



THE ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NATIONAL ARTS FUND OF CHINA



XIAOLIN YANG

Graduate School Srinakharinwirot University

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THE ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NATIONAL ARTS FUND OF CHINA



A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of DOCTOR OF ARTS
(D.A. (Thai and Asian Music))

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THE DISSERTATION TITLED
THE ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE NATIONAL ARTS FUND OF CHINA

BY
XIAOLIN YANG

HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Chatchai Ekpanyaskul, MD.)
Dean of Graduate School

ORAL DEFENSE COMMITTEE

..... Major-advisor Chair
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 Committee
	(Assoc. Prof. Dr.Veera Phansue)

Title	THE ARTISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ARTS FUND OF CHINA
Author	XIAOLIN YANG
Degree	DOCTOR OF ARTS
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Thesis Advisor	Assistant Professor Doctor Tepika Rodsakan
Co Advisor	Assistant Professor Doctor Surasak Jamnongsarn

The National Arts Fund has helped Chinese opera, an important art form, develop and introducing new trends and innovations in opera production. It has also created and performed many sorts, topics, and genres of opera and promoted Chinese, opera locally and abroad. This research had two objectives: (1) to study the art form of Chinese opera in accordance with the previous funding policy of the China National Arts Fund; and (2) to provide recommendations for the promotion of Chinese opera with the expectation of obtaining governmental support. According to the two objectives, the analysis using qualitative research methods in music theory and anthropology through interviews and participatory observation of Chinese opera activities and consideration of funding revealed that there has been a reformation in Chinese opera creation since the opening up of China. The reformation was four periods. Opera Creation has also prioritized operational systems development. It advocated that the China National Arts Fund to encourage the Independent and Commissioned Creation Situations. Culture is represented in the script topics, the script writing structure is novel, and the opera music collection encourages nationality.

Keyword : Chinese Opera, Artistic characteristics, China National Arts Fund

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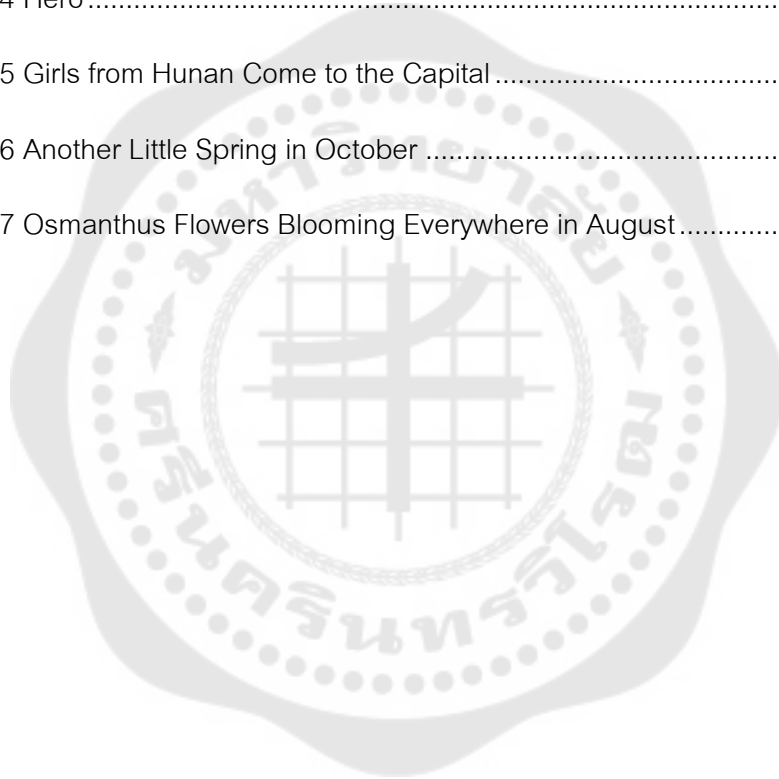
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

This study is focused on the theme "Artistic Characteristics and Future Development of Opera Works in China National Arts Fund Projects from 2014 to 2023". Its methodology is grounded in starting with data collection and analysis, followed by theoretical exploration, and ultimately returning to the logic of practical application. By statistically analyzing data related to opera works funded by the National Arts Fund over a span of nine years, it aims to provide a precise assessment of their creative outcomes and societal impact. Building upon this foundation, it delves into theoretical observations concerning the essence of opera creation and modes of societal dissemination, ultimately reverting to prospects for future development and offering pragmatic recommendations. The goal is to integrate practicality with theory, establishing a robust research framework to facilitate the effective operation of National Arts Fund projects and promote the creative development of high-quality opera productions.

The development of opera art in China since the first half of the 20th century has benefited from the collective efforts of many Chinese artists, establishing a path for the development of national opera. Milestone opera works such as "The White-Haired Girl", "Sister Jiang" and "The Red Guards on Honghu Lake" were created, influencing several generations of Chinese people (Xu, 2016). Since then, Chinese opera art creation has consistently progressed along the lines of localization and nationalization, producing many popular works. Following the reform and opening-up policies, opera art creation in China became more open, free, and inclusive. It began seeking harmony and resonance with Western music and theatrical theories, continuously advancing on the path of integration between Eastern and Western cultures. Through relentless efforts, increasingly outstanding opera art pieces were created, enriching the Chinese art stage. Since the beginning of the new century, China's comprehensive national strength has reached unprecedented levels, with remarkable achievements in media technology and cultural development (Ju, 2003). This period also witnessed new trends and changes in

opera creation. To achieve more fruitful results in Chinese opera art and create more outstanding works tailored to Chinese preferences, the national cultural authorities established projects such as the National Arts Fund and the Chinese National Opera Heritage and Development Project. These initiatives provide guidance, assistance, and financial support to propel Chinese opera art towards faster and better development.

Meanwhile, under the support of the National Arts Fund since 2014, numerous excellent opera works of various genres and themes have been launched annually, receiving widespread recognition both domestically and internationally. With the backing of the National Arts Fund, new modes of thinking have emerged in opera creation techniques and market operations. These newly created opera works can be seen as prototypes of contemporary Chinese opera creation, bearing typical representative significance. Especially in this process, effective research is needed to determine how the National Arts Fund can support these works, guide the direction, quality, and social extension of opera creation, thereby exploring the future path of Chinese opera art development. This forms the background and impetus for this study.

Research Objectives

- (1) To study the art form of Chinese opera in accordance with the previous funding policy of the China National Arts Fund.
- (2) To provide recommendations for the promotion of Chinese opera with the expectation of getting governmental support.

Research Questions

- (1) How does the National Arts Fund support Chinese opera art and play a constructive role in providing effective assistance and support?
- (2) What new characteristics and advantages are evident in opera art works funded by the National Arts Fund, in terms of creation, performance, and social dissemination?
- (3) What are the shortcomings and bottlenecks in the process of the National Arts Fund supporting the development of opera art?

(4) How can we promote the better development of National Arts Fund opera projects in the future, thereby opening up new horizons for Chinese opera art?

Research Focus: The primary focus of this study lies in conducting an in-depth and comprehensive investigation into opera productions funded by the National Arts Fund over the past nine years (from 2014 to 2023). By examining various aspects such as the selection criteria and intensity of support by the National Arts Fund, as well as the creative characteristics, performance effects, and societal responses of these operas, the study aims to conduct research and analysis on the current societal development of opera. It seeks to observe the overall development, summarize experiences, identify existing issues, and provide recommendations for future development. This series of research contents constitutes the focal point of this study.

The challenges of the study: The main challenge of this study lies in conducting social research to collect relevant data on National Arts Fund projects and opera productions over the past nine years. The content design encompasses aspects such as funding allocation, creative details, market returns, public reputation, and performance realities. Conducting extensive data research entails significant workload for the research team and requires various efforts to obtain precise data. This process serves as the precursor to the entire study and constitutes a challenging phase. However, based on the current research plan and the capabilities of the research team, these challenges can undoubtedly be overcome, and the research tasks can be satisfactorily completed.

Significance of the Study

First of all, this study aims to effectively address the research gap within the field by conducting a multi-perspective quantitative analysis of the support provided by the National Arts Fund to opera art over the past nine years, along with relevant data regarding opera productions. A statistical analysis of current academic achievements reveals a scarcity of research focused on National Arts Fund opera projects and productions, with most studies being commentary-based and lacking macroscopic perspectives or comprehensive examinations of the overall trends and characteristics of

contemporary creations. This research endeavors to fill this void by focusing on opera productions funded by the National Arts Fund, conducting theoretical investigations based on data quantification across various domains including creation, performance, dissemination, and development, thus possessing significant theoretical value.

Furthermore, this study undertakes a multi-perspective examination of the creative and performative forms, artistic features, cultural values, and societal impacts of opera productions, offering valuable theoretical insights and multidimensional theoretical innovations. Central to the study of opera productions is an exploration of their artistic essence, scrutinizing their innovative aspects and aesthetic orientations, and assessing their societal resonance and potential for edification. These investigations are grounded in the multi-perspective analysis of 89 productions, covering aspects such as script construction, vocal techniques, performance forms, and musical arrangements, thereby yielding comprehensive summaries and insights. The complexity of the research process underscores the theoretical innovation and practical applicability of its findings.

Moreover, the study's prognostication of the future development of opera is grounded in theoretical analysis and data research, thus possessing theoretical significance. The theoretical exploration of current artistic achievements aims to provide valuable theoretical support for future creative endeavors and the circulation of opera productions. Consequently, the study not only discusses the current development status but also offers recommendations for the future direction of National Arts Fund-funded opera development and various stages therein, juxtaposing these with societal and cultural contexts, thus providing theoretical guidance and value.

By focusing on the operation of the National Arts Fund and the development of its supported opera projects, the anticipated research outcomes are expected to contribute to the Fund's future operations and inform the strategic initiatives of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Finance. Simultaneously, the study will offer guiding insights for artistic groups at all levels and academic institutions, fostering innovation in opera creation, and providing practical recommendations for the

cultural and commercial operational systems. In essence, this research will facilitate the National Arts Fund in allocating limited funds to promising opera productions, fostering innovation in opera creation and societal dissemination, and ultimately enhancing the prospects for development within the field.

Scope of the Study

The study primarily covers all opera projects successfully declared by the National Arts Fund between 2014 and 2023. In terms of the scope of works, it encompasses all opera productions that have been successfully approved under three categories: the National Arts Fund's large-scale stage drama projects, small-scale stage drama projects, and artistic communication and exchange projects.

Regarding the scope of research content, the study includes the entire process of the National Arts Fund, from application, selection, approval, support, completion, to evaluation. For individual opera productions, it involves research on various aspects including music composition, scriptwriting, rehearsal processes, stage design, stage performances, and promotional activities.

Definition of Terms

Opera

The term "opera" in Chinese is transliterated from the English and Italian word "Opera". Opera, as an art form, has its roots laid in ancient Greek drama and emerged in Florence, Italy, around 1600 (Parker, 2020). As a comprehensive form of stage performance art, opera encompasses various disciplines such as music, poetry, theatrical performance, dance, visual arts, literature, and costume design. It is a concentrated product formed under specific social and cultural contexts and development levels. In its specific stage performance form, opera's structure typically includes overtures, interludes, arias, recitatives, ensembles, and choruses, interpreting character images and story situations through music and singing, providing audiences with an immersive appreciation experience. Despite its long history and diverse forms of presentation on Chinese stages, many Chinese audiences still lack an understanding of

the basic characteristics of opera, and some are unclear about whether opera belongs to the field of drama or music. Furthermore, in the professional fields of academic research and creative performance of opera in China, there may be some theoretical confusion, leading to issues such as imbalance or overshadowing of theatrical and musical components in some newly created works (Yang, 2017).

Chinese Opera

In terms of understanding the term "Chinese opera", under the category of transliteration and comprehension of "China opera", there exist two completely different phenomena: one is the form that combines Western opera structure with Chinese cultural context, and the other is the artistic form formed within the context of traditional Chinese opera culture (Ju, 2006). "Chinese opera" referred to in this study mainly involves artistic products formed by the combination of Western opera forms and Chinese culture, temporarily setting aside controversial topics related to other "Chinese operas". In general, any opera works created by Chinese people in history and the present can be called Chinese opera. This is the broadest conceptual interpretation and the most intuitive way of understanding. Based on this understanding, opera theorists and artists have put forward different perspectives.

National Opera

From a historical perspective, the concept of "national opera" has been mentioned since the early days of Chinese opera creation. In the 1940s and 1950s, when operas like "The White-Haired Girl" and "Xiao Erhei's Marriage" received strong social responses, predecessors in the opera industry began to rename "new opera" as "national opera" (Zhang, 2020). The construction and development of Chinese national opera have promoted the advancement of Chinese opera culture (Sheng, 2019). By the 1950s and 1960s, the concept of "national opera" and the creative, performance, and aesthetic concepts behind it had gained widespread recognition among the general population. The understanding of the concept of "national opera" varies from the perspectives of cultural scholars, opera creators, and ordinary society, which also leads to the differentiation between broad and narrow interpretations of "national opera" (Zhang, 2020).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The China National Arts Fund is a public welfare fund primarily funded by central government allocations, while also legally accepting donations from individuals, legal persons, or other organizations. The fund focuses on four main areas of support: creative production, publicity and promotion, collection and acquisition, and talent development, with artistic creation being a key area of emphasis. In comparison to other funds in the humanities sector, the Arts Fund is characterized by its diversity, openness, breadth, and complexity. Unlike similar government funds, the Arts Fund breaks through the limitations of systems, industries, and regions, exhibiting openness and inclusivity by accepting applications from all sectors of society, including state-owned enterprises, private enterprises, institutions, and individuals. Currently, there is relatively limited scholarly research on the topic of "Data Analysis and Research on Opera Works in the China National Arts Fund Projects". Based on the author's search across nearly ten academic databases, including the China National Knowledge Internet (CNKI), a total of over 60 relevant papers were identified. The following is a brief summary analysis of papers deemed to be of significant reference value.

2.1 Study on the Perception of the Opera

Wen (2021) published an article in "Chinese Drama", reflecting on the ideals of heroes through the ode to human nature in the national opera "Hong Liu Peng Pai". The opera revolves around the life of Comrade Peng, a pioneer of the Chinese peasant movement, focusing on his leadership in the history of peasant revolutionary movement events, reflecting the Communist Party of China's century-long baptism of wind and rain and its brilliant feats. Cui (2018) published the paper "Reflections on Watching the Classic Red Opera 'By the Jinsha River'" in Drama Literature, emphasizing the warm response to the red classic opera "By the Jinsha River" staged by the National Center for the Performing Arts compared with national operas with similar themes. The ups and downs of the drama plot, the relationship between characters, the heart-shaking

performances, and the elaborate stage design all reflect the concept of national aesthetics. Studies on the characteristics of opera ontology: Regarding opera creation, Peng (2019) published a paper in *Sichuan Drama* in 2019 titled "A New Perspective on the Creation of Ethnic Operas with a Red Theme in the Contemporary Cultural Environment". It points out that the creation of red-themed national opera reflects a new era style, themes reflecting heroic stories of different regions and nations in the same era, and music imbued with both plain traditional melodies and international language characteristics, reflecting a combination of national characteristics and Chinese and Western elements. Additionally, the concept of realistic stage design paints a grand atmosphere of the theme visually, playing a supportive role in characterization and drama plot. Zhu (2019) published "Reflections on the Music Composition of the Ethnic Opera 'The Red Detachment of Women'". As the creator of opera, he explained the inheritance and development of national opera and the inheritance and innovation of writing techniques from the perspective of opera composition. Regarding the character characteristics of operas, Song (2015) published the paper "Gender Characteristics of the 'Female Heroes' Image in Red Operas from a Gender Perspective" in *Fujian Art*, 2015, and Wang (2006) published the paper "An Analysis of Female Roles in Revolutionary Opera".

Research on the Value and Dissemination of Opera: Concerning the value of opera, Fu and Kuang (2021) published a paper in the "Contemporary Music" journal titled "The Significance of Red Opera Performances in Campus Cultural Communication". This paper delves into the current state of cultural dissemination of "red" culture in universities, the importance of red opera performances, and discussions on rehearsing and propagating red opera in universities, elaborating on their perspectives. Wu (2022) published a paper in "Northern Music" titled "Application and Practice of Selected Sections of Chinese Red Classic Operas in Teaching", summarizing Chinese red classic operas and analyzing the artistic charm of "Red Guards on Honghu Lake", discussing the application of opera in teaching, and exploring strategies to improve teaching results using excerpts from Chinese red classic operas.



FIGURE 1 Promotional poster of the opera 'The Red Guards on Honghu Lake'

Source: the official website of the Hubei Provincial Opera and Dance Theater

2.2 Research on the Direction, Purpose and Content of the Project Approval of the National Arts Fund

Regarding research on the objectives, content, and direction of the National Arts Fund: According to research by Yu (2013), the main sources of funds for the National Arts Fund come from central fiscal allocations and donations from individuals, legal entities, or other organizations. To ensure the efficient use of these funds and truly promote the development of the arts, the significant supervisory role of the auditing function must be fully played. Zhou (2013) researched musical projects within the National Arts Fund from 2014 to 2018, analyzing their rich national, distinct era-related, and profound intrinsic qualities. The musical language used combines tradition with modernity, emphasizing the transmission of positive energy and the interpretation of the Chinese spirit. Wang (2011) also compiled the results of fund applications from local colleges. For example, the success of Jilin Art College in obtaining fund projects stems from years of creative exploration and study by its teachers and students. The funded projects are among the school's achievements in the past five years and are important support for the school's key competitive materials such as discipline ranking and teaching evaluation. In the process of related categorization and discussion, theoretical scholars not only consider the National Arts Fund's support for the development of

opera art but also think through comparative observations about the development of Chinese opera art and how the National Arts Fund, as a form of financial support, can be effectively managed and fully utilized to promote the development of Chinese opera art. In the comparative process, Liu (2016) fully considers the diversified social factors and whether the National Arts Fund can effectively support opera art. In the specific process, as part of the National Arts Fund, how to achieve effective management and implementation methods throughout the process of opera art creation through administrative intervention and financial support is explored. Such research fully demonstrates the effectiveness and feasibility of the specific operation of the National Arts Fund. Since the operation of the National Arts Fund began in 2004, the research by relevant experts and scholars has a historical aspect. At different stages, specific operation methods of the National Arts Fund are discussed, and relevant opinions and suggestions are put forward regarding the achievements obtained in this process and the shortcomings in the operation (Xiao et al., 2016). Some theoretical studies not only focus on the field of opera art but also discuss the support of the National Arts Fund for various drama works such as dance drama, musical drama, and drama. This relevant discussion not only prompts public consideration but also lays a good foundation for subsequent growth and development.

2.3 Achievements on the Macro Dimension of Opera Creation of the National Arts Fund in Recent Years

Contemporary opera art has entered a new stage of development. With exquisite production levels, abundant technical materials, and an internationalized perspective on creation, it reflects a completely new artistic aesthetic, passing on the spirit of creation, infecting and inspiring the contemporary younger generation (Guo, 2002). Contemporary artists strive to continue classics with new concepts and technical methods, reproducing that period of heroic and tear-jerking years. Under the aesthetic allocation of contemporary creation, recent new works have shown outstanding artistic creativity in script conception, music creation, and stage design, fully expressing praise for heroic figures from a new artistic perspective, and inspiring contemporary people to

move forward bravely and create brilliance with the spirit of revolution (Yu, 2012). In recent years, various themed ethnic operas have reflected new era styles in their expressive methods. The theme creation reflects the heroic stories that are moving and inspiring in different regions and ethnicities of the same era. Music creation is filled with simple traditional music melodies and internationalized language with era characteristics, reflecting a dual aesthetic sense of national characteristics and the fusion of Chinese and Western styles. From a macro perspective, there are many research results on the theoretical exploration of National Arts Fund operas that revolve around corresponding themes (Sun, 2021). Since the subjects funded by the National Arts Fund often focus on red themes, historical themes, and modern social mainstream themes, there are many consensual characteristics in the style and content design of the creations. As the main creators and operators of the National Arts Fund, many corresponding perceptions will be formed in the specific research process, which also deserves effective specific exploration by the theoretical research of the National Arts Fund to explore the consensual style of opera creation funded by the National Arts Fund and to explore the problems and bottlenecks encountered in the creation process (Chen, 2014). What is more important is to propose effective suggestions to strive to make the opera funded by the National Arts Fund more effectively enhance its previous shortcomings in the corresponding field and better create high-quality opera art works. At the same time, in the process of exploring the macro characteristics of operas funded by the National Arts Fund, researchers mainly summarize from multiple dimensions such as music performance, script design, stage design, and costume design at a macro level to observe their overall quality and content characteristics, understand how the operas funded by the National Arts Fund use high-quality resources to create a good artistic platform (Liu, 2021). All these can better combine the National Arts Fund with opera creation, create a good creative atmosphere, and promote the birth of more excellent opera art works. In the specific research process, some scholars have also paid attention to the individuality and commonality of Chinese opera art and Western opera art in artistic characteristics, thinking about how operas funded by the National

Arts Fund can show Chinese cultural heritage and historical charm in creation, integrate more elements of opera culture, folk music, and historical anecdotes, and show the unique characteristics of Chinese opera art (Han, 2019). At the same time, it can actively interact with international opera art with an open and inclusive attitude, integrating the diverse systems of Western opera art such as arias, recitatives, choruses, and ensembles into specific artistic creations from a more open and inclusive perspective, enabling Chinese opera art to have a consensus in international culture and embody new characteristics of keeping pace with the times (Huang & Chen, 2022).

2.4 Theoretical Results of Case Studies of Dance Drama Works in the Projects funded by the National Arts Fund

Opera works including "Love in Songmaoling Mountains", "Taihang Nainiang", "Visitor on the Icy Mountain", "A Single Spark", "Hero", "Osmanthus Flowers Blooming Everywhere in August", and "Long March" have been the subject of several theoretical articles, focusing on various aspects of opera creation and performance. There are approximately over ten theoretical studies on "Love in Songmaoling Mountains" (Zhou, 2019).

"Love in Songmaoling Mountains" inherits the creative style and ideas of Chinese opera art in the field of revolutionary historical themes, but at the same time, it reflects the new characteristics and concepts of opera creation in this thematic field in the new era. The work does not focus on the killing on the front line but narrates a period of 30 years of deep longing for love and family affection. After parting with her lover, a Hakka girl from an ethnic minority fell into 30 years of bitter waiting, while her lover had already died on the battlefield of Songmaoling Mountains (Lin, 2015).

Thirty years later, what awaited her was the sad news of her lover's untimely death. However, in this steadfast process, it reflects the Hakka girl's unwavering concept of love and her immense longing for her lover. This creative perspective embodies the tragedy of revolutionary history while representing the voice of the common people, glimpsing from an ordinary perspective the heavy price paid by the masses in the torrent of revolutionary history and also demonstrating the hard-won

peace of today's era. Such a method of constructing creative content is rarely seen in previous opera works on revolutionary historical themes, also reflecting the freedom and openness of opera art creation funded by the National Arts Fund, as well as many innovative concepts (Hu, 2014). For example, the opera "Hero" tells the life experiences of our party's revolutionary martyrs, Mi Baoying and He Mengxiong. This revolutionary couple bravely advances in the tide of history, embodying the righteousness of revolutionary soldiers, disregarding life and death. The drama observes the life experiences, emotional foundations, and contributions to the revolutionary cause of the two from a historical perspective. Unlike previous works on revolutionary historical themes, this work also does not make the opposition between right and wrong the main storyline, but vividly portrays the transformation and growth of the two, transforming the antagonistic enemies into virtual dark figures, occasionally appearing at important junctures. This allows for a completely new artistic expression of revolutionary history and (Liu, 2005).

Contemporary opera works funded by the National Arts Fund demonstrate extremely high artistic attainment and innovative artistic pursuit in the process of individual case creation. They do not adhere to existing creative achievements but strive to open up new paths to reflect the new pattern and new direction of opera art creation with revolutionary themes. This also reflects the effective guidance of the National Arts Fund on opera art, promoting the creation and stage performance of opera art to take a new path and keep pace with the times.

In the aforementioned research findings, researchers indirectly provide detailed arguments regarding the importance and feasibility of studying opera works funded by the National Arts Fund. The consensus reached in the research is that opera works, with the support of projects from the National Arts Fund, should innovate and create more high-quality and exciting new works. However, research findings based on data analysis, quantitative research, multidimensional in-depth exploration, and other aspects are not satisfactory. On the one hand, this indicates that existing research results are not sufficiently thorough and detailed; on the other hand, it also demonstrates the innovative

starting point and standpoint of this research, which can effectively fill some gaps in the current research. This also strengthens the direction of this research topic and strives to achieve dual breakthroughs in theoretical research and practical application.

2.5 Theoretical Achievements of the Research on Chinese Opera

The origin of Chinese opera art dates back to the first half of the 20th century. Its development history, current situation, and stylistic features have increasingly attracted attention and attention from the academic community in recent years. In the nearly hundred years of development, Chinese opera art has embarked on an independent path of localization and nationalization, which differs from the aesthetic standards and performance forms of Western opera art, and more reflects its connection with Chinese traditional culture (Man, 2012). In the present era, Chinese opera art also attempts to integrate into the international opera art family in a way that is independent and inclusive, exploring a path of opera performance that is more in line with the aesthetic preferences of Chinese audiences (Jing, 2011). Through research, many experts and scholars consensually believe that Chinese opera art has gone through several stages of exploration in its hundred-year development process. For example, the period before the founding of New China can be regarded as the exploration and growth period of Chinese opera, while the first decade after the founding of New China can be regarded as the growth period of opera art. After the reform and opening up, Chinese opera art gradually matured in the process of revival and established a fusion of Chinese and Western opera performance styles, which is closely related to the actual social, cultural, political, and economic development of China (Ju, 2018). From the current development status of Chinese opera art, it has a basic pattern of nationalization and has taken an independent path in creation, themes, musical language, and theatrical performance (Yang, 2018). Since the new century, facing the increasingly complex social and cultural patterns, Chinese opera art has shown diversified stylistic characteristics in creation techniques, performance forms, and stage design (Lin, 2017). It has objectively stimulated further development of Chinese opera art, and has achieved dual progress in the accumulation of the quantity and improvement of the

quality of opera art works. In conclusion, both Chinese opera and Western opera belong to the category of opera art, but due to differences in ethnicity and culture, they have typical differences in specific artistic styles and forms. This is the unique charm of Chinese opera art, which has also gained recognition from the international opera community in the present era (Zhang, 2004).

2.6 Related Theories and Concepts

2.6.1 Theory of Communication Science

Communication studies are a scientific endeavor to study human communication, its laws, and processes (Wang, 2002). Communication is the foundation of human society formation and development. Under different social systems and levels of development, there are differences in communication tools, media, methods, and abilities (Zhao, 2007). Communication theory not only provides important assistance to various fields of social development but also offers significant support to the education sector. For example, in this study, the opera projects funded by the National Arts Fund have always considered how to achieve effective social communication through stage forms, benefiting the vast population across the country and enabling more people to understand the charm of vocal art and the development of Chinese opera (Li, 2007). Regarding the communication process, it is necessary to analyze many issues such as the communication subject, location, effect, and object (Kuang, 2006). It is also necessary to consider through research the problems that have not been solved in the communication process of the National Arts Fund's opera projects and the methods and ways for future communication and promotion (Jiang & Xu, 2006). Communication theory serves as one of the most important theoretical foundations and supports in this study (Luo, 2006).

2.6.2 Theory of Musicology

Musicology is the collective term for the theoretical disciplines studying all aspects of music (Treitler, 2018). The overarching task of musicology is to elucidate the essence and laws of various phenomena related to music (Dahlhaus, 1989). For instance, research on the relationship between music and ideology encompasses music

aesthetics, music history, ethnomusicology, music psychology, and music education. Moreover, studies examining the material characteristics of music include music acoustics, tuning theory, and organology. Research on musical forms and their composition involves melody, harmony, counterpoint, and musical form theory. Additionally, considerations from a performance perspective, such as performance theory and conducting, are also essential (Chen, 2015).

Musicological theory is a prerequisite for guiding music practice and serves as an indispensable guide in music composition and performance. It is diverse and profoundly analyzes and scrutinizes every form of music. Originating from the West, musicological theory has integrated with Chinese musical culture, forming theoretical content with distinct Chinese characteristics, with ethnomusicology being the primary representative. In the contemporary development of music culture, musicological theory deeply influences various branches such as composition, performance, education, and dissemination, playing a crucial role in determining the direction of musical art development.

Opera art is a comprehensive form of theatrical art that conveys dramatic content through music and singing (Song, 2018). In the creative process, music evidently constitutes a vital core element of opera composition (Wang, 2017). Therefore, in the analysis of the essence of opera art in this study, it is essential to rely on the knowledge and theory of musicology. Analyzing the artistic characteristics of opera music composition, singing, and performance aspects, and deriving the new outlook of Chinese opera art funded by the National Arts Fund, are based on musicological knowledge. Throughout the specific research process, investigating the stylistic features, technical standards, aesthetic tendencies, and other aspects of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund requires diverse perspectives funded by musicological theories to conduct in-depth and meticulous research, resulting in scholarly research findings.

2.6.3 China National Arts Fund

The China National Arts Fund was officially established on December 30, 2013. It is a public welfare fund funded by the central government and also accepts donations from individuals, legal persons, or other organizations in accordance with the law. Cai Wu, Minister of the Ministry of Culture, served as the first chairman of the National Arts Fund Council. The establishment of the National Arts Fund aims to promote artistic creation, cultivate artistic talents, create and promote quality works, and advance the healthy development of the artistic industry. The establishment of the National Arts Fund holds profound historical significance and important practical implications. Firstly, it implements the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which aims to "promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity". The establishment of the National Arts Fund reflects the transformation of the functions of the cultural sector, innovates the guidance methods for artistic creation and production, promotes "government regulation separate from management" of the arts, and stimulates the creativity of the whole society. Secondly, it marks a milestone in the transformation of China's art funding and review system. The establishment of the National Arts Fund has formed a model of a national, government-led, expert-reviewed, and socially-oriented public welfare fund. In terms of funding sources, it not only leverages the leading role of national fiscal funds but also fully mobilizes the enthusiasm of social forces. In terms of application and funding scope, it breaks through the limitations of industries, systems, institutions, and regions, and builds an open and equal platform for the whole society. In terms of the review body, it changes the pattern mainly decided by administrative power, establishes the important role of various professional and expert evaluations, and makes the review more scientific and reasonable. In terms of operating mechanisms, it adopts appropriate separation of decision-making, coordination, execution, and supervision, implements open, fair, and transparent procedures and operations, fully respects the right to information and participation of the general public, and enhances the authority and credibility of the management department. Thirdly, the establishment of the National Arts Fund is a new exploration to improve the cultural investment model. It changes the

previous model of direct financial investment in "supporting individuals" and fully plays the guiding role of financial funds through indirect sponsorship, expert review, social supervision, performance evaluation, etc. It ensures the openness, fairness, justice, and transparency of fund allocation and utilization, and also helps to urge the funded parties to improve the efficiency of fund utilization.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the emphasis lies on elucidating the fundamental research methods and the research design developed around them. Serving as an integral component of the research framework, initial contemplation is given to the basic research methods. Subsequently, the research design is delineated, and the respective application types of target population, sample, and sampling methods are discussed. Finally, an overview of the various instruments required for the study, data collection tools, and methods for data processing and analysis is provided.

Research Design

The design of research methods can significantly enhance the efficiency and outcomes of a study. Building upon the existing research objectives and targets, the adoption of scientifically effective research methods enables comprehensive observations from various perspectives and angles. Consequently, satisfactory research results can be achieved.

Literature review method is commonly employed in contemporary academic research. Once the research topic direction is determined, there are often numerous existing research findings related to the topic area. By extensively reading, understanding, and contemplating these research findings, one can gain insights into the current research status, previous research achievements, and various debates related to the topic focus. Moreover, through critical thinking during the reading process, scholars can reflect on new viewpoints, dynamics, discoveries, and research prospects regarding the topic. Building upon this foundation, conducting self-research allows for utilizing existing literature as support while highlighting innovations, thus avoiding conflicts and contradictions with existing research results. This research method is widely applied across various industries, yielding comprehensive, in-depth, and systematic research outcomes.

For this research, the focus is primarily on contemporary opera art creation, performance, dissemination guided by the National Arts Fund, as well as considerations at various levels such as societal opinions. The content mainly revolves around existing research literature on opera achievements funded by the National Arts Fund. Through the process of collection and organization, various relevant literature can be extracted from academic information databases such as CNKI, Wanfang, Longyuan, and VIP. By searching relevant information on CNKI, one can directly reflect on the achievements in this field of research. Understanding the current observations and research thoughts regarding the National Arts Fund, the research significantly covers various directions and levels. This includes the support scope of the National Arts Fund, the review methods for applicants, the societal impact of the works, and many other aspects, all of which become the focal points of the research. Moreover, the research outcomes funded by the National Arts Fund in the research process are also abundant. For instance, various case studies including operas, musicals, dance dramas, vocal works, and fine arts works have been deeply and thoroughly researched. These studies discuss the fruitful outcomes achieved during the operation of the National Arts Fund, while some academic materials also contemplate on the existing issues in the operation process, considering how to promote the National Arts Fund in supporting the creation, performance, and market promotion of various art works on a broader and grander scale.

These researchers mostly come from various local literary and art groups, experts and scholars, as well as professionals in the artistic industry, including teachers from relevant disciplines such as musicology, art, and drama in universities (Zhan, 2005). They often have experience in project application or creative performance, and express their true feelings during the application and performance creation process in academic language, striving to generate social resonance and propose beneficial ideas for the operation and development of the National Arts Fund. These research outcomes play a very positive and important role in this study, promoting its development towards a more innovative, inclusive, comprehensive, and systematic direction. By employing

literature review method, this study can avoid redundant descriptions of existing research findings and, through the observation and contemplation of real feelings, understand the viewpoints of existing researchers, finding the focus suitable for the continued development of this study.

For example, there is a lack of research results on the macroscopic level of the National Arts Fund's opera projects in the current research findings. Most of the observed academic directions start from the perspective of case studies, focusing on the artistic characteristics, expression techniques, style features, and thematic content of works. Few researchers take a more macroscopic perspective to observe all the opera projects included by the National Arts Fund. There are also no relevant documents to discuss the overall characteristics and macroscopic artistic styles presented (Xu, 2020). Since 2014, how the National Arts Fund has funded the development of opera art over the past eight years, how it has made decisions and judgments on the project contents of applicants, and how it has promoted the results of opera art creation to the market. These aspects of research are still blank in the current research findings, indicating that there is still rich space and content for analysis and contemplation in this research field.

With the research method of literature review, on the one hand, one can enrich their research perspective and understand the current research development situation. On the other hand, it can also set a good scope for the focus of this study, enabling inspiration to be obtained during the process of literature collection, organization, and learning. Especially in the research process of this topic, the dependence on research literature is very important. As the operation time of the National Arts Fund is relatively short, and as a researcher, I have not participated in the experience of application and creative performance, through extensive reading of eyewitness accounts and experiences, one can understand the operation mode of the National Arts Fund. This can lead to thinking about issues related to the development of opera projects and future application creation, which is beneficial for uncovering deeper structural issues,

giving the research results objective theoretical value, and providing helpful assistance for the future development of National Arts Fund's opera projects.

Ethical Consideration

Quantitative research, on the other hand, involved the collection, analysis, and summarization of digitized data. It entailed rational analysis and judgment of research subjects and results based on the trends and real data reflected by numbers. In the specific operational process, data statistics were mainly conducted during and after the teaching experiment stages. The quantitative part included questionnaire surveys and quasi-experiments. The quasi-experiments aimed to assess the effectiveness of the National Arts Fund as a tool for promoting the development of Chinese opera art. For instance, the questionnaire survey, serving as an important instrument in qualitative research, consisted of statistical questions in the first part, querying respondents' age, gender, profession, and basic level. The second part utilized a 5-point Likert scale, based on previous research by Atkinson (2007), to observe learners' attitudes toward the adoption of the National Arts Fund in opera creation and promotion. The questions were grouped based on five user characteristics related to inquiry, including compatibility, complexity, relative advantage, observability, and testability. Each question had six items for relative advantage and compatibility, nine items for complexity, five items for measurability, and four items for observability, resulting in a total of thirty-four questions. The actual survey questionnaire was adapted from Atkinson's (2007) research methodology and the practical issues involved in the National Arts Fund opera projects, and it was presented in the appendix together with the original survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire aimed to identify factors influencing the scientific progress of current opera art development and to assess the extent of innovation and improvement brought about by the introduction of the National Arts Fund. The data collection for this study mainly consisted of questionnaire surveys, recorded interviews and notes, evaluation score data, and audience feedback from performances. The collection, analysis, and research processes of these data must be

rigorous and scientific, while researchers should fully utilize various methods and means to facilitate the precise classification and expression of research content.

Participants in the Study

Sampling techniques constitute a branch of statistics utilized for studying methods of sampling and estimating population parameters in surveys. Typically, sampling methods can be categorized into two types: probability sampling and non-probability sampling, which may include techniques like sequential sampling and simple random sampling. Estimation methods commonly involve simple estimation, ratio estimation, and regression estimation.

A sampling survey is a partial investigation employing statistical analysis, where a portion of actual data is selected from a population according to random principles for examination. Probability estimation methods are then used to estimate corresponding quantitative indicators of the population based on the sampled data. Despite being incomplete, the purpose of sampling surveys is to obtain information and material reflecting the overall population situation, thus they can also be considered as comprehensive surveys.

For this study's requirements, it is proposed to employ the typical sampling method. Typical sampling involves consciously selecting a certain number of representative units from the population for measurement based on the purpose and needs of the survey and research. While this sampling method facilitates the explanation of issues, it often loses the randomness of sampling and the data obtained may not be suitable for statistical analysis. Typical surveys involve selecting a representative unit from participants to conduct comprehensive and in-depth investigations, aiming to understand the overall situation. This scientific method allows for a detailed examination of similar entities, providing valuable insights and experiences. However, its scope may be narrow, making it challenging to reflect the entirety of the situation.

Research Instruments

In the process of data analysis and understanding, on the one hand, it is essential to conduct fieldwork, interviewing relevant personnel and judges of the National Arts Fund to understand their firsthand experiences in participating in the National Arts Fund's work, contemplating how they effectively contributed to the operation and development of the National Arts Fund projects, and selecting outstanding productions for support. Similarly, interviews with the creative entities of submitted works, including composers, directors, actors, stage design teams, and audiences, are crucial to gauge their level of importance placed on the National Arts Fund projects and their firsthand experiences in the opera creation process. Such information is invaluable and can only be obtained through on-site interviews in fieldwork. On the other hand, conducting surveys is necessary to analyze the shortcomings existing in the current operation of the National Arts Fund, understand the suggestions and opinions of audience groups, creative groups, and applicants regarding the National Arts Fund, analyze their views on the current National Arts Fund opera art projects, and learn from them how to promote the National Arts Fund opera projects to overcome current developmental issues and bottlenecks, surpass limitations, and achieve better development prospects. Thus, fieldwork is a highly important and effective research method, and its proper application and practice can propel research towards more profound and comprehensive directions.

Data Collection

- Music Analysis Method

Music analysis method is a unique approach in the field of music research. It involves examining various musical elements necessary for the creation process of music works, starting from the most detailed aspects such as notes, keys, rhythms, melodies, and musical structures, and then expanding to encompass aspects like the presentation style of music performances, the tone of music works, and singing methods (Darlhaus, 2018). Through the detailed analysis of music components, researchers can study the overall structure of the work, form strong observations and thoughts, and

analyze the characteristics of the entire artistic work, showcasing its unique artistic charm and socio-cultural value.

In the process of researching and observing artistic works, music analysis serves as the most intuitive and fundamental research pathway, providing the basis for research in all other cultural fields. In contemporary art creation and performance, there have been many new changes in music structure and artistic styles, reflecting the new appearance of art under the cultural background of the times. It is necessary to deeply perceive the new changes, features, and values of cultural and artistic works, particularly in music creation, compared to the past. In the field of opera art, opera itself is structured around singing and drama. It integrates various artistic forms such as music, performance, visual arts, and literature, forming a composite artistic feature, allowing audiences to experience rich cultural elements (Wang, 2015).

From the classical music period to the contemporary development of Chinese ethnic opera art, the focus of opera art creation has always been centered around music creation. Our understanding and thoughts on opera works are mostly derived from the essence of music. Today, when reviewing many classic opera works, we are still fascinated by the splendid recitatives and arias of masterpieces by composers like Mozart and Verdi. The memories of beautiful singing passages in ethnic operas are also fresh in our minds.

Since its establishment, the National Arts Fund has maintained strict control over the creation of opera art, rigorously evaluating the motivation for work creation and the entire creation process, and making timely and meticulous judgments on the social feedback after performances, with the quality of opera music creation being a key criterion. Although opera art creation involves rich elements such as scripts, stage design, stage performance, and dance, undoubtedly, music creation and singing are paramount. Therefore, in the analysis and discussion process of various opera works under the National Arts Fund, the specific language of music creation and singing expression should be the focus of research. By starting from singing and background

music, accurate judgments can be made on the quality, social influence, and excellence of opera works (Ju, 2020).

In the process of this study, the focus is mainly on comparing National Arts Fund projects with general opera projects, reflecting on how the National Arts Fund promotes the growth and market promotion of operatic works. As an outstanding opera work, its most prominent feature lies in being pleasing to the ear and eye, and the realization of this criterion largely depends on the excellence of music creation. Through accurate analysis of the musical aspects, one can consider how to incorporate national music culture into contemporary Chinese opera creation, discussing various thematic motives and musical ideas integrated into contemporary opera singing and background music. This reflects the unique characteristics of Chinese opera different from Western opera. Furthermore, it considers how contemporary Chinese opera accommodates Western opera art, forming a broad perspective and artistic characteristics of integration of Chinese and Western cultures, enabling Chinese opera to step onto the international stage, gain recognition in the international artistic field, and form an independent Oriental opera art school.

The research content of this study involves the application methods, operation methods, creation methods, market promotion methods, and various aspects of National Arts Fund opera projects. As a researcher, I hope to use music research as the core, emphasizing thoughts and analyses of individual opera cases and macroscopic aspects in the process of music research, leading other research results with the tools and perspectives of music research. This research approach not only conforms to the basic principles of opera art research but also reflects the rigorous and systematic characteristics of this study (Liu, 2005). Although it is a fund project with financial support characteristics, its operation process involves rich market means and behaviors. However, in the research process focusing on opera creation, the characteristics of opera art itself should be highlighted, thus reflecting the inherent value of the National Arts Fund. This research approach and its results meet the needs of this

study and also conform to the important direction of overall observation and macro-control of the National Arts Fund.

- Fieldwork Method

The fieldwork method is a relatively straightforward research approach that involves extensive field visits and direct experience to gather first-hand information and resources, thereby facilitating a profound understanding of the research subject. Fieldwork, applied across disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, art studies, and geography, enables a comprehensive comprehension of the research object through in-depth investigation. It allows for the reconstruction of the truth about the research subject, analysis of the overall landscape of the research topic, and accurate assessment of the research process and outcomes. Originating in the 20th century, when social communication and media information were less developed, fieldwork, despite its time-consuming nature and the significant human, material, and financial resources it consumes, remains one of the best research methods. It ensures the acquisition of accurate data and helps mitigate various errors that may arise during the dissemination of information. During the early years of the People's Republic of China, numerous art researchers delved into various regions nationwide to explore the musical characteristics, particularly venturing into the hinterlands of ethnic minority cultures to understand the composition and artistic features of ethnic minority music cultures. Throughout this process, a plethora of literary and artistic workers extensively documented ethnic music cultures through on-site perception, note-taking, learning through imitation, and conducting interviews, providing detailed records of ethnic music cultures (Lin, 2015). According to historical records from that time, there were only two recording systems nationwide, which were highly treasured and often interchangeably used by literary and artistic workers and local judicial departments. Relying on the most basic methods and technological means, artistic workers collected samples of ethnic music works from across the country, forming a collection of ethnic music, showcasing the rich history of Chinese ethnic music culture and providing abundant material support for subsequent theoretical research achievements.

Over the years, in the field of art research, fieldwork has consistently been employed to obtain first-hand folk music materials and cultural resources and to carry out the protection of intangible cultural heritage in a robust manner. This endeavor has enabled the inheritance and development of many invaluable traditional ethnic music and opera music forms. Despite the rapid developments in scientific, technological, and media fields in contemporary society, leading to detailed observations and research on various music resources, field observation remains an indispensable component among various research methods. As for the National Arts Fund, which has undergone an eight-year journey since its inception, numerous applicants have provided a plethora of submissions, and the National Arts Fund Evaluation Committee has selected funded works amid extensive work, playing a supervisory role throughout the entire process of creation, performance, and market promotion. For researchers delving into this system, relying solely on existing literary sources for research and judgment would undoubtedly carry the risk of hearsay. Only through firsthand observation and analysis can the most accurate data content be obtained, acquiring primary information. Simultaneously, as researchers of the National Arts Fund Opera Project, a robust comprehensive analysis of individual works is imperative. According to statistics, from 2014 to 2022, a total of 89 opera works existed under the identities of large-scale stage works, small-scale stage works, and opera promotion and exchange works within the National Arts Fund. These works underwent different real-life situations and creative processes during their promotion. As researchers, detailed analysis and contemplation of individual cases should be conducted first, forming a beneficial evaluation of the overall operation of the National Arts Fund (Jiang, 2019).

- Interdisciplinary Method

The interdisciplinary method, also known as cross-disciplinary research method, is utilized in the research process of specific subjects. It is often challenging to derive objective and systematic conclusions solely through a single research method, thus hindering the ability to fully understand the true nature of the research subject. Therefore, it is necessary to employ comprehensive research techniques from both the

primary discipline and other disciplines to conduct in-depth research, resulting in beneficial outcomes and facilitating a better understanding of the research subject. Particularly in the field of artistic research, due to its inherent interdisciplinary nature, it is difficult to achieve a comprehensive understanding solely through a single discipline such as musicology or art studies. Hence, a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach is required for thorough research and discourse.

This study primarily focuses on researching the opera branch within the National Arts Fund projects. In addition to analyzing the intrinsic artistic characteristics of opera works, the research also encompasses aspects such as stage performance promotion and the operation of the National Arts Fund, involving rich knowledge from humanities, social sciences, and economics. For instance, in the specialized research and discussion on the operation mode of the National Arts Fund, knowledge from sociology, communication, and economics is required to analyze the specific operation mode and social influence of the National Arts Fund. Similarly, the research process in the field of opera artistic creation and performance involves multiple disciplines within the realm of art studies (Kerman, 2008). For instance, in the aspect of scriptwriting, a command of literary knowledge is necessary. Regarding the musical composition of opera works, support from knowledge systems in music composition techniques and acoustics is essential. Analyzing perspectives on stage design, costumes, props, visual effects, media technology, and other aspects of opera production also requires support from other fields within the domain of art studies. Additionally, the stage performance of opera art involves knowledge from performance studies, while the societal promotion of operatic art also requires knowledge structures in art management and art marketing. It is evident that to ensure the comprehensive representation of relevant content and to imbue the research itself with richness and foresight, it is imperative to involve branches of multiple disciplines in the research process. This presents a challenge to the researcher's knowledge base and structure. However, it is through such research processes that optimal research outcomes can be achieved, allowing for the elucidation of the overall operation of the National Arts Fund and the distinctive characteristics

exhibited in the creation, performance, and societal dissemination of opera projects. Through the collaborative construction of interdisciplinary knowledge systems, it is possible to understand the current development issues and bottlenecks of the National Arts Fund and make corresponding judgments and analyses to address these issues, thereby guiding the growth and development of National Arts Fund opera projects in the future. In the application process of interdisciplinary method, several principles should be adhered to: Firstly, the application of knowledge systems from various disciplines should be based on familiarity and understanding to avoid partial understanding or misinterpretation, which may lead to unnecessary research direction wastage and a skewed focus for researchers. As mentioned earlier in the research process of the National Arts Fund opera projects, there is a wealth of interdisciplinary knowledge that can be drawn upon and applied. However, it is crucial to genuinely understand the beneficial outcomes that these knowledge processes can bring and to demonstrate their value in aiding the research subject. In the process of delving into the knowledge systems and research methods of various disciplines, transplanting them into the proposition process of this study is necessary to achieve optimal research outcomes. On the other hand, the interdisciplinary knowledge involved in this research process should be prioritized, selecting the most important knowledge systems for cross-disciplinary integration while using other systems as supplementary. This approach helps avoid problems such as overlapping and unclear priorities (Robinson, 2000). For example, in the research process, it is crucial to focus tightly on the knowledge systems of musicology, art studies, communication studies, and sociology, treating these four aspects as the focal points for cross-disciplinary knowledge integration. In certain research directions, applying knowledge from disciplines such as economics and marketing promotes the richness and accuracy of research outcomes. Such research results have clearer focus and coherence, making them more easily comprehensible.

In summary, based on the habits and conditions of academic research in China, the above four main research methods are proposed. On this basis, qualitative and quantitative research elements are incorporated into the specific research process.

Through a cross-sectional and longitudinal approach, the proposition of this study is analyzed and discussed to understand the operation mode, technical essentials, intrinsic characteristics, artistic styles, and societal influence of National Arts Fund opera projects, truly promoting the prosperity of opera art in China. This enhances the macro-guidance value and significance of the National Arts Fund.

In addition, qualitative and quantitative research methods were also employed in the research process. Qualitative research primarily utilized methods such as questionnaire surveys, interviews, and classroom recordings, emphasizing studying research subjects in natural contexts rather than artificially controlled environments. The application of qualitative instruments or methods emphasized the use of diverse approaches, such as observation, interviews, and physical collections, to gain a comprehensive understanding of research questions.

Data Analysis

Since its establishment in 2013, the China National Arts Fund has made significant efforts and outstanding contributions to the development of Chinese opera art. As a result, a large number of excellent opera productions have emerged, actively promoting the development of opera art and making the opera market increasingly vibrant. The driving force behind all this largely stems from the leadership and macro influence of the National Arts Fund. Therefore, by reviewing the history of the National Arts Fund and analyzing its role in the application, selection, support, and evaluation of opera art projects, it can guide Chinese opera to enter the domestic and international art markets.

At the same time, through research, analysis can be conducted on the new highlights and elements of Chinese opera projects funded by the National Arts Fund, as well as the significance and value of their performance and social dissemination processes in the modern era. These are important issues for promoting the continued development of Chinese opera art today. The research findings can not only provide practical assistance for the National Arts Fund in selecting funded projects in the future but also offer guidance for opera creation, social promotion, and commercial operations.

(1) Research objective 1: to study the art form of Chinese opera in accordance with the previous funding policy of the China National Arts Fund.

1.1 Overview of Chinese Opera Creation since the Reform and Opening up

- Chinese Opera Recovery Period (late 1970s — early 1980s)
- Exploration period of Chinese Opera (1980s — 1990s)
- Diversified Development Period of Chinese Opera (2001 — 2012)
- Overview of the Creation of Chinese Opera since 2013

1.2 Operational Systems of Three Kinds of Opera Creation Cases from the Perspective of Artistic Production

- Independent Creation Situation
- Commissioned Creation Situation
- The Situation of Opera Creation Funded by the China National Arts

Fund

1.3 Research on the Opera Works of the China National Arts Fund

- The Longitudinal Distribution of Opera Productions Funded by the National Arts Fund of China from 2014 to 2023

- Creation unit Composition and Background Research of Opera Works

1.4 Analysis of Artistic Characteristics of Opera Works of the National Arts Fund

- Overall Cultural Diversity in Script Themes
- Innovativeness of Script Writing Structure
- The Richness, Nationality and Openness of Opera Music Compilation

and Creation Thinking

- Artistic Quality of Opera Singing and Performance
- Ingenious Opera Stage Design

(2) To provide recommendations for the promotion of Chinese opera with the expectation of getting governmental support.

2.1 Reflection on China National Arts Fund Opera Works

2.1.1 Achievements and Valuable Experience Gained in the Past

2.1.2 Limitations of China National Arts Fund Operas in the Current Situation

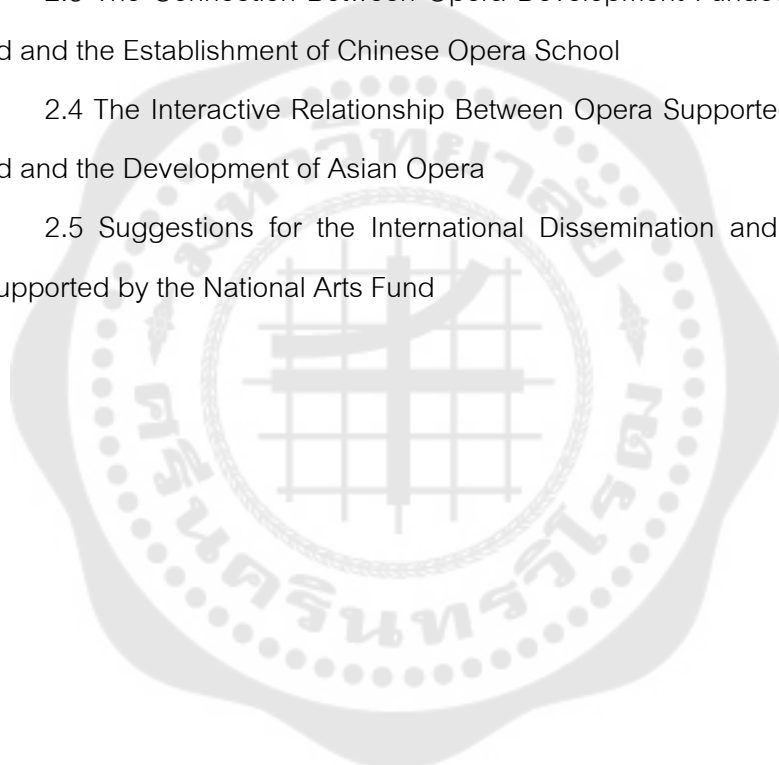
- Limitations in the Selection of Themes
- Limitations in Creation
- Limitations in Performance
- Limitations in Publicity

2.2 Analysis of the Causes of Current Development Bottlenecks

2.3 The Connection Between Opera Development Funded by the National Arts Fund and the Establishment of Chinese Opera School

2.4 The Interactive Relationship Between Opera Supported by the National Arts Fund and the Development of Asian Opera

2.5 Suggestions for the International Dissemination and Development of Opera Supported by the National Arts Fund



CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The doctoral dissertation, "The Artistic Characteristics of Opera Funded by the China National Arts Fund," analyzes the artistic category of Chinese opera and presents a comprehensive chronology of its evolution subsequent to the reform and opening up. This analysis is conducted in accordance with the previous funding policy of the China National Art Fund. From an artistic production standpoint, the operational systems of three opera creations are noteworthy. Additionally, several research projects on opera works have shown the overall diversity of script themes, the innovation in script writing structures, the diversity, nationality, and flexibility of opera music creation, the artistry of opera singing and performance, and the ingenuity of opera stage design.

This research also provides suggestions for the advancement of Chinese opera in an effort to secure governmental funding for the conservation and development of diverse opera types in China. The objectives of the research are as follows:

To study the art form of Chinese opera in accordance with the previous funding policy of the China National Arts Fund.

To provide recommendations for the promotion of Chinese opera with the expectation of receiving governmental support.

Details of the research results will be explained as follows:

4.1 Study of the art form of Chinese opera in accordance with the previous funding policy of the China National Arts Fund

4.1.1 Overview of Chinese Opera Creation since the Reform and Opening up

Opera originated from Florence, Italy, hundreds of years ago. As a form of Western classical theatrical art, it integrates various categories such as music, dance, literature, visual arts, and performance into a comprehensive expressive mode, forming a rich stage performance pattern. Through singing, it showcases the charm of Western cultural art. In the first half of the 20th century, Western opera came to China due to various objective reasons and embarked on a development journey that has lasted for

centuries. Although China did not have opera art before, the Chinese nation has a cultural heritage of 5,000 years, with rich artistic forms and literary heritage. Meanwhile, as a culmination of Chinese theatrical arts, traditional Chinese opera flourished during the Ming and Qing dynasties, rivaling Western opera. Therefore, despite the social turmoil in China in the first half of the 20th century, the nation quickly transformed Western opera with its strong capabilities, producing outstanding opera works such as "The White-Haired Girl", "Sister Jiang", and "The Red Guards on Honghu Lake". This not only laid the foundation for the development of opera art in China but also paved the way for its nationalization. By borrowing a wealth of rich ethnic cultural artistic materials, opera art can showcase the charm and artistic appeal of the East.

After experiencing the period of the New Democratic Revolution and the establishment of New China, opera art has developed a unique Chinese style and begun to develop in depth. Since Chinese opera art emerged during the turbulent years of war, its themes and cultural connotations are closely related to current events and politics. Especially in terms of the framework of the works, it excels in using revolutionary historical themes and heroic subjects as the main content, a development pattern that runs through various stages of the development of Chinese opera art. Of course, in the process of the development of Chinese opera art, there have been stages from inception to prosperity and then to twists and turns. The question of how Chinese opera should "learn from foreign techniques to strengthen itself" and how to maintain its independence in national culture has been widely discussed in Chinese theoretical circles and public opinion since the inception of opera art in China. Especially after the reform and opening up, although there has been a phenomenon of "letting a hundred flowers bloom" in the field of opera creation, it is evident that exploration and research on opera are still ongoing. Therefore, since the reform and opening up, the development of Chinese opera has experienced several peaks and crises, including bold practices in original works and cautious considerations, intertwining diverse cultural sentiments throughout. Consequently, Chinese opera art since the reform and opening up has naturally formed multiple stages of development. Through the division of stages, it is

easier to observe the development process of Chinese opera art and feel the changes and growth characteristics of opera art in this process.

Chinese Opera Recovery Period (late 1970s — early 1980s)

After the initial prosperity of Chinese opera art following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Cultural Revolution emerged, strongly suppressing the continued development and exploration of opera art. Under the intervention of Jiang Qing's mistaken idea that "Peking opera is equivalent to opera", classic opera works that had achieved significant achievements were criticized and banned, leading opera creation into a decline. Eight model operas (Peking operas "Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy", "The Harbor", "The Red Lantern", "Sha Jia Bang", "Raid on the White Tiger Regiment"; ballets "The Red Detachment of Women", "The White-Haired Girl"; symphonic music "Sha Jia Bang") emerged as the main stage productions. Although these model operas accumulated certain experiences for the future revival of opera in some aspects, the character images were uniformly heroic, and the stage roles were too monotonous. As opera art itself originated from the West, its identity was mistakenly regarded as originating from bourgeois cultural concepts, hence conflicting with the socialist direction of cultural and artistic development at the time, leading to severe criticism during the Cultural Revolution. New works emerged during this period, but they could not be staged, and even renowned opera performers and creators were wrongly criticized during the Cultural Revolution, greatly dampening the enthusiasm of opera art workers. Local opera troupes established in the early days of the People's Republic of China shifted to performing model operas, causing the loss of valuable experiences and achievements accumulated by Chinese opera art. Not only did the momentum of creation experience a sharp decline, but some once proud outstanding works also failed to meet the public again. It can be said that during this period, the entire development of Chinese opera art was basically stagnant, leading to a generational gap. Through an investigation of historical documents today, it was found that only the Xinjiang Opera Troupe had created the opera "The Red Lantern" in 1972, but obviously, this was closely related to the dissemination of the model operas at the time, and only works and themes

of this nature could possibly be staged. However, due to limitations in the entire creative process, such works were unable to flourish on stage. The constraints imposed also narrowed the scope of creativity and expression, posing serious problems.

With the advent of the spring breeze of reform and opening up, Chinese society entered a new stage of development. Not only was serious criticism and rectification given to the previous cultural and artistic lines of the Cultural Revolution, but encouragement was also given to the development of diversified cultural and artistic forms represented by opera art. This revitalized the enthusiasm of literary and artistic workers, who were willing to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the creation of opera art works. However, how to reflect the new social outlook after reform and opening up in new opera works, while also continuing the original charm of Chinese opera art, was obviously a difficult problem facing Chinese opera art workers. After several years of creation and revival, excellent works such as "Starlight" and "Morning Star" finally emerged, and literary and artistic workers also attempted new explorations. For example, influenced by the freedom of space brought about by reform and opening up, subtle changes appeared in the creation field of opera art in terms of themes, content, and expression methods. These excellent new opera works gained the love of the masses after being staged. At this time, new media technologies such as television and movies had not yet been widely promoted nationwide, so going to the theater to watch artistic performances was an important cultural and entertainment activity for the people, providing a good social foundation for these new opera works. However, objectively speaking, due to more than a decade of developmental hiatus, these opera works lacked in both new thinking and technical aspects of creation, and their levels were obviously inferior to those before. At the same time, as opera art was just experiencing a revival during this period, some long-standing deep-rooted ideas caused literary and artistic workers to be hesitant in fully expressing themselves in their creations. Therefore, there was also a problem of singularity in the types of creation themes. It can be seen that the majority of art works during this period mostly focused on revolutionary historical themes, maintaining the path of condemning evil and promoting good, and centered on

creating works based on stories and deeds of revolutionary heroes during the land revolution, liberation war, and the War of Resistance against Japan, largely shadowed by the previous works such as "The White-Haired Girl" and "Sister Jiang". This also indicates that there was a serious lack of openness and innovation in creation during this period, and creators could only further develop on the basis of previous classic works, but could not surpass their level.

Such a situation of creation and the development of opera art is imaginable and understandable. Although the accumulation of Chinese opera art development had produced some impressive high-level works, the development time was relatively short, and the experience in the application of opera elements, national art elements, and Western music elements was not very rich. The practice frequency was also extremely limited, coupled with the fact that many senior artists had already left the artistic stage due to age, and the younger generation was unable to quickly take over due to the various social factors during the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, in creation, they returned to a certain starting point and began to seek breakthroughs in the creation of classic works through imitative methods. Works such as "Starlight" and "Morning Star" marked the beginning of a new era, indicating that literary and artistic workers had not forgotten the value of opera art and were striving to carry and master it through new artistic expressions. This provided important preliminary preparations and support for the development in the 1990s, while also bringing the appreciation of opera art back into the sight of the people, allowing them to re-understand the forms of expression and new content of Chinese opera art.

Exploration Period of Chinese Opera (1980s — 1990s)

The period from the 1980s to the 1990s can be regarded as the initial stage of China's reform and opening up. Despite being in the early stages, rapid social changes and the ever-evolving urbanization development have led to rapid changes in the cultural and artistic perceptions and aesthetic concepts of Chinese society as a whole. The people urgently need new forms of literature and art to fill the gaps in aesthetics, while also hoping that Chinese opera can create new works that better

reflect the social landscape and meet the demands of emerging aesthetics. Especially in the 1990s, after more than a decade of openness, China had accumulated rich cultural achievements and social development experiences. A trend towards commercialization had emerged in the field of literature and art. Industrial methods had facilitated the emergence of new artistic forms in the cultural and artistic field to stimulate public appreciation and participation. As an important cultural element, opera also sought to observe and peek into life, providing the public with excellent artistic works using more exquisite creative methods. Whether in the early stages of reform and opening up in the 1980s or the comprehensive entry into the market economy in the 1990s, Chinese opera creation was no longer negatively influenced by external social forces. Instead, it enjoyed a relaxed and open cultural environment. Consequently, various new viewpoints on creation and performance emerged in the opera community. Creators and theoretical scholars engaged in debates, attempting to propose their own new concepts and perceptions for creation. They pondered whether Chinese opera should continue to maintain the traditional structure of opera, integrate elements of traditional Chinese opera or folk music, or extensively absorb the original essence of Western opera art to enrich the development and creation mode of Chinese opera art. Such considerations not only appeared in fierce theoretical debates but also manifested in the practical creation of opera art. A large number of new methods, new forms, and new behavioral measures emerged conspicuously in the field of opera art development, stimulating the diversified development of Chinese opera art during this period. It can be imagined that the unprecedented liberation of ideological thinking in China in the mid-1980s allowed the cultural departments of the state to only have a certain degree of macroscopic control over the development path of opera art, without specific application to creative development. This also provided creators and performers with a more free and democratic creative space, enabling them to demonstrate their strengths and prove the correctness of theories through practice. Therefore, during the entire 1980s, Chinese opera underwent significant changes in terms of subject matter, composition techniques, singing styles, and performance methods. Previously,

revolutionary historical themes dominated opera creation, but now realism, mythology, and historical themes have been integrated. The richness of structural forms allows different theater environments and audience groups to have works they love, making opera art colorful and very accessible.

Another typical feature of Chinese opera art in the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond is its strong national, speculative, and executive characteristics. Before this period, opera art creation mostly conformed to the era development background of Chinese society and seemed to have a natural resonance with politics. However, after the 1980s, Chinese opera art began to develop independent views. Opera creators no longer blindly followed the political environment but engaged in intense discussions and explorations on the issue of the independence of opera works, striving to express cultural individuality on the opera stage and truly give opera art independent development space and direction. For example, Shi Guangnan's opera "Shang Shi", created in 1981, presented many innovative points in terms of theme selection and artistic expression, and even showed significant changes in stage art. Despite the limited stage art technology and forms of expression at the time, the creator managed to bring the different environmental styles of the four seasons onto the stage, which was refreshing and cleverly integrated with the dramatic plot. This was not only due to the creator's intelligence but more importantly, it demonstrated their awareness of seeking innovation and change, as well as a resilient attitude of responsibility towards opera art, which is highly commendable.

At the same time, during this period, the development of Chinese opera art basically presented a combination of theory and practice. Not only did unprecedented artistic works appear on the opera stage, but the number of academic seminars also showed a significant increase, and several cultural publications related to opera emerged in the theoretical academic community. For example, "Opera Art Research" and "Chinese Opera News" were excellent publications formed during this period, which played a very positive role in the social dissemination of opera art. Many theoretical scholars in these conferences, based on their experience and observations,

continuously pondered how to make subsequent Chinese opera art creation display Chinese style while also being innovative. The publication of these academic journals not only served as important theoretical support but also effectively disseminated new opera art works to society, forming a wide-ranging social influence in China and promoting more attention to opera art development in the public opinion field.

It is worth noting that, from the actual situation at the time, the social dissemination of opera art mostly formed in central cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. Other less developed provincial capital cities did not have the presence of opera art performances. Therefore, basically, the dissemination of opera art in China during the 1980s and 1990s was mainly in a point-like manner, constructing a dissemination chain with points as the main nodes. It also relied on the power of the media to form a certain range of social radiation, which was a typical attribute of the times caused by the actual social situation at the time.

In terms of creative achievements, Chinese opera in the 1980s and 1990s produced works such as "Zhang Qian" and "Chu Ba Wang", which are typical examples of positive opera. At the same time, excellent opera works like "Xi Shi" were also created. In terms of creative techniques, there was both learning and inheritance of the opera creation mode from the previous stage and a demonstration of new faces in opera art creation in the 1980s and 1990s. As Chinese composers, they did not randomly imitate the creation mode of Western opera but combined with the actual situation in China, seeking new perspectives and contents in opera creation according to the preferences of Chinese audiences. Overall, it presented a comprehensive breakthrough in the number of creations, the forms of works, as well as the themes, contents, and stage art of opera art, demonstrating the era characteristics of different responses to Chinese opera art.

Diversified Development Period of Chinese Opera (2001 — 2012)

Entering the 21st century, Chinese society has witnessed a rapid development momentum in the field of cultural arts. Benefiting from the rapid rise of the Internet, the cultural and artistic industry in China has been able to better learn from and

complement the strengths of the West during its development process. At the same time, it has broadened the horizons of the people, exposing them to a plethora of new art forms that reflect the spirit of the times. Meanwhile, as cultural exchanges have intensified, Chinese musicians and artists have continuously updated their thinking and approaches in the realm of creation, leading to the emergence of numerous outstanding opera art forms, thus filling some of the gaps in the development of highbrow art in the country.

With the increasingly sophisticated development of urban music and cultural infrastructure, various art forms have exhibited distinctive characteristics of the times, and the development of opera art has entered an unprecedented golden age. The free and open-minded environment allows opera artists to engage in rich creative work without distractions, while the state provides ample support for the development of opera art. Consequently, during this period, a plethora of light operas, musicals, and experimental operas have taken to the stage, engaging with the public in diverse forms. This trend also reflects the exploration experiences and achievements of different directions in Chinese opera, including nationalization, localization, and compatibility. Meanwhile, the creation and performance of opera art have gradually begun to explore commercial development models, drawing inspiration from the development models of modern cultural arts such as pop music. This endeavor aims to maintain the continuous deepening of artistic creation through more market-oriented development approaches. In the past, the creation of opera art in China often involved large-scale production systems. While such opera works may have been visually stunning, they faced various challenges during touring performances in provinces and cities across the country, such as difficulties in transporting facilities, significant transportation impacts, and high costs of stage construction. Therefore, in order to better meet the needs of the market and the public, efforts have been made to develop opera productions in the form of small theater performances. This not only establishes a good relationship with industrial manufacturing and theater construction but also creates an immersive effect similar to

that of concert versions of operas, providing the audience with a firsthand sensory experience and a better aesthetic experience.

Starting from 2002, the state established the National Stage Arts Excellent Courses, investing substantial funds to support the creation of stage art works with national characteristics. Meanwhile, in the field of opera art, relevant funding support measures were also initiated, with budgets reaching millions of yuan. Particularly in 2007, the completion of the National Grand Theater in Beijing marked a significant milestone, enabling the highest standards of contemporary Chinese cultural and artistic performances. This also signifies the tremendous support efforts by the state, aiming to promote the healthy development of Chinese opera art and revitalize the cultural and artistic market.

Overview of the Creation of Chinese Opera since 2013

Since 2013, the development of Chinese opera has entered a new golden era, with increasingly high levels of guidance and support from national policies. It is the substantial investment from the state that has facilitated the emergence of new opera works, with unprecedented support provided by the National Arts Fund. This support represents a crucial official endorsement for the entire field of Chinese national opera art creation. The National Arts Fund was officially established in 2013, with its fundamental mission being to promote the prosperity of artistic creation in China and the vigorous development of a healthy artistic industry. It provides financial support for diverse forms of stage art, offering various forms of support in the field of opera, including large-scale stage productions, small-scale stage productions, and specialized talent development programs. The substantial funding, often amounting to hundreds of thousands or even millions, promotes the presentation of outstanding works and provides strong economic support during the creative process. Throughout this process, the Arts Fund has played a leading role, making detailed arrangements in advance for support, progress scheduling, and subsequent evaluation mechanisms. Over the past decade since 2013, dozens of Chinese opera works have been funded, leading to their flourishing development.

Additionally, in recent years, a variety of artistic activities have unfolded nationwide, providing significant support and assistance for the development of Chinese opera art. For example, the China Opera Festival, held every three years in cities such as Nanjing and Wuhan, features forums, lectures, repertoire exhibitions, and competitions for outstanding works. Diverse formats bring together the hottest new opera works and excellent classical works, fostering a positive atmosphere within the industry through performances, exhibitions, and comparative evaluations, while also providing crucial theoretical support for the future development of opera art. In terms of specific opera art creation, there is a plethora of works emerging with diverse themes, perspectives, and styles, stimulating the confidence of opera creators and solidifying their determination to deeply engage in the creative process. Funded by the National Arts Fund, the Opera Development and Inheritance Project, as well as various opera festivals and performance activities, this period has witnessed a phase of explosive development in Chinese opera art, with patriotic-themed opera works showing particularly significant development effects.

4.1.2 Operational Systems of Three Kinds of Opera Creation Cases from the Perspective of Artistic Production

Through the study of the longitudinal development and production process of Chinese opera art in recent years, it can be observed that while Chinese opera art still maintains a certain degree of niche status in terms of social influence and dissemination effects, it has consistently maintained enthusiasm for continuous progress and exploration throughout its historical development. In the following section, the specific situation of Chinese opera creation will be studied and discussed from a sociological perspective, divided into three parts, focusing on the creative motivations, characteristics, funding situations, and development advantages under three different creative modes. Relevant horizontal comparisons will be made among the three scenarios to reveal the internal mechanisms of the current development of Chinese opera art.

Independent Creation Situation

The term "independent creation" refers to works independently created and completed by individual theater troupes, public institutions, or other public and private organizations. In the process of creating the entire work, it involves planning thematic content, marketing, publicity, and promotion, as well as performances, among other aspects. It is a process of forming creative outcomes through collective labor, characterized by the freedom and openness of creative conception, high creative costs, complex processes involving multiple fields, and collaboration among talents of various types. Therefore, generally speaking, opera works created independently mainly rely on collective labor and are difficult to be independently completed by individual coordination. According to incomplete statistics, from 2013 to 2019, China created more than 30 opera works independently, with the main creative themes coming from national or regional theater troupes, as well as some private performing arts companies planning and creating opera works. In the creation process of the National Grand Theater and local orchestras, the main approach involves determining the theme, style type, organizing implementation, clarifying division of labor, constructing the main creative song and dance performances, and finally ensuring the quality of the entire work through the overall planning of part-time departments. Subsequently, specialized departments are established to promote performances and social publicity one by one, which ensures the smooth completion of the performances. At the same time, it also maintains certain production costs, promoting opera works to achieve the best creative effects under limited financial support conditions. Taking the National Grand Theater as an example: In the process of creating opera works, the local government provides 30% of financial subsidies, and the remaining portion is allocated by the theater as cost investment funds. In the later stages, income is used to offset the initial investment and obtain certain economic profits. In specific practical situations, independently created opera works mainly have the following characteristics:

Firstly, independent creation provides greater freedom in selecting themes and styles for works. The themes of these works are usually determined through negotiations

among theater orchestras and personnel involved in marketing operations. The creative team has good control over the style and theme of the work and can conduct in-depth market research based on the predetermined theme to understand the audience's aesthetic demands. This enables the creation of works that are more in line with the market's focal points. Throughout the creative process, whether it's regarding opera content, character portrayal, song performance, performance techniques, stage design, or subsequent publicity and promotion, there is autonomy in decision-making. This avoids some works losing market competitiveness due to excessive reliance on mainstream cultural systems and allows for greater artistic freedom and aesthetic spirit in Chinese opera creation and performance.

Secondly, independent creation involves an independent creative team. Since such works are mostly organized and implemented by local theater troupes, they typically develop their own unique creative teams, including directors, actors, composers, and backstage personnel, who can be allocated according to their needs. This also contributes to better nurturing of internal reserve forces within the theater troupes. Such creative endeavors play a significant role in the sustainable development of theater troupes at all levels, promoting their progress in a better direction. The process of independent creation is also a valuable learning experience. Once a work gains market recognition, the corresponding creative team can be promoted, demonstrating better market competitiveness and creative vitality in subsequent work creation and performance processes.

In terms of funding, opera creation is a complex undertaking. Therefore, during the creation process of theater troupes at all levels, due to their affiliation with government cultural departments, they receive a certain degree of government funding. For example, through special allocations, the government directly subsidizes opera projects of major theater troupes. The government provides the National Grand Theater with a 30% subsidy each year for theater operations and artistic production. Other local theater troupes also receive corresponding support from local cultural departments. This allows for the allocation of funds to initiate creation and establish good connections with

the market. Additionally, during the performance of productions, the government provides support through indirect subsidies such as public welfare tickets, student tickets, and senior citizen tickets, thereby alleviating financial burdens for the producers, creators, and performers of the opera. This not only reduces ticket prices, allowing more audience members to attend performances, but also serves as effective publicity for opera art. Furthermore, the tax authorities may provide support by exempting or reducing taxes, especially for non-profit organizations and non-profit creative projects. Social sponsorship can also be obtained, particularly as more theater troupes transition to enterprise status, commercial collaborations become more common, alleviating some financial concerns during the creative process and providing audiences with more affordable options, while offering greater support to theater troupes.

In actual creative processes, independent creation not only enhances the creative and independent development capabilities of the production entities but also increases the openness and freedom of opera art. It allows for the incorporation of more good ideas into the specific creation process, avoiding various constraints. However, due to the public nature of these institutions, there may still be certain limitations in the creative process. Nevertheless, compared to other creative systems, these limitations are relatively minor, granting more freedom to the entities involved. However, from a negative perspective, difficulties in fundraising and high performance costs during the creation process exist. If an opera work is to achieve sustained development in performance, continuous financial support is essential, promoting the sustainable development of opera performances. However, fundraising during this process is challenging, and performance costs increase significantly in different regions during performance tours. The substantial additional and external costs incurred have made many productions appear promising in the early stages of creation and performance but difficult to sustain in the long term. This has also led to some works being unable to continue their development and creation processes in the long term.

Commissioned Creation Situation

Compared to independent creation, the number of works commissioned is relatively small. According to statistics since 2013, there have been a total of 13 works commissioned. Different commissioning parties have different requirements for commissioned works. Therefore, in terms of theme, content, and presentation, it is necessary to tailor the creation according to the requirements of the commissioning party to establish a good commissioning relationship and ensure that the creation truly meets the requirements. Commissioned creation refers to the creation of opera works through negotiation and agreement between the commissioner and the commissioned party. The commissioner needs to propose a creation plan, including the overall design concept and style definition of the work, which is then delivered to the commissioned party. Through communication and negotiation, the two parties ultimately determine the main content of the entire project, the creation deadline, and the presentation effect in the later stage. Overall, commissioned creation has the following characteristics:

Firstly, commissioned creation has a strong purpose for the creation itself. Since the commissioner does not have a specific creative team, they need to commission others to achieve their creative goals. However, the commissioner often has an overall vision for the commissioned work, including careful consideration of the type and theme of the creation, and can make corresponding requirements to the commissioned party. This ensures that the commissioned party has a good understanding of the work and guarantees the complete presentation of the work's specific form in the later stage.

Secondly, the commissioning party and the form of creation of the work are often diverse and colorful. Generally, the commissioner can be an individual or multiple departments jointly commissioning the creation. The main bodies of commissioning usually include art institutions, government performing arts companies, music festivals, foreign music-related institutions, etc., who wish to have a work tailored to their thematic needs. The commissioned party is mostly composed of performing arts companies,

local government cultural departments, theater troupes, etc., who have the ability to execute such creative tasks and can complete the mission well.

Thirdly, the way of commissioned creation originated from the West, as early as the Baroque period, where royal courts and churches would commission artists to tailor chamber music, symphonies, and operas suitable for certain occasions through commissioning. This tradition has continued to this day and has become an important method of Western artistic creation. Today, many foreign theaters still invite artists from all over the world to create music works through commissions. Some international art events also invite commissioned works in advance, becoming the highlights of the entire art festival. Although the history of commissioned creation in China is not as long as that in the West, since the reform and opening up, with the introduction of Western music culture into China, some forms of commissioned works have emerged. In the latter half of the 20th century, most commissioned works came from Western invitations, and Chinese composers tailored artistic works for events such as the Netherlands Arts Festival and the Almeida Opera House in the UK, which were recognized by art institutions. This tradition has been well continued in recent years, indicating both the recognition of Chinese composers' creative level by Western music institutions and the increasing influence of Chinese artistic creation. In recent years, major theater troupes in China have also begun to accept commissioned works, producing many outstanding opera works such as "Camel Xiangzi" and "Xiao Hong".

In terms of funding for commissioned works and their sources, the funds for commissioned works are usually provided by the commissioner. These funds are divided into upfront creation drive funds and creation deposits paid after the completion and review of the commissioned work. The ratio is mainly composed of 40% and 60%. After the work is completed, the copyright belongs to the commissioner, while the attribution right belongs to the commissioned party. The commissioner usually specifies the exact time for submitting the work and shares the economic benefits obtained within two years after the completion of the work with the commissioned party, dividing the proportion of the benefits obtained between them. Among the 13 commissioned opera

works created since 2013, 8 were commissioned by various major theater troupes in China, 4 were commissioned by governments and performing arts groups, and 1 was commissioned by music festivals.

Commissioned works often provide a favorable opportunity for musicians with good artistic literacy but relatively unknown names to fully unleash their artistic talents. Often, these composers are not very famous, so it is difficult for them to get substantial financial support or engage in complex artistic creation. However, by accepting commissions, they can obtain sufficient funds, not only improving their own artistic creation abilities but also enhancing their visibility and realizing their own value. This method of creation is very popular among young composers, and commissioning parties also hope to provide more opportunities for young musicians in this way. Through the presentation of commissioned works in the market, new creative talents can often emerge, injecting fresh blood into Chinese opera art. At the same time, the commissioning method can strengthen the close connection between domestic theater troupes, government, and non-governmental arts organizations, as well as enhance cooperation between domestic and foreign theaters. This method can promote the overall development level of Chinese opera art and enhance Western society's understanding of Chinese culture and art. In the process of deepening cooperation, it can also attract more attention to the development of Chinese culture and art. Of course, from the perspective of potential problems, this commissioned creation method often has clear directionality, and the commissioner may propose various harsh conditions. This also leads to the composer's thinking becoming fixed in order to meet and adapt to these conditions. In order to complete commissioned works, compromises are often made, resulting in a certain degree of compromise on personal independent artistic character and ideology.

The Situation of Opera Creation Funded by the China National Arts Fund

Since its establishment, the China National Arts Fund has sponsored the creation of dozens of opera works. As a non-profit government fund, it encourages the entire society to engage in artistic creation and provides ample support for positive

initiatives in various creative processes. In December 2013, in order to further enrich the current artistic creation in China, create high-quality art masterpieces, and cultivate outstanding talents in artistic theory, performance, creation, and research in our country, the National Arts Fund was established. The establishment of this fund is not for profit, but to promote the development of China's cultural and artistic industry to the greatest extent possible. From the main characteristics of the fund, it is funded by the government through special allocations from the central finances to sustain the operation of the entire fund. Of course, the fund can also receive donations from other private organizations. However, overall, government funding accounts for the vast majority. The National Arts Fund not only sponsors a certain type of artistic talent but also takes a broad view of the entire artistic production process, including funding needs for talent cultivation, cooperation, and communication in various aspects. As long as they meet the conditions and standards of the National Arts Fund, outstanding units, individuals, and related projects will receive funding from the National Arts Fund, not just state-owned units. In addition, the National Arts Fund also exercises strict control over various project themes, closely integrating theme naming and selection with the mainstream cultural and artistic development trends in the country. Themes such as "Chinese Dream", revolutionary history, the 70th anniversary of the founding of New China, and poverty alleviation are key themes and project compositions that the National Arts Fund focuses on funding in the field of opera. In the review process of these projects, great emphasis is placed on the creative level, thematic direction, and feasibility of the projects, thereby promoting outstanding works to not be buried and showcasing the latest and highest level of cultural and artistic development in China in the new era.

In the process of establishing the National Arts Fund, a clear organizational structure was formed, including three parts: the council, expert committee, and management center. The management center and council make major decisions on projects, while the expert committee provides leadership consultation and evaluation services, with six departments under it managing the daily operations. Each department

performs its duties, jointly implementing internal supervision mechanisms while maintaining their respective rights, and promoting the open and rational operation of the entire National Arts Fund.

In terms of the scope and specific implementation of funding by the National Arts Fund, the amount and methods of funding are diverse. Specifically focusing on the opera art production field of interest in this study, in the initial year of the establishment of the National Arts Fund in 2014, the funding range for opera was between 8 to 50 million. From 2015 onwards, it was adjusted to 8 to 40 million. In terms of funding methods, a certain proportion of funding is implanted in the pre-, mid-, and post-production stages of opera art production, thereby achieving good funding effects. Typically, as startup funds, the foundation allocates around 30% of the funding, then allocates 30-50% of the funding after the premiere and successful review, and finally disburses the remaining funds after the work completes the designated number of performances required by the foundation. This essentially constitutes the entire process of support for opera projects by the National Arts Fund. Regarding the requirements for performances, the initial guidance recommended no fewer than 20 performances, later reduced to 8-10 performances, and stipulated that the number of performances should not exceed one and a half years, subject to expert supervision and evaluation. In terms of the number of sponsorships, the overall situation remains balanced. In 2016, there were relatively few opera projects sponsored, with only five works, while in 2018, there were as many as twelve. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, support from the National Arts Fund was temporarily interrupted, but with the end of the pandemic, the special support from the National Arts Fund resumed. In terms of the regions funded by the National Arts Fund, both the eastern and western regions of central China have received support for relevant works, with particular emphasis on support for works in remote areas and among ethnic minorities. In terms of the institutions funded, the support for state-owned institutions has basically reached around 70%, while the proportion of non-state-owned institutions is around 30%. Although there are differences between them, it can be seen that the National Arts Fund emphasizes the coexistence of various institutions and

strives to maintain a balance between them, giving different types of institutions equal opportunities based on the works as judgment objects.

Looking at the advantages of the National Arts Fund, as a government-led organization in the art fund system, it provides funds and important platforms, constantly adjusts application guidelines, provides opportunities for different institutions to apply, objectively stimulates the creativity and enthusiasm of artistic institutions, enterprises, and individuals at all levels across the country, and enhances competitiveness. At the same time, the National Arts Fund has a relatively complete organizational structure and has established an expert database. Adhering to the principle of training before review, it focuses on the authority and professionalism of the entire project, maintains internal supervision mechanisms, and promotes the operation of the entire fund in an open, transparent, and benign environment. This makes the National Arts Fund an important support for driving the development of opera art in China at present, opening a new era of opera art development. At the same time, institutions at all levels vie to apply for opera works, seeing the successful application and completion of National Arts Fund projects as a great honor. On the other hand, in the development process of the National Arts Fund, there are also certain problems, such as: the types of themes in the works are relatively single. The original intention of creating art was for a variety of works to flourish and different schools of thought to contend. However, constrained by the requirements of the National Arts Fund for related themes, there is obviously a significant directional tendency in the creative process, and only works that meet the requirements and thematic catalog of the National Arts Fund have the possibility of being selected. Therefore, works with themes such as main theme, realistic theme, red theme, and patriotism theme occupy the vast majority, which also leads to some excellent works of free creation being excluded, objectively causing a certain imbalance and unfairness. Secondly, the allocation of project subjects is uneven, with a certain degree of imbalance between state-owned institutions and non-state-owned institutions. Obviously, state-owned institutions have advantages in software and hardware reserves and talent reserves, so they have the upper hand in terms of creative environment,

background resources, and creative level, which also sets up numerous obstacles for non-state-owned enterprises and individuals in the selection process. As the National Arts Fund, it has not sensitively discovered these differences and provided more preferential and convenient conditions for non-state-owned institutions and individuals, making their application work very difficult. In addition, there are also certain flaws in the evaluation system. In the selection process, there is a certain degree of bureaucratic thinking, formalism, and empiricism, and the stereotyped impression has led to the fact that the experts and scholars involved in the evaluation may not be able to fairly and impartially evaluate various works, but instead, they are selecting institutions that conform to the content and requirements of the main theme. This is obviously contrary to the purpose of the National Arts Fund and has caused certain practical problems. Therefore, the development of the National Arts Fund should continue to be improved to reflect its authoritative, efficient, and open position.

4.1.3 Research on the Opera Works of the China National Arts Fund

The Longitudinal Distribution of Opera Productions Funded by the National Arts Fund of China from 2014 to 2023

Since 2014, the opera projects funded by the National Arts Fund have engaged in the selection of submissions from units across the nation, subjecting them to rigorous evaluation by expert judges to identify entries that encapsulate the fundamental ethos of the National Arts Fund and exhibit superior creative excellence. Subsequently, these chosen teams receive substantial financial backing to realize their opera endeavors. Over the period spanning from 2014 to 2023, the National Arts Fund has steadfastly extended robust support to applicants hailing from diverse provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions, with the overarching objective of fostering the comprehensive development of the entire creative, rehearsal, and performance processes through generous financial allocations. The details for each year are shown in the following tables.

National Arts Fund 2014 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 1: 2014 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Xue Yuan	Set against the backdrop of the 14-year anti-Japanese struggle in Northeast China.	The Anti-Japanese War Period	Liaoning Opera House
2	Yue Fei	The opera "Yue Fei" is a large-scale original patriotic opera. It took more than 30 years from its inception to its formal premiere.	Song dynasty	Tianjin Conservatory of Music
3	Missile Commander	Based on the deeds of Yang Yegong, a missile commander in the military.	Reform and Opening Up to 2004	Chinese People's Liberation Army General Political Department opera troupe (PLA Opera Troupe)
4	Taihang Nainiang	Inspired by the real and heroic group of women known as the "Taihang Nainiang".	The Anti-Japanese War Period	Shanxi Zuoquan County Kaihuadiao Art Troupe

TABLE 1 (CONTINUE)

5	Visitors on the Icy Mountain	The opera "Visitors on the Icy Mountain" is an opera of the same name based on the classic 1963 film "Visitors on the Icy Mountain"	At the beginning of the founding of new China	National Grand Theater
6	Su Wu of the Great Han	"Su Wu of the Great Han" is an original opera produced by Shaanxi Province and is the concluding work of the "Great Han Trilogy" after "Zhang Qian" and "Sima Qian".	Han Dynasty	Shaanxi Provincial Song and Dance Theater Co., Ltd
7	Diao Charn	Unlike many "Three Kingdoms dramas", the opera "Diao Charn" does not simply replicate the story from "Romance of the Three Kingdoms". It portrays Diao Charn as a victim who was deceived, telling a heartbreaking love tragedy.	three kingdoms period	Gansu Opera House

TABLE 1 (CONTINUE)

8	The White-Haired Girl	In 1945, Yan'an, the Lu Xun Academy of Arts collectively created the opera "The White-Haired Girl". This work, created in the late 1940s in the Communist-controlled liberated areas during the Anti-Japanese War, is a literary work with far-reaching historical significance.	World War II (WWII)	China National Opera & Dance Drama Theater
9	Back Home	In 1983, a Taiwan veteran returning home from Japan kneeled all the way to his mother 30 meters away. His mother had been waiting for 35 years, annually preparing a can of sweet potato chips that her son loved. The story encapsulates the heartbreak and infinite nostalgia of the Taiwan veteran. It is a rare stage art work in China that depicts cross-strait themes and a large-scale original opera created with great passion by Jiangxi Province.	Reform and Opening Up Period	Jiangxi Province Song and Dance Theater

TABLE 1 (CONTINUE)

10	The Grand Canal	The opera "The Grand Canal" focuses on Empress Xiao, the wife of Emperor Yang of Sui. The plot revolves around the Grand Canal, with the theme of the excavation and navigation of the Grand Canal and the dynastic changes of the Sui and Tang dynasties. It follows the central theme of "water can carry a boat, it can also overturn it", objectively depicting the historical merits and demerits of Emperor Yang of Sui in opening the Grand Canal.	Sui Dynasty	Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Co., Ltd.
11	High Mountains and Flowing Water	"High Mountains and Flowing Water" is based on the story of "High Mountains and Flowing Water Encounter with a Kindred Spirit" of Cai Dian. It is directed by Professor Cao Qijing of the Directing Department of the Central Academy of Drama, written by Professor Huang Weiruo of the Department of Drama Literature of the Central Academy of Drama, and composed by the famous composer Mo Fan. It attempts to integrate opera with Chu Ci, recreating a "dialogue of souls".	Spring and Autumn Period	Wuhan Song and Dance Theater Co., Ltd.

TABLE 2 2014 Communication and Promotion Funding Projects

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Fishing City	In the year 1259 AD, the Mongolian Khan Möngke personally led 100,000 troops into the Sichuan-Chongqing region, intending to emulate the strategy of the Western Jin Dynasty's conquest of Wu by first capturing the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, and then sending naval forces downstream along the river to coordinate with land forces to pacify Jiangnan.	Late Song Dynasty to Early Yuan Dynasty	Chongqing Opera House

TABLE 3 2014 Young Talent Training Funding Project

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	White-Haired Girl	<p>In 1945, in Yan'an, the Lu Xun Academy of Arts collectively created the opera "White-Haired Girl".</p> <p>This work, created in the late 1940s during the period of the Anti-Japanese War in the liberated areas controlled by the Communist Party of China, is a literary work of profound historical significance.</p>	The Anti-Japanese War Period	China National Opera & Dance Drama Theater

National Arts Fund 2015 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 4 2015 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	A river of spring water	"Spring Along the River" is a representative musical work reflecting the history of old Shanghai. Through the tumultuous years of a common family's upheaval and change, it both celebrates human loyalty and goodness and chastises the social corruption and decadence of the time.	Pre-establishment of New China	Shanghai Zhou Xiaoyan Opera Center
2	Hu Jia Yin	Based on the Hu Jia's eighteen beats.	End of Han Dynasty	Henan Song and Dance Troupe Co., Ltd.

TABLE 2 (CONTINUE)

3	Goddess	This play is based on cultural legends from Hubei, depicting the integration of Chu's ancestors, highlighting the core idea of "harmony in diversity" and "harmonious development" of the Chinese nation.	Ancient Mythology	Hubei Provincial Ethnic Song and Dance Troupe
4	A Single Spark	"A Single Spark" tells the story of the Northeast Anti-Japanese Allied Forces fighting against the Japanese fascist invaders together with the people in a difficult and hard environment.	The Anti- Japanese War Period	Shenyang Conservatory of Music
5	For You, Wang Xuan's Song	"For You, Wang Xuan's Song" is an original opera of "professor writing about professor, students acting as teachers". The creators and performers are teachers and students of Peking University. The opera starts with Wang Xuan's graduation and depicts the key events that influenced his life, demonstrating the significance of Wang Xuan's scientific contributions through stage art.	Modern	Peking University

TABLE 5 2015 Communication and Promotion Funding Projects

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Osmanthus Flowers Blooming Everywhere in August	This drama tells the story of a wealthy girl named Guihua in the Dabie Mountains during the land revolution period, depicting her journey from ignorance to awakening and her involvement in the revolution. The plot is full of twists and turns, with vivid contradictions and conflicts.	Land Revolution Period	Hubei Provincial Opera and Dance Theater

TABLE 6 2015 Small-scale Stage Drama (Operetta)

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Duo Duo's Spring	The opera "Duo Duo's Spring" tells the story of a little girl named Duo Duo from a poor family in Yao Mountain, aiming to evoke people's care for AIDS patients.	Modern	Hengyang City Opera and Dance Theater

TABLE 6 (CONTINUE)

2	Forest of Swans	<p>Adapted from a true story, it depicts the relationship between humans and the environment: the expansion of cities severely pollutes the environment, forcing swans in the land of Qilu to eat garbage, leading to illness.</p> <p>When the swans are on the brink of despair, a young man awakens human conscience, changing their fate.</p>	Modern	Central Conservatory of Music
3	Xiang Nuo Xiang	<p>The story tells of "First Secretary" Haige coming to Fragrant and Glutinous Village for two years, leading the villagers to emancipate their minds and turning fragrant glutinous rice into the unique geographical product symbol of the world, leading the villagers onto the road to prosperity, and Haige marrying Fragrant and Glutinous Sister in the village.</p>	Modern	Guangxi Shangsi County Cultural Center

TABLE 6 (CONTINUE)

4	In Search of Hanqing Gele	"In Search of Hanqing Gele" is a musical that combines ancient Dada Mongolian folk epic with modern dance, describing the integration and intersection of traditional culture and modern urban life.	Modern	Qinghai Qaidam Ethnic Culture Communication Center
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National Arts Fund 2016 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 7 2016 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

Order number	Project name	The content of the play	Period of belonging	Declaration subject
1	The Long March	The story of the Red Army's 25,000-mile Long March	Period of the New Democratic Revolution	National Grand Theater of China
2	Resurrection	A collaborative adaptation of classic works by Tolstoy	Tolstoy's works	Beijing Tianji Cultural Communication Co., Ltd.

TABLE 7 (CONTINUE)

3	Sandalwood Death	Set against the backdrop of the German colonial aggression on the Shandong Peninsula in the late Qing Dynasty, during the construction of the Jiaozhi Railway in 1900, which sparked the people's resistance against foreign aggression. It narrates the enmity and hatred experienced by Sun Bing, a folk artist who led the resistance against colonialism, during the process of receiving the "Sandalwood Punishment", highlighting the simple patriotism and heroic spirit of the people of Shandong who were willing to die rather than surrender to defend their homeland a hundred years ago.	Late Qing Dynasty, Period of the Old Democratic Revolution	Shandong Academy of Arts
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TABLE 7 (CONTINUE)

4	Lin Huiyin	The original modern national opera "Lin Huiyin" presents many important life events of Lin Huiyin's life, including her relationships with Liang Sicheng and Xu Zhimo, as well as a group of intellectuals. The entire opera cleverly uses a large rotating stage in its stage design, combined with elements such as lighting and multimedia, to achieve a stage effect of the flow of time and space transformation.	Period of the Republic of China and New China	China National Opera & Dance Drama Theater
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TABLE 8 2016 Communication and Promotion Funding Projects

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	The White-Haired Girl	Originating from the folk legend of Bai Mao Xian Gu in the Jin-Cha-Ji Border Region, the protagonist "Xi'er" suffers persecution in the old society, leading her to become known as the "White-Haired Girl". In 1945, the Lu Xun Academy of Arts in Yan'an collectively created the opera "White-Haired Girl". This opera, created in the liberated areas under the leadership of the Communist Party of China during the late stage of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, is a literary work of profound historical significance.	Period of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression	China National Opera & Dance Drama Theater
2	Visitors on the Icy Mountain	The opera "Visitors on the Icy Mountain" is an adaptation by the National Grand Theater of China based on the classic 1963 film "Visitors on the Icy Mountain".	Early Period of the People's Republic of China	National Grand Theater of China

National Arts Fund 2017 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 9 2017 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Letters to my Wife	Portrays the grand love of Lin Juemin, the male protagonist, depicted in a century-old love letter written for the well-being of all, during the period of the Old Democratic Revolution.	Old Democratic Revolution Period	Fujian Grand Theater Co., Ltd.
2	King Zhuang of Chu	Set in the Spring and Autumn Period, "King Zhuang of Chu" tells the story of Chu Zhuang Wang facing internal and external troubles, strategically biding his time, and ultimately leading Chu on the path of revitalization.	Spring and Autumn Period	Hubei Provincial Opera and Dance Theater Co., Ltd.
3	To the Moon	This mythical drama not only tells the story of Chang'e and Hou Yi but also reveals humanity's ultimate care and eternal conflicts.	Ancient Mythology	Central Conservatory of Music
4	Tubote	"Tubote" is an opera masterpiece that promotes patriotism. Set against the backdrop of the settlement of the Sibe people in the Ili region after a 36-year migration, it tells the story of Tubote, the commander of the Sibe camp, who led his people to dig the Chabuchar Canal for seven years.	Qing Dynasty	Liaoning Opera House

TABLE 9 (CONTINUE)

5	Ode to the Lotus Flower	For the first time, the timeless masterpiece "Ode to the Lotus Follower" by the Northern Song philosopher Zhou Dunyi is brought to the opera stage, meticulously crafted over three years, presenting the lofty moral beauty and human nature akin to the purity of lotus flowers through profound plots, beautiful music, and grand scenes.	Northern Song Dynasty	Changsha Tianhan Grand Theater
6	Love through the Ages	Based on the precious remains of "Qian Gu Yi Dao" left by the ancestors of the Huaxia tribe on the vast grasslands of Ordos in 212 BC, "Love through the Ages" portrays the historical background of Princess Wang Zhaojun going beyond the Great Wall, praising the great sentiment of national unity written by Princess Wang Zhaojun for the Han nationality and the minority ethnic groups of the North.	Western Han Dynasty	Ordos City Opera and Dance Theater

TABLE 9 (CONTINUE)

7	Courtyard of Family Chen	From the side, it reenacts the "Xiangnan Uprising" led by Zhu De and Chen Yi, singing the praises of the older generation of proletarian revolutionaries who stood as the backbone in turbulent times and turned the tide of the revolution.	Period of the New Democratic Revolution	Hunan Kunju Troupe Wuling Opera Troupe
8	Drunken Beauty March 3rd	Set against the backdrop of the "March 3rd" Song Fair, tells a touching story about love, dreams, and cultural inheritance. The play features two parallel timelines: one depicting the poignant love story of two Zhuang youths in the 1950s, and the other portraying a Zhuang youth in the 1980s who harbors dreams and adheres to the tradition of inheriting and carrying forward Zhuang folk songs.	Post- Establishm ent of the People's Republic of China	Guangxi Opera and Dance Theater Co., Ltd.

TABLE 9 (CONTINUE)

9	The Roar of Humen	The plot of "The Roar of Humen" is set in June 1839, when Lin Zexu, the governor-general, held the shocking "Humen Opium Destruction" on the beach of Humen Town, destroying nearly 2.4 million catties of opium in public, and wrote a glorious chapter in the history of global anti-drug efforts.	Qing Dynasty	Fujian Provincial Opera and Dance Theater
10	Liu Sanjie, the Divine Songstress	Tells the moving folk legend of Liu Sanjie, showcasing her beauty, kindness, integrity, bravery, and singing talent, praising the diligence and wisdom of the laboring people represented by Liu Sanjie, and displaying the splendid and colorful national art and the beautiful and charming scenery of Guilin.	Ancient Mythological Legend	Guilin Cultural Performance Co., Ltd.

TABLE 10 2017 Small-scale Stage Drama

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Noble Poor	The work is based on the famous novel "The Poor" by Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. It truthfully reflects the hardships of the Russian working people during the dark rule of the Tsarist regime, as well as their simple, kind, and sympathetic noble qualities.	Modern	Central Conservatory of Music
2	Yao Zhai Qing	The opera tells the story of a volunteer teacher in Taishan who stayed behind against his mother's objections to ensure that many impoverished students could go to school. Eventually, his girlfriend of many years also joined the volunteer teaching team, and the two finally came together, ending the story perfectly. The touching plot moved the audience.	Modern	Changning City Opera and Dance Troupe Co., Ltd.

TABLE 10 (CONTINUE)

3	Jie He Chun	"Spring of Border River" is a small opera full of national and border characteristics. The opera mainly uses the Zhuang folk song tunes from the Chongzuo area on the border of Guangxi, with costumes and stage design based on the basic colors and styles of Zhuang costumes from the local border areas of Chongzuo. It is a small drama based on real events.	Several decades ago	Chongzuo Huashan National Culture and Art Inheritance and Creation Center
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TABLE 11 2017 Communication and Promotion Project

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Su Wu of the Great Han	Su Wu was ordered to go to the Xiongnu and brought the friendship of the Han nationality to the northern grasslands. When he was about to return home, a rebellion occurred within the Xiongnu. The Han envoy, Deputy General Zhang Sheng, was involved, implicating Su Wu. From then on, Su Wu was exiled in Xiongnu, enduring hardships and remaining loyal to his homeland. The opera portrays Su Wu's indomitable character and unwavering loyalty to his country.	Han Dynasty	Shaanxi Provincial Opera House

TABLE 11 (CONTINUE)

2	Taihang Nainiang	The play tells the story of The Anti-Japanese War Period. During the war, when there were only over 70,000 people in Zuoyuan County, the entire population participated in the war effort. Among them, 10,000 people supported the front lines, 10,000 joined the army, and 10,000 sacrificed their lives heroically. A large number of women risked their lives to feed and care for the offspring of the Eighth Route Army soldiers with their sweet milk and broad-mindedness, and even sacrificed their lives. They share a common name—Taihang Nannies.	The Anti-Japanese War Period	Shanxi Zuoyuan County Kaihua Art Troupe
3	Xiao Erhei's Marriage	The opera describes the story of Xiao Erhei and Xiao Qin in the militia leader in the anti-Japanese democratic base area of southeastern Shanxi Province during the Anti-Japanese War.	The Anti-Japanese War Period	China National Opera House
4	Love in the Poplar	Based on the story of "epoch model" Su He, it narrates his touching deeds of greening the desert for over 10 years in the depths of the desert.	Modern	Inner Mongolia Dede Ma Art Vocational College

National Arts Fund 2018 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 12: 2018 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Red Sorghum	The entire play concludes with "My Grandfather" and the villagers commemorating the deceased by the Mohe River, leading to the audience's anticipation and imagination for the future.	During the Anti-Japanese War	PLA National Defense University Military Culture College
2	Turandot	-	Italian composer Giacomo Puccini's work	Central Conservatory of Music
3	Jiao Yulu	In 1962, Jiao Yulu became the secretary of the Lankao County Committee in Henan Province, determined to lead hundreds of thousands of disaster victims to overcome the "three evils" of waterlogging, wind and sand, and saline-alkali.	Socialist Exploration Period (1956-1966)	China National Opera House

TABLE 12 (CONTINUE)

4	He Luting	<p>From the 1920s to the 1940s, He Luting's exploration and achievements in revolution and music best embody his spiritual demeanor. The six scenes of the play depict his involvement in the revolution, studying at the Shanghai National Conservatory of Music (predecessor of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music), diligent study of Western music theory and performance techniques, creation of China's first internationally acclaimed piano work "Shepherd's Flute", leading the Shanghai cultural circles rescue and anti-Japanese drama team to the front lines, and his life as a teacher at the Lu Xun Academy of Arts.</p>	First half of the 20th century (pre-liberation)	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
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TABLE 12 (CONTINUE)

5	Mustard Seed Garden	Cultural figure Li Yu filed a lawsuit in Suzhou because someone pirated his work "Idle Thoughts in an Idle Study". Although the lawsuit failed due to the darkness of the officialdom, he became a pioneer in fighting piracy in history.	Qing Dynasty	Private Institution
6	Zhuo Wenjun	Based on the tumultuous love story of Zhuo Wenjun, a famous female poet of the Western Han Dynasty, and Sima Xiangru, the opera vividly depicts their love story from acquaintance to lifelong companionship through shining scenes such as "Qin Tai Zhi Yin", "Elopement for Love", "Selling Wine at the Docks", and "Mission to the Southwest".	Han Dynasty	Sichuan Conservatory of Music
7	Little Running River	"The original intention of love" is the keyword of the opera "Little Running River". The protagonists use their lives to affirm the truth and eternity of love and faith, which is the theme of the play.	Pre- liberation	Yunnan University for Nationalities

TABLE 12 (CONTINUE)

8	Love in Songmao-Ling Moutains	The story is based on real events in the revolutionary old area of western Fujian. It is set against the backdrop of the last major battle, the Songmaoling Battle, before the Red Army's Long March, and tells the emotional perseverance of Hakka girl Lai Amei.	Land Revolution Period (1927-1937)	Fujian Provincial Opera and Dance Theater
9	Two Springs	The opera "Two Springs" follows the life of A Bing, depicting his longing for music, light, and a better life.	Pre-liberation	Wuxi Opera and Dance Theater Co., Ltd.
10	Border Town	The opera "Border Town" retains the poetic natural scenery and simple human beauty described in the original work, and also incorporates the unique customs of the tea garden area. The folk customs of dragon boat racing and singing to courtship are cleverly integrated into the genes of the people of the border town.	A relatively distant era	Central Opera House

TABLE 12 (CONTINUE)

11	Marco Polo	The play depicts the legendary experience of Marco Polo traveling back and forth between China along the overland and maritime Silk Roads, highlighting the cultural value and humanistic elegance of the Silk Road, expressing longing for human peace and world harmony.	Yuan Dynasty	Guangzhou Opera House
12	Lan Huahua	In the valley, the young Lan Huahua and her lover, Camel, express their love for each other. Their sincere love causes a stir among the villagers of Lujia River. Subsequently, Camel is forced to leave. Pregnant Orchid, under the design of the local gentry Zhou Laoye, marries a shepherd without any attention, leading to a drama of sorrow and joy.	Pre-liberation	National Grand Theater

TABLE 13 2018 Small-scale Stage Drama (Operetta)

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Afanty	Based on well-known folk stories, the opera retells the story of Afanty "planting gold", with humorous and amusing tales, captivating music, and colorful stage visuals, aiming to guide children into the enchanting kingdom of opera with ease.	Mythical folklore	Taoyuan County Han Opera Art Troupe
2	Grandma's Bridge	The drama depicts a summer day when Zhang Xiaonan is going to visit her grandmother. She meets her friends playing in the village, and because of a small "conflict", the children decide to settle it with a singing contest. Along the way, they sing and play, enjoying the beautiful scenery and echoing laughter amidst the mountains and rivers.	Modern	Shaoxing City Cultural Center

National Arts Fund 2019 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 14 2019 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Tian Di Shennong	Based on the mythological story of the Yellow Emperor Shennong's pioneering agriculture and tasting of herbs, focusing on his courageous act of trying herbs to understand their properties and risks, praising the ancestral spirit of the Chinese nation's daring to be the first and sacrificing for the greater good.	Ancient Mythology	Shanghai Opera House
2	Dust Settles	Story of the decline of the last chieftain in the western plateau before liberation.	Pre- Liberation	Chongqing Opera House

TABLE 14 (CONTINUE)

3	Yimeng Mountain	This opera, with a distinctive Shandong regional character and a strong red theme, is based on the breakout at Dajingshan and the Battle of Yuanzi Cliff, telling the story of characters like Haitang, Lin Sheng, Xiahe, and Sun Jiulong who sacrificed themselves, united the military and civilians, and fought against the national peril in the face of their intertwined personal destinies and the fate of the nation.	The Anti-Japanese War Period	Shandong Song and Dance Theater
4	Qingshan Fenghuo	This play follows the narrative thread of Old Chu, a commander of the Eighth Route Army sent to establish a guerrilla base in the Dajingshan area of Inner Mongolia, telling the story of Old Chu and his Mongolian comrade-in-arms, Wu Rina, who united the Mongolian people to fight against the Japanese aggressors and overcame numerous difficulties such as shortage of supplies and harsh climate to establish a guerrilla cavalry unit in the Dajingshan area.	The Anti-Japanese War period	Hohhot National Performing Arts Group Co., Ltd.

TABLE 14 (CONTINUE)

5	The Ordinary World	Depicts the journey of young peasant brothers Sun Shaoping and Sun Shaogan striving to lift themselves out of poverty and seek spiritual fulfillment against the backdrop of the reform and opening up period.	Reform and Opening Up Period	Fujian Song and Dance Theater
6	Three Locks	"Three Locks" integrates the deeds of several impoverished villages and their first secretaries in Shanxi Province, telling the story of Liu Mengjie, a technician from a certain department, who became the first secretary stationed in Longquan Village.	New Era	Shanxi Provincial Song and Dance Theater Co., Ltd.
7	Han Xin	Through the artistic portrayal of Han Xin, a representative figure of military strategists, the hardships of China's reunification are fully displayed, the profound connotation of "a strong country must have a strong army" is vividly explained, and the spirit of loyalty and patriotism of the times is vigorously promoted, possessing high ideological value.	Han Dynasty	Qingdao University

TABLE 15 2019 Small-scale Stage Drama (Operetta)

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	The Entrust of Spring	Mainly tells the story of General Secretary Xi Jinping's visit to Hainan to inspect the production and life of fishermen. Encouraged by this visit, the fishermen continue to work hard in the South China Sea, fully leveraging the role of leading fishermen and professional cooperatives, leading everyone to work hard and strive for a better life together.	New Era	Hainan University
2	Junzi Zhi Jiao (Friendship of Gentlemen)	Based on the story of Cao Xueqin.	Qing Dynasty	Jilin Normal University

TABLE 15 (CONTINUE)

3	Poverty Alleviation Road to the Yi Village	Created and crafted based on grassroots roots and praising touching stories. The work extracts touching stories from the "targeted poverty alleviation" in Xiaoliangshan, depicting the moving moments between the "first secretary" and the Yi people due to road construction.	New Era	Leshan Cultural Development Research Center
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National Arts Fund 2020 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 16 2020 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Yanling Team	Eight Route Army soldier Zhang Diansheng was assigned to mobilize the masses in his hometown Baiyangdian, forming a water guerrilla team called the "Yanling Team" to block the Japanese water transportation line. Zhang Diansheng's childhood sweetheart, Ying Lian, joins the Swan Feather Team with the encouragement of Zhang Diansheng and his mother, and grows during the battles. Thousands of acres of reed marshes become battlefields, where the Swan Feather Team appears and disappears mysteriously, causing the Japanese soldiers to panic.	The Anti-Japanese War Period	Hebei Provincial Art Center

TABLE 16 (CONTINUE)

2	Canghe Suiyue	Through the story of a mysterious forest ranger "Lao Yang Tou", it praises the spirit of "continuously striving for achievements" and the continuity and achievements of the Party's policies in Yuexi County.	Contemporary Era	Shanxi Huaxia Root Art Troupe
3	Tempest over the Dabie Moutain	By narrating the vivid and substantial friendship formed between two revolutionary families during the cruel war, it reflects the firm ideal beliefs, noble revolutionary sentiments, and unyielding fighting spirit of the Communist Party of China, demonstrating the dedicated spirit of revolutionaries who fear no sacrifice and bravely sacrifice themselves for victory and liberation from one generation to the next.	Domestic Revolutionary War Period	Anhui Provincial Opera and Dance Theater

TABLE 16 (CONTINUE)

4	Shuangyi Shenma	The opera "Winged Divine Horse" takes the production, technical research, and innovative development of products in Baogang Rail Beam Factory as its main thread, integrating the affection, friendship, love, craftsmanship spirit, and dedication spirit of three generations of Baogang employees. It showcases the spirit of the times of Baogang employees who fear no difficulties, using "Baogang manufacturing" to demonstrate "Chinese speed" in domestic and foreign railway construction.	Contemporary Era	Baotou Municipal Ethnic Opera and Dance Theater
5	The Not Distant Humaling	The Huamaling Tunnel project of the Lanzhou-Chongqing Railway was once called the "world's engineering challenge". The railway builders, with the contemporary spirit of Daigong and the craftsmanship spirit of a great nation, overcame difficulties for eight years and completed the miracle of world railway construction history.	Contemporary Era	Gansu Provincial Opera Theater

TABLE 17 2020 Small-scale Stage Drama (Operetta)

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Deep Tunnel	Describes the repentance of the Japanese invaders for the crimes they committed in the tunnel. The tangible tunnel represents the unforgettable memories of the damage caused by war, which will leave indelible traces no matter how long it takes to repair.	The Anti-Japanese War Period	Fujian Normal University
2	Kelimu Joins the Army	Uyghur youth Kelimu receives a notice of enlistment and wants to test whether his girlfriend is willing for him to join the army. He falsely claims that his father disagrees, prompting his girlfriend to persuade her father, leading to a sweet and humorous story. The melodious melody and sincere lyrics convey the love for the army and the country of the Uyghur people.	Contemporary Era	PLA National Defense University, Military Culture Institute

National Arts Fund 2022 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 18 2022 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Kangding Love Song	Depicts the story of Shang Yong, a university graduate who carries his ideals from youth and a chance encounter with love to the snowy plateau. The story unfolds between the high mountain outpost, the mysterious Tibetan elder Cang Wang, Tibetan girl Gama, and Hong Zhongyi, a road team leader who takes off his military uniform due to serious injuries and transitions to a civilian role, in a touching and heart-stirring narrative.	Contemporary Era	Shanghai Conservatory of Music
2	Jangar	"Jangar" epic, passed down orally among the Mongolian people for thousands of years. This ancient and splendid literary masterpiece, created by the brave and wise Mongolian people, is a gem added to the treasure trove of Chinese civilization and human culture.	Ancient	Inner Mongolia Art Theater

TABLE 18 (CONTINUE)

3	Camellia Blooms	Tells a deeply moving story of poverty alleviation in a small mountain village in southern China, portraying the images of poverty alleviation cadres represented by Tang Meng, Lin Chuchang, and Xiao Yan, as well as impoverished farmers represented by Sister Sugu, Cao Dawang, and Cao Mancai.	Contemporary Era	Jiangxi Provincial Song and Dance Theater Co., Ltd.
4	Goddess Luo	Mythical	Mythological Period	Tianjin Song and Dance Theater

TABLE 19 2022 Small-scale Stage Drama (Operetta)

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Painted Skin	<p>"Painted Skin" is a new chamber opera by Professor Haoweiya from the Central Conservatory of Music. It adapts Pu Songling's original work into a contemporary American story. Two American singers perform the entire opera in Chinese.</p>	Mythology	Hong Kong Spirit Night Theatre
2	Battle against Destiny	<p>Set against the backdrop of the 40th anniversary of reform and opening up, "Battle against Destiny" revolves around the transformation in Luzhen by the Qiantang River. It depicts the protagonist, Zhao Xiaoyun, transforming from an ordinary embroiderer in Luzhen into a fashion designer, creating her own brand to lead the local people to wealth. It also portrays her revolutionary spirit of self-reform, akin to a phoenix rising from the ashes, to rebuild the beautiful hometown of Luzhen with green hills and clear waters.</p>	Reform and Opening Up	Chongqing Performing Arts Group Co., Ltd.

National Arts Fund 2023 Stage Arts Creation Funding Projects

TABLE 20 2023 Large-scale Stage Productions and Works

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Ode to the Nanni Bay	The opera is set against the backdrop of the Nanxi Bay Grand Production Movement and revolves around the Yan'an Lu Xun Art College youth, depicting their deep immersion in labor and learning from the people. They found the direction for artistic creation and responded to Chairman Mao's call, completing the great transformation from "Little Lu Xun" to "Great Lu Xun".	Anti-Japanese War	China National Opera & Dance Drama
2	Deng Shichang	This opera tells the story of the camaraderie, love, and comradeship between Deng Shichang, the commander of the Beiyang Fleet, and many other characters such as Liu Buchan, He Ruzhen, and Ding Ruchang. It portrays the heroic feat of a man from leaving home to joining the army at 24 and sacrificing himself for the country at 45, emphasizing the heroism of prioritizing national interests and calling for the development of science and technology to rejuvenate the country's strength, conveying the voice of the Chinese people's love for peace.	First Sino-Japanese War	Liaoning Opera House

TABLE 20 (CONTINUE)

3	Sword Casting 221	Based on the true story of the successful launch of "Two Bombs and One Satellite" on the golden and silver beaches of Qinghai, this opera faithfully depicts the vivid and three-dimensional characters of tens of thousands of nameless heroes from the 221 base and classic storylines. It portrays a brilliant picture of the spirit of "loving the motherland, selfless dedication, self-reliance, hard work, and courageous climbing" of the "Two Bombs and One Satellite", allowing the belief that once guided the predecessors to shine even more brightly in the new era.	Modern	Qinghai Performing Arts Group Co., Ltd.
4	Chinese Migrant Letter from Tangjia Bay	Using the letter as the thread, this opera connects the fate of the Liang family, the ups and downs of the Tang family, and the dedication of the overseas Chinese and overseas Chinese workers. It showcases the righteousness of compatriots during difficult times and reflects the deep love rooted in the marrow and flowing in the blood of the Chinese nation. "Overseas letter, as a special letter in modern history, embodies deep feelings of love for the motherland, hometown, and relatives, and it contains a kind of integrity, which is the greatest bond of compatriotism".	Republica n Period	Zhuhai Performing Arts Group Co., Ltd.

TABLE 20 (CONTINUE)

5	Pioneers	<p>This opera portrays a group of passionate young people chasing their dreams in the innovative city of Shenzhen. It depicts the common spirit of pioneers in the conflict between ideals and reality, and the broad-mindedness of looking to the world.</p> <p>Characters like Wu Yang, Xia Junli, and Ling Jiajia gradually resonate with the audience as the plot progresses, stirring up the power to inspire people to forge ahead.</p>	Modern	Shenzhen Opera and Dance Drama Theater Co., Ltd.
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TABLE 21 2023 Small-scale Stage Drama (Operetta)

No.	Project Name	Background Information	Historical Period	Applicant Institution
1	Mi Du	<p>The play starts with Qu Qiubai's memories in prison and gradually tells the stories of Yun Daiying and his mother, Zhang Tailei and his wife, and Qu Qiubai and Zhang Tailei's friendship. It perfectly presents the revolutionary martyrs' initial intention to embark on the journey of saving the nation, seeking happiness for the people, and planning for the future of the country. It expresses the lifelong pursuit of happiness for the people by the older generation of proletarian revolutionaries, who were willing to sacrifice their lives. It vividly reproduces the ideological collision of a generation of young people a hundred years ago about life, ideals, and beliefs, and expresses good wishes and expectations for contemporary youth.</p>	Republican Period	Changzhou University
2	True Love	-	Unspecified Period	Meishenghui Fund Co., Ltd.

Creation unit Composition and Background Research of Opera Works

As a national opera production funded by the National Arts Fund, its application is open to all sectors of society, accommodating artistic groups from various social strata in principle. This includes public institutions, folk art groups, and individual entities, allowing artists at all levels to have opportunities to apply for opera projects. However, from another perspective, the entire process of creating opera art is highly complex, requiring substantial human, material, and financial support. Therefore, for individual entities, although they may possess a certain level of creative thinking and artistic imagination in terms of libretto creation, compiling them and forming the final opera art piece evidently poses significant challenges.

Therefore, considering issues related to creative ideas and personal capabilities, in recent years, there have been few successful applications by individual entities in the opera projects funded by the National Arts Fund. Instead, most of the projects originate from public institutions and private art groups. Among these, public institutions occupy the majority, with a few projects from private groups ultimately receiving funding. By analyzing and categorizing them, it can be observed that the main constituents of the current National Arts Fund projects are as follows:

Firstly, the main applicants for the National Arts Fund opera projects are composed of central, provincial, and municipal arts troupes. Examples include the Liaoning Opera Theater General Political Opera Troupe, National Grand Theater, Gansu Opera Theater, China Opera and Dance Theater, Jiangxi Opera and Dance Theater, Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Co., Ltd., and Chongqing Opera House, among others. These units are generally public institutions or state-owned cultural and artistic enterprises with a public background. As applicants, they possess abundant resources and occupy a mainstream position in the cultural environment of various provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions. They often have a wealth of talent, rich creativity, and the necessary hardware and software conditions for opera creation and rehearsal. Therefore, they are often favored during the rehearsal process and are able to effectively complete the creation and rehearsal tasks, producing opera art pieces with

significant social impact. Consequently, they have consistently constituted the main force among the applicants for opera art projects over the years.

Secondly, Chinese higher education institutions are also a major force in the application for opera art projects. In recent years, music academies and music departments of comprehensive universities have gradually demonstrated strong creative and rehearsal capabilities in opera creation. From the results of their works, the applicants selected for the National Arts Fund cover institutions such as Tianjin Conservatory of Music, Shanghai Zhou Xiaoyan Opera Center, Shenyang Conservatory of Music, Peking University, Central Conservatory of Music, Shandong University of Arts, etc. Among them, the Central Conservatory of Music has repeatedly applied for National Arts Fund opera projects and successfully created and staged multiple excellent works. As bases for artistic creation and rehearsal in universities, they also have abundant talent resources and demonstrate bold innovative spirit in their creations. Their works often have a strong sense of the times, and the creative and rehearsal teams composed of university faculty and students invest great enthusiasm. These works have been well-received by young people, paving a new path for the dissemination and development of Chinese opera art, with a positive influence on the youth demographic.

Thirdly, folk art groups have a less prominent position and a lower success rate in the application for National Arts Fund projects, but they also contribute with great enthusiasm. For example, folk art groups such as Beijing Dayin Zhibo Music Culture Media Co., Ltd. have applied for relevant opera projects multiple times and achieved success. They often have a broader vision and more innovative artistic expression during the creation process, with a different understanding of opera art compared to other public institutions. Without the limitations and constraints, they can often work more freely and devote themselves to creating higher-quality opera art resources.

In summary, the majority of applicants for National Arts Fund opera projects are public institutions, which have more abundant social resources and can better support the creation of opera art. Through practice, it can be seen that they can effectively complete the entire process of creating, performing, and socially promoting

the work, deserving the trust of the National Arts Fund. Therefore, they have provided important support in the application process. Among the numerous public applicants, local opera and dance theaters obviously have more mature and stable operating mechanisms, with well-established creative and performing teams and substantial support from local governments, enabling them to effectively complete creation tasks. Meanwhile, music colleges and comprehensive colleges also account for a significant share in the application process, showing a stronger ability to innovate in their creations and possessing a continuous stream of reserve talent and solid resource reserves, creating diverse opera art works. In contrast, the share and proportion occupied by private art groups are relatively small. They do not occupy a major position in the National Arts Fund and have a lower success rate in their applications. However, from the annual application situation, private art groups also show high enthusiasm, striving to create excellent opera productions in the few successful cases, effectively completing the creation and performance tasks.

4.1.4 Analysis of Artistic Characteristics of Opera Works of the National Arts Fund

Overall Cultural Diversity in Script Themes

Opera art originated from Florence, Italy, and has a history of several hundred years. From the classical period to the present day, it has weathered storms and created many outstanding works that have stood the test of time. In the early 20th century, opera came to China. At that time, it was during the period of the New Democratic Revolution in China. After undergoing localization and nationalization, opera art in China produced many revolutionary historical works with a red spirit. This sparked a wave of creation, performance, and appreciation, quickly integrating into the Chinese cultural and artistic family. After nearly a century of exploration and practice, opera art in China has formed a unique national cultural spirit. With a broad vision that combines Eastern and Western elements, it has created many outstanding opera works with cultural compatibility.

The flourishing development of the cluster of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund closely integrates with the latest developments in China's socialist

political, economic, and cultural construction fields. It observes the emergence of real-life events in rural revitalization and construction through the fusion of realism and romanticism. By creating and producing opera art based on these themes, it not only embodies profound cultural realism but also achieves the dual purpose of entertainment and education, deeply loved by the people.

The "overall diversity" of the opera themes mentioned in this section refers to the various creative areas covered by the opera works successfully funded by the National Arts Fund since 2014. These themes include classical mythology, human anecdotes, historical cases, revolutionary themes, contemporary themes, significant social events, main theme spirit, and socialist construction themes. This "overall diversity" is in contrast to the richness of script themes in specific periods of Chinese opera creation in the past. The number of works created by the National Arts Fund in just over ten years is astonishing and unprecedented. The variety of themes demonstrates the openness and freedom of current national literary and artistic policies, allowing creators to boldly innovate. This is a significant characteristic of contemporary opera works funded by the National Arts Fund.

For example, the opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", funded by the National Arts Fund, is an excellent opera work that focuses on rural realities. Based on real-life events on the road to poverty alleviation, it refines vivid artistic images of characters through dramatic adaptation and creates a climax in a light and pleasant operatic atmosphere, leaving a deep impression on the audience. "This work was composed by Zang Yunfei, arranged by Ren An, scripted by Dai Lu and Lian Haiping, and directed by Huang Dinshan, and produced by the Qingdao Song and Dance Theatre. It starred Wang Chuanliang, Ding Xiaojun, Zhang Haiqing, and Shi Xugang". At the 12th China Art Festival in 2019, the opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji" successfully won the 16th Wenhua Award.



FIGURE 2 Stage photo of Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji

Source: Created by author

Note: Opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji"

Characters: Ma Xiangyang

Performer: Wang Chuanliang

From a horizontal perspective of creation and performance, the opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji" exhibits artistic characteristics of contemporaneity, nationalization, and innovation, which are integrated into multiple aspects of the work such as dramatic content, musical composition, and visual effects. This warrants in-depth observation and exploration. The birth of an outstanding opera work requires a complex process of creation and rehearsal. It necessitates thoughtful planning from directors and scriptwriters, captivating musical melodies from excellent composers, and the participation of numerous talented opera performers. Only through organic coordination among various departments can the opera stage shine brilliantly. Contemporary opera works are mostly performed in the form of opera, with profound creative backgrounds. They are called upon by the mission of the times, fueled by the concerted efforts of creative personnel, and funded by favorable timing, geographical advantages, and human resources. In analyzing their artistic characteristics, it is essential to first understand their creative background.

Opera works with themes of poverty alleviation occupy a significant share in the National Arts Fund. On November 23, 2015, the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee reviewed and approved the "Decision on Winning the Fight against Poverty". Starting from this time point, through nearly six years of arduous efforts, China, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China, has achieved a comprehensive victory in the battle against poverty. This great victory has led over 700 million impoverished rural residents in China onto the road to prosperity, laying a solid foundation for the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Cultural arts in the fields of creation and performance are a true reflection and feedback on social, political, and economic issues, maintaining close ties with significant social events and development trends. Since 2015, several opera works on the theme of poverty alleviation have been launched. These works, including "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation", "Under the Ginkgo Tree", "Hear Soma", and "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", focus on real stories from the poverty alleviation journey, vividly depicting the difficulties encountered in winning the battle against poverty, as well as the unwavering determination of leaders and the people. These outstanding opera works, rich in content, diverse in perspective, and full of dramatic tension, not only enrich the domestic literary and artistic stage but also enable the masses to genuinely experience the dramatic changes occurring in rural China. Opera works not only provide detailed descriptions of real events but also excavate, refine, and praise the intrinsic spirit. The emergence of a large number of operas with similar themes has also led to a significant social impact on the cultural propaganda of poverty alleviation efforts.

The opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji" initially came to the public's attention through the popular TV series of the same name in 2014. The protagonist, Ma Xiangyang, an assistant researcher at the Agricultural Sciences Institute, was assigned the position of the first secretary in the remote Dahuitree Village. Full of ambition, Ma Xiangyang aspired to change the impoverished and backward face of his hometown. However, from the beginning of his tenure, he faced various obstacles and interference

from various forces. The clan, represented by Liu Shirong, created numerous difficulties, making Ma Xiangyang's reform and development plan extremely challenging. Li Yunfang, the current village director and Ma Xiangyang's childhood friend, was very passive and apathetic due to various reasons, which left Ma Xiangyang at a loss. But with the encouragement and advice of the elderly party member Grandma Tai, he finally found effective solutions to overcome the difficulties. By resolving stubborn rural conflicts with sincerity, loyalty, and patience, he united the villagers and embarked on the road to common prosperity. Adapting a TV drama into a stage drama has its advantages and difficulties. The former TV drama "Ma Xiangyang's Rural Journey" had a good viewership and excellent public reputation. During the process of adapting it into a stage drama, playwrights Dai Lu and Lian Haiping faced two main challenges: firstly, how to condense the extensive content of the TV series, which spanned 40 episodes and 800,000 words, into a stage drama performance of about two hours, which undoubtedly tested the abilities and talents of the playwrights. Secondly, it was necessary to fully consider the audience's aesthetic preferences during the opera performance, break free from the inherent thinking and expression methods of TV dramas, and reconstruct the dramatic content based on the actual requirements of the opera stage, which was also challenging. After multiple revisions and refinements, a theme with dramatic expression was chosen, retaining important characters such as Ma Xiangyang, Liu Yubin, Li Yunfang, and Liu Ershu. "The structure of the drama is set around the theme of poverty alleviation, with a concise, lively, and interesting dramatic content". When I first heard the title of the opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", I was deeply impressed by its description of a comic opera style. According to director Huang Dinshan's recollection, in the entire history of Chinese opera development, it seems that only the early opera work "Xiao Erhei's Marriage" had a typical comic-opera style, and this work has been nearly 70 years old. In today's new era, as the motherland's construction progresses rapidly and rural development gradually moves towards prosperity, using the comic opera style to depict the realization of poverty alleviation goals is undoubtedly an excellent creative idea and genre form. The director hopes that

through this work, he can pay tribute to the classic "Xiao Erhei's Marriage" from over half a century ago and also pay tribute to the artists who have devoted their lives to the development of Chinese opera. Such a creative thinking and concept also shoulder the lofty historical mission during the creation process, highlighting the uniqueness of this opera work.

Innovativeness of Script Writing Structure

Contemporary Chinese opera art strives to achieve a unity of commonality and individuality in its creative endeavors. At the level of commonality, it seeks to establish a consensus on the cultural attributes and artistic expressions inherent in opera, collectively shaping a cluster of works funded by the National Arts Fund that embody the essence of opera art. This has led to the successive release of numerous works of the same genre at the same time, generating significant social impact. On the individuality level, the creation of an opera involves the synthesis of multiple artistic elements. As the primary creative team, efforts are made to integrate the cultural personality of the creators into each individual element, rendering them distinct and recognizable. Throughout the entire process of creation and performance, meticulous attention is paid to integrating various understandings, experiences, and imaginative capabilities related to opera, showcasing unique flashes of brilliance. It is precisely this ideal that has allowed opera funded by the National Arts Fund to stand out among numerous opera works, earning excellent public acclaim.

In the past century, Chinese society has undergone profound transformations. Artistic creation, guided by the spirit of realism, looks back on the past, evoking aesthetic resonance among the audience and providing the best artistic experiences. If recent creations such as "Letters to My Wife", "Yimeng Mountain", and "Love in Songmaoling Mountains" represent a realistic portrayal of the history of the revolutionary era, then a plethora of new operas with themes of poverty alleviation, such as "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation", "Ma Xiangyang Goes Rural", and "Camellia Blooms", focus on the current social development theme. These operas vividly depict

real-life stories on the path of poverty alleviation, embodying the realism of the era's pulse.



FIGURE 3 Stage photo of Camellia Blooms

Source: Created by Du Huan

Note: Opera "Camellia Blooms"

Characters: Tang Meng

Performer: Du Huan

he fundamental perspective of theme construction, although all opera works aim to showcase the spirit of the times, they exhibit diverse aesthetic characteristics at the micro level of content. Different characters, stories, and outcomes are all designed based on real-life backgrounds. Not only considering the dramatic conflicts, characterizations, and plot rhythms presented on stage, but also maintaining a consistent style of realism, rejecting fabrication and exaggeration. This creative perspective promotes distinct cultural personalities in each opera work, avoiding the issue of homogenization or stereotyping often found in thematic works. For example, the

opera "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation" tells the story of Huang Wenxiu, a college graduate who leads the poverty alleviation efforts in Baini Village, Guangxi, and tragically loses her life in the process. The characters embody the enthusiasm of "fearless newcomers", the cleverness of knowledge-based poverty alleviation, and the careful wisdom of female grassroots cadres. Meanwhile, the opera "Ma Xiangyang Goes Rural" explores another dimension of precise poverty alleviation: technological poverty alleviation. The protagonist, a research assistant from an agricultural science institute, lacks social experience but possesses excellent professional skills and an unwavering commitment to public service. Through the combined power of technology and ideology, the village of "Dahuai Shu" in Shandong, with its glorious revolutionary history, undergoes a profound transformation.

Furthermore, the opera "Three Locks" takes a bold approach to liberate the conservative and backward notions of the rural farmers in Shaanxi through the means of ideological poverty alleviation. Through the process of unlocking the minds of the villagers, the play identifies the ideological roots hindering poverty alleviation efforts, thus inspiring their determination to unite and prosper together. The dramatic intention of the opera "Hear Soma" focuses on poverty alleviation for ethnic minorities. The work narrates the story of the relocation of one of the poorest villages in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The struggle to change perceptions becomes the main dramatic conflict, featuring heartfelt persuasion, rational protest, and courageous sacrifices for a greater cause. "Home" and "Poverty Alleviation" serve as the clearest themes of the work, distinguishing it from other similar-themed productions. With ethnicity as the core theme of the diverse creative thinking, the operas depict different dramatic content according to different ethnic groups, regions, and specific events. Upholding the spirit of seeking truth and pragmatism, the creators avoid clichés and exaggeration, rejecting superficial or monotonous praise. Through sincere expressions, the audience feels a deep warmth, revealing the profound bond between grassroots cadres and the people on their journey of struggle.

From the perspective of dramatic conflict and character development, contemporary opera works funded by the National Arts Fund naturally focus on the people, portraying the conflicts between their thoughts and actions, as well as the contradictions between social work, local conditions, and human nature. With such inherent dramatic conflicts, various complex character images come to life, highlighting the brilliance of these themed works. For instance, if cadres and masses are depicted as the main positive characters in opera works, sharing similar intelligence, resilience, righteousness, and determination, then the corresponding opposing characters have their own unique features, creating various conflicting points. For example, in "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji" there is Liu Shirong, an elder clinging to tradition and obstructing reforms with his family background; Liu Yubin, a nouveau riche prioritizing money; and Liang the accountant, who vacillates between old and new powers. Their contrasting traits with Ma Xiangyang, a young cadre with limited experience but strong technical skills and a dedication to public service, lead to a series of dramatic conflicts. However, righteousness prevails in the end, as Ma Xiangyang's dedication to the welfare of the village overcomes the selfish interests of characters like Liu Shirong, ultimately achieving success.

Moreover, the realism characteristic of opera creation funded by the National Arts Fund is also reflected in the overall tone of the works. On the one hand, leading the masses out of poverty and onto the path of prosperity embodies the overarching cultural essence of these thematic works, aligning with the spirit of the times. Despite facing various hardships, they ultimately gain the support of the villagers and achieve remarkable success in their work. From this perspective, the resolutions in operas like "Love in Songmaoling Mountains" and "Hero" are undoubtedly "happy endings", fitting the genre of operas. On the other hand, as representatives of the numerous village cadres, some sacrifice their lives in peacetime for the great cause of achieving a moderately prosperous society. For instance, Huang Wenxiu in "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation" tragically perishes in a landslide while working tirelessly for the village's prosperity. Director Tian Qinxin's interpretation of Huang Wenxiu's heroic deeds was

conceived after numerous field visits and careful examination of the young cadre's diaries. While realistically describing the events, Huang's character is transformed into a yellow butterfly in local legends, providing a comforting touch to the tragic narrative. In "Camellia Blooms", characters like Tang Meng, Director Lin, and Xiao Yan, all exemplify the spirits of poverty alleviation cadres - they are hardworking, resilient, and selfless. Tang Meng's eventual sacrifice due to overwork adds a poignant note to the drama, evoking tears from the audience.

In conclusion, the realism characteristic of opera texts funded by the National Arts Fund vividly portrays the authentic, simple, and vivid nature of the works. With a focus on innovative narrative structures and rich characterizations, as well as the integration of various subtle dramatic elements, these operas truly achieve their goal of conveying profound emotions and showcasing outstanding levels of opera literature in the new era. Scriptwriting is a crucial aspect of opera art, especially in the contemporary Chinese cultural context, where the public has formed habitual demands for aesthetic appreciation in dramatic arts, particularly in terms of script content and dramatic conflict setting. Drawing inspiration from TV dramas, dramatic literature, novels, and historical facts, the scripts undergo processes of condensation and reinterpretation, selecting important characters and central plotlines to make the drama clearer, the conflicts more pronounced, and the themes more distinct. Through detailed and vivid expressions of dramatic plots, these operas portray the hardships and difficulties along the path of poverty alleviation, and through a grand finale, they foreshadow the prosperous future of the Chinese people.

The Richness, Nationality and Openness of Opera Music Compilation and Creation Thinking

In the art of opera, music is the most important form of linguistic expression. Whether it's overtures, interludes, background music, or arias, recitatives, choruses, or ensembles crafted for characters, all are important means of propelling the development of the dramatic content. Successful music is an essential support for opera works.

Firstly, the opera productions funded by the National Arts Fund have typical richness in music composition, skillfully integrating a rich variety of opera music

elements in an all-encompassing manner. Whether integrating traditional Chinese ethnic music elements or presenting and expressing the unique musical forms of opera based on specific structures, a rich variety of forms will be used to achieve the intended purpose of music composition, enabling opera music to better embody Chinese cultural spirit and contemporary characteristics. For example, in the opera "Letters to My Wife", the composer not only borrowed rich melodic lines and tonalities from Lingnan music but also extracted important singing styles and musical motifs from Cantonese opera and Min opera, giving the work a distinct regional color. In terms of the design of vocal forms and structures, in addition to borrowing the expressive forms of arias and recitatives from Western opera, a large number of duets, trios, quartets, and mixed choruses are also integrated. This enriches the sonic forms of singing, allowing the audience to fully perceive the artistic impact of the work during the appreciation process, and better present the passionate revolutionary wave. Similarly, "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", although positioned in the category of opera, achieves an organic integration of Chinese and Western musical cultures in its specific musical expressions, presenting a new era of Chinese opera. In terms of the overall composition of music, familiar forms such as yangge, xiaodiao, storytelling, and opera can be heard, as well as a large number of instruments with Shandong local characteristics such as suona, flute, zhuiqin, and bangzi, whose core function in musical expression allows the audience to genuinely feel the strong national attributes. On the other hand, "it can be found that it adopts the double-tube formation of Western symphony orchestra, portrays the musical lines on the basis of ethnic tonality, also integrates the style of Western tonality, and designs a large number of arias and recitatives, promoting the accessibility of content expression". This presentation greatly enhances the contemporary color of opera and echoes the joyful operatic style of real-life subjects, giving people an aesthetic experience of perfection and beauty.

For example, "Three Locks", created by the Shanxi Provincial Opera and Dance Theater, also depicts the poverty alleviation deeds of Shanxi Province, so it applies a large number of Shanxi local folk song elements and opera rhythms in the

music, showcasing the realistic sense of rural poverty alleviation stories with the folk characteristics of Shanxi music. Take the aria "Shanpo Shan" sung by the female protagonist Liu Mengjie in the first scene of the play as an example. The content portrays the image of a confident, wise, and sensitive female character, who uses a voice containing sadness to narrate what she saw, heard, and felt when she first arrived at Longquan Village. The aria adopts the structure of the pentatonic scale, with brief modulations to the yu mode and shang mode. The three-part structure progresses from statement to lyricism, layer by layer advancing the emotional tone of the character. The melodic lines of the music draw inspiration from Shanxi river songs "Da Lan Diao" and melodies from Puxian opera music. The use of many perfect fifths and octaves in the climax part of the music showcases the dramatic function of the aria and the heroic and desolate feeling unique to northwest music. At the same time, in the composition, music creation also adopts the logical thinking of ethnic symphony music, from instrumentation to composition, all have orchestration consciousness, forming a symphonic consciousness in terms of melodic arrangement, harmonic direction, and vertical counterpoint. As a finishing touch, the high huqin, erhu, and zhonghu in the string section play a crucial role, symbolizing the profound historical sense and simple folk customs of the Loess Plateau in northwest China in the musical melody.

Another example is in the creation of the opera "Camellia Blossoms", where the composer naturally chose to use unique music materials from Jiangxi as the main "weapon" for constructing opera music. For example, the most representative theme song in the play, "Waiting for the Camellia to Bloom", has typical Jiangxi style. The music adopts the pentatonic scale, with both the main melody music's exuberant and generous power and the enhancement of the functional roles of the horn and flutter tones in the transitional phrases, integrating warm human emotions. The combination of duple and quadruple rhythms also makes the rhythm's dynamic and static appropriate, possessing the gentle and beautiful feeling of Jiangxi music. In terms of composing thematic motives, elements of Jiangxi folk songs "Jiangxi is a Good Place" and "Tea Picking Song" are faintly borrowed, with a distinctive regional identification. As listeners,

one can clearly experience the melodious and familiar tunes of Jiangxi folk songs, as well as the classic tunes of tea-picking opera, with the music having the pastoral charm of warmth and the inner strength of softness and toughness. These music materials, combined with ethnic instruments in the plucked instrument group, form a vivid real-life space at the auditory level, greatly enhancing the credibility of the dramatic content.

Furthermore, in the opera "Hero", the creation of music sections has typical ethnic characteristics. The story is based on the revolutionary deeds of the Hunan-born revolutionary martyrs He Mengxiong and Miao Boying, portraying the life trajectory of the couple from acquaintance to love to joint revolution through multiple acts, showcasing the heroic image of a revolutionary couple. In the process of music composition, combining the life experiences of the two and accurately applying the characteristics of the dialects used, Hunan ethnic music is used as the basis for the design of arias, vividly displaying the ordinary and great spirit of revolutionary heroes. Among the 35 arias in the opera, a large number of elements from Hunan folk songs and flower-drum opera are used. In the overture, there are high-pitched cries, demonstrating the rich flavor of Hunan music.

Soprano Solo
要上那个高山哟 哪就莫怕风哟, 要下那个大海呀 哪就莫怕龙哟, 好花不怕 霜雪打, 霜雪打花越
越红哟

Tenor Solo
好花不怕 霜雪打, 霜雪打花越
越红哟

S. Solo
红哟 霜雪打花越 越红哟

T. Solo
红哟 霜雪打花越 越红哟

S. Solo
f 好花不怕 霜雪打, 霜雪打花越 越红, 好汉不怕
霜雪打, 霜雪打花越 越红, 好汉不怕

T. Solo
f 好花不怕 霜雪打, 霜雪打花越 越红, 好汉不怕

S. Solo
生 死 难, 九 死 无 悔... 还 剩 一 回 也要 逞 英雄!

T. Solo
生 死 难, 九 死 无 悔... 还 剩 一 回 也要 逞 英雄!

FIGURE 4 Hero

Source: Created by Du Ming

Composer: Du Ming

Lyrics: Zhang Linzhi, Tan Yiwei

In addition, in the aria "Girls from Hunan Come to the Capital", the tone of the Hunan folk song "Girls from the Village Come to the City" is also utilized, showcasing the bold, enthusiastic, and hearty side of people from Hunan.

The image displays a musical score for the aria "Girls from Hunan Come to the Capital". It consists of three staves of music in G major, 2/4 time. The lyrics are written in Chinese characters below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is rhythmic and energetic, characteristic of Hunan folk music. The lyrics for the first staff are: "城里的哥哥你笑笑我，我打赤脚好得多。上山挑得千斤担哟，下水获得泥鳅和团螺。". The second staff continues the melody and includes the lyrics: "我到京城来上学，为的是追求真理，有追求新的生活。追求新的生活。". The third staff concludes the phrase with the lyrics: "师兄师姐莫送我，考个状元算什么。我到京城来上学，为的是追求真理新的生活。". A watermark of Tsinghua University is visible in the background.

FIGURE 5 Girls from Hunan Come to the Capital

Source: Du Ming

Composer: Du Ming

Lyrics: Zhang Linzhi, Tan Yiwei

Similarly, in the aria "Another Little Spring in October" sung by the male protagonist He Mengxiong, the music elements of Hunan folk songs are also borrowed, employing the pentatonic scale to create a distinctive folk flavor.

又是十月小阳春，
一轮满月照窗根。
桃哥悄声传秘密，有个小生命要降临
啊要降临！
我喜若狂，我忙行动，我欣喜若狂忙行动，
买来了冰糖葫芦一大串
自后改口叫我大名，桃哥我也是个有身份的人。
串哎，还有红枣落花生
啊落花生。

FIGURE 6 Another Little Spring in October

Source: Created by author

Inspired and influenced by the dramatic context of the storyline, the music composition of such thematic works relies on regional musical elements to create a strong rural music atmosphere in most background music and arias. At crucial points where the theme is elevated and the dramatic plot reaches its climax, a burst of symphonic fusion emerges, with rich instrumentation and harmonic textures making each note resound firmly, creating a powerful musical landscape.

Secondly, from the perspective of ethnicity, taking the creation of the National Arts Fund opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji" as an example, its musical form mainly embodies: a close relationship between music and dramatic content, fully demonstrating the essential role of music in opera, while also featuring typical Shandong

traditional music style. The concept of "opera thinking" proposed by Mr. Shen Xiang refers to the emphasis on the role of music itself in carrying the dramatic content, avoiding the separation of music and drama. When the creation of "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji" shifted from primarily using language dialogue in film and television to focusing on music and singing in stage plays, music composition evidently replaced the previous dominant form and needed to play an important role. The composer used background music to depict the era of rural Shandong, incorporating a large amount of musical material from Shandong Lu opera, Shandong Kuaishu (narrative storytelling in Shandong dialect), and traditional "Peng Baban" into the musical melodies of scene themes and character images. The familiar melody lines highlight the charm of Shandong's local style while pushing the dramatic plot forward rapidly through strong musical contrast effects.

Additionally, the composer designed unified singing styles and arias for major characters to emphasize their cultural identities. The music itself features differences in tonality, rhythm, and dynamics, which are closely related to the characters and the drama. The protagonist of the National Arts Fund opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji" has a significant role and many challenging musical segments. Therefore, the composer tailored typical tenor arias for him, showcasing his youthful, resolute, and progressive character traits through voice shaping. The use of a large number of elements from Shandong traditional folk songs in the music composition vividly expresses the rustic charm carried by grassroots cadres. For the character Liang, the music incorporates a lot of elements from Shandong Kuaiban and Lu opera, conveying a sense of humor and highlighting his comical character. As for Liu Shirong, as the patriarch of the family, his arias feature a deep and conservative temperament, represented by a specially customized bass voice image.

Thirdly, in terms of the openness of the music composition of National Arts Fund operas, it reflects a clear feature. The creation of opera works often has a typical national style, as seen in previous Chinese national opera creations. However, in the contemporary new cultural environment, the development of Chinese opera also strives

to break through tradition and integrate more freely into the international art stage with a more open attitude. The creation of National Arts Fund operas is often led by provincial and municipal arts troupes, and their music style has a highly recognizable regional character. China is vast, and due to differences in climate, culture, and living conditions accumulated over five thousand years of history, various regional music personalities have naturally formed. The solemn and desolate style of Northwest music, the cheerful and heroic style of Northeast music, and the gentle and beautiful style of Jiangnan music are all integrated into contemporary opera art and blend seamlessly with the drama's storyline, revealing profound cultural connotations. The creation of National Arts Fund operas clearly understands this principle and follows such a music composition style. Therefore, in the creation and performance of operas, especially in the music composition aspect, there is a more active integration with Western operas, demonstrating the inclusiveness of Chinese culture with an open attitude. As a result, we can see in opera works such as "Love in Songmaoling Mountains", "Letters to My Wife", and "Camellia Blooms" which focus on different periods of Chinese culture, the music composition not only has a strong Chinese cultural flavor but also cleverly integrates Western compositional techniques and rich elements of symphonic music. At the same time, in terms of opera music composition, the main motive is used as a guide to form a good connection between music composition and dramatic content. This is a music composition technique that Western operas excel in and is well fulfilled and presented in contemporary China National Arts Fund opera works. This makes contemporary Chinese opera works more open, breaking away from narrow creative perspectives, and seeking consensus in opera composition aesthetics. In the music creation process of the opera "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", it fully embodies the inheritance of the musical style of board tune operas such as "Xiao Erhei's Marriage" and "The White-Haired Girl". In terms of aria forms, various forms such as solos, duets, trios, and mixed choruses are incorporated, showing the vastness of grand opera. In terms of the use of Western symphonic music, whether it is the aforementioned representative opera works or the overall creative style of National Arts Fund operas, a large amount of combined

Chinese-Western approaches are adopted, with the orchestration of background music and Western symphonic music as the main body. Brass instruments, percussion instruments, bowed string instruments, and woodwind instrument groups are standard accompaniment instruments, using brass instruments to present the grand and atmospheric sound of the era, using bowed string instruments to outline the characters' emotions, using woodwind instruments to render the atmosphere of the environment, and using percussion instruments for good embellishment. In terms of character shaping, large-scale recitative arias and narrative duets with transitional functions make the intermissions more complete. In terms of the collection and application of musical materials, it demonstrates the composer's keen perception and capturing ability. As carriers and transformations of local music cultures, Uncle Liu's singing sections incorporate the melodious coloration of Shandong Lu opera; for Liang's singing sections, musical design adds abundant elements of Shandong Kuaishu and Jiaodong folk songs, combined with the use of authentic local dialect rhythms in singing, the folk style is instantly recognizable; for the singing sections of the four village wives, the comedic elements of operatic music are incorporated, showing both humor and the straightforward and humorous atmosphere of Shandong culture.

Artistic Quality of Opera Singing and Performance

In the creation of Chinese opera, the expansion of "song" and "drama" progresses hand in hand. Contemporary opera creation inherits the concept of "putting myself first" in music composition from the older generation of artists. It also attempts to present a new perspective of Chinese opera in the contemporary era by incorporating elements of both Chinese and Western cultures, in line with the new trends in social and cultural exchange and aesthetic development since the reform and opening up. The mature mastery of symphonic orchestration and bel canto singing technique vividly demonstrates the superb skills of Chinese opera workers and their confidence in promoting the construction of the Chinese opera school. The profound sentiment of national culture remains unshaken, subtly hidden beneath the surface. As an important genre of works that praises the spirit of the times, the National Arts Fund opera often

involves themes such as national spirit, rural landscapes, and regional folklore. Therefore, in the musical composition and stage performance, a sincere national sentiment naturally emerges.

In the design of singing techniques and the creation of singing content, they are integrated with the characters of the drama, presenting a rich cultural flavor. The selection and practice of singing techniques in Chinese opera have undergone multiple transformations, from early borrowing of operatic singing styles to the dominance of ethnic singing styles, and then to the integration of various singing techniques since the 1980s. Today, the suitability of singing techniques in Chinese opera performance is no longer restricted by rigid rules, but rather seeks the most suitable singing form based on the theme and content of the work. As opera singer Lei Jia said, "The voice that suits the work is the best". In the music composition of "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation", composer Yin Qing fully integrates bel canto, ethnic, pop, and original vocal techniques, tailoring each character's vocal segments. Wang Lida, who plays Huang Wenxiu, has rich experience in opera performance, with a sweet voice, and the ethnic singing technique flows naturally from her mouth. Starting from the opening overture "Hao Da De Shiqing Zai Shenbian" the lyrics "Mountain songs drift in the clouds and mist, days go by one after another, prays Buluotuo thousands of times, and the people's lives hope for change", immediately set the tone for the drama and establish the sunny and enthusiastic image of Huang Wenxiu. In the play, bel canto is not only used to shape supporting role images but also prominently featured in solo and ensemble performances, serving as a powerful means to enhance the plot. The composer ingeniously invited actors from the Baise region to organize choral singing with dialect accents and authentic singing techniques, delivering heartfelt and unadorned vocals. Additionally, based on observations during field visits to Huang Wenxiu's residence, the director incorporated guitar playing and singing into the opera's music composition, portraying another aspect of Huang Wenxiu's life.

In "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", Ding Xiaojun, who plays Li Yunfang, is a former Peking Opera actor. She skillfully uses ethnic singing techniques and integrates

the rigorous articulation requirements of Peking Opera into her singing, vividly presenting the true image of the character. Wang Chuanliang, who plays Ma Xiangyang, constructs the character with a bel canto style, slightly infused with ethnic singing charm in articulation, and a slightly forward voice position, making the vocal image more Chinese-oriented. The character of Liang, the accountant, becomes an important supporting character, with a humorous and earthy portrayal that incorporates elements of Shandong fast-paced storytelling and Luzhou opera into the melody, making the image of grassroots cadres more down-to-earth. The diversified singing languages have opened up new creative spaces for contemporary opera creation, with organic integration of bel canto, ethnic, pop, and original singing techniques, as well as elements of traditional Chinese opera, making opera music rich and varied. Moreover, such singing techniques, when combined with the identities of dramatic characters, can also present full and vivid character images, allowing their temperament and personality to be fully displayed before the audience.

Looking at the stage performance aspect of opera art, the National Arts Fund operas generally do not have fundamental differences from previous Chinese opera art creations. They inherit the character deconstruction techniques of traditional Chinese opera and classical drama on the stage. Combined with the singing and dialogue in the opera performance process and the specific stage presentation, they reflect the close connection with the temperament, image, and character of the characters they portray. Through macro and micro aspects of stage performance such as gestures and expressions, they manifest the temperament and image that different characters should have, always guided by opera thinking and the dominant motivation. The difference lies in the contemporary National Arts Fund operas' emphasis on the audience's aesthetic experience in the creative process. Based on the practical situation in multiple opera works, actors strive to break away from the past stylized performance concepts, refusing to present rigidly defined good or evil character images. Instead, they use language, dialogue, and performance to depict vivid and

lifelike characters. This makes the stage performance more authentic and believable, deepening the audience's understanding and immersion.

In summary, from a holistic perspective, the musical composition of National Arts Fund operas reflects a blend of tradition and innovation, combining elements of Chinese and Western cultures. Musical creation is firmly rooted in the fertile soil of national culture, organizing musical scales, melodies, rhythms, beats, and orchestrations according to the regional and ethnic characteristics of the drama's story content and real prototypes. This allows for the rich ethnic flavor and simple rural music style to be presented well. At the same time, composers also keep pace with the times, drawing inspiration from Western music's polyphonic structures and symphonic styles in shaping musical styles. This not only gives a sense of grandeur to the promotion of the main melody spirit in the musical dimension but also fully satisfies the contemporary audience's aesthetic emotions.

Ingenious Opera Stage Design

Since the beginning of the new century, Chinese opera has undergone rapid changes with the support of stage technology and internet technology. In the continuous development of opera art, besides well-crafted plots and melodious singing, visually stunning stage elements are also needed. Compared to the magnificent scenes of revolutionary historical works and the ink-wash paintings of classical cultural themes, the opera works funded by the National Arts Fund demonstrate distinctive artistic characteristics in stage design.

In terms of common features, these works focus on various life scenes, belonging to realistic social themes. Therefore, in terms of stage design, they embody the simple and rustic rural style, presenting the details of rural life realistically. On the one hand, in the depiction of rural cultural landscapes, several works vividly present the rural atmosphere on stage through the coordinated layout of foreground, middle ground, and background. For example, the stage design of the opera "Three Locks" is typical. The central open space of the stage is divided into two parts. The front part along the center line is the performance area for the main characters, while the rear part features a

slope design, allowing the performances of supporting roles to be unobstructed, facilitating audience appreciation. On both sides of the stage are essential elements of the main plot: a "well" and an ancient tree symbolizing the gathering place of village cultural activities. As part of the stage backdrop, green mountains, lush forests, and a sunny sky depict a vibrant rural scene. This style of stage design is conventional, serving both the functional needs of the dramatic process and the immersive effect of the dramatic context, with characteristics of realism.

On the other hand, in terms of stage setting, prop arrangement, and costume design, these poverty alleviation-themed opera works also exhibit a unique style. For example, in "Three Locks" and "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", the stark contrast between the impoverished appearance of rural villagers at the beginning of the play and the golden fields, bright streetlights, and wide asphalt roads at the end is evident. Moreover, in "Hearing Soma" and "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation", which tell stories of leading ethnic minorities out of poverty, the productions not only demonstrate distinct environmental spaces but also put considerable effort into the design of actor costumes. In the production of "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation" alone, 500 different costumes were designed to showcase the cultural characteristics of various ethnic groups in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on stage.

In terms of individual characteristics, poverty alleviation-themed operas can also unleash rich creativity in stage design, breaking away from rigid and formulaic templates, thus dazzling the audience. For example, in "Hear Soma", most of the stage is covered with weeds, and the second-floor platform on the side is also covered with grass, seamlessly connecting with the multimedia images in the background, extending into the distance. The rugged roads erected with scaffolding represent the crude dwellings where Yi compatriots live on cliffs, vividly expressing the harsh living conditions and the arduous task of poverty alleviation through stage design. Similarly, in "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation", the villagers of Baini Village also live deep in the mountains. The stage design team built high platforms with multiple segmented spaces on both sides of the stage. This not only showcases the staggered levels of real-life

scenes but also creates multiple micro-performance spaces, presenting more implicit theatrical language. The ingenious stage design not only provides important assistance in advancing the dramatic storyline but also constructs an independent artistic space on the visual level, conveying profound aesthetic connotations.

4.2 To provide recommendations for the promotion of Chinese opera with the expectation of getting governmental support

4.2.1 Reflection on China National Arts Fund Opera Works

4.2.1.1 Achievements and Valuable Experience Gained in the Past

This study is focused on the artistic characteristics of opera works funded by the China National Arts Fund. It adopts a research approach that starts with data collection and analysis, followed by theoretical exploration, and concludes with practical application. By analyzing relevant data of opera productions funded by the National Arts Fund, the study aims to precisely evaluate their creative achievements and social impact. It then delves into theoretical observations on opera creation and social dissemination, culminating in prospects for future development and pragmatic suggestions. The goal is to integrate practical and theoretical aspects, forming a comprehensive research framework to facilitate the smooth operation of National Arts Fund projects and promote the development of high-quality opera productions.

The National Arts Fund, as a public welfare fund primarily funded by central government appropriations and donations from individuals, legal persons, or other organizations, focuses on supporting artistic creation among its four main areas of assistance. It stands out for its diversity, openness, breadth, and complexity compared to other funds in the humanities field. Breaking away from institutional, systemic, industry, and regional constraints, the National Arts Fund is open to the entire society, allowing entities ranging from state-owned enterprises to private individuals to apply for funding.

Currently, there is limited scholarly research on the artistic characteristics and future development of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund. Most existing studies mainly focus on theoretical analyses of opera works with

revolutionary historical themes. While numerous commentaries and academic studies exist, primarily centered on individual cases such as "Love in Songmaoling Mountains", "Taihang Nainiang", "Visitors on the Icy Mountain", "A Single Spark", "Hero", "Osmanthus Flowers Blooming Everywhere in August", and "The Long March", articles offering macro-level discussions, especially in observing and analyzing typified themes, are scarce. Although researchers indirectly argue for the importance and feasibility of studying opera works funded by the National Arts Fund, the research outcomes based on data analysis, quantitative research, and multidimensional exploration are not as comprehensive. This indicates both the insufficiency of existing research and the innovative potential of this study. Thus, it reaffirms the relevance of the chosen topic and aims to achieve breakthroughs in both theoretical research and practical application.



FIGURE 7 Osmanthus Flowers Blooming Everywhere in August

Source: Created by Yi Jun

Note: Opera "Osmanthus Flowers Blooming Everywhere in August"

Characters: Tang Jianhao

Performer: Yi Jun

This study focuses on opera works funded by the National Arts Fund since 2014, aiming to explore the fund's support for such productions. It collects various achievements during the creation and marketing stages to witness the remarkable accomplishments of Chinese opera productions funded by the National Arts Fund in recent years. Furthermore, it reflects on the unique aesthetic consciousness and artistic characteristics of contemporary Chinese opera works from a theoretical perspective.

The researcher conducts an artistic ontology study of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund from 2014 to 2023. In addition to having sufficient basic creative preparation, these works are expected to possess distinct themes, profound connotations, exquisite artistic standards, as well as contemporary and innovative values at the artistic ontology level. By analyzing dozens of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund over the past decade, the study examines novel perspectives in script creation, the fusion of Eastern and Western singing and performance styles, as well as the melodic, harmonic, tonal, and orchestrational elements involved in music composition. Employing multiple perspectives to observe the artistic ontology can reveal the progression of contemporary opera creation and indirectly affirm the discernment of the National Arts Fund in selecting funded projects.

The study offers forward-looking suggestions and prospects for the future development of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund. The ultimate goal is to provide practical assistance for the future application and development of the research subject. Therefore, as the final part of the study, it reflects on the issues identified and the insights gained, presenting insightful suggestions. Recommendations may include proposals for enhancing the coverage, support methods, and evaluation mechanisms of the National Arts Fund, suggestions for expanding the creative performance of opera works while maintaining synchronous aesthetic concepts and presentation methods with the times, as well as proposals for enhancing the social dissemination effectiveness and

commercial market development of opera works funded by the Arts Fund. These suggestions are based on observations and conclusions from the opera creation industry and current societal and cultural trends, aiming to contribute to the prosperity of opera productions funded by the National Arts Fund.

In exploring the artistic characteristics of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund, the study primarily observes and analyzes from the following perspectives:

1. Comprehensive research and analysis of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund since 2014, serving as the precursor to theoretical research. The aim is to quantitatively analyze the development and trends of typified opera over the past decade through data on the National Arts Fund's investment intensity, support proportion, opera market operation effects, and performance frequency, forming a comprehensive and objective assessment.

2. Endeavoring to formulate a set of detailed review articles covering aspects such as artistic ontology, communication operation, and social influence, to analyze the development of opera funded by the Arts Fund and the level of support provided. Through an integrated approach, the study aims to conduct theoretical research on the opera funded by the National Arts Fund, focusing on new features in creation and performance, observing market operation effects, and public feedback, thereby forming an objective and comprehensive theoretical framework.

3. Providing forward-looking suggestions for the future support methods of the National Arts Fund for opera projects and aspects related to opera creation, performance, and communication. The ultimate goal is to offer effective assistance to the practical application field. In the final stage of the research, based on current development trends, suggestions are provided for the selection criteria of future National Arts Fund projects and aspects of opera creation and social communication that need attention, aiming to support the prosperity of Chinese opera and maintain the smooth operation of the National Arts Fund.

Conduct art ontology research on opera works funded by the National Arts Fund from 2014 to 2023. The objects of opera works funded by the National Art

Foundation should not only have sufficient basic creation preparation organization, but also have distinct theme, profound connotation, exquisite artistic level and unique value of The Times and innovation at the level of art itself. Researchers for ten years National Arts Fund support dozens of opera works of art ontology research, analyze the novel Angle of writing, thinking opera singing and performance style of combination of Chinese and western, analysis of music and melody, harmony, tone, accessories, focus on the construction of the opera performance stage and the rendering of the stage effect style. The observation of art noumenon from multiple perspectives can reveal the past and future of contemporary opera creation, and also indirectly recognize the vision of the National Arts Fund in supporting the selection of objects.

A study on the performance market and dissemination effectiveness of opera works funded by the National Foundation of the Arts since 2014. At present, China's opera performance market generally shows a good development trend, but it still reflects the lack of commercialization, excessive reliance on government support, and uneven distribution in the performance market. From the perspective of market operation and communication effectiveness, the study mainly is whether the art fund opera has been fully recognized by the market, especially whether it is funded by the youth group. Whether the reform and innovation of opera works in the art fund can meet the aesthetic appreciation of contemporary audiences, where the audience's recognition comes from, and whether the works have achieved the expected social influence and performance effect. At the same time, it also tests whether the commercialization degree of China's opera market can achieve a virtuous cycle of self-sufficiency. In a sense, the opera funded by the National Arts Fund represents the highest level of the creation of such themes in China. Therefore, the research and thinking on the market communication level is also representative, which can truly reflect the market development of Chinese opera art.

To give forward-looking suggestions and prospects for the future development of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund. The ultimate purpose of data research and theoretical thinking is to provide practical help to the development of research

objects in future practical application fields. Therefore, as the final part of the research, we should reflect on the problems found at the above research level and the receiving of the goods obtained, and put forward insightful suggestions. For example, suggestions on the coverage rate, support mode and acceptance mode of the NFA; suggestions on how to continue to expand the creation and performance of the opera works of the Art Fund; suggestions on the social communication effect and commercial market mode development of the art fund opera; and suggestions on the combination of theatrical performance and the new form of "cloud performance". Some of these suggestions are based on the opera industry, and some are based on the current social and cultural environment and development direction. Strive to do based on the facts, to the prosperity of the art fund opera works as the foothold.

In terms of exploring the artistic characteristics of the opera works of the National Arts Fund, we mainly observe and analyze them from the following perspectives:

First, to conduct a comprehensive survey and analysis of the operas funded by the National Arts Fund since 2014. As the forerunner of theoretical special research. We strive to speak with data, through the statistics of the investment, the proportion of support, the operation effect of the opera market, the frequency of the past ten years, to form a comprehensive and objective comment results.

Secondly, it strives to form a set of detailed commentary articles including art ontology, communication operation, social influence and other aspects, and makes a detailed analysis of the development of the opera and the support of the National Arts Fund. We strive to carry out theoretical research on the opera funded by the National Arts Fund through the internal and external combination, horizontal and vertical and bidirectional ways, pay attention to the new characteristics of creation and performance, observe the market operation effect and public feedback, so as to form an objective and detailed theoretical package system.

Thirdly, it puts forward suggestions on the support methods of the Future National Arts Fund for opera projects and the aspects of opera creation, performance

and communication, and gives effective help to the practical application fields. As the final destination of comment and thinking, we strive to achieve the goal of providing support and reference assistance to the application field. In the final stage of the research, based on all aspects of the current development situation, the suggestions are put forward on the selection criteria of the future National Arts Fund, as well as all aspects of the opera itself and social communication, so as to help the prosperity of Chinese opera and the good operation of the National Arts Fund.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

1. The art form of Chinese opera in accordance with the previous funding policy of the China National Arts Fund.

This study conducts a comprehensive exploration and analysis of the characteristics, artistic styles, creative methods, and social impacts of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund. In this process, significant achievements have been made, with one of the most important research outcomes being the in-depth study of the thematic tone of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund, understanding their cultural driving force and artistic charm. Chapter Four of the study is dedicated to detailed research on this issue.

Opera works funded by the National Arts Fund place great emphasis on maintaining close ties with the country's political development direction and mainstream cultural trends during the creative process. Therefore, these opera works reflect closely aligned characteristics with the times during the application and specific creative rehearsal processes. For example, revolutionary historical-themed opera works hold a significant share within the National Arts Fund, and opera works with a realistic spirit also receive special attention from the fund. Additionally, on November 23, 2016, the State Council issued the "Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for Poverty Alleviation", which required planning paths and measures tailored to local conditions to effectively guarantee the legitimate rights and interests of impoverished households and alleviate their burdens. By the end of 2020, 832 national-level impoverished counties in China had achieved complete poverty alleviation. In February 2021, at the National Poverty Alleviation Summary and Commendation Conference, President Xi Jinping solemnly declared that China's poverty alleviation campaign had achieved complete victory. Many exemplary heroes emerged on this journey of poverty alleviation, and countless touching stories spread among the people. Artistic workers with social responsibilities and dedication use opera creation to vividly reproduce and record the trials and

tribulations on the road to poverty alleviation, paying tribute to the labor heroes of the new era. As a type of opera theme that resonates with the times, the creation of National Arts Fund-funded opera works is based on real-life stories and events, paying homage to the heroes of labor in the new era. Opera art creation, imbued with the spirit of realism, retraces the past, resonating with the audience and providing the best artistic experience. Represented by a variety of opera works with poverty alleviation as the main theme, such as "On the Road to Poverty Alleviation", "Ma Ma Xiangyang Xia Xiang Ji", and "Camellia Blooms", they focus on the mainstream theme of social development in the present day, restoring touching real-life stories on the road to poverty alleviation and reflecting the vivid pulse of the times.

For the development of Chinese opera art, in addition to the need for a large number of excellent works to expand the market and attract the attention of the general public in the field of creative performance practice, achievements in theoretical research are also essential. Systematic theoretical research results on various aspects such as the artistic style, content structure, and cultural connotation of Chinese opera art are needed to facilitate continuous development and progress in the practice field. By summarizing and analyzing representative types of opera works through case studies and systematic research, this study aims to gain insights into the overall artistic characteristics of this thematic type of opera. The research perspective, content, and structure can fill the gaps in current theoretical research in this field and provide theoretical support for the subsequent creation and performance of this type of opera art. Therefore, this study is innovative in terms of academic value and practicality. The opera works funded by the National Arts Fund revolve around the current social development of the country, praising the pioneers of the times and applauding the new look of social development. Such opera works have rich cultural connotations and significant social values. Through theoretical research in this field and the artistic refinement of individual works and macroscopic levels, opera works in this field are provided with good support in music composition, script creation, stage design, and

vocal performance, thus enhancing subsequent creation and performance and endowing the research itself with good social application value.

2. The recommendations for the promotion of Chinese opera with the expectation of getting governmental support.

As another important objective of this study, it is to analyze and contemplate how operas funded by the National Arts Fund play a significant role in shaping cultural confidence with robust financial support. This involves not only a specialized analysis and summarization of these operas from an artistic creation perspective but also a consideration of how they exert their effectiveness in subsequent development processes through effective social dissemination, thereby reflecting the strong social appeal and significant social value of contemporary Chinese artistic works. For a developing country with a population of 1.4 billion, national prosperity and strength signify the success of significant social development battles, also demonstrating the advanced nature and superiority of Chinese socialism. In the long journey of social development, numerous exemplary heroes have emerged, and countless touching stories of grassroots laborers have circulated among the people. It is through the outstanding wisdom, tenacious spirit, and excellent qualities of perseverance of these heroes of the new era that such magnificent achievements in social development have been attained. As artists with a sense of social responsibility, they reproduce what they see, hear, think, and feel in the form of opera art on contemporary stages, adapting real-life events and stories to pay their highest respects. Opera works such as "Love in Songmaoling Mountains", "Su Wu of Great Han" and "Hero", among others, which have emerged in recent years, fully demonstrate the high degree of consistency between the artistic vision of the creators and the major strategic policies of the country. Through scriptwriting that combines a realistic spirit with romanticism and through the method of "Musical Drama", utilizing a combination of literary, vocal, musical, stage performance, and visual art elements, these operas authentically depict those eternal moments of China's social development process that are worthy of praise and tears. On the other hand, the explosive growth of opera works funded by the National Arts Fund has, to a

certain extent, also promoted the exploration of opera creation and performance in the new era, integrating more elements of rich Chinese folk culture and local flavor into artistic works. This imbues them with distinct artistic features and demonstrates the enduring creative vitality of opera.

One of the most prominent artistic features of operas funded by the National Arts Fund lies in their distinct theatrical cultural concepts and thematic ideas. In Western classical opera creation, dramatic content often tends to be music-driven, hence Mozart's statement: "In opera, drama is the daughter of music". Chinese opera originated during the period of the New Democratic Revolution, with early works such as "The White-Haired Girl", "The Red Guards on Honghu Lake", and "Sister Jiang" being created around the theme of revolutionary history. Chinese audiences greatly favor the dramatic ups and downs of theatrical content and consider it an important criterion for selecting and evaluating opera works. In recent years, with the strong support of the "National Arts Fund" and the "Chinese Opera Heritage and Development Project", a large number of newly created opera works have emerged, many of which are classics reflecting the spirit of the times. National Arts Fund operas, in terms of creative concepts, use national policies as creative credentials, authentically reflecting the real-life events emerging in this process, and faithfully documenting the entire process of these events. Such a creative approach mostly embellishes real events without introducing a large amount of fabrication, making the artistic works more vivid, lifelike, and resonant with the aesthetic appreciation of the broad masses of people, enhancing their appeal to the times and possessing significant social value. In both the scriptwriting of the drama and the composition of music, the creation revolves closely around real social scenes, the progression of the drama, and the characteristic features of the characters. Whether it is the musical melodies or the deeply memorable dramatic moments on stage, they all aim to showcase the vicissitudes of the socialist development path, which not only provoke deep thoughts but also demonstrate the resilient spirit unique to Chinese culture.

The artistic form of opera creation funded by the National Arts Fund can convey abundant artistic elements contained in Chinese opera works in a macroscopic manner. The birth of Chinese opera initially embarked on a path of combining Eastern and Western elements, borrowing Western opera's basic structural forms and artistic elements on the one hand, and practicing creation based on the material content inherent in Chinese national cultural history on the other hand, borrowing extensively from traditional operas, folk songs, and Chinese national literary techniques. These basic artistic forms have continuously evolved with the development of the times, a reflection evident in the creation process of contemporary opera funded by the National Arts Fund. In specific creative contexts, we see a large number of opera works adopting the musical structure of "recitative", which converges the thematic motifs of traditional opera music and regional folk music. In terms of singing styles and stage performances, gestures, and movements, there are intricate connections with traditional theatrical forms. In terms of scriptwriting, whether it is the basic structure of exposition, development, climax, and resolution or the tension presentation through allegory, it largely inherits and promotes the essence of traditional Chinese literature. In terms of stage design, contemporary social environments are brought onto the stage, presenting diversified levels of foreground, middle ground, and background. Especially with the integration of multimedia elements, technological achievements are combined with theatrical expressions, providing a visual feast for the audience. Thus, whether in terms of visual, auditory, or sensory artistic elements, they adhere to tradition, promote the spirit of the times, and exhibit a sense of integration of ancient and modern, East and West.

Although opera art is a theatrical form created in classical times, its development process in sync with the times inevitably produces new artistic features, maintaining its aesthetic focus and keeping pace with the times. Therefore, in the process of contemporary opera creation, a distinct charm of opera art is also presented in terms of creative concepts and techniques. In National Arts Fund operas, we can see many artistic elements challenging new possibilities. Contemporary artists refuse to

adhere to conventions and continuously explore and discover new artistic elements, showcasing expressive methods with experimental characteristics. For example, in terms of theatrical structure and thematic propulsion, the formulaic application of "binary opposition" theatrical techniques is avoided, and a new theatrical mode of "unified independence" is adopted, focusing on major characters such as Ma Xiangyang. By observing their actions and ideological consciousness on China's development path, the rich and diverse character traits of the characters are displayed. In terms of specific theatrical logic, narrative expressions such as flashback and insertion are incorporated, borrowing techniques commonly used in film montages, making the dramatic performance more outstanding and gripping the audience's aesthetic appreciation. In terms of musical composition, a large number of ethnic music, regional music, and traditional opera elements are integrated. Meanwhile, in the process of setting the grand scenes of the drama, Western symphonies or even electronic music bands are employed, ensuring a targeted use of background music and accompaniment for a well-balanced effect. This not only demonstrates the rich historical accumulation of Chinese opera but, more importantly, witnesses the open, free, and inclusive cultural characteristics of contemporary China.

Discussion

Future Research Direction

Through this study's in-depth exploration and analysis of the National Arts Fund's opera, apart from acknowledging its fruitful achievements in recent years and its significant contributions to the development of Chinese opera art, the specific research process in Chapter 4, Section 3 also discusses some existing shortcomings.

For the operation of the National Fund's opera projects, it has only been less than 10 years since its inception. During this period, there has been a phase of significant development in Chinese opera art. Concurrently, the cultural development of Chinese society has been evolving rapidly, continuously presenting new artistic styles and spiritual connotations. Therefore, it's not surprising that various issues have emerged during the long exploration and development process of the National Fund

projects and support for opera art. There are still many contradictions and problems in the future development of opera art and the operation of the National Arts Fund, which can prompt the National Arts Fund to better guide opera projects, enabling them to achieve rapid development and progress from a quantitative increase to qualitative improvement.

In the research process of Chapter 4, the researcher elaborated on the shortcomings of the National Arts Fund's opera in terms of topic selection, creation, performance, and promotion. These limitations can be seen as developmental bottlenecks and issues in the operation of the National Arts Fund during this stage, or as a reflection of the limitations and social contradictions formed by Chinese opera art in specific social and cultural environments. For example, the singular types of topics, the reliance on Western opera in creative methods, the rigidity of performance modes, and insufficient promotional efforts are all actual limitations within the National Arts Fund's opera projects, posing challenges and even a certain degree of closure to more artistic entities. Therefore, in future theoretical research processes, it is necessary to continue exploring the diversity, depth, and breadth of the National Arts Fund's support for opera projects, so as to genuinely promote the National Arts Fund to adopt a more open, inclusive, and diversified approach to opera art types and to have better guidance and specific measures for the creation and social dissemination stages.

Regarding the future research direction setting, it mainly focuses on addressing the issues raised in Chapter 4, Section 3 from a theoretical perspective. Through the current analysis of the limitations in topic selection, creation, performance, and promotion, it is believed that to address these contradictions fundamentally, adjustments should be made to the scope and scientificity of the National Arts Fund's support. This would bring about a transformation in the support approach of the National Arts Fund itself. This approach would enable the National Arts Fund to control and guide the design of application contents along established directions, and to better promote open perspectives and continuous innovation among applicants. For example, in terms of topic selection, the current National Arts Fund only provides cultural guidance at a

macro level, inevitably resulting in a concentration of mainstream theme works. In the subsequent detailed refining process, the National Arts Fund could effectively control and divide the topics of opera, such as historical themes, revolutionary themes, contemporary themes, social life themes, and legendary themes, proposing specific numbers or proportions of application works for each type. This would encourage different attempts and leverage strengths and weaknesses based on actual situations in selecting proposition scopes for application and subsequent creation. In the preliminary interview process, the interviewee, Shu Wen, also expressed similar views. She stated, "My expectation is that the National Arts Fund can focus more on forward-looking and innovative development in the field of opera. In addition to protecting and inheriting traditional operas, the Art Fund should actively support and promote new works with unique styles and modern concepts. This can enrich the artistic forms and content of Chinese opera and better lead the trend of the times, enhancing the international competitiveness of Chinese opera. The National Arts Fund can pay more attention to the development of multiculturalism and local characteristics. China has rich and diverse regional cultures and folk arts. The Art Fund can explore and promote local characteristics by supporting the creation and performance of local opera troupes. This can promote local economic and cultural prosperity, enrich the diversity of Chinese opera, and allow audiences to experience a richer cultural experience when watching operas". Similarly, specific adjustment guidelines can also be proposed for the creation itself and stage performance, requiring subsequent applicants to practice and meet each criterion according to quantitative evaluation standards, ultimately determining whether the project meets expectations and qualifies for funding disbursement. This can better control the quality of opera works at a professional and macro level, avoiding phenomena of plagiarism and imitation in the creative process driven solely by application purposes.

Final Thoughts: Looking Forward to the Future

In recent years, the emergence of National Arts Fund operas can be seen as a cultural response to major national policies. It reflects the characteristics of socialist countries' literary and artistic construction, truly reflecting the face of social progress and development, and sculpting with artistic techniques that combine realism and romanticism. The choice of using opera art is partly because its comprehensive structural form can present the real human history and contemporary social development of China in a composite way of singing, music, and stage performance, showing real events and feelings. On the other hand, it also utilizes the artistic characteristics inherited from opera, displaying the authentic Chinese folk customs and expressing the strong local cultural atmosphere.

Based on the analysis of the artistic characteristics of National Arts Fund operas from the three aspects mentioned above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Firstly, it is important to continue to emphasize and highlight the most important artistic features and distinctive thematic styles of National Arts Fund operas. Throughout the creative process of Chinese opera, the preference of the audience for the content of the drama often makes it one of the primary criteria for the success or failure of opera works. In recent years, with the strong support of funds and projects such as the "National Arts Fund" and the "Chinese Opera Heritage and Development Project", many opera themes with mainstream cultural colors have emerged. For example, themes like revolutionary history, human history, realism, and hero biographies have been developed. Each type of opera work has a unique cultural meaning, and the presentation of character spirits in opera creation reflects the unique social value of opera types. The birth of National Arts Fund operas is a cultural force formed under the guidance of major national policy directives, reflecting real social events and writing various real stories in the development path of society with the comprehensive artistic means of drama. This type of opera creation theme is not only a cultural record of social events but also resonates with the masses through the performance and social

dissemination of the works, with profound and rich social appeal and irreplaceable value.

Secondly, it is important to continue the practice of National Arts Fund operas relying on cultural themes and spiritual connotations in their creation, and to form a linkage effect in script creation methods, character shaping methods, music styles, vocal techniques, and stage design under a unique perspective, providing a good practical effect on the exploration and development of new era Chinese operas. In the past, operas with revolutionary history themes closely echoed Chinese revolutionary realities before and after the founding of New China, inspiring public appreciation and completing the initial exploration of opera. By using a large number of opera and traditional Chinese music composition techniques, the image of opera was constructed, and an independent development path was taken. Today, the creation of National Arts Fund operas focuses on the changes in the face of contemporary Chinese society. After establishing the theme material, music systems and stage visual systems are constructed based on the appearance of different regions and local cultural and artistic elements. Techniques such as "binary opposition" and "independent unity" are adopted in the dramatic structure, incorporating techniques such as retrospection and intercalation, and applying film lens effects and montage techniques in the creation process. A large number of folk music, regional music, and traditional opera elements are used in music composition, while enhancing the connection with Western symphonic harmony and instrumentation, reflecting the comprehensive localization and openness of Chinese opera. It embodies typical Chinese charm while demonstrating independent creative perspectives and artistic connotations. This is undoubtedly a distinctive feature of National Arts Fund operas in terms of creative essence, and it influences and benefits the creation of other Chinese opera works of similar themes, forming a good linkage effect.

Thirdly, it is important to further explore the integration of National Arts Fund opera works with professional teaching systems and widely apply the results of works to educational expansion and talent cultivation. In this research process, the interviewee

mentioned: "The National Arts Fund can also strengthen cooperation with other relevant departments and institutions to form a good artistic ecosystem. Through cooperation with theaters, music colleges, cultural institutions, etc., the Art Fund can jointly undertake the responsibilities of opera creation, performance, education, and research, forming an efficient collaborative work model. This can better integrate resources and improve the development efficiency and quality of the opera industry". Research should be conducted on the way "ideological and political education" is carried out in current university vocal music teaching, as well as the feasibility of integrating National Arts Fund opera material with university vocal music teaching. This part of the content serves as a theoretical foundation and research basis for the subsequent sections, focusing on the methods, current situation, problems, and bottlenecks in the implementation of "ideological and political education" in university vocal music education. Discovering some hidden problems and proposing specific, timely, and targeted solutions is the combination of National Arts Fund opera works and the reform of vocal music teaching. This combination can not only achieve good ideological and political education effects but also find a supportive teaching approach for the expansion of vocal music teaching materials and the learning of traditional vocal music techniques, achieving multiple goals. Research on its feasibility and theoretical implications at the macro level, providing theoretical support for subsequent research. The combination of National Arts Fund opera works and the reform of university vocal music teaching in terms of disciplinary theoretical construction. The main content of this part of the research is to build a theoretical foundation for the development direction of discipline education, plan the systematic theoretical argumentation, including teaching theory, curriculum theory, teaching methods theory, and the support level of existing theoretical achievements. The advancement of a new educational concept or direction must have sufficient theoretical systems as support to achieve sustainable development. There is a rich reserve of National Arts Fund opera works at the theoretical level, which needs to be demonstrated in terms of the value significance and specific connotations of its integration with vocal music teaching, demonstrating the precedence of theory and

guaranteeing the deep immersion of ideological and political content into the vocal music teaching system. The presentation of the combination of National Arts Fund opera works and the reform of university vocal music teaching in the organization of teaching content. This part examines the integration of the two in terms of teaching content. It mainly selects National Arts Fund opera works as materials for university vocal music courses based on the educational content of university vocal music courses, adhering to the principles of step-by-step advancement and promoting the spirit of the Red Revolution, and seeks to find and use excellent classic materials. Pay special attention to learning and drawing from National Arts Fund opera works, and on this basis, attempt to develop innovative creative abilities, develop National Arts Fund operas, and present new artistic effects. The new views on teaching methods and course support in the combination of National Arts Fund opera works and university vocal music teaching reform. This part mainly reflects on teaching methods and peripheral course organization in vocal music teaching. It tries to use open experiential teaching methods to break away from a single teacher-led approach, encourage students to independently find vocal music materials, independently train and attempt creative compositions, experience the national cultural spirit in the process, and develop a sincere appreciation and ideological sublimation of typified vocal music works. Utilizing the Internet to find relevant materials, attempting to use open teaching methods, drawing extensively from the concepts of vocal educationists and performing artists, and forming a wide-ranging teaching scope. At the same time, it forms a close connection between basic vocal courses, theoretical courses, and ideological and political courses, holds special lectures on National Arts Fund opera works, and enables students to integrate technical skills with theoretical cultivation. The effects of the combination of National Arts Fund opera works and university vocal music teaching reform at the practical application level. This part mainly discusses the opera arias and works born from the integration of National Arts Fund opera works into vocal music teaching, which need to be staged for practical experience. This process is a test of students' skills and ideological sublimation, and also an opportunity to popularize

ideological spirit in the campus and beyond, expand social influence, and thus achieve higher social value and teaching significance. We are pleased to see that in recent years, many National Arts Fund opera works have emerged one after another. Based on this, themes related to the shift in national strategic policies have been explored, opening up the creation of theme operas to build a socialist cultural power. We believe that in the current practice of work creation, the creative teams have gained many insights and inspirations for this type of work, and have accumulated rich and valuable experience at the technical level. On the one hand, during the implementation of the previous stage of national development strategy initiatives, many touching and true stories have emerged, urgently needing to be praised and expressed through opera art forms. Opera creation is a long process that requires deeper precipitation and training to form a stronger collective force, making opera works of this type a cultural symbol of an era. On the other hand, through the accumulation of experience and results in the creation of a series of works, it will be integrated into the future journey of creating operas with similar themes. It comprehensively promotes the development of Chinese opera art and presents a profound cultural power through the artistic form of opera. It infects and inspires contemporary audiences to not forget their original intentions and forge ahead, striving for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The creation of National Arts Fund opera works conforms to the trend of the times, depicting the resolute will and brilliant achievements of the party leading the people on the road to building a well-off society in an artistic and realistic manner. As the fruit of new era opera art creation, National Arts Fund opera works have accumulated rich and innovative artistic thinking, presenting a unique artistic style of oriental opera art through the close integration of script conception, music creation, and stage design, inheriting the creative position and style of Chinese opera. They demonstrate contemporary artists' independent cultural insights, making National Arts Fund opera works present unique artistic perspectives.

Suggestion

This study focuses on the opera productions funded by the National Arts Fund. In the specific research process, it examines the artistic characteristics of these opera productions and provides reflections and suggestions. The analysis covers various aspects of opera creation, including scriptwriting, musical composition, vocal performance, and stage design. It contemplates how National Arts Fund-funded opera productions can achieve better development prospects and effectiveness in the future. These studies are based on the accumulation of National Arts Fund opera productions over the past decade and the support provided to opera projects during their implementation. The analysis and reflections are grounded in factual evidence.

Moving forward, the National Arts Fund will continue to provide comprehensive support for opera productions. As creators and performers of opera artworks, efforts will be made to attain better development opportunities by achieving high technical standards. This will not only accelerate the development of Chinese opera art but also facilitate smoother operations of the National Arts Fund. We believe that there are many perspectives to explore in this field of study, and we offer the following suggestions for future research:

Firstly, it is essential to study the interactive relationship between National Arts Fund opera productions and other social factors. In the process of contemporary Chinese opera art development, National Arts Fund opera productions, as a core force, are closely linked to rich social resources in terms of topic selection, creative motivation, specific creative processes, and the final presentation and dissemination. Merely observing National Arts Fund opera productions may not yield sufficient useful information from a macro perspective and may lead to some one-sided views. While this study has observed to a certain extent from the perspective of China's recent social development, future research can delve into the interactive relationship between National Arts Fund opera projects and other social factors, forming specialized research results. This includes exploring what kinds of opera productions are needed in contemporary Chinese cultural environments and what responsibilities and obligations

the National Arts Fund applicants should bear to make opera productions more popular among the people and align better with China's contemporary social and cultural development direction and future trends. Such research is undoubtedly progressive and represents a key direction for future studies on National Arts Fund opera productions.

Secondly, comparing National Arts Fund-supported opera productions with other locally independently created opera productions is also of great significance. In the specific research process of this study, the focus was mainly on analyzing the internal mechanism characteristics and future development of National Arts Fund opera productions. However, it is undeniable that, besides National Arts Fund opera productions, there are many other outstanding opera productions in contemporary China, which have not received National Arts Fund support due to various reasons. Whether there is a quality gap between these productions and National Arts Fund opera productions, whether there are typical distinctions in specific style characteristics, operational mechanisms, quality assurance, and dissemination effects, such comparisons represent important research perspectives. This approach not only fully observes the uniqueness of National Arts Fund opera productions but also provides insights into the overall situation and future development direction of Chinese opera art. Such comparative studies are of great significance and await further in-depth exploration and research by scholars in this field.

Finally, studying the development of China National Arts Fund opera productions compared with contemporary Western opera productions is also an important research direction. In recent years, Chinese cultural departments have provided significant support for the development of opera art, with strong support from the National Arts Fund, which is highly representative and indicative of the high-quality level of contemporary Chinese opera art development. However, considering the global development of opera art, Western opera art also has a rich history and excellent technical standards. To fully understand the position and future development direction of National Arts Fund opera productions, it is necessary to compare them with Western opera productions, observing differences and characteristics from various perspectives

such as creative elements and social dissemination. This approach not only provides a more comprehensive understanding of the oriental cultural characteristics of China National Arts Fund opera productions but also accurately positions their current development status and future development direction. Such research is crucial for gaining deeper insights into China National Arts Fund opera productions and represents an unavoidable important proposition for future exploration.



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APPENDIX

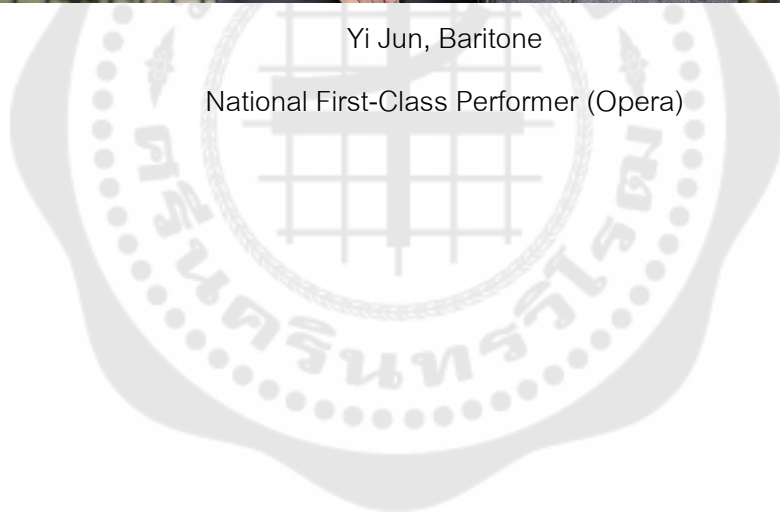


Zhang Rong

Member of the China National Arts Fund Review Committee



Yi Jun, Baritone
National First-Class Performer (Opera)





Pei Chuanwen, Professor, Hubei Provincial Opera and Dance Theater
Former Head of the Department of Music Education, Wuhan Conservatory of Music



Zhao Wanli, Composer
Director of Wanli Music Studio





Liu Tao, Associate Professor

Zhejiang Conservatory of Music

Opera Performer

VITA

