation to the

interviewee. The filmmaker needs to manage with an absent manner to let the view establish through their own engagement with the text (the film) itself.

The *reflexive mode* calls attention to itself by examining the problems of representation. In other words, the filmmaker unveils the film itself in a metacommentary about how the world is presented by film. "Rather than hearing the filmmaker engage solely in an interactive fashion with other social actors, we now see or hear the filmmaker also engage in the expository and poetic or interactive and diaristic modes, than about the process of representation itself." The reflexive mode of documentaries addresses the question of "how we talk about the historical world". Different from interactive films which "pose a problem for the participants", "the reflexive mode draws attention to the process when it poses problems to the viewer."²⁸

Thus, the belief systems of subjects become repositioned within the text's own metacommentary and reconstructs the perspective of the audience. The reflexive mode of representation emphasizes the encounter between the filmmaker and viewer rather than the filmmaker and the subject. The filmmaker puts himself or herself in the frame and tells the stories with a surreal manner. The interactive film and the reflexive film blend into one at some points. "In one, the filmmaker interacts with the subjects; in the other, the filmmaker may detail how the film affects her. Whereas the interactive film literally shows the filmmaker, the reflexive mode shows the film as a construct, but it may also show

the filmmaker as part of that construction."²⁹ Through unexpected juxtapositions, the film can function as a stimulant to raise the audience's consciousness of their distance from engagement with the text, as a representation of reality.

Characteristics of Television Documentary

Since television holds the biggest share of existing media audience, it has become the best qualified medium to reach its audience. "This new channel would provide substantial and sustained basis of support. Thanks to television, more documentaries and related types of public information programs have been shown to larger audiences than at any other time in history".³⁰ Made-for-television documentaries do have a significant influence today. According to Ellis on "The documentary Idea", there are three types of documentary series. First is the documentary based on newsworthy subject; second are the historical and often nostalgic subjects; third is "human interest", which is the interest we all have in individuals. Lately, the "Entertainment documentary" has emerged within the nostalgia and human interest categories.³¹

Television documentaries tend to appear in the context of a series, or fit precisely into air times. "In series context and in the daily flow of television programming, it may be difficult for particular documentaries to offer the kind of aesthetic experience or to achieve the social impact on those they do reach to the extent that some documentaries shown in the theaters and to nontheatrical audiences may have done." ³²

As Ellis stated: "television has become virtually the mass medium, certainly as far as documentary is concerned. It is the best qualified of any medium of art and communication yet devised to quickly call large numbers of people's attention to various subjects. It has established its ability to do that- and sometimes has done it superbly." ³³

Chapter 3

VIDEO PROGRAM DESIGN

1. Program Purpose and Description

This program is titled "Jing-Chu, The Making of Peking Opera" which clearly communicate the intention of explaining the making of this old art form to a general audience. "Jing-Chu" is the Chinese pronunciation of Peking Opera.

Since Peking Opera is colorful and full of movements, perhaps the best way to portray the aesthetic features of this creative work is to develop a video program that incorporates Chinese Opera fundamentals. "The Western world's knowledge of Chinese theater has largely been derived from the old Peking style of performance, commonly known as Peking opera."³⁴ As Scott addressed in "An Introduction to the Chinese Theater":

*"The Chinese theater has generally been regarded as beyond normal understanding in the West. Exotic, yes, and with a strange fascination born of this fact, but the nature of its technical approach raises an apparently insuperable barrier against interpretation on the part of the newcomer watching Chinese traditional drama for the first time."*³⁵

In the recently years, research has focused on comparison Peking Opera with Western theater. However, only limited media texts targeted the aesthetic principles of this form. This program will examine the aesthetic attributes to give

the audience a basic guideline of appreciation. For instance, one of the aesthetic values of Peking Opera is to combine both movement and vocal production instead of separating them from each other. Visual examples will be given in this video text to provide a better illustration of this art form.

Based on those symbolic attribute and aesthetic features of opera, the program will bring up a brief introduction of the character roles of Peking Opera, distinguished on the basis of sex, age, and personality. This can serve as a general idea of the persona for performing. Also, the program will describe the basic aesthetic principles of how to make an opera good: synthesis, convention, stylization. The program will also bring in the training process, and stage practices to let the audience know the efforts devoted behind the stage. Other sections will include interviews with professional Peking Opera performers, the director, and the stage designer.

2. Format

This program will design a televisual text, a made-for-television documentary. The main format of this video text will be presented in a narrative manner to create an experience that introduces Peking Opera to a Western audience.

“Narration is content that tells a story. It is perhaps the most powerful means of communicating content.”³⁶

“Narration, as story, has a beginning, middle, and end. It always involves a series of events and characters who move, in spite of (sometimes increasing) conflict, toward a goal. “

The main format of this program adopts a “narrative strategy”³⁷ to tell the story. The producer uses voice over narration and content from interviewees to structure scenes, so the words used relate to the emotional flow of the piece as well as the message being communicated.

The documentary will involve the audience to establish its own understanding of Peking Opera via the interviews and stage performances recorded by the producer. Two short “montages”, one in the beginning and one at the end will represent a hybrid image saturation of symbolic languages of Peking Opera. Thus the audience can keep the mainstream storyline in mind as well as experience some mixing of sequences of Chinese opera movement, opera music, vocal expression, dance, and stage design. This video text can function as an introductory program in a TV documentary series since it explains the basic concept, stage patterns, and training of Peking Opera.

3. Target Audience

In the present-day competition for the audiences among various forms of entertainment, programs with complex patterns or which require program background knowledge for viewing may have limited their appeal to a new

audience. Therefore, the audience will be people who are interested in arts and performance, but do not have much knowledge of Chinese Opera. The starting point is to make the program understandable to people from a different culture or background.

4. Mode

Bill Nichols identified four modes used in documentary film for structuring its representation of events. "*Jing-chu, the Making of Peking Opera*" mixes several modes. Expository, observational, and interactive are all applied on this video text. The first and second segments on the first topic use expository mode to directly address the audience and inform them of the background knowledge of the history of Peking Opera. The use of commentary voice dominates the beginning sections of this program in order to establish an objective belief system to offer the necessary knowledge to the audience. The beginning of the third topic "Stories and Roles" uses the same method.

Observational mode, or direct cinema is used in B roll shots (visuals that are inserted over a voice). In on stage rehearsing and performance, the performers concentrated on their acting and were not aware of the camera. Sync sound and images are all recorded at the moment of observational filming. The producer took the position of an ideal observer, moving among and in between the audience to find revealing views.

In addition, the interactive mode is widely used for on camera interviewees. These interviewees provided their professional knowledge and experience on Peking Opera on screen. The producer recorded these prearranged conversations and used these voices as a commentary argument.

The interview structure remains self-evident since all the interviewees address directly to the camera. The producer brought up questions at times to inspire interactive talking for the interviewees as if they were addressing the real audience. These monologues from the interviewees successfully delivered their thoughts, impressions, feelings, and knowledge as the individual witness directly to the viewer. A great part of topic two, topic three, a topic four are comprised of these interviewees' comments.

4. Program Content

Topic one: Introduction

Segment one: Historical ideas of Peking Opera

The first topic is a brief history of Peking Opera. It serves as the opening of this program as well as introducing the background of Chinese Theater. Information given to the audience includes the history and development of Peking Opera, and the role of Peking Opera in modern society. For an audience with no knowledge of classical Chinese Theater, this segment is extremely

important to give them a rough idea of Peking Opera. For others who have learned some or a little history of theatrical development of China, this sequence can function as a review.

Segment two: The Development of Peking Opera in Taiwan

Since the whole subject of this program is Peking Opera troupe in Taiwan instead of opera troupes in China, the second segment will explain how Peking Opera moved over to Taiwan, and the development of Peking style of Opera in this island.

The major Peking Opera troupe in Taiwan, Kuo-Kuang Opera Company (established on July 1, 1995) combines three former troupes, Ta Peng, Hai Kuan, and Lu Kuang, all of which were sponsored by the military. The Kuo-kuang Opera Troupe is now sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Another well-known troupe is affiliated with the National Fu-Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy. Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe and Fu-Hsing Dramatic Arts Academy are the two major official opera troupes and training school in Taiwan. These two organizations are both considered as renowned and highly professional Peking Opera performing troupes in Taiwan. Both of them have performed with famous troupes from Mainland China or traveled overseas and gained their fame internationally.

Therefore, the style and performance style itself will not have major differences due to the location of the troupes. Peking Opera performance has been on stage for 200 years, and the style and convention are all consistent everywhere.

Topic two: Concepts of Peking Opera

Segment one: Peking Opera, and the basic differences between Western and classical Chinese theater

The program starts with brief interview with one of the performers in Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe, Ms An-li Ju. She points out the major attributes of Peking Opera

"Basically, Jing-chu, or Peking Opera is a very elegant and delicate traditional art performance. I think that one of the special attributes of Peking Opera is that it represents ordinary life expressions in a stylized, non-realistic way."

Another interviewee in this segment is Mr. Hua-ming Jen. He works as a lighting, stage designer of Kuo-Kuang Opera troupe. Jen attended Texas A&M university and gained his Masters degree in lighting and stage design. He has a good understanding of both western and classical Chinese theater. In the interview, he explained the idea of the simple stage properties on Peking Opera stage, and how that differs from the Western stage.

"The reality in the traditional Chinese Opera theater, is not made on the stage, it is made by the audience and in the audience mind.

"To me, the reality in the western theater is to build by magic, by hiding, by shadow, everything on the stage, we want it look like real. A chair, we make it look like a Victorian chair, Victorian table, building, window, even lights, we make it look real. "

The Peking Opera convention takes for granted that a part or some parts can be made to represent the whole in a symbolic way. Symbolic expression is one of the major attributes in Peking Opera. It is vital for the performers to convey their performance via proper representation of reality.

"Effective representation and description requires invention. They are creative. They inform each other; and they form, relate, and distinguish objects." ³⁸

Tables and chairs are the most frequently used portable properties on the Peking Opera stage, and they are often used to represent living rooms and courtrooms where the actual existence of such furniture symbolizing outdoor objects and space. Mr. Jen explained how a table and two chairs can be made to stand for bed, bridge, mountain, or just a table as it is.

"For example, a table on the stage, could be just a table, could be a bed, could be a bridge, could be a mountain. But how it can be the reality,

it's by the action's action. So the stage, the scenery, the props are only the tools for the audience to imagine. It will be more like a guide for the audience to see all the details that make the reality. So that's why the light is always bright, and the audience won't miss any part on the stage."

Another example given by the author is a "night scene" of fighting. This is shown by footage from a Peking Opera play portraying actors combating at night. Peking Opera theaters used to have performance in the daytime without modern artificial lighting facilities. Even today, Peking Opera performing groups try to avoid too many changes of electric lighting indicators. Lighting designers try to create a scene that corresponds with the conventional stage, the live theater outside in the daytime. Therefore, the actors use dialogue, gestures and movements to show they are in the dark. The actors can see each other in reality, but they pretend that they cannot see anyone and act accordingly. The gestures and movements in the night scenes are highly mimetic, and that makes an interesting point of watching Peking Opera.

The lack of realistic representation contributes to the symbolic expression of Peking Opera. The simple stage properties make the audience build up their own imagination. Usually the audience will need some basic knowledge of Peking Opera language and ways of stage stylization. However, good acting is still the most essential thing in Peking Opera, and a good actor is supposed to not let the stage convention and stylization limit his or her way of performing, but

to make good use of these symbolic expression to represent the reality in a creative way, or to assert the style of specialty.

In short, the main purpose of Peking Opera is that the actor should produce an artistic effect rather than be true to life.

"For it is the ideal, not the real, that is intended to be emphasized. The aim is to present the show as artistically as possible without heeding whether or not the details are of true life."

"Any expression of feeling--a smile, a frown, a sigh, an indication of surprise - must be conventionally given in accordance with special music.

*If an actor can make his audience feel and appreciate what he means to present in the play, it is sufficient."*³⁹

Different from Western theater, symbolic expression (including movements, gestures, and stage properties) has been discussed in this segment. To help the audience to have a better understanding of Peking Opera.

Segment two: Stage acting patterns and stylizations

Following up the basic concepts, this segment talks more about details about the stage patterns and stylization of Peking Opera.

First is the exit and entrance of stage. This is also a symbolic idea of place and situation changing without the change of sets. They may give some prologue

or deliver some poetic passages or sing the last sentence of a song to imply travel.

To enter and exit through the curtain represents that the character returns to the place from where he has come, or the character has been summoned by another character on the stage. Characters entering from both curtains show they come from different directions and happen to meet each other, or that they are going to all directions.

*"Prescribed action creates scenery"*⁴⁰ In other words, scenery only exists in imagination. Actors can travel from place to place by entering or exiting the stage, or simply walk around on the stage, by words and movements. The audience knows this is the conventional stylization of traveling. From one perspective, the lack of reality, however, gives the actors a tremendous freedom of acting space via the abstract idea of acting with almost no sets.

Singing, gestures, and movements are all highly stylized. The singing part must follow the special tone to go with the plots and match live orchestra perfectly. Every musical theme has its particular emotional appeal. For example, the singing performance of a sad scene must have a different tone from a happy one.

Movement stylization includes sleeve, hand, arm, foot, and waist. Each of them has its own requirement of style according to the characteristic of the role category. Two examples of movements were mentioned by the interviewees.

"Opening and closing a door": to open a locked door from outside. The actor will use the thumb and index fingers of the left hand, with palm outward as if holding the lock, then open it with the right hand as if putting in the key. Then she will remove the lock; put hands together, palm outward, and put them forward as if pushing the door apart.

However, to open a door from inside is slightly different. Take a pair of Chinese doors for example, if an actor is performing to open doors from inside or she would first hold the left palm outward, and use the thumb and the two fingers of the right hand as if they were grasping the bolt. Move the "bolt" to the right. With hands together in front, draw them inward as if pulling open the doors. Then she walks toward the left with hands raised, palms outward, as if pushing back the heavy left door. Not only will the actor need to follow these sequences, but also he or she has to perform it with a graceful, beautiful way.

Another example is the hand gesture of Tan role (the female characters). Usually this special style of hand movement is called "lotus-like gestures". The actress puts the thumb on the last joint of the middle finger, which is held a little

forward, and leave the other three fingers naturally extended. This usually presents the graceful, or gentle characteristics of traditional females.

Peking Opera has been carefully studied and compared with the English Renaissance theater by Tao-ching Hsu. Horse, or horse back riding has been discussed by Mr. Tao-ching Hsu.⁴¹

"Unlike English Renaissance theater, Peking Opera uses a whip to symbolize a horse."

For example, to rein up an imaginary horse. The rider on horseback moves the whip backward and downward in a curve. When a circle is completed, he holds the whip in front of him with a prone hand.

In this program, Mr. Ching-chou Ju, a Peking Opera performer, explained the use of whip and the horseback riding stylization. He emphasized the importance of body language to symbolize a real horse on the stage. The video in this segment also has footage which clearly demonstrates how the actor mount an imaginary horse.

Another stylization in this program is the so-called "Singing through melody, gesture through dance." This is a very important stylization in Peking Opera. Ms An-li Ju, a performer from Kuo-kuang Opera Troupe, gave her explanation of this old saying.

"Speech through melody is about our singing. The way we talk is like singing. We actually improvise, working from conventions, using rhythm and music to show we're talking."

"No gesture means anything without a dance. We have to perform it in a graceful way. Just like dancing."

Peking Opera is a synthesis of stage art. It is a combination of stylized acting, singing, dialogue and mime, acrobatic fighting and dancing to represent a story or depict different characters and their feelings of gladness, sorrow, anger, happiness, fear, surprise, and sadness. It is their synthesis, rather than presentation in sequence, that is characteristic of traditional theater.⁴² In other words, all the stage movements, gestures, singing, and music should be able to synchronize with each other. Singing can not be alone with live orchestra playing, a movement won't be achieved without proper stylization, a line won't be said without a poetical form. Synthesis is a requirement, and also a bright element of Peking Opera. Ms Kuang-yu Li explained this idea:

"Basically, Jing-chu, or Peking Opera is a synthesized stage art. For example, the poetical lyrics we use are like a literary part; The intonation of the singing must be graceful-that's a musical element; The floor acrobatics we perform on the red carpet are gymnastic demonstration. All the stage movements or postures we adopt, even hand gestures, are like dance."

There are hundreds of rules and stylization on traditional Peking Opera stage. This topic picks up the most important things and explains them from the expert's point of view. Therefore, the audience should be able to get the main idea and essence of stage patterns and stylization of Peking Opera.

Topic three: Stories and Roles

Segment one: The Story of Peking Opera

This segment introduces the topics of plays in Peking Opera, as mentioned earlier. A short narration gives the rough idea of the story content of Peking Opera to the audience.

Narrator:

"Peking Opera owns a greater repertoire of stories than any other. The number of its plays ranges anywhere among 1,000 to 1,500, with about 100 frequent presentations. Themes includes wars, love stories, folk tales. Understanding the story is to achieve a shortcut to the Chinese mind and heart. In the old times, people are not as well educated as today. The Chinese Theater has been an agent of public morality and is officially endorsed as an important medium of mass education. Watching opera performance is a way to know part of history, to learn to be patriotic, and to tell good from wrong."

"For the audience, these important topic has been brought to life on stage through four main roles and their sub categories."

The content of Peking Opera has been derived from various sources, such as historical events, love stories, folk tales, etc. Most reputable plays teach the wisdom of morality. For example, comedy is usually the triumph of virtue over the machinations of some evil influence. Other themes including filial and parental piety; the exaltation of learning; native vice and peculiarities of official corruption; vices common to mankind; legal anomalies; and the absurdities of religious practices.

The depravity of the priesthood and the corruption of official China have been two controlling elements that are lashed by the dramatist. Thus, the audience found themselves releasing their mind through watching Opera performance.

Confucian themes include the popular cult for learning and filial devotion. Satire is always a development of old civilization, and the Chinese people understand and respond to satirical comedy. Dramatists write stories with an ironic perspective to push the corrupting government in their way.

The second segment is about the types of characters. Peking Opera does a clear job in characterizing different roles. The vivid personality of a certain role can be told by the audience right away, so there is no need to explain the characters on stage. Usually the audience can tell good from wrong by the way the actor dresses, acts, and the mask they wear on the stage.

Narration:

" To understand the story of Peking Opera, it is essential for the audience to know these four main role categories. Each has their own different patterns of performing. Roles are distinguished by the way they dressed, sand, and performed. The characters in Peking Opera can be divided into four distinct categories: the male characters in general, which is Sheng in Chinese. Tan, the female characters. Ching, the masked characters, and Chou, the comedians. Each of the four categories is sub-divided into several types according to age and characteristics. "

Topic four: Training Process of Peking Opera

Segment one: Pupil Training

"A Chinese actor is called professional not only because he earns his living by acting but also because he has completed a long and rigorous course of training and apprenticeship".⁴³

Like the training of ballet dancers, a Peking Opera performer starts his training at the age of eight or ten and it lasts about 10 years. During this period, students assimilate all the basic floor movements, acrobatic and singing. The question of if he or she can be a good performer on the stage relies a lot on this period. The life of these trainees is hard; for example, they rise before daybreak

to start their routine practices day by day. Even today, Peking Opera training schools still have early morning practice session as a tradition.

Narration:

"The training process of Opera actors is very harsh. During the ten years of their training period, students are usually called up at 5:30 in the morning to start their routine practice."

This segment starts with the three elementary routine practices. They are the basic stage techniques of Peking Opera. Mr. Ching-chou Ju, a performer as well as a teacher of elementary training class, talked about the learning and training process.

"Usually we have students practice opera floor movements in the morning.

The first thing they learn to do is the handstand...

In the beginning, teachers will assist students in doing somersault exercise. Eventually students can do somersaults on their own.

For opera training, there is an old saying, you have to make yourself control the somersaults, not let the somersaults control you, so I always remind the students to control the somersaults properly, and they will be safe all the time. "

Segment two: Professional Life of Actors

The harsh training process for Peking Opera students enables them to be a better professional performer on the stage. This segment presents the practicing and rehearsing process of two professional opera troupes, Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe and Contemporary Legend Theater. These two troupes share some same performers. Usually three to four rehearsals are needed before performing in public. Sometimes if the play has a lot stage movements, acrobatic combats, the process of rehearsing will be longer to achieve the perfect coordination among performers and the live orchestra.

Another theme covered in this segment is the idea of "stage directing" in traditional Peking Opera. There was no actual stage directing in the past. Almost all the opera performing groups were dominated by one or a couple of main characters. It was taken for granted that the lead character also served as the stage director. Mr. Tsiao-ping Li, the stage director of Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe, gave his point of view on directing Peking Opera.

" A director would never use his point of view to direct the main characters. A Peking Opera director was known as "script holder" or "manager" because he was only in charge of the main character's script, and managing everything else except the main character's script, and managing everything else except the main character's performance. Nowadays, the concept of directing has evolved closer to that of the

western theater. We need to remind the main character to present the play from the audience point of view. "

From Mr Li's talking, the audience will have a better idea of how the concept of stage directing differ from that of the Western theater.

Topic five: Feedback from Actors: The Drive of Learning Peking Opera

Since Chinese Opera takes a long time to learn, actors or actresses often start their training from their childhood. Most of them have encountered a strict time of learning and training. The ten years of hard training is unforgettable for most actors and actress. Today, Peking Opera has been declining, because not too many young people can appreciate the highly stylized traditional performance. Some actors leave the stage and choose other ways of living; however, there is still a group of actors who are proud of their job performing Peking Opera. They support the continuation of this classical performance.

There are three short interviews given in this segment.

1. Ms. Kuang-yu Li, performer.

"When we perform on the stage, on this piece of red carpet, we try to present our best performance to the audience. For me, I think Peking Opera is so beautiful, and it is so full of artistic beauty. How lucky I am to have immersed myself in this beautiful performance and to have a chance

to appreciate it. Not only can I appreciate the modern stage, but also I can integrate the beauty of classical performance into my own."

2. Mr. Tsiao-ping Li, performer/stage director.

"Peking Opera occupied a big part of my life now. In fact, I really like it a lot, and I'm proud to be an opera performer."

3. Ms An-li Ju, performer.

"I choose Peking Opera to be my job, and I never feel any regret about it. Performing on stage is a big mental support for me. If I feel frustrated today, for example, if I have an argument with other opera troupe members or with my husband. What I need to comfort myself is not to talk to others, but to go to the practice court, to rehearse a scene, to let this frustration out. Afterwards, I may cry in the practice court, and I'll feel a big release. So Peking Opera does bring me a lot of happiness, and a lot of pain, but I feel I can overcome those."

Topic six: Ending

Peking Opera is a tremendously in complex, and there is too much too much to cover in this 45 minute video project. The ending of this program will review the essence of Peking Opera and the relationship of Chinese people and the Opera Theater.

Narration:

" An agent of public morality, a school of stylish acting, a synthesis of singing, dancing, martial arts and music. For hundreds of years, Peking Opera has had a great influence in the life of the Chinese people. It is the living treasure of China's traditional performing art."

Chapter 4

EVALUATION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After the video documentary had been produced, it was evaluated by eight individuals. The respondents were all residents from the Lansing area. Their ages range from 22 to 52. Four of them have never heard or watched any Peking Opera before. Two of them knew the name of Peking Opera and had a little understanding of it. Four of them watched more than five theatrical performances a year. Three participants watched at least one theatrical performance a year. Only one person did not watch any theatrical performance a year. Four out of eight were students, and two were homemakers, one was a consultant, and the last one is a reporter as well as a Ph.D. student.

Evaluation was done with the participants taking the video distribution dub and watching the program at their household television. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this program is to develop a video program to introduce the Peking Opera fundamentals to a Western audience. A specific questionnaire was created to study audience reactions.

This questionnaire (see Appendix A) is aimed at the general western public in United States. Respondents could be any members of the western television audience. The results of the evaluations are analyzed by evaluating a 5 point Likert scale. For example, if 7 out of 8 gave a response of 4 to a

particular question, that question would be coded with 7 responses of “4”. All the responses to each open-ended question were looked at individually and similar comments were grouped together.

The questionnaire is designed to elicit responses in three main areas; how interesting the program is, how informative it is, and its overall effectiveness. The following is the summary of the evaluations from the questionnaire.

Interest

In general, most of the respondents found the program interesting, especially on the “Stories and Roles” and “Training” sections. One person expected more details on “History” and “Training” sections. Clearly the program did raise their interest or curiosity at certain points.

Question 3-5, and question 7-8 are in this category.

Question 3:What is your first impression, reaction, or feeling after viewing this program?

Four out of eight respondents found the program is insightful and interesting, and they are impressed by the colorful footage. Two people said that the information is a little overwhelming. One participant also indicated that the narrator’s voice could have been more enthusiastic, and the natural sound and music overlays sometimes drowned out the narrator’s voice.

Question 4: On a scale of one to five (with 1 being not at all and 5 very much) indicate how much you enjoyed viewing this program?

7 out of eight participants gave the rating 4 on this question, and only one of them marked three.

Question 5. Did the program hold your interest throughout its presentation?

Four people gave yes on this question while two respondents said if held their interest for the most of the part. One person said not always, and the last person said "No, because terms were used a lot."

Question 7: Of the topics presented in this program, which ones did you find *MOST*** interesting?**

Three participants said the section of "stories and roles" or "the 4 characters" is the most interesting part. Three others found training as well as 4 roles are interesting. One indicated "stage craft" is her favorite. One marked "introduction" as the most interesting: "It provided me with differences between U.S. theatrical productions and the Peking Opera. I was fascinated by the explanations of props being used as bridges and gestures symbolizing actions."

Question 8. Of the topics presented in this program, which ones did you find *LEAST*** interesting?**

Five out of eight said "props" (which falls in the introduction section) is least interesting. One of the five also said "stories and roles is too much to

absorb in one viewing". One person left this question blank, and one said none. The last one indicated the "history" (which is the open) section could have provided more details. "For example an estimate of age of Peking Opera. 712 BC was mentioned, but the date didn't tell me how old the art form was around before then. What other theatrical art forms are there in Taiwan or China. Is this the only one. Is this the most popular? Also, I wanted to know more information about the "Trainers". For example, how are they picked? How many stay in the profession? Are they able to go to college at the same time? Do they live in dorm? Can the trainees visit their families?"

The results of this program interest evaluation indicate this video did stimulate the interest of the audience.

Informative

The informative question is designed on a Likert scale according to the program sections. The Likert scale was "5" meaning very **informative**, and "1" meaning **uninformative**. The program is divided into sections including "Open, history and highlights of Peking Opera", "Introduction", "Stories and Roles", "Training and Performers", and "Ending Summary".

Question 6. On a scale of one to five, with one being uninformative, and five being very informative, how would you rate the following sections of this program?

	<i>uninformative</i>			<i>very informative</i>	
<u>A) Open: History and highlights of Peking Opera</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>B) Introduction</u>					
<u>C) Stories and Roles</u>					
<u>D) Training and Performers</u>					
<u>E) Ending Summary</u>					

The result of the question are respondents by the following chart. The highlighted column is the rating of Likert scale. Other columns indicate the number of people who gave their rating points according to the Likert scale.

Uninformative

Very Informative

Likert Sale	1	2	3	4	5
Section					
Section A (Open)			One	Two	Five
Section B (Introduction)			One	Three	Four
Section C (Four Roles)				Three	Five
Section D (Training)				One	Seven
Section E (Ending)		One	One	One	Four

There are five people ranked 5 on section A (*History and highlights*) and section C (*Stories and Roles*). Four people ranked 5 on section B (*Introduction*) and E (*Ending Summary*). Seven people ranked 5 on the "*Training and Performers*" section. One respondent marked 2 on section E, which is the *Ending Summary* section. Other respondents who gave on 3 and 4 points on Likert Scale kind of spread on most sections. Most of the respondents' gave 4 or 5 points rating through the five sections. For this area, it is obvious that they considered the program as a highly informative one.

Effectiveness

The next set of questions addressed the areas of program effectiveness in conveying the general understanding of Peking Opera.

Question 9. After viewing the program, do you have any understanding or acceptance of the performance style of Peking Opera? If the answer is yes. Please indicate in what aspect?

Six out of eight participants said yes on this question. Two of the six said the program is very interesting. Two out of eight left the answer blank.

Question 10: After viewing this program, do you think "Jing-chu: The Making of Peking Opera" would be effective in getting people to understand this highly stylized performance?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Three people ranked 5 on this question while 5 participants marked 5 on it.

Question 11: After viewing this program, will you be interested in watching any Peking Opera performance in the future?

Five said yes on this question. Three others said no. One of the three said "I'm not into arts very much".

For this question category, all participants indicated they did have some understanding after viewing this program. Other comments they said such as “very different from other Opera” “great choreography, custom and expressions”, “well done”. One of them pointed out that the program is more scholarly, and less “user friendly” for general audience. One said the program “ a little overwhelming with information.” Two respondents said the program was well put together, one of them said “the editing was well-done. Explaining the various roles, primary and sub-roles, could have been aided with a graphic page illustrating or outlining the roles.”

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this evaluation point to success. Viewers find the program is interesting, informative and effective. It fulfills the program objective to introduce and make the audience have general understanding on this classical performance, Peking Opera.

In general, the respondents all felt this material of this program is novel as well as interesting to them. The content of this documentary provides a good message of conveying things that are new and unknown to people.

However, there is still some room for improvement. Peking Opera has its own performing system, and all the stage patterns and performing stylization are

strictly ruled according to the tradition. It is a little difficult to explain such a big topic via a 45 minute program. The program did promote understanding. Nevertheless, the complexity of this topic could program a TV documentary series for the audience to absorb the all the information in a step by step sequence.

As a program for a first time Peking Opera audience, this program may be a little overloaded with information. As mentioned earlier, the program needs to be made on a more sufficient length to be able to give more details. More graphic pages will be a must to present more clear idea on various role groups. The program left out the music section due to the time constraints, yet musical construction is highly integrated with the performance. Therefore, one more section on musical construction could be effective with more details. Also, more inside presentation of the performer's training and professional life could be added since the survey indicated that the audience would be interested in it.

In view of respondents' comments, "Jing-chu: The Making of Peking Opera" is quite effective at getting people to understand Peking Opera. Even though there are still some parts can be improved in the future, however, given the restraints present during the production, the program meets the communicative object.

APPENDIX A

PROGRAM EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

For the purpose of evaluating this project. Please answer the following questions after viewing the presentation “Jing-chu, the Making of Peking Opera”. Thank you very much for your participation.

1. Before viewing this program, have you every heard or watched any performance of Peking Opera? If the answer is yes, what do you know about Peking Opera?
2. On an average of one year, how often do you watch theatrical performance (including live performance and recording program)?

None 1 2 3 4 5 More than 5 a year

3. What is your first impression, reaction, or feeling after viewing this program?
4. On a scale of one to five (with 1 being not at all and 5 very much) indicate how much do you enjoyed viewing this program?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

5. Did the program hold your interest throughout its presentation?
6. On a scale of one to five, with one being uninformative, and five being very informative, how would you rate the following sections of this program

	Uninformative			Very Informative	
A) Open: History and highlights of Peking Opera	1	2	3	4	5
B) Introduction	1	2	3	4	5
C) Stories and Roles	1	2	3	4	5
D) Training and Performers	1	2	3	4	5
E) Ending Summary	1	2	3	4	5

7. Of the topics presented in this program, which ones did you find **MOST** interesting?

8. Of the topics presented in this program, which ones did you find **LEAST** interesting?

9. After viewing this program, do you have any understanding or acceptance of the performance style of Peking Opera? If the answer is yes, please indicate in what aspect?

10. How effective do you think “Jing-chu, the Making of Peking Opera” would be in getting people to understand this highly stylized performance

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

11. After viewing this program, will you be interested in watching any Peking Opera performance in the future?

12. Please give any other comments or suggestions about this program.

Sex: Female____ Male ____

Age: _____

Occupation: _____

APPENDIX B

NARRATION AND INTERVIEW OF THIS PROGRAM

Topic 1: Open

Segment one: Historical ideas of Peking Opera

Narrator

Chinese theater is very old. It has been traced to different elements in the ancient Chinese culture.

Some scholars found it in ceremonial dances, others in ancient court music, and still others in ancient folk dances.

People believed the emperor Ming-huang, who reigned from 712 to 756 AD of the Tang dynasty, established a music academy in his Pear garden.

Dancing, singing, and music playing developed both in various regions and in the royal kingdom.

In the middle of Ching dynasty, around late 18th century.

One of the best known regional styles spread to Peking, the capital city of China.

There this regional style derived the most important form of traditional theater: the Peking Opera.

Through the years, it has kept on growing and revolving, until today it is one of the forms of native entertainments most admired, and preserved by all the Chinese, wherever they may happen to be living.

Segment two: The Development of Peking Opera in Taiwan

Narrator

Taiwan is a mountainous island of 13,885 square miles in the South China Sea.

In 1949 the Chinese communists defeated Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces and took control of the mainland.

Chiang moved the government of the Republic of China to Taiwan.

Although the mainlanders comprise only one-tenth of the Taiwan population, their theatrical taste—mainly the appreciation of Peking Opera—has had a powerful effect on the theater development in Taiwan in the last half century.

Training school and opera troupes supported by the Taiwanese government has kept this old performance rolling in Taiwan.

In competition with modern entertainment, Peking Opera is not as popular as before.

However, one of the most famous opera troupe and training school in Taiwan, the National Kuo-kuang Opera Company, is still trying to keep this treasure alive today.

Topic 2: Concepts of Peking Opera

Segment one: Peking Opera, and the basic differences between Western and classical Chinese theater

Interview with Ms. An-li Ju, a Peking Opera performer

“Basically, Chin-chiu, or Peking opera is a very elegant, and delicate traditional art performance.

I think that one of the special attributes of Peking opera is to represent all the ordinary life expressions in a stylize, non-realistic way."

Interview Mr. Hua-ming Jen, the lighting/ stage designer of Kuo-Kuang Opera Troupe

"The reality in the traditional Chinese Opera theater, is not made on the stage, it is made by the audience and in the audience mind.

" For example, a table on the stage, could be just a table, could be a bed, could be a bridge, could be a mountain. The table is only a table, it's not a mountain, not a bridge. But how it can be a mountain, a bridge, or the things, or the reality we want it to be, it's by the action's action.

To me, the reality in the western theater is to build by magic, by hiding, by shadow, everything on the stage, we want it look like real.

A chair, we make it look like a Victorian chair, Victorian table, building, window, even lights, we make it look real."

"For traditional Chinese Opera, it's totally different.

The stage, the props, is only a tool for the audience to imagine.

It will be more like a guide for the audience to see all the details that make the reality.

That's why the light is always bright, and the audience won't miss any part on the stage."

Segment two: Stage acting patterns and stylization

Narrator

As a highly stylized performance. The Peking Opera of acting can hardly be automatically and universally understood.

It is a language which has to be learned.

The audience needs to understand certain conventions and rules before viewing Peking Opera in the theater.

Entry and exit on the stage is a good example of stylization.

In a fighting scene, generals of opposing sides make entries with their soldier from the exit and entry sides simultaneously.

The soldiers stand to one side and the generals stride forward to meet each other.

This is one of those patterns they use on the stage.

Interview Ms. An-li Ju, a Peking Opera performer:

"A special feature of Peking opera is how actors stylize their performances.

Stylization is one of the principles in Peking Opera performance.

For example, it will take an opera performer 10 years to manage just the 4 basic ways of opera movements and the 5 basic ways of expressions.

People say that Peking opera is different from other performances because the space is unlimited. That's true.

Peking opera is a very stylistic and abstract performance.

We don't use a lot of props on stage to limit actors' performing space.

For example, suppose I want to step out of a door. But what do I do without a real door on stage? This can be accomplished by our stylization.

For instance, to open a pair of Chinese doors on stage, this is a pair of Chinese doors, and here is the door lock. I would first unlock the door, and then push the doors forward, watch my hands. This is the stylization we use to “open the door”.

Interview Mr. Ching-chao Ju, a Peking Opera performer:

“Performing horse back riding on the stage is an abstract idea.

We use a whip to symbolize a horse.

We put the cord of the whip on our fingers, then grab the whip. This is how to hold our whip.

When we’re performing horse back riding on the stage. We simply walk around the stage to represent that the horse is running.

For example, in the play Monkey King. The scene where the horse doesn’t obey the Monkey King, and his servants can’t control the wild horse. He uses his own performance to represent the action of a real horse.

I think that when we’re performing horse back riding on the stage. We have to imagine we’re riding a real horse, and we need to use our body language to convey it. “

Interview Ms. An-li Ju, a Peking Opera performer.

“There are other stylizations such as “Speech through melody, gesture through dance”

Speech through melody is about our singing. The way we talk is like singing.

We actually improvise, working from conventions, using rhythm and music to show we're talking.

No gesture means anything without a dance. We have to perform it in a graceful way, just like dancing.

This is "I'm looking at something" "

Interview Ms. Kuang-yu Li, a Peking Opera performer.

"Peking Opera is a synthesized stage art.

For example, the poetical lyrics we use are like a literary part.

The intonation of the singing must be graceful, that's a musical element;

The floor acrobatics we perform on the red carpet are a gymnastic demonstration;

All the stage movements or postures we adopt, even hand gestures, are like dance."

Topic 3: Stories and Roles

Segment one: The Story of Peking Opera.

Narrator

Peking Opera owns a greater repertoire of stories than any other performing art.

The number of its plays ranging anywhere among 1,000 to 1,500, with about 100 frequently performed.

Themes include wars, love stories, and folk tales.

Understanding the stories is to achieve a shortcut to the Chinese mind and heart.

In the old times, people were not as well educated as today.

The Chinese theater has been an agent of public morality, and is officially endorsed as an important medium of mass education.

Watching opera performance is a way to know part of history, to learn to be patriotic, and to tell good from wrong.

For the audience, these important topics have been brought to life on stage through four main roles and their sub categories.

To understand the story of Peking Opera, it is essential for the audience to know these four main role categories.

Each has their own different patterns of performing.

Roles are distinguished by the way they dressed, sang, and performed.

The characters in Peking opera can be divided into four distinct categories: the male characters, which is **Sheng** in Chinese. **Tan**, the female characters. **Ching**, the masked characters, **Ch'ou**, the comedians,.

Each of the four categories is sub-divided into several types according to age and characteristics.

"Sheng", are male characters in general. They are subdivided according to their age, social status, and characteristics.

For example, scholars and officials are often play by Sheng roles.

The first Peking Opera actor in the history, played **"Sheng"**'s role.

From that time, **"Sheng"** is the leading role among the four categories.

They are popular not only from their strong voice, but also from their great performance of martial fighting on stage.

Sometimes, the male roles are played by females if this role requires special vocal expression that can be better played by females.

For example, here is **"Tiao-sheng"**, a sub-divided role in **Sheng** category.

Tiao-sheng are young men who sing and talk with a higher tone than other "sheng" roles.

They are often played by women.

Interview Ms. Li-hung Sun, a Peking Opera performer:

"Since the voice of the male breaks, females are usually preferred to play this role.

In Taiwan, almost all Hsiao Sheng's roles are played by female."

Narrator

In general, the make up for this character is light in order to show their clear, confident faces.

Make up for the women is simple too. The ideal of beauty is a narrow oval face with slanting corners to the eyes, and eyebrows.

This is the typical make-up pattern of "Tan" role. The female characters.

After the Ching dynasty collapsed, the audience seemed to appreciate "Tan" more than they did **"Sheng"**.

"Tan" are actors or actresses who play all women's roles.

These roles used to be presented all by males, and many well-known male Peking opera actors earned their fame by playing females on the stage.

Interview Ms. Kuang-yu Li, a Peking Opera performer

"Tan roles are divided into Ch'ing-yi, Hua-tan, Hua Shan and Wu-tan.

Ch'ing-yi plays the role of a virtuous woman.

Hua-tan represents a younger woman with charm.

Hua-shan's character falls in between the two.

Ch'ing-yi focuses more on singing skills, and Hua-tan on performance.

Hua-shan combines the two.

For example, the character Hung-Niang can be categorized as a Hua-shan character type. Be singing and performing, she embodies characteristics of both Ching-yi and Hua-tan."

Narrator

Audiences today are still fascinated with Tan's beautiful stage actions and dedicate singing.

Narrator

With multiple color paint covering all over the actor's face, "colored face" is the nick name of the third role: Ching. They are also called "painted face."

The term "painted face" also refers to the art of make-up in Peking Opera.

The painting pattern of this role is a perfect example of human face painting art.

Today, face painting art not only applies to real people, but these masks can be drawn on paper for artistic value- especially for the Ching role, the most famous role for its colorful face painting.

Interview Mr. Tsiao-ping Li, a performer and stage director

"Face painting is very interesting, I have a great interest on it since I was a kid. Face painting is the most typical art form in Chinese traditional theater, especially when it applies to real human faces.

A painted face is made up of distorted facial features.

All the lines and colors are exaggerated. In general, there are around 600 to 1000 commonly used mask patterns in traditional face painting.

Every line has a meaning. Usually, a symbol icon is painted on the forehead. And all together the facial mask portrays a character's status and background.

There are several types of face painting masks.

One of them is the "Three bricks".

In this mask type, the stripes above the eyebrows and across the eye clearly divide the face into 3 separate parts, the eyebrows, the eyes, and the nose.

The other mask type is the "broken face".

This is portrayed by curves, lines to represent a superficially and expressive character.

Another common mask pattern type is the symbolized mask.

The monkey King's mask is an example of a symbolized mask.

It represents a monkey's face, so these are the major mask types.

To paint a mask, the first thing to do is to lay the white foundation all over the face.

Then, draw the outline of the whole mask, from light to dark colors. Leaving out the red.

Red is applied last. It is the holy color in Peking opera face painting.

Red appears in almost all the masks except in 3 historical characters. These were unloyal people, and not worthy of red.

Other colors have specific functions too.

Blue masks, for example, represent bandit heroes.

Black masks represent aggressive and violent men.

But red stands for loyalty and honesty.

Narrator

In general, **Ching** role suggests power, whether in thought, word, or deed.

Usually they play men with strong, tough characters.

The forth role, **Ch'ou**, is the clown, comedian.

The special make up they wear mark them clearly from other role groups on stage.

Basically, **Ch'ous** portray males with humorous, smart, or negative characteristics.

Chou is not necessary a fool, but he makes people laugh by making fun of himself or others.

Interview Mr. Li-chang Chen, a Peking Opera performer

“Unlike the western clown, the Chinese Opera clown has a nose painted white, which is the common characteristics of the comic role, Ch'ou.

The size of the painted surface tells a Ch'ou's age.

The bigger the surface, the older the Ch'ou.

The shape indicates his knowledge. If it is square the Ch'ou is educated, and is known as the Fang-ji-Chou” This shape is just like a square slice of Dofu..

A Ch'ou in Peking opera must have the ability to give colloquial speech, mimic, joke and sing.

A Ch'ou must speak clearly on the stage.

Moreover, he needs to sing well, because sometimes he has to imitate the roles of Sheng, Tan, and Ching.

He must also plays the roles of women, however, the women he represents are not normal women like those represented by the Tan role, but women with negative or funny characteristics.

To represent them, he acts in exaggerated ways.”

Topic 4: Training Process of Peking Opera

Segment one: Pupil Training

Interview Ms. An-li Ju, a Peking Opera performer

“As I recall, I went to Opera school when I was ten years old.

I remember suffering a lot during the training process.

Now when I look back, I don't think I'll have the courage to go through the whole thing again.

Because the training is not only tough mentally, but also physically.”

Narrator:

The training process of Opera actors is very harsh.

During the ten years of their training period, students usually are called up at 5:30 to start their routine practice.

There are three kinds of elementary routine practices, including floor movements, acrobatics combat, and weapons fights training.

After this comes to the individual practice.

Interview Mr. Ching-chao Ju, a performer and a teacher

“Usually we have students practice opera floor movements in the morning.

The first thing they learn to do is the “hand stand”. This is one of the basics.

To do a hand stand, a teacher needs to tell students how to swing their legs and lean on the wall.

Doing hand stands can strengthen their arms and waist, which allow them to do other movements easily later on.

In the beginning, teachers will assist students in doing somersault exercises. Eventually students can do the somersaults on their own.

It will take at least three years for a student to finish all the floor movements training. These are the basics.

For opera training, there is an old saying: “ You have to make yourself control the somersaults, not let the somersaults control you”.

So I always remind the students to control the somersaults properly, and they will be safe all the time.

For students, after they finish practicing all the hand fights and weapon fights combinations, it will become easy for them to do these combinations in a creative way.”

Narrator

After their three years of basic training, teacher will select students according to their specialties, and fit them to the four role categories or music orchestra.

This will be an individual training process. Besides basis opera movements, vocal training plays an important part in students' daily practice.

Usually the singing practice will be with a live orchestra.

During this session, the teacher will teach and correct the student's vocal performance individually.

For students, the strict training process not only educates them to be good opera performers on the stage, but they can also take advantage of this special background to be successful in other performing or acting fields.

Segment two. Professional Life of Actors

Narrator

After the basic training process, students move on to act as Peking opera professionals.

This will take even more practices and rehearses to be able to present in front of the audience.

To manage a group of performers, good directing is important.

Unlike Western theater, stage directing is still a new concept for Peking opera.

Interview Mr. Tsiao-ping Li, performer and stage director:

“Directing Peking Opera was simpler in the past.

In those times, a main character would establish his own opera troupe, and all the other arrangements were made around him.

For instance, rehearsals depended on how the main character positioned himself on stage.

A director, would never use his point of view to direct the main characters.

Nowadays, the concept of directing has evolved closer to that of the western theater.

We need to remind the main characters to present the play from the audience point of view.

Of course, such change won't happened that fast.

One has to work on making those “celebrities” accept one's suggestions.

This is not easy for them to accept being directed.

It's not easy, but the situation is making progress slowly, and I'm working on making it better."

Topic 5: Feedback from Actors: The Drive of Learning Peking Opera

Interview Mr. Kuang-yu Li, a Peking Opera performer

"When we perform on the stage, on this piece of red carpet. We try to present our best performance to the audience.

For me, I think Peking opera is so beautiful, and it is so full of artistic beauty. How lucky I am to have immersed myself in this beautiful performance and to have a chance to appreciate it.

Not only I can appreciate the modern stage, but also I can integrate the beauty of classical performance into my own."

Interview Mr. Tsiao-ping Li

"For me, Peking Opera occupied a big part of my life now. In fact, I really like it a lot, and I'm proud to be an opera performer."

Interview Ms. An-li Ju, a Peking Opera performer

"I choose Peking Opera to be my job, I've never feel regret about it.

Performing on stage is a big mental support for me.

If I feel frustrated today, for example, if I have an argument with other opera troupe members or with my husband.

What I need to comfort myself is not to talk to others, but to the practice court, to rehearse an scene, to outlet this frustration.

Afterwards, I may cry in the practice court, and I'll feel a big release.

So Peking opera did bring me a lot of happiness and a lot of pain, but, I feel I overcome those."

Topic 6: Ending

Narrator:

An agent of public morality;

A school of stylized acting;

A synthesis of singing, dancing, martial arts, and music.

For hundreds of years, Peking Opera has had a powerful influence in the life of the Chinese people.

It is a living treasure of China's traditional performing art.

FOOTNOTES

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- ¹ Tao-ching Hsu, "The Chinese Conception of the Theater", 1985:299
² A. C. Scott, "An Introduction to the Chinese Theater", 1958:1
³ Hsu, p.299-301
⁴ Shao-po Ma, "The Development and History of Peking Opera in China", 1993:99
⁵ Colin Mackerras, "Chinese Drama, a Historical Survey", 1990:60-64
⁶ Kate Buss, "The Chinese Drama", 1922:42
⁷ A. C. Scott, "Performance of Classical Theater" in Colin Mackerras ed., *Chinese Theater*, 1983:128
⁸ Philip Rosen "Document and Documentary: on the Persistence of Historical Concepts", Michael Renov, ed., *Theorizing Documentary*, 1993:65-66
⁹ Sharon R. Sherman, "Documenting Ourselves", 1998:5
¹⁰ Jack C. Ellis, "The Documentary Idea", 1989:5
¹¹ Ellis, p.5
¹² Ellis, p.6
¹³ Sherman, p.5
¹⁴ Bill Nichols, "Getting to Know You..., Knowledge, Power, and the Body", Michael Renov ed., *Theorizing Documentary*, 1993:174
¹⁵ Jack C. Ellis, "The Documentary Idea", 1989:6-7
¹⁶ Michael Rabiger, "Directing Documentary", 1998:6
¹⁷ Bill Nichols, "Representing Reality, Issues and Concepts in Documentary", 1991:14
¹⁸ Nichols, p.32-75
¹⁹ Nichols, p.34
²⁰ Nichols, p.35
²¹ Nichols, p.38
²² Rabiger, p.25
²³ Nichols, p.38
²⁴ Nichols, p.43-44
²⁵ Nichols, p.52
²⁶ Nichols, p.44
²⁷ Nichols, p.47
²⁸ Nichols, p.57
²⁹ Sherman, p.262
³⁰ Ellis, p.185
³¹ Ellis, p.196-198
³² Ellis, p.200
³³ Ellis, p.200
³⁴ Scott, "The Performance of Classical Theater", p.118
³⁵ Scott, "An Introduction to the Chinese Theater", p.1
³⁶ David L. Smith, "Video Communication", 1991:196
³⁷ Smith, p.342
³⁸ N. Goodman, "Language of Art: An Approach to the Theory of Symbols", 1996:33
³⁹ Cecilia S. L. Zung, "Secrets of the Chinese Drama", 1937:66
⁴⁰ Buss, p. 62
⁴¹ Hsu, "Talking about Drama", 1996:115-129
⁴² Elizabeth Wichmann, "Traditional Theater in Contemporary China", Colin Mackerras ed., *Chinese Theater*, 1983:185
⁴³ Hsu, p.77

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