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The University of Adelaide

Elder Conservatorium of Music

Faculty of Arts

**Anhui Opera: Towards Maintaining a Historical  
Regional Dramatic Opera Tradition in  
Contemporary China**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of

**Master of Philosophy**

**Yiyin Tian**

**(a1699752)**

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## **Abstract**

Anhui Opera is a vital part of Huizhou culture that spread over centuries to more than half of China. It occupies an important position in the history of traditional music. Yet Anhui Opera was on the verge of extinction prior to the foundation of the People's Republic of China. Only after 1949, when this new government adopted a policy of conservation and restoration, was Anhui Opera able to rise again from obscurity.

This thesis aims to reveal the charm and significance of Anhui Opera by exploring its main stylistic characteristics as primarily developed in Hefei, old Huizhou (now Huangshan city) and Anqing in China's Anhui Province. It offers an ethnomusicological investigation of the contentious issues of the Anhui Opera's origins, its distinctiveness from other Chinese opera styles, and the influence of present cultural policies on its continuing development. It examines the historical development of the Anhui Opera Troupe (Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre) in Anhui Province, and the contemporary revival of Anhui Opera in recent times.

It concludes that Anhui Opera most likely originated in Huizhou in the south of Anhui Province, but also became popular in Shipai. It also demonstrates how suitable government cultural policies play a decisive role in the survival and transmission of Anhui Opera and considers avenues for further research.

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## University of Adelaide Higher Degree by Research Declaration

I, Yiyin Tian, certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree. I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signed:

30/06/2021

Yiyin Tian

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## **AHCRC Researcher Declaration**

Further to the University of Adelaide HDR declaration, I also declare that I was employed as a researcher at the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Center (AHCRC) from 2013 to 2018, prior to my enrolment in the degree of Master of Philosophy. At the AHCRC I was engaged to study the repertoire, techniques, history, heritage and preservation of Anhui Opera. During the course of this work, I undertook interviews with expert performers and scholars, and collected rare cultural artifacts and resources for AHCRC, including representative manuscripts and costumes. These materials are now held in the AHCRC's public collection, which is open to researchers and the general public, and as such are discussed in this thesis.

30/06/2021

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As an existing student at the University of Adelaide, I decided to extend my knowledge and broaden my life, after completing an MA in opera performance. Regarding this journey, there are a number of things I would like to mention and people I would like to thank. The help and care I have received from academic staff, fellow students and my family has allowed me to persevere, and their support has filled my scholarly pursuits with brilliant colours.

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## Glossary and Terminology

Term	Description	Additional information	Chinese text/ Pinyin characters
<b>Musical, stylistic and technical terms</b>			
Anhui Opera	Foundational form of traditional local dramatic opera		徽剧
Bozi	A style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		拨子
Buddhist customs chant in Jihua Mountain	A style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		九华山佛俗说唱
Children opera troupe	A troupe of child actors.		童子班
Chizhou qiang	A style of Huichi elegant tune		池州腔
Chui qiang	A style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		吹腔
Dahua	Depicts male characters with outstanding characteristics	Also known as jing.	大花
Dianju	Local traditional opera in Yunnan province		滇剧
Erhua	Brave and forthright positive characters		二花
Erhuang tune	Imported style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		二黄腔
Gongche Score	A unique notation method in the Chinese character cultural circle.		工尺谱
Guiju	Local traditional opera in Guangxi province		桂剧
Hanju	Local tradition opera form in Hubei province		汉剧
Huadan	Vivacious, appealing and lively young women		花旦
Huagu deng	Local music in Anhui province		花鼓灯
Huaiju	Local opera in Jiangsu province		淮剧
[The] Huichi Elegant Tune	Imported style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		徽池雅调
Huikun	Imported style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		徽昆
Jingju	Peking opera		京剧
Kun Qu (or Kunqu Opera)	Kunqu Opera, one of the oldest forms of traditional opera of the Han ethnic group, originated in Suzhou, China, in the 14th century.		昆曲

Kunshan qiang	Imported style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		昆山腔
Laodan	Older women of various identities		老旦
Laosheng	A kind of role type in Anhui Opera. They mostly represent middle and old aged men.	The role of laosheng is divided between wen laosheng and wu laosheng, depending on the type of opera.	老生
Minju	Local traditional opera in Fujian province		闽剧
Miscellaneous Tune [The]	Imported style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		杂曲小调
Mulian xi	A form of religious opera from local Anhui		目连戏
Nanxi	One of the earliest mature forms of Chinese opera. One of the earliest Han operas to emerge in southern China during the 200 years from the end of Northern Song dynasty to the end of Yuan dynasty and the beginning of Ming dynasty (from the 12th to the 14th century).	It has many different names, such as Xiwen, Wenzhou zaju etc.	南戏
New Yuefu	Folk-style ballads and poetry popular in the Han dynasty		新乐府
Opera highlight	An opera highlight refers to an episode which is abstracted from an entire play.		折子戏
Qingyang qiang	A style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		青阳腔
Qin qiang	Local tradition opera form in Shaanxi province		秦腔
Sanhua	The role of clown		三花
[The] Siping Tune	Imported style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		四平腔
Troupe No.1 under the heaven	Anhui Opera Troupe founded in 1956	Later known as Anhui and Peking Theatre	天下第一团
Wudan	female general, heroine, fairy, or banshee who is brave and good at fighting		武旦
Wuhui	Specific folk tradition upon which Huizhou folk operas drew	Originated in the town of Fuling	舞廻

Wuju	Local traditional opera in Jiangxi province		婺剧
Xiangju	Local traditional opera in Hunan province		湘剧
Xiaosheng	The role of handsome young man or men		小生
Xipi	Imported style of Anhui Opera vocal tune		西皮
Yihuang tune	Local traditional opera in Jiangxi province		宜黄腔
Yiyang qiang	Local traditional opera in Jiangxi province		弋阳腔
Yuyao qiang	A traditional opera in Local Zhejiang		余姚腔
Yuyao tune	A kind of Han opera dialect with strong local characteristics in eastern Zhejiang province. It has been sung throughout the Shaoxing Prefecture since the beginning.	Also called Yuequ or Yueqiang	余姚腔
Zhengsheng	The serious and decent role		正生
<b>Geographical place names</b>			
Anhui	A province in middle area of China	Birthplace of Anhui Opera	安徽省
Anqing	Anqing located in the southwest of Anhui Province, on the north bank of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, bordering Hubei Province to the west and Jiangxi Province to the south		安庆
Chizhou	In the south of Anhui Province, on the south bank of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, it faces Anqing City across the river to the north, Huangshan City to the south, Jiujiang City of Jiangxi Province to the southwest, Wuhu City, Tongling City and Xuancheng City to the east and northeast, respectively. It is home to Mount Jiuhua, one of the four most famous Buddhist mountains in China.		池州
Hubei province	The province bordering Anhui Province.		湖北省
Huizhou	Several cities in South Anhui province	An area in South of Anhui	徽州
Jiangsu province	The province bordering Anhui Province.		江苏省
Jiangxi Province	The province bordering Anhui Province.		江西省
Jingshi	In ancient China's imperial examination system, those who passed the last imperial		京师

	examination of the central government were called jinshi		
Shexian	A country in South Anhui, considered by some as the place of origin of Huiju		歙县
Shipai	A country in Anhui province, considered by some as the place of origin of Huiju		石牌
Yangtzi River	A long and important river in China	Also known as Long River	长江
Yello River	A long and important river in China		黄河
Zhe Jiang porvince	The province bordering Anhui Province.		浙江省
<b>People: authors, composers, performers.</b>			
Gu Huamin	National first-class actor, the first generation of Anhui Opera actor, Anhui and Peking Theatre actor, Anhui Opera National Intangible Cultural Heritage successor		谷化民
Hou Lu	CPPCC member, vice president and Secretary General of Anhui Opera Association		侯露
Jiang Xianqin	National second-class actor, actress of Anhui Huangshan Hui Opera Troupe, provincial inheritor of Anhui Opera intangible cultural heritage		江贤琴
Li Taishan	Contemporary authoritative writer on Huiju; first generation of Anhui Opera artist		李泰山
Shao Mingqin	Folk artist in Jixi Anhui, Anhui Opera Children troupe provincial intangible cultural heritage successor, Anhui Opera instructor of Fuling school in Jixi		邵名钦
Song Yangjian	Director of Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre and the first generation of Anhui Opera actors		宋扬俭
Wang Danhong	National first-class actress, member of Anhui CPPCC, Key actress of Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre, winner of plum blossom award, national intangible cultural heritage successor of Anhui Opera		王丹红
Wang Hongyang	National first-class actor, Key actor of Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre, winner of plum blossom		汪鸿养
Wang Yushu	Folk artist in Shexian, Anhui, Anhui Opera's provincial inheritors of intangible cultural heritage		汪育殊
Xiang Wei	Key actress of Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre		项薇

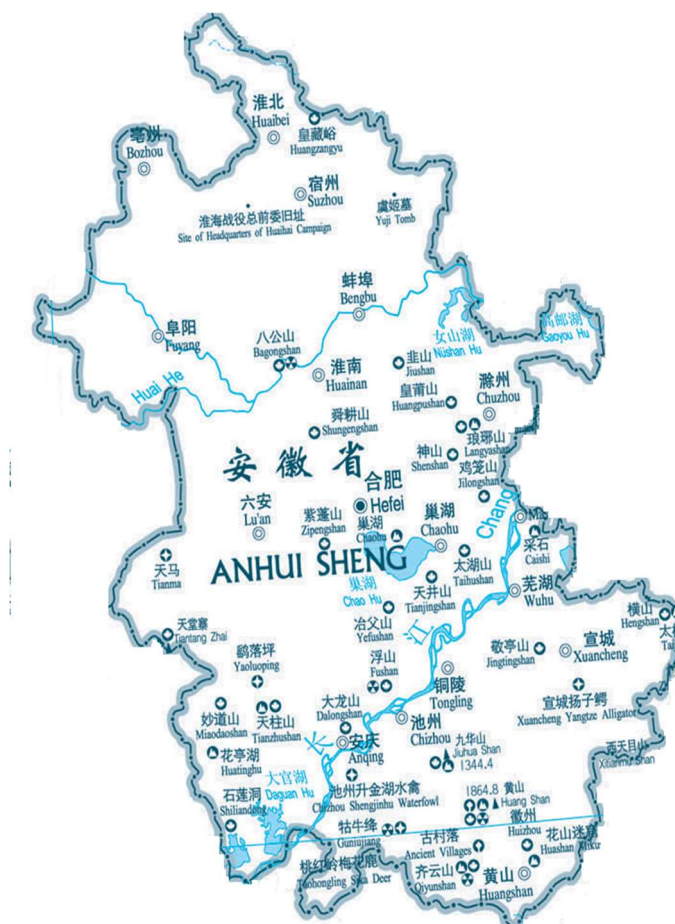
Zhu Zhuxin	Folk artist and amateur Anhui Opera composer		朱祝新
<b>Main Dynasties</b>			
Yuan Dynasty	1271-1368		元朝
Ming Dynasty	1368-1644		明朝
Qing Dynasty	1644-1912		清朝
<b>Main Emperors</b>			
ZhengDe	reign from 1506—1521		正德
Jiajing	reign from 1621-1566		嘉靖
Wanli	reign from 1572-1620		万历
Qianlong	reign from 1735—1795		乾隆
Jiaqing	reign from 1796—1820		嘉庆
Daoguang	reign from 1820—1850		道光



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Anhui Opera, or Huiju Opera, originated in China's Anhui Province during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) nearly 400 years ago.<sup>1</sup> It is an important part of Anhui Province's Huizhou culture and vital to understanding both the past and future of Chinese traditional music.<sup>2</sup> Due to its historical importance, Anhui Opera was recognised as a priority for protection on the first list of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006 (Anhui People's Government 2018) and an application has recently been submitted by the Anhui People's Government for it to be listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage List by UNESCO.



Anhui Province map

<sup>1</sup> The Ming dynasty (1368–1644) was the last unified dynasty established by the Han people of China. It spanned twelve generations and sixteen emperors. The Qing dynasty (1644–1912) is the last feudal dynasty in Chinese history with twelve Manchu emperors of the Aisin Gioro family.

<sup>2</sup> Huizhou, abbreviated as Hui, is a historical and geographical name referring to the southern part of Anhui province.

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Intangible cultural heritage refers to the behaviours or expressions recognized by UNESCO as important to the cultural inheritance of a region. These included various intangible forms of intellectual property such as folk custom, culture, belief, tradition, knowledge and language (Intangible heritage China.cn, n.d.).

Anhui Opera is characterised by a kaleidoscopic array of integrated theatrical elements, including story, music, acrobatics, voice, makeup, costumes, martial arts, movement, and stage props, to offer audiences a captivating theatre experience. Yet for all its artistic and historical significance, Anhui Opera had all but disappeared prior to its contemporary revitalisation in 1956.

Though once acclaimed throughout China, Anhui Opera is little known outside Anhui Province today and even basic information about it is scarce. Before 2018, no systematic measures had been taken to protect Anhui Opera as a unique tradition and present government policies could yet be improved. To date, very little systematic research into Anhui Opera has been undertaken in either Chinese or English. I therefore hope that this thesis will contribute new scholarly and public insights into Anhui Opera, and assist the work of Chinese artists and policy makers who are now trying to preserve this tradition for future generations.

## **1.1 Research Questions and Aims**

I was born in Anhui Province and have always been interested in my home region's Huizhou culture. From 2013 to 2018, I was employed as a researcher at the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre (AHCRC), which took me to the old Huizhou and Anqing areas to conduct cultural surveys and research several times. Through this work, I developed a strong interest in Anhui Opera as an important part of Huizhou culture, which generated for me a range of interesting questions that I have sought to pursue in this thesis.

- Did Anhui Opera truly originate in the south of Anhui Province?
- Why did Anhui Opera spread to more than half of China and influence the development of more than fifty other operatic styles?
- How did Anhui Opera contribute to the formation of Peking Opera (or Peking Theatre)?
- Why did Anhui Opera all but vanish after its initial rise to national popularity?

My visits to the old Huizhou and Anqing areas enabled me to recognise the importance of Anhui Opera to the cultural life of the local inhabitants and their efforts to protect this cultural treasure. I also saw challenges to the continuing development of Anhui Opera. Its support base was scattered across remote regions and its material heritage not effectively protected. The number of older Anhui Opera artists was decreasing year by year and their artistic legacy was in jeopardy. Scholarly research

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into Anhui Opera was minimal and systematic investigation lacking. All these concerns encouraged me to better study, understand and protect this tradition.

Anhui Opera has its roots in the Huichi elegant tune form and the distinctive Erhuang folk opera style.<sup>3</sup> Anhui Opera in turn influenced the formation of Peking Opera, which is now widely recognised as the quintessential Chinese opera style. Contemporary Anhui Opera experts considered it to be the Father of Peking Opera. Yet despite its historical importance to the development of Chinese music, few people today know that Anhui Opera exists and, because it contributed so heavily to the development of Peking Opera, cannot distinguish between these two styles.

A primary aim of this thesis is therefore to demonstrate how Anhui Opera is a discrete theatrical tradition with its own distinctive characteristics that continues to this day after being revitalised in 1956, while also having contributed significantly to the formation of Peking Opera. Its other primary aim is to consider how government policies and other contemporary measures can now be optimised to support the continuing survival and growth of Anhui Opera.

The development of Anhui Opera over the centuries reflects how profoundly the socioeconomic influences of Huizhou merchants, the royal court and the broader public have shaped the course traditional Chinese culture in ways that warrant further examination. I hope that this thesis will enable greater scholarly and public understanding about Anhui Opera and be useful to artists and policy makers in China who are now trying to ensure the survival of this tradition into the future.

## 1.2 Scope of Research

Anhui Opera is nearly 400 years old. For convenience in this thesis, I use the expression ‘modern times’ to describe the period from the beginning of the Qing dynasty in 1644 until the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. I use the term ‘contemporary’ to refer to the period since 1949 to the present day.

The geographical focus of my research is China’s Anhui Province, where Anhui Opera developed and prospered. Its provincial capital, Hefei, is home to the Anhui Opera Troupe<sup>4</sup>, which presently maintains the most sophisticated performance skills in this tradition. By exploring the history of the Anhui Opera Troupe, I hope to provide insight into the survival, development, and continuation of Anhui Opera in contemporary China. Southern Anhui is another geographical area of interest in this research. There, in the old Huizhou and Anqing areas, are numerous folk artists and

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<sup>3</sup> *Erhuang* is a kind of Anhui folk opera form, and one of the main components of Anhui Opera. Its melody is multi-graded, the tune is smooth and peaceful, the rhythm is relatively stable, and the speed is slow. Most of the singing ends on *re* and *sol* pitches. It is dignified and steady with deep sentiment.

<sup>4</sup> Often referred to as ‘the No.1 Troupe in the world’.

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opera enthusiasts whose perspectives and cultural manuscripts and relics significantly supported and shaped my thinking when I worked as a researcher for the AHCRC.

There is a wealth of Anhui Opera manuscripts and relics in the possession of folk artists and opera enthusiasts that have yet to be fully explored. However, for this thesis, I have limited my research to fundamental, yet urgent, questions concerning the historical development and key characteristics of Anhui Opera, and the recent emergence of government policy measures aimed at supporting the continuation of this tradition.

### **1.3 Chapter Outline and Summary**

This thesis contains six chapters, commencing with this Introduction, which outlines its research aims, scope and chapters.

In Chapter 2, I provide a comprehensive review of the existing literature in this field and explore methodological approaches in ethnomusicology with greatest application for my thesis.

In Section 2.1, I divide the literature into three stages according to periods of time: before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, 1950-1989, and 1990 to the present. My research clearly shows that before 1949, Anhui Opera had come to be regarded as folk music, and few people cared about it. In the 1950s, the government of the PRC realized that Anhui Opera needed to be protected. However, this traditional music form did not benefit from much researched and only basic documentation such as collected recordings and playbooks existed. Moreover, much of the extant significant data regarding Anhui Opera was almost completely destroyed and lost between 1966 and 1976. Only in the 1980s, there appeared the first article with the word 'Anhui Opera' in the title. After the 1990s, an increasing number of papers and books on Anhui Opera appeared, covering a wide range of topics, including the study of Anhui Opera's fighting, scripts, the relationship between Anhui Opera and Huizhou culture and so on. Considering that serious academic research into Anhui Opera really only began to appear in the 1980s and 1990s, it is something of a recent occurrence. Compared with Peking Opera, academic literature is still scarce, and many articles lack detail and comprehensive scholarship. I also discuss the research of some western scholars on Chinese traditional music. At present there is not a single paper written in English about the specific topic of Anhui Opera.

In Part 2.2, I introduce the research methods I use in this thesis. In addition to the Media Study and simple analyses of lyrics and music scores, some of the most important sources are those firsthand archival resources that I compiled in the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre from 2010-2016, when I was employed as a researcher there. These resources include general data, cultural observations, and interviews with folk artists and enthusiasts in southern Anhui where the opera first

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appeared. All these materials gathered from 2010-2016 and drawn upon in this thesis are held in the main collection of the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Center and are available to the general public.

In Chapter 3, I introduce the historical development and key characteristics of Anhui Opera as a distinct tradition, beginning with the definition and historical status of Anhui Opera, so that what Anhui Opera is and what role it plays in the bigger picture of Chinese traditional opera may be understood more clearly. In 3.2 I discuss the three most critical elements of Anhui Opera – the music singing style, the role types and facial makeup. Obviously, music is an indispensable part of opera and the music of Anhui Opera has the spirit of compatibility and inclusion, so the singing style is extremely rich. I have provided sample scores and made some basic analysis to show the different singing styles of this art form as clearly and intuitively as possible.

Role types are used to distinguish different natural and social attributes of characters in a play, such as age, appearance, identity, personality and so on. These are somewhat similar to Spindo, Lyric Mezzo Soprano, Dramatic Tenor and the like in western operas. The facial makeup of Anhui Opera is a character modelling art. Unlike in the West, where dramatic block colours are almost exclusively applied to clowns, most of the characters in Anhui Opera have immensely colourful faces painted according to the character's appearance (beautiful or ugly) and personality (honest or cunning). Some images of facial makeup are provided in this chapter to offer a relatively accurate depiction of facial makeup technique. These pictures are merely representative and do not denote the entire repertoire of facial makeup found in Anhui Opera, only represent a small portion of it.

In Chapter 4, I examine historical debates concerning the origins of Anhui Opera, as well as socioeconomic factors that contributed to growth and decline of its initial widespread popularity and its contributions to the emergence of Peking Opera.

In Section 4.1, I discuss the origin and formation of Anhui Opera, observing how Anhui Opera originated in the south of Anhui. I also outline the controversial views in current Chinese academic circles on whether this traditional opera originated in Shipai or Shexian County. Then, starting from the musical formation of Anhui Opera, I introduce the concept that historically Anhui Opera always absorbed traditional music forms of other provinces (and continues to do so), while simultaneously spreading in all directions, especially the south of China, affecting the music of other provinces. Then during the Qing dynasty, an Anhui Opera troupe came to Beijing to celebrate the 80th birthday of Emperor Qianlong. Following a continuous absorption of Han Opera, Qinqiang Opera and other musical forms in China's capital, Anhui Opera became a brand-new opera, which is now the quintessence of China, Peking Opera. The last part of Chapter 4 discusses Anhui Opera from its heyday to decline and analyses the reasons for its waning presence.

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The fifth chapter elaborates on the development of Anhui Opera under contemporary Chinese government policy. It looks at the situation of the Anhui Opera troupe since its establishment in 1956 to the Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre today. This discussion is divided into six stages. Along with the government policy, I analyse the development of Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre over the last half century. In the second part of Chapter 5, I discuss how that policy supports the development of Anhui Opera from several perspectives, such as how it is being brought onto campuses, how to develop Anhui Opera's familiarity and popularity, and what measures the government has taken to encourage and support many more people to watch Anhui Opera. Through this discussion it will be shown that Anhui Opera's successful development and inheritance is closely related to the guidance of national policies.

Finally, I summarise the main arguments of this thesis in Chapter 6, present its key findings and recommendations for sustaining Anhui Opera into the future, and identify possibilities for ongoing research in this field.

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## Chapter 2

### Literature Review and Methodology

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature about Anhui Opera and appraises relevant research. It also explains how my research methodology builds on qualitative ethnomusicological approaches to studying Chinese musical traditions, and sustaining musical traditions globally through the development of public music archives. I will also outline my methods for investigating primary and secondary sources.

#### 2.1 Literature Review

Chinese opera has a long history and great variety. There are more than 360 kinds of localised opera styles in China and tens of thousands of traditional operatic works across their combined repertoires. Chinese opera styles can generally be classified into the two distinct stylistic genres of Southern Opera and Northern Opera (Zhou et al. 2011). Anhui Opera originated in the south of Anhui Province, so geographically it falls into the category of Southern Opera. Anhui Opera was once a very important Chinese opera style that was highly popular in many regions and influenced dozens of other theatrical styles across China. Having emerged in Anhui Province nearly 400 years ago, it was first performed in the capital Beijing in 1790 and became highly popular there across many strata of society from the royal family to the general public (Li 2005).

##### 2.1.1 Research conducted on Anhui Opera by Chinese scholars

The most comprehensive writing on Anhui Opera is *Anhui Opera Troupes of China* by Li Taishan (2014). According to Li, Anhui Opera is open and inclusive. It has absorbed extensive performance elements from other opera styles, including Chuju and Hanju from Hubei Province and Bangzi from Shaanxi Province. It developed into a highly celebrated form that ultimately contributed to the formation of Peking Opera, which is now widely recognised as a fundament of traditional Chinese culture. Yet Anhui Opera has never received the broader scholarly attention accorded to Peking Opera. Research literature on Anhui Opera is quite limited even within China, and virtually non-existent elsewhere. Existing research into Anhui Opera can now be grouped into three distinct periods: a) before 1949,<sup>5</sup> b) 1950–1989, and c) since 1990.

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<sup>5</sup> The People's Republic of China was established in 1949.

### a) Before 1949

Before 1949, Anhui Opera had been called both Erhuang Diao and Hui Diao. It was regarded as a type of folk song that held little interest, even among local people in Anhui Province. It was largely forgotten that stock tunes of the *qingyang qiang* and *kunshan qiang* varieties had once developed into the grand Anhui Opera style through a process starting nearly 400 years ago.<sup>6</sup> It was not until 1949 that Erhuang Diao or Hui Diao was revitalised and named Anhui Opera.

At present, no research literature from before 1949 can be found on Anhui Opera, Erhuang Diao, or Hui Diao. The only available materials from this period are historical manuscripts, costumes, and props. These items are few and largely remain scattered throughout the south of Anhui Province. They are often in the possession of the descendants of Anhui Opera artists or are displayed in family folk museums. During the time I worked there as a researcher, the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre (AHCRC) learnt that Fu Yunzi (1902–1948)<sup>7</sup>, an opera researcher and chief editor of *Chinese Drama Pictorial*, had once conducted a small amount of early research into Anhui Opera. But now, only some of his writings can be found, and those contain no direct information about Anhui Opera.<sup>8</sup>

### b) 1950–1989

In the 1950s, the Chinese government began to supervise the restoration of Anhui Opera, mainly by collecting old plays and inviting veteran artists to record tunes to support their preservation and transmission. However, no relevant academic papers are found to have been published at this time. Between 1966 and 1976, nearly all old manuscripts and recordings of Anhui Opera were lost or destroyed (Chronicles of Chinese Drama Editorial Committee 1993). Scholarly writing about Anhui Opera effectively began in 1986 with the publication of Wang Xiaoyi's article, 'Huizhou merchants and Anhui Opera troupes', in *Huizhou Studies*, even though this does not address its musical characteristics. He wrote:

The Huizhou merchants prepared all the necessary conditions for the formation of the Hui Troupe and provided a broad stage for its development. Huizhou merchants not only financially supported the Hui Troupe, but also strongly influenced the Hui Troupe and its artistic development with their own ideology, moral concepts and aesthetic psychology. The distinctive personality and unique style of the Hui Troupe are the reflection of Hui merchants' personality and style in art. (Wang 1986, p. 86)

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<sup>6</sup> In Chinese opera forms, *qiang* refers to a common melodic framework used to compose recognisable tunes.

<sup>7</sup> Fu Yunzi was of Manchu origin, which is an ethnic minority in China.

<sup>8</sup> Fu discusses some voice tunes that are used in Anhui Opera, but does not explicitly use the word 'Anhui Opera'. The voice tunes he discusses can exist independently outside of Anhui Opera and this is likely what he was referring to.



c) *Since 1990*

The early 1990s saw the compilation and publication of the *Anhui Volume of the Annals of Chinese Drama* (Chronicles of Chinese Drama Editorial Committee, 1993). To some extent, this book filled a significant gap in the study of Anhui Opera. Aimed at exploring, rescuing, and preserving all remaining Anhui Opera materials from the 1950s and 1960s, it chronicled the development of Anhui Opera troupes since 1949, their repertoires and new opera compositions, and relevant government policies.

The book *Anhui Opera Troupes of China* (Li 2005) was listed as a project of the Tenth National Five-Year Plan for the Arts and published by the Anhui Literature and Art Publishing House after three years of compilation. Its author was the preeminent Anhui Opera artist, Li Taishan, a former Deputy Director of the Anhui Opera Troupe. Li's book contains five sections: i) Anhui Opera troupes in the Ming dynasty, ii) Anhui Opera troupes in the Qing dynasty, iii) modern Anhui Opera troupes, iv) Anhui Opera art, and v) Anhui Opera music. It outlines the historical formation and development of Anhui Opera troupes and discusses their relationships with Anhui merchants and Huizhou culture. It also explains some of Anhui Opera's aesthetic qualities. In the final section on Anhui Opera music, Li analyses the vocal parts of some Anhui Opera excerpts to illustrate their dramatic characteristics. This was a relatively comprehensive book that opened the door to future research.

Influenced by Li's research, the folk composer Zhu Zhuxin completed another extensive work, *The Annals of Anhui Opera in Shexian County* (2015).<sup>9</sup> It too focusses on the development of Anhui Opera in Shexian County, its formative opera troupes and aesthetic qualities. What is noteworthy about Zhu's book, however, is that it collated forty-two classical Anhui Opera scores for operatic works, such as *Guangzhuang Wang* and *The Emperor of the Beihan Dynasty*, which greatly augmented and enriched the repertoire then available for performance. Zhu's book also outlines the musical instruments used in Anhui Opera, its lyrical conventions<sup>10</sup>, and percussion notation system.<sup>11</sup> Zhu puts forward the novel, yet minority, view that Anhui Opera began in Huangwei village in Shexian County, Anhui Province.

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<sup>9</sup> Shexian is a county in South Anhui province with a population of 490,000.

<sup>10</sup> Such as *Qupai*, a general name for the form used in traditional lyrics and musical notation, commonly known as 'brand'. In ancient times, the original composition of *ci* (lyrics) and music was called 'lyrics selection and music score'. Later, attractive tunes were gradually canonised, and new words were added according to the pattern of the original lyrics and tunes, though the original names were still used in most cases. The melodic frameworks of operas formed before the Ming dynasty, such as the Kunshan tune, the Yiyang tune and operas derived from popular tunes of Ming and Qing dynasties, were mostly composed according to the *Qupai* form, commonly known as singing in 'Qupai style'.

<sup>11</sup> Luogujing is a notation system that uses Chinese characters to identify combinations of instruments, modes of articulation, timbres and so on for traditional percussion accompaniment.

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Increasingly, since 2000, other scholars have researched and published on Anhui Opera. These sources can be classified into five main categories:

- a) Martial arts in Anhui Opera,
- b) The importance of Huizhou merchants in disseminating Anhui Opera,
- c) New perspectives on education and innovation,
- d) Studies of specific Anhui Opera manuscripts,
- e) Artistic practice research.

*a) Martial arts in Anhui Opera*

Peng Wenbing and Qu Xiaohong's article, 'Research on the Protection of Martial Arts in Anhui Opera from the Perspective of Intangible Cultural Heritage' (2012), elaborates on the significance of theatrical martial arts in Anhui Opera. 'The Application of Martial Arts in Anhui Opera and its Value' by Huang Xiaohua and Zhou Yangyang (2019) has further analysed the mutual influences and interrelationships between traditional martial arts and their theatrical forms in Anhui Opera. It stresses the importance of martial arts in arousing people's attention and commitment to Anhui Opera.

*b) The importance of Huizhou merchants in disseminating Anhui Opera*

'Exploring the Tension of Huizhou Opera Culture from the Activities of Huizhou Merchants and Family Music Class in Ming and Qing Dynasties' by Luo Keman (2013), focusses on the chronicling of Anhui Opera music, performances and venues in historical Huizhou manuscripts. Luo explores the contributions of Anhui merchants to the growth of Anhui Opera.

*c) New perspectives on education and innovation*

'The Lively Inheritance in Jixi Children's Troupe of Anhui Opera' by Hu Cuili (2016) discusses how better to develop, utilise and protect the Jixi Children's Troupe of Anhui Opera by adopting the traditional mode of oral instruction to stimulate performance vitality.<sup>12</sup> 'A SWOT Analysis and Countermeasures Study of Jixi Children's Troupe of Anhui Opera' by Ye Jiajia and Wang Kui (2017) explores the viability of reinstating the traditional inheritance model<sup>13</sup> of Anhui Opera transmission. Using new research methods, they have broached new research questions that have not previously been explored. 'Anhui Opera: Integration with School Education by No. 3 Primary School Affiliated to Hefei Normal University, Anhui Province' (China Wenming Network, 2017) shows how Anhui Opera can be successfully integrated into a school curriculum aimed at allowing younger students to absorb their cultural heritage, while 'Some Problems in the Innovation of Anhui

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<sup>12</sup> Jixi is a county located in South Anhui province with a population of 159,000.

<sup>13</sup> This article provides a detailed analysis of the shortages and challenges faced by children's Anhui Opera troupes in primary schools in Jixi country. It also discusses how to set up the troupes in schools successfully to prevent children from simply treating Anhui Opera as an extra-curricular hobby as opposed to a serious cultural heritage.

Opera' by Wei Qing and Tang Lu (2019) discusses barriers and successes in bringing innovation to contemporary Anhui Opera productions.

*d) Studies of specific Anhui Opera manuscripts*

Studies of specific Anhui Opera manuscripts have been a new research direction in recent years. They include 'The Evolution of the Script of *Nahu (Capturing the Tiger)* of Anhui Opera' by Yao Xue and Jiang Xiaoping (2020), which postulates that the plot of this opera may be transformed from the folk opera, *Cui Jue Duan Hu (The Verdict on the Tiger)* by Cui Jue. During the Ming dynasty reign of Emperor Wanli<sup>14</sup>, 'A Collection of Law Cases' renewed this story and until the Qing dynasty the opera *The Law Case of a Tiger* flourished on the stage. During the late Qing dynasty and the early Republic of China, it was abridged and transformed by Anhui Opera troupes into the popular *Nahu* operatic work. Liu Yang's Masters Thesis, 'The Evolution of the Performance in *Gui Feizui Jiu (The Drunken Concubine)*' (2020), traces the evolution of the opera *The Drunken Concubine* across different adaptations by different artists over time. The first and second chapters of Liu's thesis elaborate on the evolutionary changes to Anhui Opera when it absorbed the folk vocal style of *qingyang qiang*.<sup>15</sup>

*e) Artistic practice research as informed by Anhui Opera*

Li Yan's Masters thesis, 'Study on the Expression of Anhui Opera Characters in Oil Painting Creation' (2019), made an in-depth analysis of Anhui Opera stage characters that captured costume colours, choreographed movements and regional characteristics through fieldwork and interviews. Starting by capturing the facial expressions of opera characters in his oil paintings, Li analysed their different forms of appearance and presentation. His research illustrates the aesthetic qualities of the dramatis personae in Anhui Opera, as well as the inheritance and development of folk custom and modern art in Chinese culture. To date, this research is unique.

## **2.1.2 Research conducted on Chinese traditional music by Western scholars**

Regarding broader research into traditional Chinese music, the existing literature in English is relatively sparse, but there is a growing ethnomusicological literature on China's musical heritage. Jonathan Stock's book *Huiju: Traditional Opera in Modern Shanghai* (2003) was mostly based on audiovisual materials and interviews gathered during his fieldwork, and recorded the main repertoire, characters, troupes, costumes and set designs of this tradition. Huai also recorded interviews for his book, *Cross-Gender China: The Revival of Nandan Performance in Jingju* (2018) with the mostly

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<sup>14</sup> Emperor Wanli (1563–1620) was the fourteenth emperor of the Ming dynasty. He ascended the throne in 1572 and reigned for forty-eight years.

<sup>15</sup> *Qingyang qiang* is a form of folk vocal music with easily understandable lyrics and was very popular with the general public.

male Jingju (Peking opera) performers, including newcomers, students and enthusiasts. Stock (2003), as well as Huai (2017) and Guo (2002), have also collected and documented historical materials that demonstrate respective developments in Huiju and Jingju over time. Guo (2002, p. 35) has also examined the historical notation system used in Shanghai opera, and the same method was used by Wong in his article, ‘Reinventing the Central Asian Rawap in Modern China: Musical Stereotypes, Minority Modernity, and Uyghur Instrumental Music’ (2012, pp. 51–53). In ‘Cantonese Opera and the Growth and Spread of Vernacular Written Cantonese in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’, Chan (2005) analysed a large collection of opera scripts and audiovisual materials to explain the relationship between Cantonese opera and print culture. Finally, where strategies for ongoing cultural survival are concerned, both Huai (2017) and Wong (2012) offer their reflections on the contemporary status of traditional Chinese music and put forward proposals after much consideration.

There is a developing ethnomusicological literature concerning strategies for maintaining musical traditions in contemporary contexts. The article ‘The Rise and Implementation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection for Music in China’ (Zhang, Yao & Schippers 2015) explains that China has recently striven to connect with the rest of the world in protecting its cultural heritage, including its musical traditions. Many policies, procedures, regulations, projects and concepts have emerged through this push, including the official List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in China. By the end of 2014, the Chinese government had invested several hundred million Yuan into 1828 cultural heritage projects that benefitted some 20 million people.

There are presently fourteen national cultural and cultural environment preservation priorities. Anhui Opera falls within the Huizhou preservation zone. All together, these zones span:

Table 1: National Cultural and Environment Zones in China

National Cultural and Environment Zone	Province
Minnan (闽南)	Fujian province (福建省)
Huizhou (徽州)	Anhui (安徽) and Jiangxi (江西) provinces
Regong (热贡)	Qinghai (青海) province
Qiang (羌)	Sichuan (四川) and Shaanxi (山西) provinces
Hakka (客家)	Meizhou (梅州) in Guangdong (广东) provinces
Tujia (土家) and Miao (苗)	Wuling (武陵) mountains of the Xiangxi (江西) and Hunan (湖南) provinces
Xiangshan (象山)	Zhejiang (浙江) province
Jinzhong (晋中)	Shanxi (山西) province
Weishui (渭水)	Shandong (山东) province
Diqing Tibetan (迪庆藏族)	Yunnan (云南) province
Dali (大理)	Yunnan (云南) province
Shanbei (陕北)	Shaanxi province (陕西)

Hakka (客家)	Gannan (赣南) area of the Jiangxi (江西) province
Qiandongnan (黔东南)	Guizhou (贵州) province

This is a relatively limited body of literature and many aspects of Anhui Opera, such as its elaborate and systematic aesthetics, are still waiting to be explored. Similarly, almost there is no research into the musical content and performance practice of Anhui Opera, except in Li Taishan's *Anhui Opera Troupes of China* (2005, pp. 719–1365). No research has been undertaken into the influences of Anhui Opera upon many other opera forms, including Chuju and Qinqiang, or how this led to the formation of Peking Opera. Also absent is research into Anhui Opera's performance practice, lyrical settings and set designs. There are still many areas around Anhui Opera that require further research and there are many unanswered questions about the formation of Anhui Opera itself.

In *Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Policy, Ideology, and Practice in the Preservation of East Asian Traditions*, Ree declares that anecdotally, it seems as if many Chinese students and teachers believe that traditional Chinese music is aesthetically inferior to western music or Chinese music genres that have been westernized (2012, p. 12). This cultural hegemony has largely negated the presence and influence of local folk musics, ignored cultural heritage, and dissipated the respect for and value of local culture and art. This arises from a lack of exposure to and understanding of community culture, an indiscriminate reverence for foreign (especially western) art forms, and a mistaken shift in the cultural narrative.

Little is known these days about Chinese traditional culture due to the long-term deficiency in protecting and promoting its values. Many do not know the cultural history or the subtext of Chinese musical drama, leading many Chinese to think that their traditional music is 'unscientific' and 'backward' (Ree 2012). This thesis aims to bring some of the history and character of Anhui Opera to light in order that it may gain the recognition and protection that it deserves.

## 2.2 Methodology

My employment as an AHCRC researcher from 2013 to 2018 greatly inspired me to undertake further research into Anhui Opera through this thesis and drew me towards methodological approaches of ethnomusicology as a means of engaging in this research. My initial research for the AHCRC first took me to Fuling, known as the hometown of Anhui Opera in the Jixi County of Anhui Province in October 2014. There I met with villagers and folk artists, spoke with them about their local culture, and explored the past and present of Anhui Opera. Farmhouses, ancestral halls and even fields were sites of communication and sharing.

My interviewees in Fuling and the old Huizhou and Anqing areas while working for the AHCRC included many seasoned Anhui Opera experts and artists. Mr Shao

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Mingqin of the Children's Anhui Opera Troupe had played roles in Anhui Opera since the age of twelve and is now over sixty. Ms Hou Lou was a Member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Vice-Chairperson and Secretary-General of the Anhui Dramatist Association. The seminal Anhui Opera scholar, Mr Li Taishan, was Deputy Head of the Anhui Opera Troupe founded in 1956, and Ms Wang Jinxian was Director and a veteran artist of the Anhui Opera and Peking Opera Troupe of Anhui Province.

My interviews with these experts and other seasoned Anhui Opera artists explored the history and development of Anhui Opera, its influence on Peking Opera and other Chinese opera styles, and the present challenges to its continuation. I also gathered their views on the collection of old manuscripts, the preservation of other old relics such as costumes and props, rebuilding contemporary audience numbers, and ongoing innovations in composition and performance.

The interviews and relics I recorded and collected during those visits built a new corpus of rare and precious Anhui Opera resources spanning twelve old manuscripts, more than 100 hours of audio recordings, more than 300 photographs and nine short videos that the AHCRC now holds in its public collection. These are open to researchers and the general public, and I cite them as such in this thesis, just as their donors and the AHCRC have intended them to be used.

These materials, however, are not products of my research into this thesis, nor are these its focus. Instead, my primary focus is to remedy the problem that, to date, there has been no research into the basic musical content and performance practices of Anhui Opera throughout its developmental history. This gap, if left unaddressed, holds the capacity to stop useful ethnomusicological research into Anhui Opera from ever progressing.

My methodological approach in this thesis is therefore to address fundamental and urgent research questions concerning the historical development and key characteristics of Anhui Opera with respect to its musical content and performance practices. These show and contextualise Anhui Opera's regional origins in Anhui and its influences on other opera traditions as it spread across China. To this end, my analysis of Anhui Opera manuscripts has demanded detailed transcription and translation of lyrics and musical scores originally written in ancient Gongchepu notation into English and Western notation.<sup>16</sup> It has also involved the mediation of ancient Chinese musical concepts such as *qiang*, a common melodic framework used

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<sup>16</sup> Gongchepu is a unique notation method in the Chinese character cultural circle. It originated from the Tang dynasty in China and later spread to Japan, Vietnam, the Korean Peninsula, Ryukyu and other areas where Chinese characters are used. Some traditional Chinese opera actors and students still use it today. Gongchepu is traditionally written vertically from top to bottom, but now it can also be written horizontally.

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for composing recognisable tunes in Chinese opera styles, that have no direct equivalents in Western music theory.

I combine this approach with a survey of recent government policy measures aimed at supporting the contemporary continuation of Anhui Opera while also considering related performance troupes, education programs, opera enthusiasts, non-governmental organisations, public collections and public media representations. By tracing information about Anhui Opera on official websites and public media platforms, I seek to better understand its present status of Anhui Opera and present findings that can be of use to artists and policy makers in China who are now trying to ensure the survival of this tradition into the future.

### **2.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has explored the scope and limitations of existing scholarly literature on Anhui Opera and how my thesis seeks to address these significant gaps in research. It outlines my methodological approach within the context of ethnomusicological research and my previous employment as researcher with AHCRC, whose role it was to ensure that Anhui Opera resources could be safeguarded and made accessible to all in its public collection. I have iterated the primary aim of this thesis to redress the basic lack of research to date into Anhui Opera's musical content and performance practice throughout its developmental history, and the analytical methods I will employ to achieve this. I have also explained the methods I will employ in my survey of recent government policy measures and other contemporary approaches aimed at ensuring the future survival of Anhui Opera. In the following chapter, I will explain the key characteristics of Anhui Opera with reference to its musical content and performance practices.

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## Chapter 3

### Anhui Opera and Its Core Elements

Anhui Opera contributed greatly to the emergence of Peking Opera and has had an important influence on the development of more than forty regional opera styles throughout the country. Yet, as Anhui Opera is itself only a local opera style familiar to a relatively small number of people, there is little broader understanding or knowledge of it. This chapter is therefore devoted to an examination of the core musical and theatrical concepts and elements of Anhui Opera concerning its vocal tunes,<sup>17</sup> character roles, and facial makeup. The aim of this chapter is to provide broad awareness of and familiarity with Anhui Opera for all kinds of readers to lay a solid foundation for subsequent research and performance initiatives. Section 3.1 briefly discusses the definition of Anhui opera; section 3.2 presents the core elements of Anhui opera, also known as the three most important components of stage performance – vocal melody, role types, and facial makeup, with texts, music examples and figures.

#### 3.1 Defining Anhui Opera

Anhui Opera arose from the combination of a wide variety of recognisable pre-existing opera melodies that were staged as scripted operatic set pieces, dramatising a wide array of themes, including military disputes among nations, regal court events, mythical gods and ghosts, and traditional folklife. Its theatrical displays were rich and colourful with a strong local flavour and dialogues that are simple yet humorous. Anhui Opera repertoires also span different generic formats. The *wen* play format, for example, is characterised by melodious songs, wonderful dances and delicate, euphemistic performances, while the *wu* play format is known for its stunning and astonishing feats of acrobatics and martial arts. According to Li, however, the term Anhui Opera is a rather recent construct:

It is only after the founding of the People's Republic of China that this opera was named Anhui Opera. The appellation of Anhui Opera was first found in the Anhui Opera Troupe founded in 1956. Anhui Opera is primarily composed of chuiqiang tunes (吹腔), bozi tunes (拨子), pihuang (皮黄) (xipi-erhuang in full) tunes and other early Anhui opera tunes, which are combined with the 'Anhui style' kunqu (昆曲) tunes and Qingyang tunes (青阳腔), according to the guidelines formulated by the Ministry of Culture on the founding of the Anhui Opera Troupe of Anhui Province. Thus, Anhui Opera is unique and different from many other pihuang operas all over China. (Li 2015, p. 595)

Zhu (2015) states that vocal melody, role types, and facial makeup are the three main elements in Anhui Opera. The development of Anhui Opera through its absorption of and integration with other traditional Chinese opera styles later played an important contribution to the emergence of Peking Opera and has influenced more than fifty other local Chinese opera traditions overall (Li 2015). Yu Zhibin's *A Brief History of*

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<sup>17</sup> See section 3.2.1 for definition of this term.



*Pihuang Operas in South and North* (1994) documents that, in 1790, a major Anhui Opera troupe arrived in Beijing for Emperor Qianlong's 80th birthday.<sup>18</sup> They collaborated with other Han opera (汉剧) artists from Hubei (湖北), who arrived in Beijing later during the Jiaqing (嘉庆) and Daoguang (道光) reigns. They also absorbed regional folk tunes and gradually formed a new type of opera, now known as Peking Opera and considered to be a quintessential Chinese artform. Many texts, including *The Development History of Chinese Drama* (Liao and Liu 2013) and the *Dictionary of the Stagecraft of Traditional Chinese Drama* (Yu 2006), explain how Anhui Opera laid this groundwork for Peking Opera, while also closely influencing many other local opera traditions in south China, such as Dianju (滇剧), Cantonese Opera (粤剧), Fujian Opera (闽剧), Guiju (桂剧), Hunan Opera (湘剧), Ganju (赣剧), Wuju (婺剧) and Huaiju (淮剧), as will be discussed in detail later. Anhui Opera has handed down a rich artistic legacy of vocal melodies and repertoire for Chinese opera performance. Through its spread from Anhui by Huizhou merchants across much of China during the height of its historic popularity, it uniquely connects Chinese opera's past with the future.

### **3.2 The Vocal Melodies, Role Types and Facial Makeup of Anhui Opera**

Among Anhui Opera artists, vocal tunes, character roles, and facial makeup are regarded as the three key elements that form the heart of Anhui Opera performance.

Foremost are the vocal tunes, which are of great importance to building the narrative thread of each staged opera. Vocal tunes are mainly used to express the feelings of and communication between characters, lead the plot development, and combine beauty of timbre and rhyme, which is an indispensable artistic factor in its performance.

Character types that differentiate the roles of different singers and actors are established within a standardised performance system in Anhui Opera. As an important part of its performance and style, character types categorise roles by physical attributes such as gender, age and appearance, and social attributes such as identity, status and temperament.

Different character roles are accentuated by a colourful array of facial makeup patterns. These exaggerate the shape of the eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth, and emphasise the facial muscles used to express emotional changes, such as pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy. They also assist audiences to identify the innate nature of each character: loyal or treacherous, good or evil, or beautiful or ugly.

The following explains these three key elements in greater detail.

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<sup>18</sup> Initially only the Sanqing troupe travelled to Beijing for this event. Following the financial success of this trip, several other troupes soon followed them to Beijing, pursuing fame and financial gain.

### 3.2.1 The Major Vocal Tunes of Anhui Opera

The term *vocal tune* in Anhui Opera denotes, within a song, a complex multi-layered combination of regional dialect, character voicing, subject matter, and melodic style. Whereas in Western art opera, there will be a variety of songs composed with original melodies for each new operatic work, in traditional Chinese opera, vocal tunes are usually derived from long-established folksong repertoires sung with their own distinct regional language dialects, accents and cultural meanings. Each Chinese opera style is built upon one or more vocal tunes around which has coalesced a distinct school of performance that foregrounds the specific dialect and singing style of its performers. How people within a region speak is therefore transposed into how their regional opera style is sung, thereby providing it with its own unique melodic framework. Through complex histories of travel between regions, different regional tunes have migrated with artists into new regions, where they have often merged with local folksongs and tunes of other opera styles.

The vocal tunes in Anhui Opera run through the entirety of each operatic work. They provide a range of thematic templates for constructing the primary plot and locating its regional origins and setting. Through its long history of absorption from local folksongs and mergers with tunes from other opera styles, the principal types of tune used in Anhui Opera are the Miscellaneous Tune or Ditty, the Huichi Elegant Tune (徽池雅调), the Huikun Tune (徽昆), the Siping Tune (四平腔), the Chuiqiang Tune, the Bozi Tune and the Erhuang tune (二黄).

#### 3.2.1.1 The Miscellaneous Tune or Ditty

Miscellaneous Tunes have two key functions. When appropriate, they are used to contribute to plot development. At other times, they are used as interstitial ditties bridging different Kunqu, Yiyang Qiang, Chuiqiang, Bozi or Erhuang tune songs. Although Miscellaneous Tunes can have a variety of names, they are always categorised as folksongs of the Ming or Qing dynasties. Folksongs from across the country have developed their own regional styles and characteristics and have been influenced by different dialects and music traditions. Therefore, the Miscellaneous Tunes preserved in different regional opera styles across China inherited some common factors yet developed differently over time. In the early Qing dynasty some intellectuals and artists who were fond of Chinese opera thereby adapted folk tunes, dances, or religious music into small operatic works to meet general public demand. These small operatic works reflected daily life and comprised several folk melodies or ditties. As such, they are also called *ditty operas* (Li 2005, Zhu 2015).

Examples 1 to 3 are folk tunes used as Miscellaneous Tunes in the Anhui Opera, *Madam Wang Curses the Rooster* (王婆骂鸡), as collected by the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre (AHCRC) in 2014. They were sung for this collection by Yu Yinshun (余银顺), a senior performer of Anhui Opera, transcribed in numbered notation by Lu Xiaoqiu (陆小秋), and I have rendered them here in Western notation.

Example 1. 'Madame Wang gets up early in the morning', an aria sung by Madame Wang (王婆) (Laodan).<sup>19</sup>

### (一) 老王婆，天早起

(王婆[老旦]唱腔)

15 老王婆，天早起，放出一笼鸡。这几天未曾在家里，不知失鸡  
 28 不失鸡。用手抓把米，一撒撒在尘埃地，学一个韩信是乱  
 42 点兵（哪） 一二三、三二  
 57 一只鸡，一二三四五、五四三二一只鸡。一二三四五六七、七六五四  
 71 三二一只鸡，一二三四五六七八九、九八七六五四三二一只鸡。  
 81 点来点去少了一只红毛绿眼的报晓鸡。  
 (哎)

Lyrics:

I am Madame Wang, who got up early to release the roosters from the coop. I have been away from home for a while, and I am wondering if any roosters are lost. Let me grab a handful of rice and scatter it on the dirt ground. I'll count them as if I were General Han Xin making a roll call in a barrack: 1, 2, 3, 3, 2, 1 roosters; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 roosters; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 roosters; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 roosters. I found one red-feathered green-eyed crowing rooster missing after I counted them repeatedly. Gosh!

<sup>19</sup> As discussed in the next section, Laodan is an Old Woman character role.

Example 2. 'Madame Wang annoys me by raising too many roosters', an aria sung by Madame Li (Huadan).<sup>20</sup>

(二) 恼恨王婆，光养雄鸡  
(李嫂[花旦]唱腔)

The musical score is written in a single system with four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in a style characteristic of traditional Chinese opera, with various note values and rests. The lyrics are written in Chinese characters below the notes. The score is divided into four lines of music, each starting with a measure number: 13, 28, 39, and 44. The lyrics are: 恼恨王婆，光养雄鸡，朝朝暮暮偷我菜吃。棒槌打死，拿到家里。烧锅开水，去掉毛衣。放在锅里，吞在腹里。等她到此，我还要与她生气。

13 恼恨王婆，光养雄鸡，朝朝暮暮偷我菜  
28 吃。棒槌打死，拿到家里。烧锅开水，去掉  
39 毛衣。放在锅里，吞在腹里。等  
44 她到此，我还要与她生气。

Lyrics:

I am annoyed that Old Madame Wang raises too many roosters. They feed on my vegetables, day and night. Let me kill the rooster with a club and take it home. I'll boil a pot of water while removing its feathers, and then I'll cook it and gobble it up, and I'm going to have a fight with her as soon she comes here.

<sup>20</sup> As discussed in the next section, Huadan is a Vivacious Young Female character role.

Example 3, 'If a businessman steals my rooster', sung by Old Madame Wang (Laodan) and by Madame Li (Huadan).

### (三) 若是做生意的人偷了我家的鸡

(王婆[老旦]李嫂[花旦]唱腔)

12 (婆) 若 是 做 生 意 的 人 偷 了 我 家 的 鸡, 吃 了 我 家 的 鸡, 叫 他 一 天 到 晚

26 没 得 生 意 万 钱 为 本 一 钱 为 利。 (嫂) 王 大 妈 说 话 少 道 理, 若 还

36 做 生 意 的 人, 偷 了 你 的 鸡, 吃 了 你 的 鸡, 做 起 生 意

45 兴 隆, 四 海, 一 钱 为 本, 万 钱 为 利。

Lyrics:

Madame Wang: If a businessman stole my rooster and ate it, he would never make money, and always lose his capital in his business.

Madame Li: Old Madame Wang, you are very unreasonable. If a businessman stole your rooster and ate it, his business would prosper, and he would make a lot of money for it.

These examples show the satirical lyrics and melodic contours and rhythms that are characteristic of Anhui Opera. Their shared time signature is 1/4, which is uncommon in Western music, but very commonly used in Chinese opera to accentuate the four pitched tones of spoken Mandarin (rising, falling, flat and broken) when sung. However, this does not influence the pitch contour of melodies in Anhui Opera or most other traditional Chinese music.

### 3.2.1.2 The Huichi Elegant Tune

The Huizhou Tune and the Qingyang Tune (also called the Chizhou Tune [池州腔]) are collectively referred to as the composite Huichi Elegant Tune. According to sources such as Li Taishan's *The Anhui Opera Troupes of China* (2005) and Zhu Zhuxin's *The Annals of Anhui Opera in Shexian County* (2015), during Emperor Jiajing's (嘉靖) reign in the Ming dynasty, the Yiyang Tune was brought by refugees from Jiangxi to the Huizhou area of southern Anhui, where it merged with the local folk opera style to form the Huizhou Tune. Other Jiangxi refugees brought the Yiyang Tune to Qingyang County and incorporated it with local music there to form the Qingyang Tune.<sup>21</sup> The Qingyang Tune occupied a leading place in the Huichi Elegant Tune framework. The Huichi Elegant Tune was nonetheless despised by the scholar-bureaucrat class due to its folksong origins.

Luo Jinlong (罗金龙) states in his online journal, *The Creation of Chinese Opera by Long Ying* (2019), that Long Yan (龙贇) (1560–1622), a Hunan native who had been an official in Huizhou, had indignantly scorned:

Nowadays, some people do not study rhymes seriously but randomly replace them with local dialects. They are ignorant of the 355 chapters of the modes of tonality but blindly steal their opera lines. Not to mention that they should perform a relaxed style of melody but act a fast style instead; they should adopt a sobbing melodious tone but [instead] sing with the high-pitched tone; they should act gracefully with implicit style but show live scenes instead. Or else they are keen on vulgar banter and jokes and piece a lot of doggerel together. The Qingyang tune, for example, is only used to please children or street girls. If the words are put on the table, they will tarnish one's eyes. Their mis-imitation can be likened to 'paint a tiger that resembles a dog'. (*The Complete Works of Lunyan*, Vol. 21, in Luo 2019, p. 1)

Luo explains the significance of these criticisms. He suggests that Long Yan's critique of the 'vulgar banter and jokes' in the rolling melody indicates a gag between the singing, as 'doggerel' referred to cracking a joke or limerick. The 'pieced words' meant that the lyrics of the Qingyang Tune were too vulgar and without elegant rhymes. The phrase 'paint a tiger that resembles a dog' meant that the Qingyang Tune and similar melodic forms should theoretically work well in Chinese opera, but because their vocal timbre was too shrill and their lyrics too vulgar, they were far removed from fine traditional opera melodies such as the Kunshan Tune (昆山腔).

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<sup>21</sup> Qingyang Tune is also known as the Chizhou Tune, since Qingyang was administratively subordinate to the Chizhou Prefecture.

Although the Huichi Elegant Tune was ridiculed by scholars and officials, it still spread widely and was greatly influential in China's vast rural areas. One stylistic reason for this can be found in Anhui Opera's practice of *Wen xi wu chang* (文戏武唱), which paired the singer's authoritative vocal performance with skilful stylised choreography designed to reveal the character's nature and captivate the audience. Often performed were also difficult acrobatic acts such as 'jumping through a burning ring'<sup>22</sup>, and the 'pagoda of bowls.'<sup>23</sup> The performance of Qingyang Tune songs also employed various kinds of vibrant paper masks.

The musical and singing styles of the Qingyang Tune were almost the same as that of the Yiyang Tune (弋阳腔). However, the Qingyang Tune retained the established practice of making songs from medleys of various existing tunes, while the Yiyang Tune featured a spoken solo with chorus and used only gongs and drums for accompaniment. Another style of performance was the *rolling melody*. In his article, 'An Explanation of the Rolling Melody' (1942), Fu Yunzi (傅芸子) explained that the rolling melody (*gundiao*) was a 'chanting tune', halfway between singing and speech. It originated in Buddhist and Taoist music from southern Anhui and came directly from Mulian Opera (目连戏). This kind of singing was high pitched, emotive and very rhythmical. Its lyrics were formed from rhyming couplets of five or seven characters, which were catchy and lively. Importantly, these lyrics were very easy to understand by common people and not esoteric, as in Kunqu (昆曲).

Figure 3 is an example of a rolling melody score characteristic of the Qingyang Tune. This figure is from a collection of engraved Qingyang Tune extracts from the Late Ming dynasty, found by Fu Yunzi in the Cabinet Library of Japan in the 1940s, called *A Collection of Selected Traditional Opera of Yuefu Rolling Melodies* (摘锦奇音·伯喈别亲赴选) and reproduced by Li (1993).

<sup>22</sup> An acrobatic feat where a performer somersaults gracefully and safely through a burning ring.

<sup>23</sup> An extremely difficult acrobatic act where the actor carries a pile of china bowls on his head while performing splits, standing on one leg, handstands, and other skills.

Figure 1. ‘Bojje departs from his parents for the imperial examination’, from *A Collection of Yuefu Rolling Melodies* (Li 1993, p. 202), depicting a son leaving home.



Lyrics:

‘Water in the River’<sup>24</sup>

Jing (a male role with painted face): The son has to leave his mum.

Sheng (a young male role): My mum will stay alone.

Jing: You are wrong. My wife, sew him good clothes, and let’s expect him back really soon. We must sew his clothes with dense stitches before he leaves.

[Rolling melody] Why we sew his clothes with dense stitches before he leaves? That’s all because he will seek fame and fortune. Keep in mind the family’s instructions and return as soon as possible. Don’t worry your mum too much. She looks longingly toward the steep mountains.

The lyrics in this song are easy to understand, colloquial, and not as abstruse as those in Kunqu. So they were compatible with the general experiences and sensibilities of people at the time. This is also one of the characteristics of rolling melodies. Musical scores reproduced in the books, *The Spring of the Ming Dynasty* (in Li, 1993), and *Works of Traditional Chinese Operas* (in Zhu 2015), hold many similar examples. The following Examples 4–6 show the distinctive features of rolling melodies.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Water in the River’ is the title of this song.



Example 4. 'The Story of a Gold Pellet • Holding the Box (金丸记 捧盒)', an aria sung by Chen Lin.<sup>25</sup> (AHCRC Main Collection)

### From <Golden pellet·Holding box>

Chen, Lin (Old male role)'s Aria

Sang by Chu, Sui huai  
Recorded by Lu, Xiao qiu

是谁行? 站立金桥上, 怀抱小儿郎, 口儿内禁不住

13 (chorus) ———— Ad libitum

23 闲谈讲, 絮叨叨, 愁锁愁锁在眉尖上。(一当一当当)

32 盈盈泪两行, 此事咱也知道明白, (chorus) ————

41 莫不事宫中宫人干出巧勾当? 宫中宫人干出巧勾当? Ad libitum

干出巧勾当? (一当一当当)

#### Lyrics:

Who is walking there? She is standing on the Golden Bridge with a little kid in her arms, and can't help chattering, showing a trace of sadness on her brows.

(Clang, clang)<sup>26</sup>

Tears are coming down her cheeks. I also know and understand a little bit about her worries. Isn't someone in the palace doing something bad to her? Is someone in the palace doing something bad to her?

(Clang, clang)

<sup>25</sup> Chen Lin is an old male role type.

<sup>26</sup> This onomatopoeic stage direction 'imitates' the sounds made by cymbals, indicating that there will be percussion accompaniment.

Example 5. 'The Romance of a Gold Hairpin • Forced Marriage (金钗记 逼嫁)', sung by Qian Yulian

From <The romance of a Hairpin. Compel a woman to marry>  
Qian, Yulian's Aria

Sang by Cui, Mengchang

吉 凶 祸 福 从 天 降。 继 母 顿 起 歹 心 肠。  
7  
鹊 噪 非 为 喜， 鸦 鸣 岂 是 凶？ 若 问 吉 凶 事，  
13  
尽 在 鸟 音 中， 鸟 音 中， 此 事 我 也 知 道 晓 得，(哎) 孙 汝 权 你  
19 (chorus) Ad libitum  
好 痴 心 妄 想。 (一 当 一 当 当)

Lyrics:

Good luck, bad luck, misfortune and good fortune come from the heavens. The stepmother is heartless to me. The chirping of a magpie doesn't convey a joyous occasion. Does a crow's croak convey a disaster? I know that both the bad and the good are in the bird's sound.

(Alas) Sun Ruquan, You're delusional!

(Clang, clang)

Example 6. ‘A Legendary Pipa from Farewell to Nanshan Mountain (琵琶记 南山别)’

(Li 2005 p.779), an aria sung by Zhang Guangcai.

### From<The Romance of the Lute. Say goodbye in South Hill>

Zhang, Guangcai's Aria

Sang by Chu, Suihuai

12 说 什 么 屡 屡 相 周 济, 这 几 年, 遇 饥 荒, 老

24 汉 相 看 你 不 周 你 看 日 落 西 山, 白 鸟 投 林,

36 你 还 拜 我 怎 的? 拜 我 何 来? 拜 我 何 来? 五 媳,

(chorus) Ad libitum

一 同 转 过 古 荒 丘, 一 同 转 过 古 荒 丘。 (一 当 一 当 当)

Lyrics:

You say that you have relieved us many times? We have had a famine [all] these years, and I don't think you have ever helped us. Look, the sun is setting in the west, and birds are flying into the forest. Why are you worshipping me? Fifth daughter-in-law let's turn around the ancient barren hill together and turn around the ancient barren hill together.  
(Clang, clang)

It can be seen that all three melodies employ the pentatonic mode. In Example 4, phrases have a strong tendency to end on a D, creating a sense of D as the tonic. In Example 5, the first halves of phrases tend to finish on A, while the second halves tend to finish on E. This could suggest that the tonic of Example 5 is E, with antecedent phrases coming to rest on the fourth. Alternatively, the tonic could be interpreted as A, with antecedent phrases coming to rest on the tonic, and consequent phrases moving to the dominant. In Example 6, there is no clear sense of tonic. The absence of an A dominant in Example 4 might seem odd to a Western audience. However, the relationship between tonic and dominant, as shown in these examples, is arguably less significant in Chinese music than in Western music.

#### 3.2.1.3 The Huikun Tune

Regarding the classification of the Anhui Kunqu Tune (Huikun Tune for short), the current academic view shared by Li (2015) and Zhu (2015) is that this melodic form can be divided into two types, Wenkun (文昆) and Wukun (武昆).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The Wenkun form is also called Zhengkun (正昆) or Xikun (细昆), while the Wukun tune may be called Caokun (草昆) or Cukun (粗昆).

### 3.2.1.3.1 The Wenkun Form (文昆)

In *The Spread and Variation of Kunqu Opera in Anhui* (2010), Fan Jinghua of Anhui University has pointed out that Wenkun operatic works came directly from Kunqu troupes. Generally speaking, Wenkun's vocal tune is the same as that of Kunqu Opera, maintaining various aspects of traditional Kunqu, such as its standard songs, musical form, melodies and rhythms, with only very slight differences. As the protagonists in Kunqu operas are mostly talented scholars and beautiful ladies, and most of their stories are about love, their music is generally slow and soothing. Since their lyrics are noble and graceful, these stories often need to be explained via the accompanying acting and dancing. Their lyrics and dialogue are based on legendary scripts, and their arias also have special scores. *A Collection of Opera Music Scores in Qing Dynasty* (九宫大成南北词宫谱), *The Music Scores of Yinxiang Hall* (吟香堂曲谱), *The Music Scores of Chunxue Pavilion* (春雪阁曲谱) and *The Complete Music Scores of Qunqu Operas* (昆曲大全曲谱)<sup>28</sup> all serve as texts for training opera students to sing and study Wenkun.

Kunqu troupes declined after Emperor Jiaqing's reign in the 19th century. Prior to this, Kunqu was mainly spread by Anhui Opera troupes, which were very popular. Huikun artists developed their vocal form from original Kunqu opera scores, which brought improvements and refinements that made their songs more accessible to a broader audience (Yu 1994).

The following Example 7 compares the lyrical and melodic characteristics of the Huikun Tune and the Kunqu vocal form of the same aria, 'The Palace of Eternal Life • A Shocking Change (长生殿 惊变)'.

<sup>28</sup> All these music scores are teaching materials for Kunqu opera training.

Example 7. 'The Palace of Eternal Life • A Shocking Change' (Huikun Tune from AHCRC Main Collection)

南尾声

(《长生殿·惊变》唐明皇[生]唱)

huikun  
在 深 宫 自 娇 慵 惯， 怎

Kun opera  
在 深 宫 兀 自 娇 慵 惯， 怎

6  
样 支 吾 蜀 道 难？ (答 答)  
(白) 妃子呀！(唱)

12  
愁 杀 你， 得 落 玉 软 花 柔 要 将  
愁 杀 你， 玉 软 花 柔 要 将

18  
途 路 蹇。  
途 路 蹇。

Lyrics:

Since you have been pampered in the deep palace, how can you cope with the dangerous and steep Sichuan Road?

(Stage speech) Oh, Imperial Concubine! How can you cope with the dangerous and steep Sichuan Road? Oh, Imperial Concubine!

How worrisome! You are so weak and delicate that such a dangerous journey will kill you. All right, weak as you are, we still hurry up to hit the road.

Through this comparison, it can be seen how the two modes correspond. It is clear the two melodies move in the same direction, with only minor differences in melodic detail. They have the same key, C major, and the same time signatures, 4/4 into 2/4 after the first bar. More than 85 per cent of the song lyrics correspond. So through this similarity, it can be seen that the Wenkun form of the Huikun Tune is very similar to traditional Kunqu.

### 3.2.1.3.2 The Wukun Form (武昆)

From *The Annals of Anhui Opera in Shexian County* (Zhu 2015) and collected AHCRC interviews with drama writer, Hou Lu, it seems most probable that the Wukun form emerged from the lower-middle class.<sup>29</sup> The Wukun form is always matched with plots featuring martial arts, fast rhythmic singing and simple lyrics, compared with the more formal, lengthy and chivalric Wenkun tune. Wukun singing involves more fast-paced songs, fewer average-tempo songs and no slow songs in order to express relevant sentiment. So musically, the Wukun tune has lost much of Kunqu's characteristics. Though standard songs in the Wukun form originate from Kunqu, their singing style, mood and performance are obviously different from those of both traditional Kunqu operas and the Wenkun tune.

While working for AHCRC in 2014, I observed many rehearsals of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre and noticed that the most common song of the Wukun form is called the ‘Tangzhong’ song, which is similar to unison singing in Western opera. According to the needs of the plot, the same melody can be performed solo or in unison by any numbers of singers and may also be played on instruments alone without vocals.

The old standard song, ‘Winds between Pine Trees (风入松)’, which was composed by Cheng Zhulin (程祝林) in the Qing dynasty, is one such song of the Wukun form. The original score was collected in Shexian County by the AHCRC and from this I have transcribed it into Western notation (Example 8).

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<sup>29</sup> With the exception of *The Niutou Mountain* [牛头山], created by the drama writer Li Yu [李玉] in the late Ming dynasty.

Example 8: ‘Winds between Pine Trees • The Eight Diagrams (八阵图)’, choral aria by Generals from Shu State

## 风入松

（《八阵图》蜀将[众]唱腔）

Main accompany instrument: Big Suona  
E major

清代程祝林抄本工尺谱  
陆小秋

辄敢绕舌道短长，全没个谦虚逊让。反出恶言  
10 来顶撞，岂不知逆天罔上。速投戈  
15 勒马收缰，倘迟疑祸取非常。

Lyrics:

How dare you make irresponsible remarks, without any humility or concession? On the contrary, you uttered bad words; don't you know it is against heaven? You must rein in your horse and surrender instantly. If you hesitate, you'll make tremendous trouble.

This standard song can be used in two scenarios: a scene where soldiers lead generals on or off the stage, or a scene where two armies face off. It can also be used for solos and duets. It later evolved into an instrumental piece for wind and percussion without singing but was still used to create an atmosphere of confrontation between two armies.

Another attribute of the Wukun form is its great flexibility and fluidity. In performance, the Huikun Tune would openly be applied to set musical pieces from other operatic works. In the process, their lyrics' original meanings became unsuitable for these new Huikun Tune settings, which led to their lyrics being changed to support new plot needs.

### 3.2.1.4 The Siping Tune

'It is well known that the Siping Tune evolved from the Yiyang Tune' wrote Gu Qiyuan (顾起元) (1565–1628) in *A Record of the Stories and Chores in Nanjin* (1987, p. 303). It is worth mentioning that here, the *Yiyang Tune* does not refer to the *Yiyang Tune* from Jiangxi, but rather its tuning system, which was brought by refugees to Anhui and merged with local musical styles. The Ming dynasty playwright, Tang Xianzu (汤显祖) (1550–1616), claimed in his book, *The Temple of Drama God Qingyuan in Yihuang County*, that the original *Yiyang Tune* disappeared during Emperor Jiajing's reign (1521–1566), and offers evidence that scholars of his time mistook it for the Huichi Elegant Tune.

The Siping Tune emerged in southern Anhui in the 15th century as an important element of Anhui Opera. However, its ‘Yiyang’ component should rightly have been identified as the Huichi Elegant Tune. The features of the Siping Tune quoted above by Gu Qiyuan indicate that it evolved partly from the Yiyang melodic system. A similar view was expressed in *A Note on Operas* by Liu Tingji (刘庭玑) during Emperor Kangxi’s reign in Qing dynasty (1661–1722). In Li Shengzhen’s (李振声) *The Zhuzhi Songs of Various Operas* written during the same period, the Siping Tune was recorded as a smooth melody. Changes to the Siping Tune altered it quite considerably from its Yiyang origins. Only a slight change made the Siping Tune quite different from the Yiyang Tune ‘which only used drums instead of orchestral instruments for accompaniment, was not in line with the sheet music, was sung in a way of one solo with choruses and was noisy’ (Xu 1989, p. 239).

The Huichi Elegant Tune was far more popular than Kunqu during Emperor Wanli (万历)’s Ming dynasty reign (1572–1620). As described in the text, *On Traditional Chinese Operas*, ‘troupes from Shitai and Taiping nearly occupy the entire operatic circle today and troupes from Suzhou hardly account for twenty or thirty per cent’ (Wang 1959, p.117).

As a result, in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, a number of Kunqu opera troupes were dissolved, and those unemployed artists joined Huichi Elegant Tune opera troupes, providing an opportunity for those Huichi opera troupes to learn Kunqu. As previously mentioned, the Huichi Elegant Tune was influenced by the Yiyang tuning system, and so, to a large extent, it retained the Yiyang Tune’s tradition of mixed vernacular songs that changed keys. The Siping Tune lost its precursor’s clamorous accompaniment of drums and gongs, but added flute or oboe wind instruments, which restricted the tonality of the accompanied vocal melody. However, the Siping Tune also grew to enhance the narrative function of songs, due to its wide usage of the rolling tune and characteristic smooth melody.

The following song is sung by the clown Liu Er (刘二) in the opera, *Borrow Boots* (借靴) (Zhu 2015, p. 805) and demonstrates the characteristics of the Siping tune. Again, I have rendered this example in Western notation from a numbered notation transcription collected by AHCRC.

Example 9: Song No.10 from *Borrow Boots*, sung by *Liu Er* (Clown role)

曲 十  
(《借靴》刘二[丑]唱腔)

瘦损了脸上肉, 又添我心头闷。



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Lyrics:

My cheeks have thinned, and now I have something that annoys me.

The Siping Tune rapidly became popular across China, but it was not static and continued to absorb cultural variations wherever it went (Yu 1994). In the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, the Siping Tune combined with Kunqu, not only in Anhui, but also in Jiangsu, Zhejiang and other provinces. It also absorbed elements from Qingyang Opera, and folksongs of southern and northern Anhui, which further extended its aesthetic range. Though some scholars believe that the Siping Tune, which absorbed much of Kunqu's stylistic essence, should be more appropriately named Kunping Tune or Kunyi Tune to identify its Kunqu origins, my research does not support this view. While adopting elements of Kunqu and Qingyang Opera, the Siping Tune is complete in itself, and does not require those antecedent styles to be considered whole. The creation and sustained development of the Siping Tune further drove the growth of Anhui Opera to become self-sustaining (Li 2007, Zhu 2015, Hou 2015). For an example of the Siping Tune, please see the video referred to in Appendix B 1.

### 3.2.1.5 The Chuiqiang Tune and the Bozi Tune

As the Siping Tune matured artistically at the start of the 17th century, the graceful string melody or Xiansuo Tune (弦索腔) (as developed from folk tunes in Henan and Shandong) was introduced into the Songyang area of southern Anhui. In *An Account of the Evolution of Traditional Operas*, Li Diaoyuan, a writer of the Qing dynasty, records how it became widely known as the Chuiqiang Tune.

The Nuer Tune was also called the string tune, and its local name was the 'Henan tone'. It sounded like Yiyang Tune, and its ending should not be harmonized by human voice but by stringed [instruments], so it sounded leisurely and lengthy. According to the book *The Anecdotes of Opera Artists in Shaanxi* by Yan Changming, the string tune was popular in the north, the Anhui people sang it as Zongyang Tune, its present name is Shipai Tune, while its common name is the Chuiqiang Tune (Zheng & Feng 2008).

The reasons for the formation of the Bozi tune can be found in Yu Zhibin's book, *An Introduction to the History of Pihuang Operas in North and South China* (1994), and from an interview with Li Taishan (AHCRC, 2015). These include the introduction of Qinqiang Opera and its integration with the native dialect of southern Anhui and the Siping Tune. In the 1630s, the displacement and movement of people due to the peasant rebellion led to the introduction of Qinqiang Opera to Anhui Province.<sup>30</sup> Qinqiang Opera is a style of northwest China with a long history that mainly features pastoral songs from the northwest plateau. Its tone is high and passionate, and its lyrics are mostly composed of either seven or ten characters, which are considered to be the most suitable for expressing passionate or poignant feelings.

According to Ouyang (1927), Li Zicheng (李自成)'s peasant uprising had a huge military impact on the eleven provinces of Shaanxi, Gansu, Shanxi, Hebei, Henan,

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<sup>30</sup> This peasant rebellion was led, fairly successfully, by Li Zicheng from Shanxi Province in western China.

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Anhui, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan, and Sichuan. The high pitch, bright rhythm and accessible lyrics of Qinqiang Opera reflected this history and were much enjoyed by the general public. After the introduction of Qinqiang Opera into southern Anhui, it amalgamated with songs in the local dialect of the Tongcheng area and was further influenced by the rolling tone of the Siping Tune, thus forming the new Bozi Tune. The Bozi Tune still retained some of the characteristics of Qinqiang Opera in its tone, rhythm and percussive clapper striking.

This is illustrated below in Examples 10–11; the Bozi tune *Fengjiao Throws Herself into the River* (凤娇投江) (Li 2005, p. 738) and the Qinqiang opera *Xuzhou Uprising* (反徐州) (Li 2005, p. 727).

Example 10. 'Hu Fengjiao throws herself into the river' (Old Bozi)

From Huiju <Fengjiao cast into the river> Old Bozi [Yuanban]

奴好比空中雁  
 5 (Omitted 'Kutou' and Interlude)  
 9 独自只 (Omitted Interlude)  
 13 难寻到鸳鸯鸟 (Omitted Interlude) 好不  
 17 孤凄。

Lyrics:

I'm like a goose left behind flying in the sky. It's hard to find my better half and I'm so lonely.

Example 11: 'Xuzhou Uprising' (Huayin)

From Qin qiang (秦腔) <Xuzhou Uprising>  
 Huayin[Yuan Ban]

(Omitted Interlude) (Omitted Interlude)  
 自幼儿 在江  
 5 (Omitted Interlude)  
 9 学曾把书念，先学  
 13 文后演武 文武  
 双全。

Lyrics:

Since childhood, I studied in school, first learned literature and then martial arts, and now I'm adept with both the pen and the sword.

The lyrics of these two examples are characteristic of the ten Chinese characters in each sentence of a couplet, while the singing style has a syllabic construction of three, three and four, with each sentence composed of three small clauses. The two examples are also very similar to each other in their principal notes and tune. Their tonic and melody are basically the same, and their manner is characteristically high and violent, with the striking of clappers as accompaniment during performance.

The Chuiqiang Tune is gentle and euphonic, and the Bozi tune is high pitched. The two are often performed alongside each other, as they are complementary, and are collectively known as the Chuibo Tune (吹拨). To hear an example of the Chuibo Tune, please see the video referred to in Appendix B3.

### 3.2.1.6 The Erhuang Tune

In the early 17th century when Anhui Opera troupes came into being one after another, they extended out from Anhui Province (Li 2015). When they came to Jiangxi with the Siping Tune, they met the local Yihuang (宣黄) Opera troupes. The dialectical mode of the Yihuang operas was accordingly known as the Yihuang Tune (宣黄调), which had been formed by the conjunction of local Yiyang folk melodies with the Haiyan Tune (海盐腔) introduced from Jiangsu Province. The Haiyan Tune and the Yiyang Tune were both accompanied by gongs and drums and were high-pitched (Beijing Institute of Art and Shanghai Institute of Art 1999). As stated above, the Siping Tune had been transformed from and synonymous with the Yihuang Tune, so there was likely a smooth confluence between them. However, it remains unknown what the ancient Yihuang Tune sounded like. There is nonetheless a surviving Erfan (二犯) form of the Yihuang Tune still sung today, which is very similar to the Erhuang Tune sung in Peking Opera (Yu 1994).

The Siping tune absorbed elements of both Kunqu and the Qingyang tune during its development, though the Qingyang tune appears more gorgeous and elegant when compared with the Yihuang Tune (Li 2015). Therefore, Anhui Opera troupes mainly sang with the Siping Tune, absorbing its plain and simple style, and combined it with the advantages of Chuibo Tune, thereby creating the Erhuang Tune as a new form. The Erhuang Tune is richly nuanced, consisting of the Flat (Pingban), Yuan (Yuanban) and Reverse forms. These singing styles are good for expressing emotions, and for narration, dialogue and the telling of stories.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For more information on the Erhuang tune, please refer to Yu Zhibin's article *An Introduction to the History of Pihuang Opera Tunes in North and South China* and *History of Chinese Peking Opera*, jointly written by Beijing Artistic Research Academy and Shanghai Artistic Research Academy.

The creation of the Erhuang Tune caused a pivotal change to Anhui Opera troupes. It was at this point that the tonal system dominated by the Erhuang Tune was established, and the term *Erhuang Opera Troupe* became identified with Anhui Opera (Beijing Institute of Art and Shanghai Institute of Art 1999). The Erhuang Tune was soon after performed in Yangzhou with the Xipi Tune (西皮), which had been formed in Hubei Province. These two tunes came to be collectively referred to as the Pihuang Tune, which later became the main singing tune of Peking Opera after its foundation (Yu 1994). To hear an example of the Pihuang Tune, please see the video referred to appendix B 2.

### 3.2.1.7 Musical instruments that accompany the Singers

As with western instruments, Chinese instruments possess a range of tone colours and characteristics. Different instruments are chosen for their specific tone quality to accompany different voice tunes. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed explanation of how different instruments are used to accompany various tunes, but a brief list of instruments is provided to give an idea of what instruments are used in Anhui opera generally, and their construction material, and tone quality.

Table 2: Principal accompanying instruments of Anhui Opera

Instrument name	Construction and timbral description
Suona (唢呐)/Xiaoqing (小青)	A double-reed Chinese oboe with a conical wooden body and movable flared metal bell. Its timbre is bright and loud.
Qudi (曲笛)/ Hengfeng (横风)	A transverse bamboo flute. Its timbre is elegant and melodious, and it plays a leading role in the Anhui opera orchestra.
Dizi (笛子)	A transverse flute made of bamboo, rather like a higher register Qudi.
Sheng (笙)	Generally made of thirty-six bamboo tubes of different lengths and used for playing. The sound is created by the vibration of the reed across the air in the pipe.
Erhu (二胡)	A two-stringed spike fiddle that originated amongst the ethnic minorities of northern China
Gaohu (高胡)	A string instrument, a sort of high-pitched erhu.
Zhonghu (中胡)	A string instrument, formed in the style of a mid-range erhu.
Huihu (徽胡)/Kehu (科胡)	A string instrument based on the tonal characteristics of the suona.
Ban Drum (板鼓)	A short, single-sided drum with a head made from cowhide and played with two bamboo

	sticks.
Yueqin (月琴)	A traditional Chinese plucked instrument. The range is around two octaves, the volume is light, and the tone is clear and soft.
Pipa (琵琶)	One of the main plucked instruments in Chinese traditional music. Its voice has a wide range, and its playing technique is one of the hardest skills to master in Chinese traditional instrumental music. Its expressive force is the most profound in folk music.
Ruan (阮)	A type of ancient pipa, with four strings and a range of up to two and a half octaves.
Yangqin (扬琴)	A form of dulcimer, a stringed percussion instrument in common use in China. The volume is strong, and the tone is bright.

Anhui opera is musically rich and colourful, sometimes high-pitched, loud, rhythmic, and passionate, at other times gentle and lyrical. Fast and loud musical passages might be accompanied by percussion instruments, whereas soft lyrical passages would more likely be accompanied by wind and stringed instruments. Anhui opera is similarly dramatic to western opera. There are not only pieces of music that have popular appeal for many people, but also elegant poems and melodies that are steeped in metaphor with have deeper layers of meaning that are more of an acquired taste.

### 3.3 The Role Acting and the Facial Makeup of Anhui Opera

In addition to its music Anhui Opera maintains its own unique styles of character acting and facial makeup. Acting in Anhui Opera reveals a character's morality, quality and temperament, using archetypal characteristics to signal a character's ethical disposition. Similarly, the function of facial makeup in Anhui Opera aims to convey to the audience aspects of personality, age and disposition – such as loyalty, treachery, good and evil – through standardised visual symbols.

#### 3.3.1 The Role Acting of Anhui Opera

Anhui Opera inherited character roles of the Huichi Elegant Tune system and absorbed the character role divisions of Kunqu and the Yiyang Tune (Li 2014). It was also deeply influenced by Mulian Opera in this respect. From the Qianlong (乾隆) reign to the Xianfeng (咸丰) reign of the Qing dynasty (1735–1860), the acting roles in Anhui Opera changed several times. Originally, there were nine, namely the *Mo* (末), *Sheng* (生), *Xiaosheng* (小生), *Wai* (外), *Dan* (旦), *Tie* (贴), *Fu* (副), *Jing* (净) and clown (丑) roles. In the latter part of the 18th century, these were further subdivided into seventeen roles. The *Anhui Volume of Chronicles of Chinese Drama* (Chronicles of Chinese Drama Editorial Committee 1993) shows that after 1860, Anhui Opera roles

merged gradually into the ten roles of today: *Zhengsheng* (正生), *Laosheng* (老生) (*Wen* and *Wu* respectively), *Xiaosheng* (小生) (*Wen* and *Wu* respectively), *Dahua* (大花) (or *Jing* [净]), *Erhua* (二花), *Sanhua* (clown) (丑), *Zhengdan* (正旦), *Huadan* (花旦), *Laodan* (老旦), and *Wudan* (武旦). While the number of roles decreased, the artistic requirements within each role increased, becoming strictly codified. In addition to mastering their own principal roles, performers were required to learn one or more others and work towards a comprehensive range of skills in acting, singing, speaking and fighting to become highly versatile. The following describes the main roles still performed in Anhui Opera today.<sup>32</sup>

The *Zhengsheng* role is the serious and respectable protagonist in a drama, generally a middle-aged man, such as Guan Yu in *Flooding All the Enemy Troops* (水淹七军) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty) and Zhuge Liang (诸葛亮) in *The Eight Diagrams* (八阵图) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty).<sup>33</sup> His performance skills include singing, dance-acting and speaking.

Figure 2: Guan Yu in *Flooding All the Enemy Troops*.



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2016) courtesy of Wang Yushu.

The role of *Laosheng* is divided between *Wen laosheng* and *Wu laosheng*, depending on the type of opera. They mostly represent middle- and old-aged men, and the roles need equal emphasis paid to singing, speaking, performing, and dancing. They are also required to have a solid foundation in martial arts and combat skills. In *wen* operas, the characters acted by the role of *Laosheng* include Xu Ce (徐策) in *The Calamity Paintings of the Xue's* (举鼎观画) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty) and *Xu Ce Watches Battle at Gate Tower* (跑城) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty), and Xiao He [萧何] in *Chasing Han Xin* (追韩信) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty). In *wu* operas, the role is represented by Qin Qiong (秦琼) in the *Qin Qiong Fights with Yang Lin Thrice* (三挡), and Huang Zhong (黄忠) in the *Dingjun Mountain* (定军山) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty).

<sup>32</sup> This content is held in the AHCRC Main Collection. All photos were provided to AHCRC Main Collection for public access by the Reference Room of Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre of Anhui Province.

<sup>33</sup> The composers of these ancient scores are unknown.

The role of *Xiaosheng*, which similarly includes the *Wen xiaosheng* and the *Wu xiaosheng* forms, is a young teenager to young adult role type. The character is required to sing both in true voice and a falsetto with a strong and beautiful tone. He is required to be elegant and natural, tasteful yet unconventional in figure and movement, skilled in performing choreography such as *playing peacock feather*<sup>34</sup>, fighting with all manner of weaponry, and acrobatic feats. In a *wen* opera, the *Xiaosheng* characters include Zhou Zhuming (周珠明) in *Yintao Mountain* (银桃山) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty), Hai Jun (海俊) in *Phoenix Mountain* (凤凰山) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty), and Guo Nuan (郭暖) in *My Wife is Princess* (打金枝) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty). In *Wu* operas, they include Zhou Yu (周瑜) in *A Meeting East to the Yangtze River* (临江会) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty), Lv Bu (吕布) in *The White Gate Tower* (白门楼) (n.d. ca Qing dynasty), and Zi Yin (子胤) in *The Frightened Soul* (惊魂记). (Xu 2016)

Figure 3: Zi Yin in *Death of the Usurper* – ‘playing peacock feather’.



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collections (2016) courtesy of Wang Yushu

The *Dahua* role, also known as *Jing*, mainly depicts male characters with outstanding characteristics. They are unique in quality and appearance, and are designated by colour as the white-faced *Jing*, black-faced *Jing*, mottle-faced *Jing* and red-faced *Jing*. Their performances mainly consist of singing with loud and powerful voices<sup>35</sup>, while their acting is majestic and dignified. The black-faced *Jing* characters include Bao Zheng (包拯) in *Beheading Bao Mian* (铡包勉) and Xiang Yu (项羽) in *Jade Talisman* (玉灵符). The white-faced *Jing* includes Yan Song (严嵩) in the opera *Hitting Yan Song* (打严嵩) and Xu Yanzhao (徐延昭) in *Xu Yanzhao Pays a Second Visit to Harem* (二进宫). The mottle-faced *Jing* includes Zheng Ziming (郑子明) in *Gao Huaide*

<sup>34</sup> Playing peacock feather refers to the symbolic kung fu art of waving and placing a peacock feather on the hat as a headdress (as in the picture)

<sup>35</sup> Western opera refers to this kind of singing as a full voice, such as the Wagnerian *heldontenor*.



*Calls on King Chai* (打龙蓬) and Xiahou Yuan (夏侯渊) in *Dingjun Mountain* (定军山), and the red-faced *Jing* includes Guan Yu in *Meeting at an Old Town* (古城会), and Li Keyong (李克用) in *The Taiping Bridge* (太平桥).

*Erhua* is the painted-face role, representing brave, forthright and positive personalities. Their performances are based on movements and shapes. Their speech is sonorous and powerful. Their fighting is forceful and fiery, and they also perform some special feats, such as acrobatics. Painted-face characters include Zhang Kui (张奎) in *Taking Zhang Kui* (收张奎) into Forces, and Lu Zhishen (鲁智深) in *Drunk at the Mountain Gate* (醉打山门).

*Sanhua* is the role of the clown. The clown is obviously a humorous character, and sometimes includes women clowns. These are versatile roles, needing to be good at singing, speaking, dance-acting and stage-fighting. In *wen* operas, *sanhua* characters include Cheng Yaojin (程咬金) in *The Jiuxi Palace* (九锡宫) and Liu Er in *Borrowing Boots*. In *wu* operas, the *sanhua* characters include Yang Xiangwu (杨香武) in *The Nine-dragon Cup* (九龙杯), and Jiang Ping (蒋平) in *Hua Chong* (花蝴蝶). The characters acted by women clowns include Madam Wang in *Madam Wang Curses Rooster*, and the nurse Nai Niang (奶娘) in *The Lucky Marriage* (巧姻缘).

Figure 4: Sanhua role: the two clowns in the opera *Borrowing Boots*.



Photo provided courtesy of Wang, Yushu

The *zhengdan* or *qingyi* role is a young or middle-aged female role, generally a moderate and dignified woman. The actors must be especially good at singing and the voice needs to be mellow and exquisite. They are also good at revealing their characters' emotions, and their body movements are simple and solemn. *Zhengdan* characters include Li Sanniang (李三娘) in *Hunting* (出猎), and Wang Baochuan in *Wang Baochuan* (王宝钏) and *Xue Rengui Bid Farewell to Cave Dwelling* (双别窑).

Figure 5: Concubine Yang (杨贵妃) in the opera *The Drunken Concubine* (贵妃醉酒)



Photo provided courtesy of Wang, Yushu

The *Huadan* role is a young female character who is vivacious, appealing, and lively. These actors are especially proficient at delicate and elegant performances and beautiful, charming and crisp movements. *Huadan* roles include Bai Mudan in *Tricks on White Peony* and Pan Jinlian in *Killing Pan Jinlian*. The term *Huadan* comes from Xia Tingzhi (夏庭芝)'s *Brothels* (青楼集) in 1355 : ‘All prostitute women who are dotted with ink on the faces are *Huadan*’ (Xia, 1355).

The role of *Wudan* is a female general, heroine, fairy or banshee, who is brave and good at fighting. Its actors need to be particularly effective at martial arts and flips, be vigorous, and be good at showing charm, strength and uprightness through their singing and acting. *Wudan* characters include Mu Guiying in *Mu Guiying Conquers Hongzhou* and Sun Erniang in *Wu Song Attacks the Inn*.

*Laodan* roles represent older women, and require good singing, stage speech, and a steady manner and pace in performance. They are characterised by singing and speaking with their actor’s true voice, but not as flat, straight and rigidly as *laosheng*, nor as graceful and rounded as *qingyi*. These characters include She Taijun in *Yang Yanhui Visits His Mother* and Zhu Chundeng’s mother in *The Volume of Shepherds*.

### 3.3.2 The Facial Makeup of Anhui Opera

Facial makeup is regarded by Anhui Opera artists as an important visual and aesthetic focal point for audiences. Audiences understand the moral quality and thoughts of a character through its facial design, markings and colours. They portray loyalty or treachery, good or evil, and beauty or ugliness. As such, the function of facial makeup is indispensable in Anhui Opera as an artform.

When consulted by the AHCRC in Fuling<sup>36</sup>, veteran artists such as Shao Mingqin agreed that Anhui Opera’s facial makeup is based on and developed through a

<sup>36</sup> The survey is publicly available in the AHCRC Main Collection.

synthesis of patterns derived from precursor opera styles such as Kunqu, Qinqiang Opera and Qingyang Opera. Hou Lu and Li Taishan explained to the AHCRC that, during the Ming dynasty, the tinting of Anhui Opera's facial makeup was only used to exaggerate a character's skin tone with relatively simple colours such as red, black, blue, yellow, green and white. Pink, purple, grey, ochre, gold and silver for gods and monsters were added later to create a full spectrum of colours. Their stylistic features combine realistic and symbolic forms with some degree of artistic exaggeration.

Their colouring vividly portrays a character's type, appearance, and quality. Red generally stands for loyalty, white for treachery, black for perseverance, yellow for wisdom, blue for bravery, and green for weirdness, while gold and silver represent ghosts and gods. These archetypes then are either loyal, ruthless, cunning, fierce, reckless, forthright, witty or humorous. Sketched facial makeup for the various character roles follows general conventions that grew in Anhui Opera through early performances in town squares. Initially Anhui Opera was performed in town squares and temples, where there was open space between cast and audience. The distances separating them determined which features of facial makeup patterns needed to be exaggerated. For a character's inner and outer being to be clearly recognisable by audiences, makeup had to emphasise the facial outline, using contrasting colours and shades, according to the actor's muscle and bone structure. Anhui Opera uses a variety of facial makeup designs to express character and temperament.

Figure 6: Guan Yu, in the opera of *The Three Kingdoms* (三国志)



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

This design for Guan Yu has piercing eyes, slender tapering eyebrows, and a ruddy face, which all reflect the gallantry and loyalty of his character.

Figure 7: Zhang Fei (张飞), in the opera of *Zhang Fei Holds a Memorial Ceremony for his Horse*



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

Zhang Fei from the opera, *Zhang Fei Holds a Memorial Ceremony for his Horse* (张飞买马), has a cat-like face with big round eyes symbolising a loyal and brave nature. The peach painted on his forehead represents the Oath of the Peach Garden.

Figure 8: Zhou Cang (周仓) in the opera *Flooding All the Enemy Troops*.



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

Zhou Cang, Guan Yu's deputy, has cheeks painted with fish scales, indicating that he was reborn from a snakehead fish. He is therefore good at swimming, so can catch Pang De underwater.

Figure 9: Pang De (庞德), in the opera *Flooding All the Enemy Troops*.



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

Pang De has a highly-stylised crab painted on his forehead, representing his tyranny and ferocity.

Figure 10: Jiangwei (姜维) in the opera *Tielong Hill*



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

Jiang Wei has an image of the Eight Diagrams in Tai Chi on his forehead, which describes his knowledge of Yin and Yang, his ability with the Eight Diagram skills, and his knowledge of the art of war.

There are also facial symbols representing various characters, based on fairy tales and folk legends. For example, the monkey's face of Sun Wukong in *The Palm-leaf Fan* (盗芭蕉扇).

Figure 11: Monkey King (Sun Wukong)



Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

This snake face is sketched onto the Snake Spirit in *The Golden Butterfly* (金蝴蝶)

Figure 12: Snake spirit

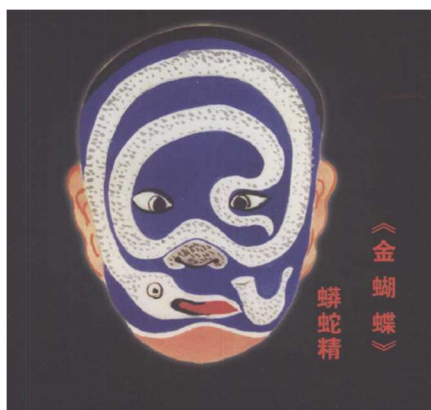


Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

Below is Bao Zheng in *Beheading Bao Mian*, who was thrown into a dry well by his stepmother. This gave him a large blood blister on his head, which is why this design has a very noticeable red mark on the forehead. His furrowed brow also indicates unhappiness, which is unsurprising given his stepmother's actions.

Figure 13: Bao Zheng (包拯) in the opera of *Beheading Bao Mian*

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Photo provided to AHCRC Main Collection (2005) courtesy of Li Taishan

Anhui Opera facial makeup may be divided into conventional makeup, comprising some facial features that are fixed and unalterable, and unconventional makeup, referring to some traits that have more plasticity and can be used for different facial expressions, allowing space for more creative elements and vivid imagination. This combination of the static and the flexible produces a more distinctive artistic range in accordance with the differing needs of plot and characterisation in specific operas.

Depending on these differing needs, a character's facial makeup can also alter within a singular operatic work. For example, in *A Conspiracy in Bamboo Forest*, Yu Hong's face needs to be blackened gradually, because his face is burned as the plot progresses. Similarly, in play *Tao Sanchun Vents Her Anger*, once Zhao Kuangyin ascends the throne as emperor, the image of a pearl and a spider on the left and right of his mask, which indicate bad luck, must steadily disappear. This codification has been recognized and agreed by scholars of Anhui Opera such as Li Taishan and Song Yangjian (AHCRC 2015).

### **3.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has detailed the three key elements of significance to artists and audiences in Anhui Opera: vocal tunes, character acting and facial makeup. The major vocal tunes that contributed to Anhui Opera's formation have been explained and discussed with reference to existing historical and scholarly sources. I have outlined the different character roles sung and acted in Anhui Opera historically, and the various facial makeup designs used to signal the qualities and thoughts of different characters to audiences. Each of these key elements has been illustrated with musical and visual examples from traditional Anhui Opera works. The musical and theatrical characteristics of Anhui Opera explore in this chapter lay a useful foundation for Chapter 4, in which I will discuss in more detail how Anhui Opera first developed and initially spread in popularity across China to influence Peking Opera and many other traditional opera styles.

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## Chapter 4

### The Origin, Development, Rise and Fall of Anhui Opera

This chapter will discuss Anhui Opera's origin in the south of Anhui Province, and show how Anhui Opera originated in Huizhou and became popular in Shipai. It will describe the rapid and widespread development of Anhui Opera in modern times, which contributed to the emergence of Peking Opera, and examine the main causes for its rise and subsequent decline. Section 4.1 outlines the origin and formation of Anhui Opera, including the inevitability of its founding in the south of Anhui Province, and the controversy over its birthplace in current academic circles. This part also introduces the Anhui local music development and foreign opera elements contributing to its creation. Section 4.2 focuses on the spread of Anhui Opera and its influence on other operas, including the establishment of Peking Opera, a new operatic form.

#### 4.1 The Origin and Formation of Anhui Opera

The following section describes in detail how Anhui Opera originated and demonstrates the influences of Anhui folksongs and tunes from other regions upon its foundation based on historical records of the time.

##### 4.1.1 The Origin of Anhui Opera

The origin of Anhui Opera has been a controversial subject, and there are still a variety of views on this issue in Chinese scholarship. I will summarise the two main theories below. However, given all the available evidence, this thesis supports the view that Anhui Opera clearly began in southern Anhui Province.

###### 4.1.1.1 The Probability of Anhui Opera's birth in Southern Anhui

It is highly likely that Anhui Opera originated in the southern region of Anhui. In 2014 and 2015, surveys conducted by Anhui Opera experts for the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre (AHCRC) in the ancient city of Huizhou (now Huangshan) and villages of the Anqing area uncovered some of the earliest written records of Anhui Opera.

A number of crucial factors influenced the formation of Anhui Opera in southern Anhui Province. A southward movement of China's political, economic and cultural centres provided the necessary socioeconomic conditions for the art form's genesis. The wealth and superior education of Huizhou merchants offered strong economic and cultural support by providing a broad cohort of theatre lovers in the region. This in turn provided a strong popular base for Anhui Opera's development.

During the Song dynasty (960–1279), China's political, economic and cultural centres moved south from the mid-to-lower Yellow River to the mid-to-lower Yangtze River



region, passing through Anhui Province. According to Sun Pengpeng's (孙朋朋) article, 'The power operation in the early period of Emperor Gaozong (高宗) in the Southern Song Dynasty from the perspective of Gaozong's goal of centralization by delegating power' (2005), the reason for this translocation was that the Song and Jin dynasties were frequently at war with each other and, as a consequence, much of the populace lived in poverty. After the defeat of the Northern Song dynasty in 1127, this regime was forced to move south to establish its capital in Lin'an (now Hangzhou) and from then on was known as the Southern Song dynasty. The south, however, was rich in natural resources, which made it possible to create a solid economic foundation for the imperial court to establish its headquarters. The considerable economic and cultural demands of the court's grand officials and dignitaries enabled the local economy and culture to prosper.

Wang Shihua's (王世华) article, 'Huizhou merchants: China's economic trajectory (1400–1900)' (2010b), shows that, in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties during the first half of the 17th century, the population of southern Anhui was extensive, but habitable land was limited. Forced to move away from the traditional agrarian economy to make a living, many Huizhou people left the mountains along the ancient Huihang Road and turned to commerce for their livelihoods. Many became successful businessmen. The great wealth of these new Huizhou merchants lasted for more than 300 years, and there was a saying that: *The wealth of Huizhou merchants is comparable to that of the country*. Huizhou merchants devoted much attention to education, and enthusiastically built schools in their various hometowns. Collectively, they became known as the Southeast Zoulu School.<sup>37</sup> While pursuing their economic interests, these wealthy and well-educated Huizhou merchants became avid consumers of cultural experiences and were the biggest patrons and supporters of Anhui Opera. They patronised the Anhui Opera troupes, not only for personal enjoyment and entertainment, but also as a means of networking and socializing with the social and political elite (Wang 2010b).

Interviews collected by the AHCRC in southern Anhui found that the people of Huizhou and Anqing still customarily enjoy and appreciate Anhui Opera. It is an important local convention handed down over centuries that local people sing, perform, and enjoy folk operas at festivals and ceremonies, including weddings and funerals. In the Jieyuan (街源) area of Shexian County more than ten old theatre stages were still preserved in remote mountain villages and whenever an opera was staged, crowds of villagers of all ages would excitedly come from surrounding towns to enjoy it. Elder residents, however, regretted that some old theatre stages had collapsed from disrepair. Old manuscripts found by the AHCRC in the Shao family ancestral temple (邵氏祠堂) in Fuling (伏岭) in Jixi (绩溪) County revealed that it was very common for children to learn to act in operas in southern Anhui. Historically, Anhui Opera troupes for children date back more than 200 years and continue to the present day.

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<sup>37</sup> South-eastern Zoulu [东南邹鲁]: 'Zoulu' originally referred to the individual states of Zou and Lu during the Spring and Autumn Period. Mencius was born in Zou, and Confucius was born in Lu, so it was a place where culture and education flourished. Under the weighty influence of the central plains culture, Huizhou to the south of the Yangtze River (ancient Huizhou now comprises Huangshan city, Jixi County and Wuyuan County) became a prosperous cultural hub.

Traditional Anhui Province folk customs can also be shown to have contributed to the genesis of Anhui Opera. The southern part of Anhui is a mountainous and isolated region. The local people sought their wishes for happiness and deliverance from adversity in protection from the gods, as reflected in numerous folk customs involving prayer and pleas for immortality and exorcism that were brought into Anhui Opera through stylised dramatic portrayals. According to *The Annals of Anhui Opera in Shexian County*:

Shexian County is rich in folk customs. During the Spring Festival, people divine the source of wealth, while during the Lantern Festival people make lanterns. On the second day of the second lunar month, people offer sacrifices to the land and hold dragon-boat races on Spring Community Day. During the Qingming Festival, people worship ancestors and hang paper money. In the Dragon Boat Festival, the fifth day of the fifth month of the lunar calendar, people venerate Zhong Kui God to ward off evil spirits and protect their health. On the sixth day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar, people expose their books,<sup>38</sup> and pray for peace via offerings to the two famous loyal generals. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, people eat vegetarian food to worship their ancestors. In the Mid-Autumn Festival, people play grass dragons. On the Double Ninth Festival, people hang five-coloured paper decorations. In the middle of October, people mourn the newly dead. On the winter solstice, people move graves and renovate their hearths. People celebrate the Lunar New Year's Day in December, the Laba Festival, the Minor Spring Festival, and then the old year comes to an end (Zhu 2015, p 4).

Many of these old folk customs were often accompanied by opera performances. In Fuling in Jixi County, *Wuhui Dancing* was such a custom. Wildfires in this region were traditionally thought to be the work of the local Fire God. In 1187, in an attempt to prevent these disasters, the rich and influential Shao family prayed for an exorcism. These prayers came to be known as Wuhui Dancing, which involved young men who were all aged thirty years. The villagers would raise their torches, set off firecrackers and shout watchwords and mantras in unison to drive away fire demons, hoping for prosperity, peace, and happiness in the coming year. The climax of this ritual was to gather at the local stage to enjoy a grand opera by torchlight. According to handwritten records in the family ancestral temple, this opera was performed over three days.

This celebration has since been handed down for more than two centuries and remains a local custom. When interviewed by the AHCRC in Fuling in 2014, Shao Mingqin said that this ritual and operatic celebration is still held every year during the Spring Festival. He also said that a number of its vintage costumes had been donated by local villagers to the local Anhui Opera Museum.

The old Huizhou area in Anhui Province was also located near other regions with neighbouring operatic styles that influenced the development of Anhui Opera. To the west was Jiangxi, where the Yiyang Tune flourished, and to the east was Jiangsu and Zhejiang, where Kunqu and the Yuyao Tune emerged. The Yiyang, Yuyao and Kunshan Tunes in the Huizhou and Chizhou regions in southern Anhui have therefore been popular in southern Anhui since the middle of the Ming dynasty during the first half of the 16th century. Anhui Opera troupes sometimes staged both Yuyao Tune

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<sup>38</sup> The books were exposed to the sun to dry and protect them from mould. In June, the sun is warm and the humidity low, which is good for 'publishing' books.

operas and Haiyan Tune operas<sup>39</sup>, but they staged Kunqu works more than those in other opera styles. These introduced styles gradually merged with local dialects and folk arts into the early Anhui Opera style, which was characterised by the creation of the Huizhou Tune.

In *Huizhou Merchants and Anhui Opera Troupes*, Wang Xiaoyi (1986) explains how Anhui Opera's popularity continued to spread through the travels of Huizhou merchants. Successful merchants would often return to their rural hometowns to worship their ancestors, run schools, and patronise their own private Anhui Opera troupes. This introduced musical content and ideas from various surrounding regions to the mountainous Anhui Province and many Anhui opera artists saw the advantages of drawing upon these influences to enrich their own operatic style. The further integration of Kunqu influences with the local Huizhou Tune led to another new musical innovation in Anhui Opera with the creation of the Siping Tune.

#### 4.1.1.2 The Argument over the specific area of Anhui Opera's origin

While the view that Anhui Opera originated in southern Anhui is widely accepted, its specific place of origin has remained a somewhat controversial topic. There are two different views about the exact area where Anhui Opera started.

One opinion is that it began in Shipai in southern Anhui. According to *The Spread of Hakka Music* (Feng 2000), the precursor form of Anhui Opera using the Qingyang Tune and Huizhou Tune started in Anqing (安庆), Shipai (石牌) and Jiyang (暨阳) in Anhui Province during the reign of Emperor Jiajing of the Ming dynasty (1522–1566).<sup>40</sup> A similar view can be found in *The Chinese Element Affected the World Quintessence: Peking Opera* (Li 2015). The writer Zhou Miao Zhong states in his book, *The History of Chinese Traditional Opera in the Qing Dynasty* (1987), that the main singing style of Anhui Opera first became popular in Shipai. *The Chronicle of Chinese Opera: Anhui Volume* (Chinese Opera Annals Compilation Committee 1993) also observes that Anhui Opera developed in Shipai County, Anhui Province. They offer historical evidence that large numbers of exceptionally talented performers emerged in the Shipai area, and that there were widely influential Anhui Opera troupes from the Ming dynasty through to the Qing dynasty. There are carving and helmet workshops in Shipai – where opera manuscripts and costumes were traditionally made – that still exist. On 21 June 2015, an academic seminar entitled 'Anhui Opera Restarts' was held in Anqing. Wang Jun, Chairman of Wanjiang Culture Research Association, expressed his idea that Anhui Opera troupes began at the Shipai ferry terminal, where vessels traversed the Wan River and gathered other singing styles from Anqing and Yangzhou, where many salt merchants congregated.

The alternative view of Cheng Shaoyi is that Anhui Opera originated in Shexian (歙县) County, Anhui Province, as outlined in *The Shexian County Series of Historical and Cultural Cities in China* (Cheng 2001, p 3). Zhu Zhuxin holds the same view, listing

<sup>39</sup> 'Haiyan' tune is a traditional opera form from Jiangsu Province. In this style, the singing is accompanied by gongs and drums, while the vocal parts are loud and high-pitched.

<sup>25</sup> Mr. Zhu Zhuxin agrees with this view in his paper 'The Origin of Anhui Opera' (2015).

the following five reasons in his paper ‘The Origin of Anhui Opera’ (2015).<sup>41</sup> The first is related to language. Although the geographical distance between Shexian County and Shipai is minimal, their dialects are quite different. After comparing the pronunciation of Anhui Opera lyrics with the Shexian dialect, Zhu believes that the two are almost identical, while quite different from Shipai dialect.

The second reason concerns the socio-cultural environment. Officials and their families participated extensively in the activities of Anhui Opera, prompting its emergence and development, and many of them came from Shexian County. According to the *The Annals of Anhui Opera in Shexian County* (Zhu 2015), throughout the Tang, Song, Ming and Qing dynasties over a period of some 1300 years, 820 people passed civil or military imperial examinations receiving the title of *jinshi*<sup>42</sup>, while 1865 people received the title of *jure*.<sup>43</sup> This meant that Anhui Province ranked as the country’s highest for those passing imperial examinations.<sup>44</sup> Greater numbers of officials returned home to Shexian County with their privately retained musicians, who brought with them Central Plains culture and palace music. These musicians not only played songs for entertainment, but also for sacred events<sup>45</sup>, which provided an important social context for the development of Anhui Opera at the province’s many temples, temple fairs and ancestral halls. Religious music was an important factor in the birth and growth of local opera traditions. As such, in Shexian County, there were many local opera troupes, stages, and patrons.

A third reason connects to Shexian County’s booming economy. The rise and economic prosperity of Huizhou merchants in Shexian County served as a strong material foundation for the development of Anhui Opera. Shexian County was widely forested with abundant wood and building materials, and famous for its tea and other produce. Huizhou merchants mainly traded in local products and their flourishing markets provided their economic support for Anhui Opera.

The fourth reason concerns a large number of newly unearthed historical remains in Shexian County. Kunqu Opera scripts copied by Yao Zengguang<sup>46</sup> were found in Huangwei village, while in Changgai (长咳) village, early Nanxi opera (南戏) scripts and a qupai called Nanxi Diao (南溪调) were discovered. These artefacts provide further evidence that Anhui Opera originated in Shexian County.

The fifth and final of Zhu Zhuxin’s reasons is that the cultural role of the playwright appeared earlier in Shexian County than in any other area. In Huangwei (璜蔚) village, Shexian County, Su Wanliu composed an opera in the second year of Emperor Yuantong’s reign during the Yuan dynasty (1333) (Zhu, 2015), and Bi Shangzhong (1416-1497) composed the *Annals of the Seven Kingdoms* (七国志) and *The Story of*

<sup>41</sup> ‘The Origin of Anhui Opera’ is chapter ten in *The Annals of Anhui Opera in Shexian County*.

<sup>42</sup> In ancient China’s imperial examination system, those who passed the last imperial examination of the central government were called *jinshi* (进士).

<sup>43</sup> *Jure* was a qualification obtained after passing the province-wide imperial (township) examination).

<sup>44</sup> ‘Gaining fame in the imperial examination’ refers to obtaining the award of the imperial examination and then acquiring an official position because of the status.

<sup>45</sup> Activities held to commemorate and worship the ancestors.

<sup>46</sup> An artist from the Qing dynasty, dates unknown.

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*Red Paper* (红笺记) in Changgai during the Zhengtong period of the Ming dynasty. These operas were widely popular (Shanghai Art Research Institute & Shanghai Branch of Chinese Dramatists Association, 1985), indicating the early establishment of Anhui Opera in Shexian County.

Since Shipai was an impoverished rural area, Zhu Zhuxin believes that it did not have the political, economic or cultural resources for Anhui Opera. To support their families, many poor people had to send their children away to learn a craft or trade and studying Anhui Opera would most likely have been one of their choices. Shipai has been known as a source of Anhui Opera due to the large number of opera students and artists who came from there. There was an adage that no troupe existed without an artist from Shipai and, as a result, many people mistakenly came to believe that Anhui Opera originated in Shipai. Zhu maintains that Shipai artists played a very important role in the popularity and development of Anhui Opera in its early days, but that Shipai is not the place where the opera originated.

According to the existing historical data and evidence, there is no doubt that both the Shexian County and the Shipai area made significant contributions to the emergence and development of Anhui Opera. The most important factor is that the forms of music, dialect and performance from those two sites fused together, forming the basis for Anhui Opera's establishment. The best evidence for this view is that fragments of Anhui Opera appeared in Shipai and Shexian at the same time.

There is some truth in the popular maxim that Anhui Opera 'originated in Huizhou<sup>47</sup> and became popular in Shipai'. Nevertheless, according to available evidence, the conclusion that Anhui Opera actually originated in Shexian County before becoming popular in Shipai seems more in line with its original historical appearance.

## **4.1.2 The Musical Basis for the Formation of Anhui Opera**

Early local Anhui folk music was not related in any way to the Yuyao Tune (余姚腔) or the Yiyang Tune (弋阳腔). In the Ming dynasty these tunes came to Anhui from neighbouring provinces (Zhejiang and Jiangxi respectively) and they fused with Anhui folk music to form what we could consider an antecedent to modern Anhui Opera.

### **4.1.2.1 Local Folk Music and Opera in the Province amassed considerable artistic resources for the formation of Anhui Opera**

Historically, Anhui was a culturally influential province, and numerous forms of performing arts originated among its people, such as the Fengyang Flower-Drum Dance (凤阳花鼓), Guichi Nuo Opera (贵池傩戏), Middle Anhui Luju Opera (皖中庐剧) and Anqing Huangmei Opera (安庆黄梅戏), to name just a few. In Huizhou, often referred to as *Southeast Zoulu*, many popular forms of dramatic song appeared, such

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<sup>47</sup> Shexian County was subordinate to the Huizhou Prefecture, so the latter's higher administrative ranking was reflected in cultural matters.

as folksongs from southern Anhui, Mulian Opera, and the Flower-Drum Lamp Dance in southern Anhui. These became the artistic bases for Anhui Opera.

The formation of Anhui Opera in Huizhou is directly tied to Mulian Opera. Mulian Opera was performed in Shaokeng (韶坑) during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), and possibly even earlier in the Jieyuan (街源) area of Shexian County. Plays such as *Journey to the West* (西游记) and *Emperor Wudi of the Liang Dynasty* (梁武帝记) were regularly presented (Zhu 2015). By the time of the Wanli period in the Ming dynasty (1572–1620), Mulian Opera had formed a relatively complete style of artistic drama. It arose all over Huizhou, and Mulian Opera performances became and remain one of the main Huizhou traditions for offering sacrifices to gods and ancestors. Thirty to forty strong actors capable of wrestling and martial arts would be selected from Jingyang in Huizhou to perform a Mulian Opera, which lasted over three days and nights. A large audience was seated around a stage on which the actors displayed their unique skills, such as rope walking, braid dancing, table turning, ladder turning, somersaults, dragonfly dancing, vat juggling, mortar juggling, ring jumping, fire breathing and sword swallowing (Zhang 1644). A Mulian Opera performance contained many Huizhou acrobatic and martial arts elements, since most of the works performed had developed from folk stories with combat themes. These Mulian elements also played a central role in the birth of Anhui Opera.

Another very important factor was the spread of religion. Mount Jiuhua (九华山), one of the four holy sites of the Tibetan King Bodhisattva, is located in Qingyang County. It has been a Buddhist site since antiquity with an established Ashram and the proselytisation of Buddhist scripture. The tradition of Buddhist chants on Jiuhua Mountain was one of the main popular music forms in the Qingyang area of southern Anhui (Hu 2019). The Jiaqing and Wanli periods of the Ming dynasty coincided with Buddhism's growth in the region, so Buddhist culture and music played an influential role in Anhui Opera's development. The rudiments of Anhui Opera were formed from the Southern Opera's vocal tune in Chizhou and the fusion of established Buddhist chanting with other art forms.

#### **4.1.2.2 The Non-local Southern Opera's Tunes – the Yuyao Tune and Yiyang Tune – provide new artistic input to the formation of Anhui Opera**

In the middle of the Ming dynasty, the areas of Anqing, Chizhou and Huizhou in southern Anhui were flourishing centres of economic activity. The success of Huizhou merchants and their business expansion made southern Anhui more economically developed, which simultaneously brought growing cultural prosperity and support for local folk opera (Luo 2013, Yan & Yang 1998). By then, the Yiyang Yune (弋阳腔) from Jiangxi and the Yuyao Tune (余姚腔) from Zhejiang had been well received in southern Anhui. During the Ming dynasty, the playwright Xu Wei wrote in his book, *A Narration of the Classical Operas in South China* (南词叙录),

Today's opera actors sing Yiyang tune, which originated in Jiangxi, the two capitals, [Beijing and Nanjing], Hunan, and also spread in Fujian and Guangzhou. Yuyao tune

originated in Kuaiji (会稽), Changzhou (常州), Runzhou (润州), Chizhou, Taiping (太平), Yangzhou (扬州) and Xuzhou (徐州). And Haiyan tune is also used in Jiaxing (嘉兴), Huzhou (湖州), Wenzhou (温州) and Taizhou (台州). The popularity of Kunshan tune came to a halt only in Wuzhong (吴中) (1559 [1989], p 242).

This clearly indicates the Yiyang Tune's origins in Jiangxi and subsequent broad dissemination, as it does the Yuyao Tune's beginnings in Kuaiji and later adoption in Changzhou, Runzhou (now Zhenjiang (镇江) in Jiangsu), Chizhou, Taiping (now Dangtu (当涂) and Huizhou in Anhui), Yangzhou and Xuzhou. The Haiyan Tune was popular in Jiaxing, Huzhou, Wenzhou and Taizhou, while Kunshan tune was popular in Wuzhong (now Suzhou of Jiangsu). According to *Anhui Opera Art* (Li 2005), the Yuyao Tune and Yiyang Tune were the earliest opera forms in the southern mountains of Anhui.

The Yuyao Tune had inherited the folk culture of *New Yuefu* (新乐府), a popular Han folk style of ballads and poetry, during the Six Dynasties period (222-589 CE) and absorbed the folk culture of southern China, including folk tunes and ditty singing. Its sung lyrical syntax was derived from the region's spoken language. So, the Yuyao Tune was easy to understand and well received by the general public.

Reference to the Yuyao Tune was first found in the book, *Beans Garden Notes* (菽园杂记), written by Lu Rong (陆容) (1436–1496), a *youcanzheng* (a high-ranking official) in Zhejiang Province during the Chenghua period of the Ming dynasty.

Many excellent people make a living on singing Haiyan opera of Jiaxing and Yuyao opera of Shaoxing, although the children of good families are ashamed to do so. They act out legends, which have heroines in the stories, they always cry with grief, and the viewers feel sad (1959, p 124).

The Yuyao Tune flourished during the Zhengde (正德) period of Ming dynasty (1506–1521). The country to the east of Yuyao County was rich in salt. Yuyao Official Salt accounted for two thirds of the province's economy. Salt merchants from the provinces along the Yangtze River frequently met and socialised with each other. These wealthy local businessmen habitually maintained their own private music ensembles, which accompanied them to and from the different cities and regions where they did business. Yuyao Tune songs became popular along the Yangtze and Huaihe Rivers in southern Anhui. It is recorded in *Anhui Volume of Annals of Chinese Opera* that the appearance of Anhui Opera was greatly influenced by the Yuyao Tune.

Shang Na quotes the records of the *Yiyang County Annals* (弋阳县志) from the Ming dynasty (1573–1620) in her article, 'Communication modes and characteristics of Yiyang Tune', saying that:

For hundreds of years, so many people had lived in Yiyang. However, [due to war and famine] they had to emigrate, abandoning their homes, even though the household register still had their names. They became famous later in the world even though they were not known in their former land (2018, p. 3).

In the face of serious existential crises, ceaseless wars and continuous famine, it was inevitable that people would migrate and flee in large numbers. During the years of Emperors Chenghua, Hongzhi and Jiajing of the Ming dynasty, the population of Yiyang in Jiangxi suffered terribly under the harshest conditions. Being destitute, they resorted to any craft or work to make a living. Their migration and spreading diaspora eliminated the Yiyang Tune from its birthplace, though it was still popular wherever they relocated. Some refugees passed by the neighbouring counties of Leping and Fuliang to start new lives in southern Anhui, where their music again grew in popularity (Zheng 2012).

During the Ming dynasty the Yiyang Tune took root in the soil of southern Anhui Province because of its flexibility and inclusivity (Dai 2007). It had no formal scores but reflected many local customs. It often changed the keys and vernacular lyrics of songs. During the Jiajing period of the dynasty, the Yiyang Tune expanded in popularity into Qingyang County, Chizhou Prefecture and southern Anhui Province, where it was sung either solo or in unison to the rhythm of gongs and drums instead of orchestral accompaniment. This mode of singing combined with local dialects and musical forms, including the Buddhist chants of Mount Jiuhua, the great religious drama of Mulian Opera, the Yuyao Tune from Zhejiang, and southern Anhui folk tunes, to create the Qingyang Tune. As the Qingyang area was politically subordinate to the Chizhou Prefecture, the Qingyang Tune was also called the Chizhou Tune.

Another group of the Jiangxi refugees took the Yiyang Tune to Huizhou, where it merged with the local dialect to become the Huizhou Tune (Wen 2010). According to records in the book, *On Traditional Chinese Operas*, ‘There came the tune of the “Yiyang”, “Yiwu (义乌)”, “Qingyang”, “Huizhou” and “Leping (乐平)” ’ over the years. Tang Xianzu (汤显祖) (1550–1616), a dramatist of the Ming dynasty, recorded that ‘in the Jiajing years, the Yiyang Tune died out, and turned into Leping, Hui and Qingyang Tunes’.

Zhou Yibai holds a similar view. In *The History of Chinese Operas*, he says:

The Yiyang tune also moved north and south and changed in some places because of its association with local operas. The most obvious facts can prove this view, such as ‘Huichi Elegant Tune’, ‘Qingyang Shi Tune’, ‘Siping Tune’ and ‘Taiping Tune’ in Anhui (2007, p. 109).

The Huizhou Tune and Chizhou Tune are collectively referred to as the Huichi Elegant Tune, the earliest form of Anhui Opera (Li 2005). Later, the Huichi Elegant Tune was further enriched by other types of opera that spread into Anhui Province, which led to the development of new Anhui Opera tunes, such as Bozi, Chuiqiang, Bangzi and Erhuang tune. As such, the formation of Anhui Opera is inseparable from the widespread amalgamation of local Anhui musical styles and those imported from a variety of other regions. Anhui Opera artists absorbed aspects of many regional Chinese cultures, as well as their own, and embraced these schools of artistry to enhance their own development.



## 4.2 The Dissemination of Anhui Opera and its influence on the formation of Beijing Opera and many other styles

Anhui Opera features a variety of songs, exciting combat skills, acrobatics and stage fighting with all manner of weapons that was popular among people of all classes. With the rise and expansion of Huizhou's economy and merchants, it spread widely across China. This time-honoured artform has influenced more than fifty other traditional Chinese opera styles, especially in southern and central China, and is an important precursor to Beijing Opera. It has, therefore, played a vital role in the development of regional opera styles right across China.

### 4.2.1 The Dissemination of Anhui Opera

The rise of Huizhou merchants not only had an important influence on Anhui Opera's origin and development, but also played a decisive role in its dissemination. Huizhou mercantile networks spread throughout China, and Anhui Opera proliferated along with them.

By the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Huizhou merchants had become a highly influential economic group (Huang 1995). This new merchant class was well educated, culturally sophisticated, and enthusiastic about Anhui Opera. Opera theatres and performances were important sites where Huizhou merchants conducted business negotiations and maintained their commercial, social and political relations (Yan & Yang 1998).

Well-connected Huizhou merchants made huge commercial profits and many of them were called *red-crowned merchants*.<sup>48</sup> The adage that *opera is the business* circulated among these merchants for a long time, as their patronage of private opera became their main public relations tool for consolidating their commercial monopolies in commodities and services such as salt, tea and pawnbroking (Wang 1986).

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Huizhou merchants were mainly concentrated in the Yangzhou and Hangzhou regions, where the local culture flourished with opera respected as a high artform and esteemed by officials and socialites. To cultivate relationships with government officials and consolidate contacts within elevated circles, Huizhou merchants kept their own private Anhui Opera troupes, and attracted talented and skilful artists to join them. These artists participated in banquets, family parties and other social gatherings that extended the influence of Anhui Opera and promoted its development. Emperor Qianlong in the Qing dynasty made many tours to Southern China where Huizhou merchants received him warmly and staged operas at banquets that met with his favour. This further stimulated the expansion of the

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<sup>48</sup> The term 'red-crowned merchants' was used to refer to those who were both officials and businessmen. The name came from the Qing dynasty, when the troubling phenomenon of being both an official and a merchant was particularly serious and referred to the vermilion feather on their official hat representing a certain rank. Hence the name, which is still in use today. A typical representative of the red-crowned merchants was Hu Guangyong (胡光墉) (courtesy name Xueyan [雪岩]), a famous Huizhou merchant in the late Qing dynasty.

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opera market and laid a foundation for the later relocation of Anhui Opera troupes to Beijing.

The commercial activities often took Huizhou merchants away from home, causing familial separation and loneliness, and the Anhui Opera troupes they patronised provided them with a source of cultural connectedness and emotional sustenance.<sup>49</sup> They adapted Yangzhou Opera to their own needs and added to it Huizhou cultural elements. Their influence upon the development of Anhui Opera troupes was not solely limited to financial support. Huizhou merchants also cultivated their Anhui Opera troupes so this artistry would reflect their own personal ideologies, morals, and aesthetic preferences.

The popularity of Anhui Opera extended from southern Anhui to the central and eastern parts of the province, and even to Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and other places following the merchants' commercial interests. The golden age of Anhui Opera was when Huizhou merchants were at their most prosperous during the late Ming dynasty and early Qing dynasty.

## **4.2.2 Anhui Opera's contribution to and integration with other opera forms**

Having absorbed elements from other traditional folk and operatic styles, the popular expansion of Anhui Opera across China would gradually influence the development of more than fifty other regional opera styles (Wuyuan Art Museum, n.d.).

### **4.2.2.1 The Influence of Anhui Opera on Beijing Opera**

The most celebrated of these influences began when an Anhui Opera troupe first arrived in Beijing in 1790 to celebrate Emperor Qianlong (乾隆)'s 80th birthday. So significant is this event that, since 1990, the Chinese government has officially recognised its importance with anniversaries and celebrations. It is commonly acknowledged as an important milestone in the history of Chinese opera that enabled the birth of Peking Opera.

#### **4.2.2.1.1 Anhui Opera Troupes' arrival in Beijing**

Zheng Yongchang states in the book, *The Records of a Study and Analysis on the Map of Qianlong's Southern Tour Itinerary Collected by the Museum* (2012) that emperors of the Qing dynasty were fond of opera, and it had become customary for the royal family to stage performances to celebrate the royal birthdays and other occasions. From 1751, Emperor Qianlong went to Southern China six times to attend operas.

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<sup>49</sup> In tradition Chinese society, leaving one's home is a very disruptive process. Chinese people had a strong sense of 'family', so for a man in a patriarchal and conservative society, it was his filial duty and responsibility to stay with his parents. Countless poems and works of literature written at that time express the sadness of being away from home and parents and the longing to return.

High-ranking officials and magnates from all over Southern China kept their own family operas troupes, which made opera performances one of the main entertainments for a visiting emperor.

In 1790, to celebrate Emperor Qianlong's 80th birthday, the Sangqing Opera Troupe from Anqing, which had been performing in Yangzhou all year, was invited to perform in Beijing on the recommendation of Wu Lana, Governor of the Fujian and Zhejiang provinces. Its patron was Jiang Chun, an influential salt merchant from Huizhou (Xie, 2016).

The Sangqing Opera Troupe (三庆班) was originally founded in Yangzhou and comprised three parallel Anhui Opera troupes kept by the merchants Jiang Chun (江春), Xia Wenpan (夏文涛) and Yu Laosi (于老四).<sup>50</sup> The Sanqing Opera Troupe in which Gao Langting worked had three flower-character singing tunes: namely, the Erhuang Tune from Anqing, the Beijing Tune and the Qin Tune (Li D, 1795 [2007], p. 130). The most prominent singing tune of this troupe was the Erhuang Tune, which was supplemented with others including the Kunqu Tune, Chuiqiang Tune and Bangzi Tune.<sup>51</sup>

The celebratory Anhui Opera performance in Beijing for Emperor Qianlong's birthday was of unprecedented splendour. The imperial court spent more than 1.1 million taels of silver on the festival<sup>52</sup>, according to *An Exhibition of Longevity Celebration of Emperors and Empresses in Qing Dynasty* compiled by the Palace Museum. From the Xihua Gate to Gaoliang Bridge outside the Xizhi Gate, a stage was erected every few dozen steps, and large audiences gathered around them enjoying dramas in different tunes from different parts of the country. Artists from all over the nation were either playing string music or dancing with fans and handkerchiefs. It was a dizzying array of performances, one after another. Among them, the Sanqing Anhui Opera Troupe rose to pre-eminence.

The pinnacle of the Sanqing Opera Troupe's performance was the famous female role<sup>53</sup> sung by Gao Langting (高朗亭), who came to Beijing in his heyday (Zhao 2008). He did not simply win audiences over with his singing and appearance, but through his refined character portrayal. A document of the period, *Records of Famous Opera Actors*, states that

<sup>50</sup> Jiang Chun was a salt merchant, Xia Wenpan was a leader of merchants in South Anhui. Yu Laosi was a recruitment consultant.

<sup>51</sup> The remarks on *The Comments on Poetry at Suiyuan* were written by Shu Zhongshan, son of Wu Lana (?—1795), governor of Fujian and Zhejiang during the reign of Qianlong in the Qing dynasty, according to research by Xie Yufeng.

<sup>52</sup> One tael of silver in the Qing dynasty was worth between 150-220 RMB. One Australian dollar is now equivalent to about 5 RMB. So, in today's currency, the festival would have cost around A\$45 million!

<sup>53</sup> Cross-gender is a feature of some traditional Chinese operas. Depending on the voice, some males exclusively play female roles, such as Mei Lanfang (梅兰芳), a famous Peking Opera master. Some females, such as Meng Xiaodong (孟小冬), a famous actor from the Republic of China, play male roles exclusively.

... he was well built with a nice countenance and looked like a real woman once on stage. Even with his physical performance or his smile, he could achieve a stunning artistic effect and won the audience. The audience was so enthusiastic about his superb performance that they forgot he was a fake woman. His acting talent was by no means innate but the result of hard work (Xiao 1988, p 55).

The birthday performance was a great success. Sanqing Opera Troupe earned the title of *No. 1 in Beijing*, and Gao Langting was honoured as the *Senior Actor of Erhuang Tune*.

After 1795, five more Anhui Opera troupes (Sixi, Qixiu, Nicui, Hechun and Chuntai) arrived in succession in Beijing. Over time, these six ensembles (including Sanqing) gradually merged into four major troupes, namely Sanqing Troupe, Sixi Troupe, Hechun Troupe and Chuntai Troupe. *Criticism of Comments on Poetry at Suiyuan* notes that ‘these troupes had at least 100 actors each acting as young female roles.’ (Yuan 1982, p. 859). This comment highlights that the casts of the Anhui Opera troupes in Beijing were huge, with each group of actors dominated by young female roles.

These four consolidated troupes had their own specialisations and there were accolades for each. Sanqing Troupe was known for its well-scripted operas with strong beginnings and grand finales. Sixi Troupe focussed on performing Kunqu operas. Chuntai Troupe had fine, lively teen actors, and Hechun Troupe was good at performing martial arts operas. Each was always very well received by audiences.

In his book, *Menghua Suobu* (梦华琐簿), Yang Maojian commented that ‘the influential opera theatres included Guangdelou Theatre, Guanghelou Theatre, Sanqingyuan Theatre, Qingleiyuan Theatre, which were mainly used by Anhui Opera troupes’ (1988, p. 349). Evidently, Anhui Opera troupes were extremely popular in the Beijing during this period.

Initially, Sanqing Troupe’s arrival in Beijing was just for the royal birthday performance at the palace. However, due to the beautiful tunes and uncomplicated scripts of Anhui Opera, the whole performance was novel and full of life, and was warmly welcomed by local audiences. Sanqing Troupe was in continual demand after the emperor’s birthday and remained in Beijing permanently to perform for the general public.

#### **4.2.2.1.2 The Evolution of Anhui Opera and the Formation of Beijing Opera**

After Gao Langting came to Beijing, he mainly sang the Anqing Huabu Tune<sup>54</sup> along with the Beijing Opera tune and the Qin Opera tune and named his troupe Sanqing. In

<sup>54</sup> The Huabu tune is best explained by comparing it with the Yabu tune. The Yabu tune was favoured by noble classes and scholars for its elegant musical style and tasteful lyrics. Conversely, the Huabu tune was enjoyed by the broad populace as it was louder, less poetic and more easily understood.

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the process of performing and singing, he adopted the advantages of the Qin opera tune, so the Chuntai Troupe combined the Beijing Opera Tune and the Qin Opera Tune into one. (Yang 1988)

Once in Beijing, Anhui Opera troupes incorporated the Qinqiang Tune and Gaoqiang Tune into their performances. The above allusion to the ‘Anqing Huabu Tune’ refers to the use of Erhuang Tune in Anhui Opera, while ‘Beijing Opera Tune’ refers to the Yiyang Tune that was introduced into Beijing in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. Through the influence of this Beijing Opera Tune, there were some musical changes within Anhui Opera that led to the formation of the new Beijing Gaoqiang Tune.<sup>55</sup>

In 1779, more than a decade before Anhui Opera troupes arrived in Beijing, Wei Changsheng, an artist of Sichuan Province, accompanied a Qinqiang Opera troupe to Beijing, where it was very well received (Bi & Wu 2015). Wei Changsheng dressed beautifully, had a sweet voice, and sang and acted gracefully. His performance was accompanied by the *huqin* (spike fiddle) and *yueqin* (moon lute), and his nuanced singing was rhythmical and highly expressive. He acted in an opera called *Huang Saihua Avenges Her Parents* (滚楼), which caused a sensation in Beijing.

This shift of focus caused the pre-existing opera style of Beijing to decline in popularity, which forced their artists to join Qinqiang Opera troupes to make a living. However, in 1785 Emperor Qianlong’s royal court banned Qinqiang Opera from Beijing and expelled Wei Changsheng from the capital because of his risqué performances.<sup>56</sup> Since this opera star was forced to leave Beijing, Qinqiang Opera in turn fell out of favour as an artform across China. This obliged Qinqiang Opera artists to join Anhui Opera troupes to survive, which led to a fusion of the Anhui Opera and Qinqiang Opera styles. As part of this synthesis, Anhui Opera troupes rearranged a large number of Qinqiang operatic works, such as *Women Generals of the Yang Family* (杨门女将) and *Yue Fei’s Mother Tattooing His Back* (岳母刺字), thereby expanding their own repertoire.

During the Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns of the Qing dynasty, more and more Han opera<sup>57</sup> artists came to Beijing. By then, Anhui Opera was in such great demand that Han Opera was somewhat isolated. However, prior to them reaching Beijing, Anhui Opera artists had already communicated and cooperated with Han Opera artists. Faced with little alternative, Han Opera artists simply joined Anhui Opera troupes to perform and sustain careers. This amalgamation enhanced Anhui Opera’s singing

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<sup>55</sup> Scholars in Beijing pursued cultural fashions, which of course varied over time. From the early Qing dynasty, they admired the Kunqu tune, right into Emperor Jiaqing’s reign. Later, people began to sponsor the Yiqiang tune. This was commonly known as Gaoqiang tune according to the volume *Records of Trivial Matters in Beijing*, written by Zhen Jun (1857-1920), who lived in Beijing in the late Qing dynasty. The Gaoqiang tune still used the Kunqu lyrics, with only a change in the tone. It was especially loved by people in the Inner City and was known as Desheng song (Zhen 1966, p. 524).

<sup>56</sup> Wei’s performances included elements of what was considered obscenity, which added to the sensationalism but affronted the royal guardians of morality.

<sup>57</sup> Han Opera is a kind of local opera in Hubei Province.

style and strengthened its troupes, simultaneously making their repertoires and performance techniques more diversified.

As noted in *The History of Chinese Beijing Opera* (Beijing Institute of Art and Shanghai Institute of Art 1999), and in the introduction to the *History of Pihuang Opera Tunes in North and South China* (Yu 1994), Anhui Opera and Han Opera are culturally related. The main Erhuang Tune of Anhui Opera was heavily influenced by the Yiyang Tune, which came with refugees from Jiangxi Province during the Ming dynasty. The Erhuang Tune used in Han Opera was another branch of the Yiyang Tune that spread to Hubei Province at the same time.

Another important vocal tune in Anhui Opera is the Bozi Tune, which the Qinqiang Opera style brought from Western China following Li Zicheng's peasant uprising in the late Ming dynasty (1600–1644). It spread to the Zongyang (枞阳) region of Anhui Province and was combined with local folk operas. Yet another singing tune in Anhui Opera is the Xipi Tune. According to the research of Ouyang Yuqian's monograph, *A Study on Erhuang Tune* (1927) and Zhou Yibai's *The History of Chinese Opera* (2007), Xipi Tune was transformed from the Qinqiang Tune, which had been introduced into the Xiangyang (襄阳) area of Hubei Province by Hubei artists. Although similar, the musical styles of Yiyang and Qinqiang differ because their tunes came from different geographical locations between Anhui and Hubei. The tunes of Han Opera were more plentiful, and complemented those of Anhui Opera, which were less flamboyant. After Han Opera artists joined Anhui Opera troupes, the characteristics of Han Opera were fully adopted into Anhui Opera.

In this period, Qinqiang elements continued to be absorbed into Anhui opera in such a way that that a new type of pihuang, named 'Chu Tone New Voice' (楚调新声), was born, which was different from the original Han Pihuang. This new melodious and mellow style of singing – high, intense and deep, with a rich musical and expressive force – was warmly welcomed by the people. This can be considered as the primary stage of Peking Opera.

The merging of Han Opera artists with Anhui Opera troupes altered the latter's performance characteristics, which hitherto had been mainly focused on young female roles and plotlines. Thereafter, the number of male role actors and plotlines rose sharply, especially for old male roles. Published in 1845, *A Brief Introduction to Beijing* (都门纪略) claims that, at that time, more than seventy plays were performed on stage by seven opera troupes, including Sanqing, Sixi, Hechun and Chuntai. Operas led by old male roles, such as *Famen Temple* (法门寺), *Giving up Chengdu* (让成都), *Qin Qiong Fights with Yang Lin Thrice* (三挡) and *Throwing the String Instrument* (摔琴) accounted for more than half of these. For example, the frequently performed opera, *Guan Yu*, was first incorporated into Anhui Opera troupes by Mi Yingxian (米应先), originally a Han Opera artist. Cheng Changgeng (程长庚), a native of Qianshan in Anhui and an Anhui Opera troupe leader, was highly accomplished at performing in *Guan Yu*, as he had learned from Mi Yingxian. Cheng Changgeng would become one of the originators of Beijing Opera as it is known today and he significantly changed the performance style of those Anhui Opera troupes based in Beijing. Due to the

increased number of male roles, the array of all the roles became more balanced, making Anhui Opera performances in Beijing grander and seeding their imminent transformation into today's Beijing Opera style.

This new style of Beijing Opera matured and evolved through stylistic changes made by the Anhui Opera troupes of Beijing (Beijing Institute of Art and Shanghai Institute of Art 1999). This new type of opera was produced through the gradual cross-fertilisation of Anhui Opera, Han Opera, Kunqu Opera, Gaoqiang Opera and other stylistic influences. This process took some fifty to sixty years after the first arrival of Anhui Opera troupes in Beijing in 1790. Until the eventual formation of Beijing Opera during Emperor Daoguang's reign, the four consolidated Anhui Opera troupes of Beijing were important societal and cultural organisations. By 1840, however, Anhui Opera in Beijing had completely morphed into what is now known as Beijing Opera, as characterised by its novel use of the Pihuang Tune.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4.2.2.2 The Influence of Anhui Opera on other Operas

While Anhui Opera laid the foundation for Beijing Opera, many other opera styles from Southern China are closely related to it. These include Dianju Opera (滇剧), Cantonese Opera (粤剧), Fujian Opera (闽剧), Hunan Opera (湘剧), Ganju Opera (赣剧), Wuju Opera (婺剧) and Huaiju Opera (淮剧) (Li 2005).

The main tune in Dianju Opera, from Yunnan, is a combination of Anhui Opera with the Xiangyang Tune. As recorded in *Pingtang Poetry in Southern Yunnan, and Xianghe Song in Operatic Circles* (滇南萃堂诗话, 梨园宴集相和歌) (Tan, 1790)<sup>59</sup>, Tan Cui was appointed head of a mountainous region in Yunnan. He requested seven Anhui Opera troupes, led by the Yangchun Opera Troupe, to perform in Yunnan. They established themselves there, exerting a significant influence on the provincial Yunnan Opera (Gu et al. 1986). There were some 1600 plays in Yunnan's Dianju Opera style, most of which had corresponding works in Han Opera, Anhui Opera, Sichuan Opera and various Bangzi Operas (Lu 2013). The Dianju Opera repertoire was thereby transplanted from those kinds of operas, and its string and percussion music, facial makeup, martial arts, movements and programs were all related to Anhui Opera.

Cantonese Opera was another new style produced by combining Anhui Opera with the local singing style after the Xipi and Erhuang Tunes were introduced to Guangzhou and altered to accommodate local pronunciation. Anhui Opera troupes began to sing operas in Guangzhou during the Qianlong period. According to an inscription on the Liyuan Guild Hall (梨园会馆) in Guangzhou, established in 1791, Shangsheng Troupe, Chuntai Troupe, Rongsheng Troupe, Baoqing Troupe, Baoming Troupe, Guihe Troupe, Yusheng Troupe and Shengchun Troupe all performed there. Cantonese Opera artists not only absorbed the Erhuang and Xipi tunes of Anhui Opera in their singing, but also adopted its traditional emphasis on combat skills (Lai & Huang

<sup>58</sup> Beijing Opera was first known as Pihuang Opera, which indicated its innovative combination of both Xipi and Erhuang Tunes.

<sup>59</sup> Tan Cui was himself a descendant of an Anhui Opera troupe.

1988). Ouyang Yuqian (欧阳予倩) has pointed out that ‘Cantonese Opera originated from Anhui Opera tune’

Mai Xiaoxia (麦啸霞) said that the foundation of Cantonese Opera was Han Opera. Cantonese opera performers also admitted it, but there were few signs of direct transformation from Han Opera to Cantonese Opera, and the direct influence of Anhui Opera troupes was indeed great, [since] many Anhui Opera troupes had brought bangzi tune and erhuang tune to Guangdong (1957, p. 109).

He also commented that:

[T]he original Guangdong Opera was almost the same as the Guangxi Opera and the Qiyang Opera. They had a deep blood relationship... Guangdong Linggong group received bangzi tune and erhuang tune from Anhui Opera troupes and Hunan Qiyang opera troupes. (Ouyang 1957, p. 110)

Zhou Yibai agrees with Ouyang Yuqian that the root origin of the Pihuang Tune in Cantonese Opera is the Anhui Opera troupe.

The direct root of bangzi tune, pihuang (xipi and erhuang tunes) of Guangdong Cantonese opera was Qiyang Opera in Hunan. However, the so-called Luantan tune in Qiyang opera inherited the tradition of Anhui opera troupes and was influenced by Hubei Han Opera. Then it affected Guangxi opera and Guangdong opera. (Zhou 2007, p. 109)

In *On Ancient and Modern Cantonese Opera*, Guo Bingzhen (1979) commented that:

Bangzi Tune was first used in Cantonese Opera, and then Erhuang Tune was learned from other troupes beyond Guangdong. So far, the Erhuang Tune is still incomplete... The melodies of Yiyang Tune, Kunqu Tune, Bangzi Tune, Anhui Tune and Han Tune, which were popular in Guangdong during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, are all related to Cantonese Opera. (Guo 1979, p. 34)

Lin Yan from Xiamen University states in her master's thesis, ‘A Preliminary Study on the Art of Fujian Opera’ (2001), that Anhui Opera also played a role in the formation of Fujian Opera in the late Qing dynasty. The local troupes in Fujian consisted of Pingjiang troupes<sup>60</sup>, which were favoured by the general public, and Rulin (儒林班)<sup>61</sup>, troupes, preferred by scholars and bureaucrats. As relocated officials assigned to Fuzhou could not understand the singing of local troupes, they invited Anhui Opera troupes to perform there. After the Chinese Revolution of 1911, Anhui Opera troupes were disbanded due to the loss of support from these relocated officials. Most of the main Anhui Opera actors stayed in Fujian and joined Pingjiang troupes (平讲班). Later, they combined the characteristics of Anhui Opera with Rulin troupes which gradually evolved into modern Fujian opera of today (Wang 2013).

<sup>60</sup> The Fujian dialect is called Ping. Jiang means to speak in Chinese. So Pingjiang troupe means a troupe that sings and recites only in Fujian dialect.

<sup>61</sup> In Emperor Wanli's 37th year of rule in the Ming dynasty (1609), Cao Xuequan (曹学佺), a senior official of the imperial court, was demoted and sent back to his hometown because of political dissent. He lived in Hongtang Town (洪塘乡) in the western suburb of Fuzhou in Fujian province. He organized servants in the government to set up Cao's family classes, inviting scholars to watch and entertain them, which was later called ‘Rulin troupe’.



The formation of Hunan Opera was relatively late.<sup>62</sup> Commerce in Changsha was controlled by Jiangsu and Anhui mercantile clans. Huizhou merchants doing business in Changsha often supported Anhui Opera performance back home and sponsored it elsewhere. As a result, the influence of Anhui Opera continued to expand, so more and more troupes performed and sang Anhui Opera, which gradually combined with various Gaoqiang tunes (高腔) popular in the Hunan countryside to form Hunan Opera (Fan 2007). Hunan Opera's repertoire absorbed works such as *Happy Life* (大长生乐) and *Stealing Chicken* (偷鸡) from Anhui Opera troupes, and its songs were sung in Anqing Tune. Other operas that used Anqing Tune – such as *Flooding All Enemy Troops*, *A Fight between Dragon and Tiger* (龙虎斗), *Distance Tests a Horse's Stamina* (路遥知马力), *Wang Xiang's Mourning* (王祥吊孝), *Li Da Sounds the Night Watches* (季大打更) and *Trapped in Cao's Mansion* (困曹府) – were also frequently performed in Hunan Opera. The Anhui operas *Ruyi Hook* (如意钩) and *The Unicorn Purse* (锁云囊), which originally came from Qin Opera, spread to Hunan Opera troupes later. So the early form of Hunan Opera is to some extent related to Anhui Opera (Chinese Traditional Opera Network, n.d).

Ganju in Jiangxi, Wuju in Zhejiang and Huaiju in Jiangsu were all regional opera styles directly influenced by Anhui Opera. In the Shangrao and Yushan districts, where Ganju Opera was formed, and the adjacent neighbourhood of Huizhou, the influence of Anhui Opera was very obvious. Wuju mixes the Gaoqiang Tune with Kunqu and Anhui Opera. The Yangzhou-Huaian area was the primary residential quarter for Huizhou merchants in Jiangsu province where Anhui opera troupes performed frequently. Huaiju later formed there by absorbing Anhui Opera's vocal tunes and the performance structure of its troupes (Wuyuan Museum of Art, n.d).

Not only did Anhui Opera directly contribute to Beijing Opera beginnings, but also to those of many other regional opera styles. Today, its vibrant artistic influence can be found in regional opera traditions across China.

### 4.3 The Decline of Anhui Opera

The apex of Anhui Opera's popularity across China also signalled the start of its decline. The main causes for this waning can be explained as follows.

The decline of Huizhou merchants due to the gradual shift of socioeconomic power to Beijing led to the loss of strong local economic support for Anhui Opera. Due to the Qing government's changes of policy on tea, salt and pawnbroking in 1831, this previous commercial backing dissolved as the core industries of Huizhou merchants collapsed, causing great financial loss (Wang 2005). Coupled with a destructive war<sup>63</sup>, fiscal constraints and high government taxation, the influence of Huizhou merchants

<sup>62</sup> The name of Hunan opera first appeared in the 9th year of the Republic of China (1920 CE).

<sup>63</sup> The Taiping Rebellion, or Civil War, 1850-1864

finally receded. The cost of 10,000 taels of silver per annum<sup>64</sup> to support Anhui Opera was unsustainable, so patronage was lost and the artform fell into decline.

The emergence of Beijing Opera changed the focus of audience attention away from Anhui Opera. Beijing Opera had absorbed most of the best artistic elements of Anhui Opera, as well as the artistic features of many local operas, and so appealed to broader audiences. This made Beijing Opera the dominant opera form in China. As audience interest shifted, some Anhui Opera performers began to switch to Beijing Opera since it was more popular. By 1840, most Anhui Opera troupes in Beijing had morphed into early Peking Opera troupes (AHCRC 2015).

Frequent conflicts caused the loss of primary performance venues, audiences and cultural opportunities. The *Anhui Volume of the Chronicles of Chinese Drama* (China Traditional Opera committee 1993) states that from 1850 to 1864 the separatist Taiping Heavenly Kingdom movement (太平天国) and the Nianjun Army (捻军) opposed the Qing dynasty, leading to a war unparalleled in size and ferocity since the Qing dynasty had unified the Central Plains. The chaos of fighting in Southern China resulted in the devastation of Anhui Opera's main performance regions and venues. Huizhou was looted by the defeated retreating forces of the Xiangjun (湘军) and Taiping (太平军) armies. Anhui Opera artists, having lost their resources, performance venues and homes, were unable and unwilling to continue performing. They had no means of living, leading to the dissolution of the Anhui Opera troupes. These performers either switched to learning Beijing Opera, or left the arts completely and returned to farming. Inevitably, this led to the decline of Anhui Opera. In 1935, the Ke Changchun (柯长春) Opera Troupe, the last remaining major Anhui Opera troupe, was disbanded in Jingxian County (泾县) in southern Anhui Province.

Because of these strictures and limitations, Anhui Opera retreated to its place of origin and reverted to a rural folk opera style without broader influence.<sup>65</sup> Divorced from its once vast national marketplace, it retired to the mountainous region of its infancy and largely disappeared from broader view.

#### 4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described in detail the emergence of Anhui Opera in the south of Anhui Province, and has listed those causes that underpinned the political, economic, cultural and geographical environment that encouraged its rapid growth. It has illustrated the main viewpoints in the dispute over its regional origins and shown

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<sup>64</sup> Approximately equal to \$2 million today.

<sup>65</sup> Result of a discussion at a seminar (2014) at the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre (AHCRC). Speakers and presenters included Ms. Hou Lu, member of the CPPCC National Committee, playwright, and researcher at Research Institute of Culture and History of Anhui Provincial Government; Mr. Tian Yi, consultant of the Research Centre of History and Culture; Wang Shaolin, researcher of Anhui History and Culture Research Centre.

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qualified support for the position that Anhui Opera ‘originated in Huizhou and became popular in Shipai.’

In addition, the chapter has articulated the perspective that the advancement of Anhui Opera promoted the birth of Beijing Opera, and also acted as an important influence on the emergence and development of many local operas. Finally, there is an analysis of the causes of Anhui Opera’s decline, which will lead to further research on the development status of Anhui Opera under the influence of contemporary policies.

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## Chapter 5

### Influences of Contemporary Policy on Anhui Opera

Chapter 5 investigates how Chinese government policy has directly impacted the survival, progress and inheritance of Anhui Opera. This is examined through the chronological development of Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre; how the Opera's culture is disseminated in schools and universities; its development, promotion, and revitalization opportunities; modes of protecting Anhui Opera; and the roles that various organisations play in supporting Anhui Opera.

Changes in Chinese government arts policy in the 20th and 21st centuries have had a direct impact on the survival, progress and inheritance of many Chinese traditional cultures, including Anhui Opera. These policies have contributed to the development of the renowned Anhui Opera company and the Anhui Opera Troupe of Anhui Province, also known as 'Troupe No. 1 under Heaven' (天下第一团). A large amount of historical evidence uncovered through research undertaken by community organisations and public collections demonstrates how new Anhui Opera repertoire has developed under the Cultural Revolution policy of 'letting a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend and bringing forth the new through the old' (Li 2005; Zhu 2011).

#### 5.1 The Six Stages of Development of the Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre and Cultural Maintenance

When China was reorganised in 1949, the new national government was faced with many problems, such as determining political strategy, economic recovery and reconstruction, the revival of cultural endeavours, and the challenge of securing peoples' livelihoods. During this period, the government adopted relatively flexible policies, providing more favourable conditions for the resumption of various cultural undertakings. For literature, music and art, it continued the idea determined at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art in May 1942 of 'letting a hundred flowers bloom' (Li 2005), which called for the recovery, rescue and protection of a large number of disappearing traditional cultures and advocated for the coexistence of various old artistic forms with the creation of new artistic works.

With the support and encouragement of this policy, a number of artistic works reflecting the busy contemporary lives of the populace emerged, and numerous traditional plays were unearthed. The art of Anhui Opera was revived, emphasising its tenacious vitality, while the Anhui Opera Troupe of Anhui Province was restored in 1956. Through consulting historical materials and additional anecdotal research, it seems that most of those involved in this process at the time were satisfied with the positive momentum brought by this policy. Li Taishan, a scholar of Anhui Opera, and Song Yangjian (宋扬俭), an artist and director of Anhui Opera, noted in a 2017 recording for the Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre (AHCRC) Main Collection that this was a time worth remembering. The efforts made to reclaim this

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operatic heritage remain vivid in the memories of those involved.

The success or failure of an undertaking is often determined by the efficiency with which a policy is operationalised, and cultural developments are no exception. The contemporary growth of Anhui Opera proves this point, as this study of the Anhui Opera Troupe reveals.

Anhui Opera Troupe of Anhui Province, founded in 1956, is the only provincial-level theatrical group engaged in artistic studies and performance. It is known as ‘Troupe No. 1 under Heaven’ due to its unique special status in Anhui Opera’s reclaimed heritage. Its history presents a microcosm of the reclamation of Anhui Opera in China and as a result, much can be understood about Anhui Opera through a study of this legendary troupe.

After the 1950s, China’s cultural activities developed rapidly under the guidance of the literary and artistic policy of ‘letting a hundred flowers bloom’, and many operas reflecting the lives of ordinary people were created. Having previously faced extinction, the art of Anhui Opera was revived. A large number of traditional plays were salvaged, restructured and performed in the early 1950s (Li, 2018). These included *Hujia Village* (扈家庄), *Zhaojun Departs the Frontier* (昭君出塞), *The Drunken Taibai* (太白醉酒), *Mount Phoenix* (凤凰山), *Nine Pieces of Clothing* (九件衣), and *Capturing and Releasing Meng Huo Seven Times* (七擒孟获). Following its founding in 1956, The Anhui Opera Troupe’s evolution may be divided into six developmental periods.

### 5.1.1 The First Stage

During the first stage between 1956 and 1963, the troupe’s focus was on unravelling Anhui Opera’s heritage and training a new generation of talented artists. The troupe salvaged Anhui Opera’s repertoire from different historical periods and preserved a large number of valuable materials, such as manuscripts of vocal tunes, instrumental music, and facial makeup. More than forty traditional plays were discovered, with two *Collections of Anhui Opera Materials* and ten *Collections of Anhui Opera Music Materials* compiled and published at the end of 1962 (Li’s Interview in AHCRC, 2014). The collection of scattered materials, the standardisation of music and new text arrangements of ancient operas all played an important role in preserving Anhui Opera. While actively salvaging Anhui Opera relics, the troupe organized and resumed rehearsals and performances. In 1959 and 1961, the Troupe went to Beijing, Shanghai and elsewhere for public concerts. Zhou Enlai (周恩来), Zhu De (朱德) and other state leaders were often in the audience and met with all actors to encourage them to protect the art of Anhui Opera.

In April 1959, the Anhui Opera Troupe went to Beijing to perform for the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China (Li 2019). From 15 April to 22 May, they performed more than forty times in Beijing, with an estimated total audience of more than 47,000. On 16 May, the troupe held a cultural entertainment recital at the Auditorium of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles to nearly 1000 people from the arts world and the press. Although youthful,

the troupe's actors were deemed to highly successful, and were expected to continue their efforts to recapture Anhui Opera's former glory.

The next day, the Troupe held a repeat performance in the auditorium of the State Council, attended by state leaders and ministerial heads<sup>66</sup>, and another in the auditorium of the Public Security Academy on 18 May. Premier Zhou Enlai and state leaders once again watched the performance and met all the actors.<sup>67</sup> The Premier expressed concern about the health of the senior artists and the progress of the younger ones. The performance was highly praised and on 23 May, the *Guangming Daily* published an article entitled 'Withered Trees Sprout in Spring' to report on this grand occasion.

According to the main collection of Anhui Historical and Culture Research Centre (2004) and *The Anhui Volume of Chronicles of Chinese Drama* (Chronicles of Chinese Drama Editorial Committee 1993), in 1961 at the invitation of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Culture and the Shanghai Branch of the Chinese Dramatists Association, the troupe went to Shanghai for the first time to perform at the China Grand Theatre. They arrived on 7 March and, on the same day, *Xinmin Evening News* published a report saying that the troupe would hold a performance on 9 March to entertain Shanghai's literary and art circles.<sup>68</sup> A day later, *Wen Wei Po* published a newsletter entitled *Anhui Opera Received High Praise in Shanghai* and, on 11 March, *Jiefang Daily* also published two favourable articles by Zhou Xinfang (周信芳) and Li Yuru (李玉茹). Zhou Xinfang and Li Yuru were well respected Peking Opera masters, and the articles show how engaged they were with Anhui Opera at this time. The same day, the *Xinmin Evening News* published a drama review entitled 'The Death of Luo Cheng in the Muddy River' by Zhong Yuan. These historical newspaper articles can all be found in *The Anhui Volume of Chronicles of Chinese Drama* (1993).

Following this enthusiastic press commentary, traditional Anhui operas continued to be presented successfully. The troupe cultivated a group of outstanding performing artists led by Zhang Qiyang (章其祥), Cao Shangli (曹尚礼) and Qin Caiping (秦彩萍).

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<sup>66</sup> These included Premier Zhou Enlai, Chairman Zhu De, Vice Premier Li Xiannian, (李先念) Vice Premier Luo Ruiqing (罗瑞卿), Vice Chairman Lin Fengfeng (林峰枫), Vice Chairman of the National Defence Commission Zhang Zhizhong (张治中), and Ministry of Culture heads Shen Yanbing (沈雁冰), Qian Junrui (钱俊瑞) and Xia Yan (夏衍).

<sup>67</sup> These performances were meticulously directed by Shen Yanbing (沈雁冰), Qian Junrui (钱俊瑞), Xia Yan (夏衍), Mei Lanfang (梅兰芳), Ma Shaobo (马少波), Li Jianwu (李建武) and other famous opera writers and artists.

<sup>68</sup> The report was entitled *Anhui Opera: Youthful Vitality Recovers while the Withered Tree Sprouts Again with the East Wind*. Peking Opera performer Zhou Xinfang, Kunqu Opera performer Yu Zhenfei, Yue Opera performing artists Yuan Xuefen and Yan Huizhu, as well as Tong Zhiling, Li Yuru, Ding Shi'e, Zhao Dan and other literary and art celebrities attended the performance.

### 5.1.2 The Second Stage

The next stage from 1964 to 1965 was seen as a time when left-of-centre political ideas became more prominent in cultural circles, with artistic works adopting different views and perspectives. The government maintained a relatively tolerant attitude, hoping to resolve artistic differences through discussion and criticism, and by mediating disagreements among the people. There was fierce debate concerning forms of expression and content during this time, which was seen as an appropriate way of articulating and resolving artistic differences.

Anhui Opera troupes performed modern plays about the thirteen years of history since 1949, which had become China's mainstream culture (AHCRC Main Collection, 2014). Anhui Opera troupes were obligated to shift from the performance of historical stories to modern dramas. They transcribed and performed modern dramas such as *Hongxia* (红霞) and *Two Little Heroines on the Grassland* (草原英雄小姐妹). However, traditional art was still tolerated and given necessary exhibition. It was during this period that the ancient Anhui Opera *The Legend of the White Snake* was rediscovered, rehearsed and performed. It was adapted into a series of operatic highlights, including *Lake Cruise* (游湖)<sup>69</sup>, *The Change* (惊变)<sup>70</sup>, *Stealing Herbs* (盗草)<sup>71</sup>, *The Broken Bridge* (断桥)<sup>72</sup>, and *A Fight on the Sea* (水斗).<sup>73</sup> Among these, the singing style of *The Broken Bridge* was presented according to its smooth, graceful and expressive tradition. The elaborate mode of this opera has been handed down over centuries and is widely regarded as a classic work of art.

### 5.1.3 The Third Stage

The period from 1966 to 1978 may be identified as the third stage. In the years following 1964, the revival of Anhui Opera gradually ground to a halt, as political and cultural norms valued contemporaneity over historicism. In the decade from 1966 to 1976 government authorities put forward a mistaken policy of 'taking class struggle as the key link' (Zhu 2011). They advocated 'destroying the four olds and establishing four new ones' (Wang 2017)<sup>74</sup>, adopting a relatively severe approach to culture and art

<sup>69</sup> Where the leading male role (Xu xian) and leading female role (White Snake Spirit) meet for the first time at West Lake.

<sup>70</sup> During the Dragon Boat Festival, Xu Xian is frightened to death when Lady White shows her true shape.

<sup>71</sup> In order to bring Xu Xian back to life, Lady White risks her life to steal herbs of immortality.

<sup>72</sup> The Broken Bridge (Duanqiao in Chinese) is the bridge in Hangzhou on which Lady White meets Xu Xian, and they fall in love at first sight.

<sup>73</sup> Xu Xian is locked in a pagoda by a monk. The White Snake Spirit leads her maid and a group of water fairies to attack the temple.

<sup>74</sup> The 'destroying the four olds' refers to destroying old ideas, culture, customs and habits; and as a concomitant, 'establishing four new ones' refers to the establishment of new ideas, culture, customs and habits.

and ensuring all traditional cultures under the four old modes of ideas, culture, customs and habits be sanitised, censored or eliminated.

The previously effective method of assertion and discussion was replaced by a relentless struggle of disputation and revisionism. General literary criticism represented the struggle between opposing political ideologies, and many literary and artistic works such as *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* (海瑞罢官), *Liu Zhidan* (刘志丹) and *The Life of Wu Xun* (武训传) were severely criticised for not conforming to mainstream political values. Traditional operas of skill and beauty depicting emperors, generals, ministers and gods were driven off the stage, and replaced by those depicting workers, peasants, and soldiers.

This transformation led to a cultural depression, in which all plays except the so-called ‘revolutionary model’ operas were banned. In a January 2014 interview for the AHCRC Main Collection, Mr. Li Taishan said:

In 1969, Anhui Opera Troupe of Anhui Province was abolished and forced to disband. Most of the cast went back to the grassroots, and a few were incorporated into the Peking Opera Troupe of Hefei. All the actors and actresses no longer sang Anhui Opera and began to sing Peking Opera. All of the old actors and actresses returned to their hometowns. So, Anhui Opera disappeared from the stage. Anhui Opera relics collected over the years suffered losses. Fortunately, they were partly saved under the protection of young actors who had been incorporated into Peking Opera Troupe.

These materials played an important role in the later restoration and reconstruction of the Anhui Opera Troupe of Anhui Province (Li 2018). In a January 2014 interview for the AHCRC Main Collection, Hou Lu (侯露), member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), stated that ‘the loss caused to traditional culture and art in that era could not be made up for many years, or even forever’.

#### 5.1.4 The Fourth Stage

The fourth stage from 1979 to 2004 is the period during which traditional institutions were restored, and culture and art developed briskly. After reform and opening up to the rest of the world<sup>75</sup>, the Chinese government once again put cultural foundations on the agenda and suggested the *Double Hundred* policy<sup>76</sup>, which promptly restored the seriously damaged cultural system. The Anhui Opera Troupe of Anhui Province was reinstated but faced a serious shortage of artistic talent. All senior Anhui Opera artists of the original troupe had passed away, and the returning performers varied in age and skill. Anhui Opera Troupe then introduced a group of new actors from the Peking Opera class of the Anhui Art School and the Peking Opera Troupe of Hefei, thus temporarily solving this personnel shortage. After its restoration on 6 December 1979, the first performance of the opera, *The Legend of the White Snake* (白蛇传), caused a sensation. It was staged for only one month, yet the total audience reached more than

<sup>75</sup> The term refers to the policy of reform at home and opening up to the outside world initiated by China at the Third Plenary Session of the eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in December 1978.

<sup>76</sup> An arithmetical summary of ‘letting a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend’.



40,000. In 1980, the troupe undertook more than 100 performance tours, which was unprecedented (Chronicles of Chinese Drama Editorial Committee 1993).

The troupe laid considerable emphasis on exploring Anhui Opera's heritage and continued to research and reconstruct its history (Song's Interview in AHCRC 2014). The booklet *Interpretation of Rolling Melody* and the music score *Excerpts from Hanju Operas in Fujian and Guangdong* (AHCRC Main Collection)<sup>77</sup> were the artistic works created in that period.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, the troupe strove to train new talent, and a number of outstanding actors and actresses, such as Wang Danhong and Wang Yushu, joined.

According to the official website of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre of Anhui Province, the Anhui Opera Troupe transcribed a large number of new costume operas during this period, such as *Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* (七侠五义) and *The Tragedy in Han Palace* (汉宫怨), and also created and performed dozens of opera works, including *Seven Steps Verse* (七步吟) and *Liu Mingchuan* (刘铭传).<sup>79</sup> Many received praise and high accolades. *A Meeting East to the Yangtze River* (临江会) won the Magnolia Award in 1991 for its leading role<sup>80</sup>; *Eternal Friendship* (情义千秋) won the Performance Award in 1992; *A Grievance* (哭恨饮剑) won the Magnolia Award for Performing Arts in 1993; *Lv Bu Flirts with Diao Chan* (吕布戏貂蝉) won the Plum Blossom Award of Chinese Opera in 1994<sup>81</sup>; *Liu Mingchuan* won the Wenhua Prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture in 1997<sup>82</sup> and the Plum Blossom Award of Chinese Drama in 1998.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>77</sup> The AHCRC collected and sorted the material into a booklet. It was not published, as it was for internal review only.

<sup>78</sup> Anhui Opera once influenced other traditional Chinese operas, including Fujian Opera, Cantonese Opera and Han Opera, all of which had a close relationship with Anhui Opera, and warranted the publication of such music scores.

<sup>79</sup> Liu Mingchuan was born in Hefei (now at the foot of Mount Daqian in Feixi County), Anhui province during the Qing dynasty. He was the first governor of Taiwan Province and a mainstay of the Westernisation Movement.

<sup>80</sup> The Magnolia Drama Award for the Performing Arts was inaugurated in 1989 as an official literary and art award, given annually in Shanghai.

<sup>81</sup> The Plum Blossom Award is the highest award for performance in Chinese opera. It is presented every two years to recognize young and middle-aged opera performers who have made outstanding contributions to the arts.

<sup>82</sup> The Wenhua Award is an award set up by the Ministry of Culture of China. It is the highest government award at present and is particularly applied to theatre performing arts. They include the Wenhua Grand Award and the Wenhua Award for Best New Production. The individual awards include acting, directing, playwriting, stage art, etc.

<sup>83</sup> The scriptwriters of *Lv Bu Flirts with Diao Chan* were Dai Yinglu (戴英禄) and Zou Yiqing (邹忆青). The scriptwriter of *Liu Mingchuan* was Jinzhi (金芝). The scriptwriter of *Eternal Friendship* was Zhou Deping (周德平). The scriptwriter of *Meeting East to the Yangtze River* and *A Grievance* was Xu Qinna (徐勤纳). The scriptwriter of *Seven Steps Verse* was Liuqiang (刘强). The other scripts are ancient and their authors are unknown.

Anhui Opera Troupe also undertook many memorial performances after its restoration. In 1990, it went to Beijing to perform in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Anhui Opera's first arrival there. It was invited to perform in Hong Kong in 1991 and in Macao by Ma Wanqi (马万祺) and He Houhua (何厚铨) in 1993, and performed in eight cities across Japan. In 1997, the troupe travelled to Hong Kong and Taiwan again, and in 1999 it performed in Spain. These recitals extended Anhui Opera's influence and received fine artistic and social accolades, showing that Anhui Opera was thriving. All these events are recorded in *The Chronicle of Events of Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre of Anhui Province*.<sup>84</sup>

Figure 14:



Anhui Opera troupe (1790–1990) commemorating the 200th anniversary of Anhui Opera troupe entering Beijing. (AHCRC Main Collection)

Figure 15:



Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre performed in Macao. (AHCRC Main Collection)

<sup>84</sup> The Chronicle of Events of Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre was provided by Anhui opera artist Wang Yushu and can be found in AHCRC resource centre.

### 5.1.5 The Fifth Stage

According to the *Notice on the Establishment of Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre of Anhui Province* issued by the Commission for Public Sector Reform of Anhui Province on 10 May 2005, the Anhui Opera Troupe and the Peking Opera Troupe Anhui were to be merged on 18 November that year to form the Anhui–Peking (or *Huijing* for short) Opera Theatre. From then, the Anhui–Peking Opera would make its first appearance in the performing arts market. It had two guiding principles. Firstly, the cultural resources of Anhui Province could be meticulously utilised to strengthen the support for the restoration of Anhui Opera, extend its protection as a regional cultural heritage and form an enduring trend. Secondly, the merging of the Anhui Opera Troupe and the Peking Opera Troupe would make full use of their combined resources, as the two operas were of the same origin and could jointly inherit and develop Anhui and Peking operas. Anhui Opera had less influence than its counterpart, so such a merger would be more beneficial for its development.

From the very beginning, the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre faced challenges in the marketplace, due to the sluggish performance market and insufficient funds. Xu Beixiong (许北雄), then president of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre, told reporters that:

We are under great pressure both in inheriting Anhui Opera, an intangible cultural heritage, and in the market-oriented development of the theatre itself. The market elements have penetrated into every corner of the theatre although the Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre is still a public institution. Due to the lack of funds and the huge gap in the academic research of Anhui Opera, we could not find more original scripts of Anhui Opera, which has made our research scope very narrow. Few plays are being sung now. The superior has set [the] performance task for us this year, and the performance revenue should reach 2.82 million yuan. We have to perform 252 shows a year, which means we have to perform two shows every three days, and we have to earn at least 10,000 yuan per show (Fu 2011).

In the face of such adverse conditions, they launched costume pantomimes and other performance modes intended to appeal to children, and let the actors play such roles in children's music theatre, hoping that this would alleviate the problems of inadequate funding, a listless performance market and scant performance opportunities. It is arguable that this practice had little effect and distracted attention from the main business of the theatre, which then impacted badly upon research progress into Anhui Opera's heritage. Animated children's operas, mainly in the form of song, dance, and drama performances, did not enhance the cultural authority of Anhui Opera or expand its audience. Technically speaking, this kind of performance was costume drama and pantomime, but it utilised only 15 per cent of the known Anhui Opera repertoire and did not engage audiences with the full extent of the traditional artform. The modification of original props and backgrounds for theatrical pantomimes and children's plays damaged the material conditions of Anhui–Peking Opera performance, caused an unwarranted amount of waste and did not substantially change the awkward situation Anhui Opera found itself in at that time.

To summarise, this kind of performance could not fundamentally resolve the problems of inheritance and development even though it did achieve some economic gains. This situation existed not only in Anhui Opera, but also in other traditional cultural forms.

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In the final analysis, the ultimate solution to this dilemma would depend on government policy.

### 5.1.6 The Sixth Stage

National policy support eventually ushered in a golden period of development. To carry forward fine traditional culture, the General Office of the State Council issued *Several Policies on Supporting the Inheritance and Development of Traditional Chinese Operas* in July 2015. From July 2015 to June 2017, a nationwide survey was carried out to establish the local opera database and an information sharing and exchange network platform (Central Government of the People's Republic of China 2017b).

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee met and adopted the *Opinions on the Prosperity and Development of Socialist Literature and Art* in September 2015 (Central Government of the People's Republic of China 2015a), and in the same year, the Ministry of Culture incorporated local opera, folk music and dance support projects into *A Plan for the Inheritance and Development of Fine Traditional Chinese Art* (Central Government of the People's Republic of China 2017b) to promote traditional Chinese culture in a more comprehensive manner.

The General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the *Opinions on the Implementation of the Project for the Inheritance and Development of Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture* in January 2017 (Central Government of the People's Republic of China 2017a). These policies endorsed the restoration and promulgation of traditional arts. The departments concerned adopted a strategy of 'one troupe, one policy, and classified guidance' for Anhui Opera troupes, and implemented a procedure of 'full financial subsidy for differential institutions'. They established special funds for the protection of Anhui Opera, providing a strong guarantee for its continuance and ushering in a further golden period.

With the encouragement and support of the policies, the staff of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre were enthusiastic. The main actors of the two troupes played their respective roles in several major operas and actively participated in the performance activities of the Anhui Opera and Peking Opera (AHCRC Main Collection, 2016). *The History of Chinese Peking Opera* (1999), a collaboration between Beijing Art Research Institute and Shanghai Art Research Institute, emphasised that Anhui Opera and Peking Opera were closely related, and that their repertoires, singing style, tunes, roles, singing, chanting and performing procedures are closely interwoven. The actors of both styles sang the same tunes, and acted the same plays on the same stage, achieving good results. Peking Opera actor Dong Cheng acted the role of Liu Mingchuan in the Anhui Opera *Liu Mingchuan*, while Anhui Opera actress Wang Danhong acted the role of Yao Aimei in the Peking Opera *Popular Will*, for which both won a Plum Blossom Prize.

So it can be seen that the cooperation between Anhui Opera and Peking Opera, the meritocracy, and the government's high priority for developing artistic talents represented effective ways to improve performance standards overall. Since the

Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre was founded, the Anhui Opera Troupe has successfully created and rehearsed dozens of operas excerpts and highlights<sup>85</sup>, as well as three large historical dramas: the newly compiled *One Penny* (一文钱), *The Frightened Soul*, and *The Anhui Opera Troupes Arrived in Beijing* (徽班进京).

The Anhui–Beijing Opera Theatre presented more than fifty large performances between 2006 and 2017<sup>86</sup>, with more than 200 performances each year (Anhui and Peking Opera Theatre, n.d.). It toured to Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Macau, Taiwan and many other places and has been invited to the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, France, Spain, Bulgaria and Macedonia among other countries.

### 5.1.7 Anhui Opera Masters teaching in Schools

The development of Anhui Opera is inseparable from the nurturing of its talent. For hundreds of years, performers from one generation to the next primarily relied on the masters imparting their knowledge orally to their apprentices.<sup>87</sup> Given that master performers varied in singing styles, and operas varied in their core tunes, there was no unified or strict system for each mentor to divulge his or her experience to an apprentice. Singing and performing were determined by the master's individual habits and preferences, and the pupils were trained to absorb completely the master's artistic practices and characteristics. The advantage of this method of artistic training is that Anhui Opera could preserve its own traits, while new musical elements would periodically be added from other styles, bringing reinvigorated artistic life to the form. The disadvantage is that the different schools stand side by side, each having its own independent system, making it difficult for the troupes to cultivate large numbers of new talent due to their lack of unified standards. It was in this way that the first generation of contemporary Anhui Opera performers was fostered. The master-and-apprentice approach has therefore limited the extent of Anhui Opera training and has been largely unable to meet the urgent need for new talent.

At the first session of the eleventh CPPCC Anhui Provincial Committee held in 2013, Ms. Wang Danhong submitted a proposal for the protection of Anhui Opera. This was to establish a research group, a formal, full-time teaching team for performance, composition, band and so on, and a special teaching team for Anhui Opera as soon as possible, which would encourage new talent using scientific methods with the help of the mature artists' knowledge and mentoring.

To ensure a reliable succession of professional performers, the state has increased its emphasis on the training of traditional drama skills, clarified the status of drama

<sup>85</sup> These include *A History of Anhui Opera Troupes* (徽班春秋), *The One-penny Merchant* (一文钱掌柜), *The Sacred Battle of the Buddha* (圣斗佛), *Zhou Yu's Picking the Qin* (周瑜挑琴), *The Attractive Zhou Lang* (美周郎), *Drunken Imperial Concubine* (贵妃醉酒), *A Meeting East to the Yangtze River* (临江会).

<sup>86</sup> Large performances are provided in formal theatres, where the number of performers is complete, and the performance is of the entire play. A normal performance may be staged on a roadside stage with excerpts from an opera.

<sup>87</sup> The passing of skills from master to apprentice has been the teaching method for most traditional Chinese operas, including Anhui Opera, since ancient times.

performance majors in secondary vocational education, and introduced preferential policies such as exempting students from tuition fees and expanding the troupes' scope for professional recognition. A reorientation of professional training in colleges and universities was conducted, based on the master-student system. Classes for Anhui Opera performance skills, which had been suspended for many years, were restarted.<sup>88</sup>

Fuling Experimental Primary School of Jixi County established a Children's Society of Anhui Opera as a provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage project that made the study of Anhui Opera a central feature of its curriculum (Shao's interview, AHCRC 2014). Intangible cultural heritage representatives and opera experts were employed to teach the knowledge and performance skills of Anhui Opera systematically, so that teachers and students alike would enjoy hearing and singing Anhui Opera, and be better able to understand it. The children's classes often participated in performances, attracting much attention. Several talented pupils emerged, and some have even been selected to further their studies in art colleges. The opera writer Hou Lu, Anhui Opera scholar Li Taishan, and Plum Blossom Award winner and performing artist Wang Danhong have all interviewed these children, taught them the art of performing, and encouraged them to pursue the fine heritage of Anhui Opera (Shao's interview, AHCRC 2014).

Anhui Vocational College of Art successfully launched three sessions of Anhui–Peking Opera classes in 1996, 2006 and 2016 to train students for theatre (Wang's interview in AHCRC 2016). In the process, the school adopted a training mode of combining school and performance groups. That is, the school was responsible for the students' daily management and basic education, while Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre was responsible for specialised opera courses. This process is known as the *dual system*.

The article 'Chinese operas enter campuses, and the classics are passed down forever' (Huangshan People's Government 2019) stated that to carry out the Anhui Opera revitalisation project, the government of Huangshan City established Anhui Opera Theatre as a municipal art organisation and signed a contract in 2017 with Anhui Provincial Art Vocational College, which was commissioned to run an Anhui Opera class. The college was required to recruit thirty students from all over the province for specific training and to engage professional teachers for that purpose. The students would undertake a three-year professional course at the college, followed by a two-year internship under the mentoring of seasoned artists. Students would graduate after the five-year program and earn an associate degree. They would then be selected to join the Anhui Opera Theatre and all qualified students would be recruited by Huangshan Municipal Anhui Opera Theatre. The dual system of the college and experts' teaching and training has broadened the idea of artistic instruction, expanded class sizes, and ensured the retention of the Anhui Opera's traditional attributes.

A new generation of outstanding Anhui Opera actors has since flourished. At present, four Anhui Opera performers, including Wang Danhong and Wang Yushu, have won the Plum Blossom Prize and become famous Anhui Opera performers. The book *The*

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<sup>88</sup> Refer to the *Plan for the Inheritance and Development of Chinese Fine Traditional Arts* and the revitalization project of Chinese operas.

*Anhui Opera Troupes in China* (2005), written by senior artist Li Taishan, has attracted the attention of opera researchers. Shao Mingqin has made exceptional contributions to Anhui Opera's heritage in the process of training the Children's Society of Anhui Opera, and the actors Luo Liping, Wang Yushu, Wang Jieshi, Shi Xiaodong and Hu Jianxian have been rated nationally as first-grade actors. Several teams of experts, scholars, famous actors and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage for Anhui Opera have been formed.<sup>89</sup>

### **5.1.8 The effect of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Project on Anhui Opera**

*The Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage* was adopted at the 32nd Session of UNESCO in October 2003 to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage represented by tradition, oral expression, festival etiquette, manual skills, music and dance, and entered into force in April 2006 (United Nations Conventions and Declarations Search System 2003). In accordance with Decree No. 39 of the Ministry of Culture, People's Republic of China (Central people's gov.cn, 2007), the *Interim Measures for the Protection and Management of National Intangible Cultural Heritage policy* was launched on 25 October 2006, with the introduction of programs for the protection of intangible cultural heritage and the issuing of relevant supporting policies. The government also formulated specific criteria for the application and submission of intangible cultural heritage projects and the management, evaluation, and support of those projects. The government grants titles of intangible cultural heritage to projects and inheritors at national, provincial, and municipal levels, and provides them with financial support according to the project's rarity, historical status, time of formation, and the inheritor's contribution to the project.

In the same year, Anhui Opera successfully applied for intangible cultural heritage status, and the government released a list of intangible cultural heritage recipients. These national representatives are important bearers and transmitters of this heritage since they possess extensive knowledge and skill and represent a living inheritance. Zhang Qixiang (章其祥), Gu Huamin (谷化民), Li Longbin (李龙斌) and Wang Danhong (王丹红) of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre have all been thusly named (Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre, n.d.). A group of folk artists and professional actors has also been named as inheritors of the intangible cultural heritage for Anhui Opera at all levels, including Jiang Yumin (江裕民) at the national level, Wang Yiping (汪亦平) and Jiang Xianqin (江贤琴) from Huangshan at the provincial level, and Wang Hongyang (汪鸿养) at the provincial level and Zhu Zhuxin (朱祝新) at the municipal level from Shexian County (AHCRC Main Collection, 2016).

The official webpage of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre of Anhui Province states that it has been designated by the national government to be the representative institution under priority protection for the first group of national intangible cultural heritage holders for Anhui Opera projects, and Anhui Provincial Department of Culture has also been listed as one of its first recipients. The organisations concerned

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<sup>89</sup> This is from anecdotal observations made during my work as a researcher of Anhui Province Historical and Cultural Research Centre.

have implemented the policy of full financial subsidy for different institutions and established a special fund for the protection of Anhui Opera.

Considerable progress has also been made in the recovery and research of Anhui Opera remnants. The Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre of Anhui Province compiled and published two sets of old plays, *Anhui Kunqu Opera* (徽昆) and *Anhui Opera Highlights* (折子戏) in 2019 and 2020.<sup>90</sup> A third set, the *Legacy of Anhui Opera* (徽韵), was published in December 2020 by the Anhui Runfang Culture Company. Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre has therefore made new contributions to the research and protection of the ancient texts of Anhui Opera.

Currently, Anhui Opera is facing an urgent requirement: that of applying for international cultural heritage recognition. At the fourth session of the 10th National Committee of CPPCC, Ms. Hou Lu and eighteen members of the CPPCC National Committee jointly put forward *The Proposal on Salvage, Protection and Support of the Art of Anhui Opera* (Hou’s interview from AHCRC in 2017), which attracted wide attention from all sectors of society. She has put forward this proposal three times now, calling for support for Anhui Opera at the national level and requesting that it be submitted for Intangible Cultural Heritage recognition by the United Nations, as sanctioned by the Chinese Ministry of Culture. Hou Lu said has suggested that the Ministry of Culture take the lead in initiating this important application. She also recommended that more publicity be provided to extend the influence of opera culture both at home and abroad and called on the people of Anhui province to contribute to the application.

## 5.2 Promoting the Revitalization of Anhui Opera

Policy support has brought opportunities for cultural development, which each region of China has implemented according to its local situation. The following section will examine how state-owned, community and privately funded institutions all made recent positive contributions to the maintenance of Anhui Opera.

### 5.2.1 Diversified Modes of Protection, Promotion, and Inheritance

To protect the Opera, Anhui Province has fully involved both government and non-government organisations to build a new financial support base through state investment, private investment with public subsidy, and private investment. When interviewed in Fuling for the AHCRC Main Collection<sup>91</sup>, Mr Shao Mingqin said the ‘reform and opening up’ of Fuling through private–public partnerships has been adopted to restore Anhui Opera troupes. Performance activities have been held every year during the Lunar New Year and other major festivals. In 2015, *A Fight between Dragon and Tiger* was staged, which was mainly performed by actors and actresses

<sup>90</sup> The author was presented with copies of these two books in April 2020.

<sup>91</sup> Fuling is in Jixi County, Anhui Province and is important to the opera’s revival.



from the Children's Society, with mature artists joining in the performance while coaching them. The opera performance served as both a recreational and heritage activity.

In cooperation with Zhu Zhuxin, a folk scholar of Anhui Opera, the private firm Huangshan Tianwang Agricultural Technology Co. Ltd. in Anhui's Shexian County invested and founded the Wangnong Society of Anhui Opera (旺农徽班), which rearranged many traditional operas, but also rehearsed a number of operettas reflecting modern life, such as *The Tea Lady Yingzi's Dream* (茶姑梦). This troupe toured extensively from village to village and was well received by audiences (Zhu's interview, AHCRC 2018).

The Shexian County government applied to the Chinese Ministry of Culture for the establishment of the Qingsheng (庆升) Anhui Opera Troupe of Shexian County in 2014 (Tian's interview from AHCRC in 2014). The troupe had a crew of fifty-three performers, following the tradition of inclusiveness handed down from ancient times. They performed lots of local Anhui opera styles, including Huangmei Opera and Anhui Opera. For several years, they performed a dozen old Anhui operas inherited from the Qing dynasty, and the Republic of China, to promote research into the origins of Anhui Opera in Shexian County.

The Department of Ancient Books of Anhui University Library established a project to manage the old Anhui Opera manuscripts. After years of collecting, the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre systematically produced two sets of twelve ancient scripts, passed down through the Ming and Qing dynasties. Local cultural administrative departments have carefully arranged and collected audio visual recordings of some vintage performances (AHCRC Main collection 2016).

In 1989, the Chinese National Academy of Arts sent experts to Huangshan City to make videos of Anhui Opera and Mulian Opera performances. Among them, six traditional Anhui operas were recorded: *Flooding All Enemy Troops*, *Princess Presents the Sword* (百花赠剑), *Hunting and Letter Reply* (出猎回猎), *Zhang San Borrows Boots*, *Gao Huaide's Challenge*, and *A Story of Revenge* (乌盆记). They have been listed in the national art archives for long-term preservation. The measure has played a positive role in protecting Anhui Opera (Bilibili 2018).

Over many years, Shao Mingqin, a folk artist and inheritor of intangible cultural heritage, has persisted in sorting and integrating the repertoire that has been handed down from the past, saving a significant number of precious historical artefacts. Ms. Hou Lu, a national drama scriptwriter, has also persevered in maintaining traditional culture. She has written excellent opera scripts, such as *Yaogang Village* (风起瑶岗) and *The Red Azalea* (红杜鹃), and her Anhui opera in the Qingyang Tune, *Qingyang Heroines* (凤出青阳) (2020) touched many audiences (AHCRC Main Collection, 2020).

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## 5.2.2 Promotion and Inheritance starts with young people and children

To popularise traditional arts, some institutions and local governments have taken the initiative to introduce Anhui Opera to campuses. This enterprise reached new heights in August 2017, when the publicity department of the Chinese Central Committee, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Culture jointly issued the *Opinions on the Introduction of Traditional Chinese Operas to Campuses* (Central Government of the People's Republic of China, 2017c). Anhui Province contributed to this policy by requiring schools to implement it, depending on their circumstances. This experience has had a positive effect on increasing Anhui Opera's influence.

Huangshan City, in southern Anhui Province, began introducing Anhui Opera to campuses in 2009 (Li 2019). In 2010, Huangshan School signed a cooperation agreement with the Municipal Cultural Centre, inviting inheritors of intangible cultural heritage and experts in Anhui Opera, such as Jiang Xianqin and Wang Yiping, to teach opera classes in the curriculum. They taught two half-day drama classes a week, focusing mainly on the fourth and fifth grades to ensure students mastered skills and then intensified their training. To test the results, the school arranged two events. Firstly, an opera performance was held on 1 June for International Children's Day, and all opera students were required to perform on stage. Secondly, a repeat performance was held at the end of semester before the Spring Festival. The Huangshan Municipal Government stepped up its efforts for the introduction of operas to campuses in 2018. With a total investment of 530,000 yuan (about A\$10,600), a total of 109 performances were staged across the city, which were well received by students.

Qingsheng Anhui Opera Troupe in Shexian County, whose founding members are local inheritors of intangible cultural heritage such as Zhu Zhuxin and Wang Hongyang, has continued to introduce Anhui Opera to campuses since 2016 (Qi 2017). They went to the Huangtian School and gave a basic outline of Anhui Opera through lectures, taught performance art by tutoring interested groups, and performed traditional plays with teachers and students, such as *Three Performances for Good Luck*, *Joy Fills the Sky*, *A Water-Vat Repair*, and *Mu Guiying's Marriage*. As elsewhere, the introduction of Anhui Opera to campuses has been much appreciated.

Figure 16:



Teachers and students performing the opera *Three Performances for Good Luck* on stage in the Introduction of Operas to Campuses, carried out by Anhui Opera Troupe of Shexian County (Zhu 2015).

According to ‘Hefei Kids Sing Anhui Opera on CCTV Grand Stage’, (Hefei Evening News, 24 March 2017), in 2012, the Third Primary School affiliated to Hefei Normal University began a cooperative venture with the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre, and introduced the Anhui Opera Project, taking the lead in launching the ‘Introduction of Opera to Campuses’ event in the province, and carrying out a series of beneficial explorations. The school opened an Anhui Opera class for those interested, inviting national first-grade actors to teach primary school pupils. Xu Yousheng, Deputy Director of the Anhui-Peking Opera Theatre and national first-class actor, said, ‘We want to cultivate more heirs and enthusiasts for Anhui Opera among children.’

For a long time, teaching Anhui Opera primarily depended on an oral tradition, without a corpus of formal teaching materials. For this reason, the school organised teachers and invited experts from the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre to form a curriculum writing group. After much discussion and revision, the school compiled a set of textbooks, the *Anhui Opera Curriculum for Primary Schools* for pupils aged from six to ten. This publication filled a serious pedagogical gap and provided an effective way of comprehensively and systematically promoting Anhui Opera in schools, attracting people from all over the country to visit and learn. The school has also developed a set of more practical teaching materials, *A Package of Teaching Materials for the Popularization of Anhui Opera Knowledge*, for ordinary classes so that respect and love for Anhui Opera may grow. Benefitting from training with these resources, Huang Sihan (黄思菡), a fifth grade pupil from Class 3, received her admission notice from Anhui Vocational and Technical College.

Figure 17:



Huang Sihan, a grade five pupil from Class 3, receives her college admission notice from Anhui Vocational and Technical College after training (Chinese Civilization Network, 2017).

At the end of October 2015, the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre came to Nanmen Haiheng Primary School to hold a special performance. It was part of the introduction of traditional Anhui Opera to school campuses. The principal actors and actresses of were warmly welcomed by the teachers and pupils (Mao 2015). They had been invited to the school to advocate for traditional culture, popularise an understanding of Anhui Opera and broadly to encourage the performing arts. Hefei Nanmen Primary School, Haiheng School, Huangshan Baishu School, Shexian Xin’an Primary School, Huangtian School, Tongxi Hehuachi Primary School and Jixi Fuling Experimental School have all since been inspired to try similar approaches.

Figure 18:



A combined Anhui Opera performance for the Introduction of Operas to campuses in Shexian County, (Chinese Civilization Network, 2018)

Anhui Opera has also been introduced to tertiary campuses through the project ‘Campus Stage: Anhui Style and Anhui Charm Comes to Campus’, launched in 2014.

It was sponsored by the Publicity Department of the CPC Anhui Provincial Committee, and the Education Department and Culture and Tourism Department of Anhui Province, and was a significant cultural event in the dissemination of traditional culture with government support (China Finance and Economics 2014). Colleges and universities throughout Anhui province were required to participate in this process. The Anhui University of Finance and Economics hosted the event. Li Longbin, winner of the Plum Blossom Prize and a national first-grade performer, and other opera performers such as Wang Yushu, Luo Liping, Chen Xiaofeng, Wu Juanjuan and Fan Qiaoqian took turns to perform traditional dramas, such as *Broken Bridge* and *Flooding All Enemy Troops*. The performance venue was full, and applause was prolonged (Yuyao News Network 2014).

The grand Anhui Opera, *The Frightened Soul*, was staged through this campus project in the Academic Lecture Hall of Bengbu College on 20 November 2017. The opera was enhanced by the performers' singing, dialogue, dance-acting and acrobatic fighting, and brought visual spectacle and mystical delight to the audience (Anhui University Student Net 2017).

Another special performance in 2018 at the Bengbu Medical College was held in its Academic Lecture Hall. It began with the romantic opera, *Picking Up a Jade Bracelet*, with melodious singing and vibrant acting that conveyed the passionate sentiment of young love. The presentation of the classic operas *Fork in the Road* and *The Frightened Soul* deeply moved the audience. The martial combat skills in the former drew much admiration, while the audience was impressed by the performers' gorgeous costumes, gestures and facial expressions in the latter. The play *Drunken Concubine* provided a fitting finale with a gracefully dressed concubine and magnificent stage dancing earning much applause (Bengbu Medical College, 2018).

Yet a further special campus performance took place in the Academic Lecture Hall of the Anhui International Studies University on 16 October. Artists from the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre staged the operas, *Heavenly Maids Scatter Blossoms*, *Return of the Phoenix*, *Mu Guiying's Marriage*, *Fork in the Road*, and *Witnessing a Battle*. Students already fond of Anhui Opera came early, and invited Xu Zhengfang, Deputy President of this troupe, as well as the actors Wang Fayang and Hong Lei, and drum master He Shenlai, to answer questions about Anhui Opera (Official Website of Anhui International Studies University 2019).

Due to the COVID pandemic, the 'Anhui Style and Anhui Charm Comes to Campuses' event for 2020 was instead held online. The article, 'Anhui style and Anhui charm comes to Anhui River virtually', published on the Anhui Normal University's website on 15 October 2020, commented that:

It is a more flexible way to transfer the performance of excellent traditional plays from offline to online, and this not only resolves the problem of limited space, but also builds a platform for more college students to have close contact with excellent traditional culture as a result of a more flexible way and greater performance size. (Anhui Normal University 2020)

The official websites of universities such as Huangshan College, Huainan Normal University and Anhui Information Engineering College published articles showing

that students were actively participating in this event online with great interest and enthusiasm (Anhui Normal University 2020).

The ‘Anhui Style and Anhui Charm Comes to Campuses’ project not only builds a platform for many students to have direct contact with Anhui Opera, but also deepens their understanding of this tradition. It enriches student engagement with artistic heritage and improves their comprehension and aesthetic education via new ways for Anhui Opera to enter the tertiary environment.

On 12 June 2014, Wang Danhong, a national first-grade actor and inheritor of Anhui Opera, gave a talk entitled ‘Anhui Opera and its artistic appreciation’ to students in the Administration Building, Xuancheng Campus, Hefei University of Technology. Anhui Opera artist Wang Yushu demonstrated the charm of Anhui Opera with his original singing style at the Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition held by the university on 10 September that year (Hefei University of Technology 2014).

Colleges and universities in Anhui Province also arranged for students to carry out social practice activities. Anhui Normal University organised a summer social engagement for graduate students of the School of Liberal Arts. A research and practice team of eight people visited Huangshan from 1-4 July 2016 to investigate and practice the inheritance of Anhui Opera. They went to the Huangshan Cultural Committee and Anhui Opera Institute to discuss these ideas with famous opera artists. Through social practice and research, they formed deep insights into the art of Anhui Opera, and stated that they would continue to learn and explore it (Anhui Normal University 2016).

Figure 19:



The Research and Practice Team of Anhui Normal University established to investigate and practice the Inheritance of Anhui Opera in Huangshan City (Anhui Normal University 2016).

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Students of Hefei University of Technology even travelled into the fields and farmhouses to speak with villagers and form a better understanding and appreciation of and respect for knowledge of Anhui Opera and culture (Cheng 2019).

### 5.2.3 Organizations that support the development of Opera

State policy requires major media and public art museums at all levels to support actively the development, inheritance, selection and publicity of traditional operas. For this reason, CCTV has established a special drama channel for traditional opera that broadcasts Chinese opera classics, opera knowledge, interviews with opera masters, and other programs all year round (CCTV, n.d.). The Anhui Radio and TV Station has established a program called *Meeting at the Gorgeous Dramatic Stage* to find outstanding opera talent through performance, arts commentary, and the promotion of major cultural events, which such art museums and cultural centres often organise (Anhui TV, 2018). The Hefei Municipal Mass Culture and Art Museum holds Anhui Opera performances in the Cheng Huang God Temple (城隍庙) every year<sup>92</sup>, attracting many opera lovers. Chen Guo, curator of the Anhui Mass Art Museum, says there are 146 public art museums in Anhui Province that are free all year round and provide rehearsal spaces for groups of artists. They perform on small stages in these museums and arrange for large groups to perform local operas. These un-ticketed performances are much appreciated and attended by the general public.

### 5.2.4 The role of museums in generating interest in Anhui Opera

There is an Anhui-style residence named Cao's Two Houses in Dugujiing Street in the ancient city of Huizhou in Shexian County, built in the late Qing dynasty by Cao Tingsheng, a descendant of Huizhou merchants. In 2015, the Huangshan municipal government invested more than 2,000,000 yuan (about A\$400,000) to renovate it and use it as an Anhui Opera Troupes Memorial Hall. The hall records in detail the origins of Anhui Opera, the arrival of Anhui Opera troupes in Beijing, facial makeup, costumes and other historical materials by means of texts, photos, artefacts, videos, sculptures and other display methods. As one of the important tourist attractions in old Huizhou city, Anhui Opera Troupes Memorial Hall is open to the public for free all year round and has become an important publicity site for the intangible cultural heritage of Anhui Opera troupes. More than 300,000 people visited it in 2019 (China Civilization Network, 2016).

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<sup>92</sup> This is a business address, not a real temple.

Figure 20:



Anhui Opera Troupes Memorial Hall (Chinese Civilization Network, 2017)

Figure 21:



Photos on display at Anhui Opera Troupes Memorial Hall (Chinese Civilization Network, 2017)

The Anhui Opera (Qingyang Tune) Museum was especially built in Anhui's Qingyang County to show the Anhui Opera's traditional heritage and appeal. The museum was opened to the public on 23 May 2018. Old manuscripts, musical scores, musical instruments, and related wood and brick carvings of the region are on display in the museum, so that visitors may admire the artistic features of Anhui Opera. There is



also a small theatre in this museum, which periodically stages on opera highlights (Chizhou Today, 2019).

Figure 22:



Qingyang Tune Museum (Chinese Civilization Network, 2018)

Figure 23:



Qingyang Tune Museum (Chinese Civilization Network, 2018)

An Exhibition Hall of local Anhui Opera was built in Fuling Town, Jixi County, which displays its centuries-old operatic culture. Townspeople arrange its exhibits with the support of local government, and this is where antique musical scores, prop boxes and costumes are preserved. Volunteers bought glass display cabinets, vintage costumes, and knives, spears, swords, halberds, helmet masks and other opera props for public display. The hall is run by volunteers with government subsidies in a private-public partnership. Opened in 2010, this has become an important venue for promoting local culture and exhibiting Anhui art. Its collection is a combination of donated material and purchased acquisitions, and artefacts are put on public display in

its exhibition hall as soon as they are acquired. At present, the hall is undergoing further development and improvement.

Opera museums and memorial halls have been built in many places throughout the province. In Qianshan (潜山) County for instance, a memorial hall has been created in the former residence of Cheng Changgeng, an Anhui Opera troupe leader and the founder of Peking Opera. Anhui Opera museums have been built in Shexian County, Jixi County and Huaining County, while exhibition halls have been built in some townships such as Huangwei village (璜蔚村) in Shexian County (AHCRC Main Collection, 2020).

### 5.2.5 Anniversaries as opportunities to promote Anhui Opera

The *China Culture Daily* reported on 21 October 2010 that the year 1990 was the 200th anniversary of the arrival of Anhui Opera Troupes in Beijing. Grand commemorative events were held in Beijing, Anhui and Shanghai. The same year, the *Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of Anhui Opera Troupe's Arrival in Beijing: Exhibition of Precious Cultural Relics of Peking Opera* (chronicle website: today in history, 2018) was held in Shanghai on 8–12 December, sponsored by the Shanghai Dramatist Association and Shanghai Library Audio-visual Archive. Journalist Zhai Qun (翟群) noted in his article ‘The road to the revitalization of Peking Opera, 1990–2010’ that *A Seminar on Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of Anhui Opera Troupes' Arrival in Beijing* was held in Beijing from 20 December 1990 to 12 January 1991. Jiang Zemin, then China's president, attended this seminar to show his interest (2014).

In his report ‘Road to the revitalization of Peking Opera, 1990-2010’, the journalist Zhang Haitao said that part of the *Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of Anhui Opera Troupe's Arrival in Beijing* exhibition, held in the capital, was sponsored by the Publicity Department of the Beijing Municipal Party Committee, the Municipal Bureau of Culture, the Municipal Literary Federation, Xicheng District Party Committee and the district government. The Chinese Ministry of Tourism reprinted the article on the national government website (WeChat public platform of Mei Lanfang (梅兰芳) Memorial Hall, 2020). It stated that the year 2020 coincides with the 230th anniversary of the Anhui Opera troupes' arrival in Beijing and that cultural departments at all levels attach great importance to this date and have launched commemorative events.

The *Anhui Opera Tune and Beijing Rhyme: Special Exhibition of Peking Opera for 230th Anniversary of the Anhui Opera Troupes' Arrival in Beijing*, sponsored by the Mei Lanfang Memorial Hall and Beijing Xicheng District Publicity Department, opened at Tianqiao Art Square, Xicheng District (天桥艺术广场) in Beijing on 23 October 2020. This exhibition focuses on the collection of cultural relics and documents from the Mei Lanfang Memorial Hall and chronicles the heritage and development of Anhui Opera and Beijing Opera over the past 230 years, since the first Anhui Opera troupes arrived in Beijing. This exhibition comprises a collection of more than 200 rare treasures, such as Qing dynasty palace opera paintings, rare books of operas, calligraphy and paintings of celebrities, old opera lists and photos, letters between famous artists, Chinese and foreign language books and periodicals,

performance props, handmade costumes, and hand-painted face designs. Many of these were exhibited to the public for the first time, such as the original painting, *The Thirteen Outstanding Theatrical Performing Artists in Tongzhi and Guangxu Reigns* (同光十三绝) by the Qing dynasty artist, Shen Rongpu (沈蓉圃). The *Academic Exchange Meeting on Anhui Opera Troupes' Arrival in Beijing and the Development of Peking Opera in the New Century* was held at the Foreign Experts Building in Beijing from 24–25 October 2020. This exhibition was an important part of the series of occasions commemorating the 230th anniversary of Anhui Opera's arrival in Beijing.

The Publicity Department of Anhui Provincial Party Committee (AHCRC Main Collection, 2020) held five commemorative events to celebrate this anniversary:

1. In August, the program *Famous Actors are Here* on CCTV recorded two special performances to honour the anniversary. These were broadcast on CCTV 11 at the end of November 2020.
2. The Anhui opera, *The Anhui Opera Troupes*, was performed at the Hundred-Opera (Kunshan) Grand Ceremony, held by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China in Kunshan in 2020, and then made a tour of twenty performances through Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shanghai to observe the historical day.
3. On 25 November 2020, a display party of rare Anhui operas was held in the Anhui Grand Theatre with the theme of The Opera Troupes' Arrival in Beijing.
4. Two days later, on 27 November, a special concert was held, including famous performers from Peking Opera, Han Opera, Qinqiang Opera and Wuju Opera, who were invited to participate in the performance at the Anhui Grand Theatre.
5. The Publicity Department of Anhui Provincial Party Committee held a seminar at the China Association of Dramatists on 11 November 2020. Renowned national drama masters were invited to attend. The event was meticulously organized and prepared by Anhui Provincial Dramatists Association.

### 5.2.6 The Government sponsors performances for public benefit

To implement the policy requirements that promote traditional staged operas, Anhui Province government will sponsor performances, regularly arrange local operas in the studio theatre in Anhui Museum of Historical Notables and open them to the public free of charge. This is outlined in the document, *Notice of Anhui Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism and Anhui Provincial Department of Finance on 'Delivering Operas to 10,000 Villages' by Means of the Government Purchase Service in 2020* (Huainan Municipal People's Government 2020). Understandably, as Anhui Opera is one of the most important Chinese opera styles, an intangible cultural heritage park was established in the northwest sector of Hefei City, where Anhui Opera art and many intangible cultural heritage projects are exhibited. It has now become a base for primary and middle school students to study and learn Anhui Opera.

The Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre and various other organizations have actively contributed to the promotion of traditional culture, the protection of traditional cultural heritage and the revival of Anhui Opera under the guidance and support of the policy. The Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre's success and the efforts made by other cultural bodies are a direct function of this benevolent policy initiative.

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The Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee stated:

We should promote the great development and prosperity of culture and enhance the soft power of China's culture...promote cultural innovation, deepen the reform of the cultural system, enhance the vitality of cultural development, and prosper and develop cultural undertakings and industries. We will also basically complete the establishment of a public cultural service system, make the cultural industry a pillar of the national economy, give full play to the role of culture in guiding society, educating the people and promoting development, build the common spiritual home of the Chinese nation, and enhance national cohesion and creativity (China Network, 2020).

### **5.3 Chapter summary**

This chapter divides the modern history of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre into six stages from 1956, the date when it was founded. It describes and analyses these periods based on existing primary and secondary data, aiming to illuminate the main causes for the development, rise and fall of contemporary Anhui Opera in China. It records and clarifies the influence of policy formulation and guidance on the development and inheritance of Anhui Opera through the interpretation and implementation of relevant policies.

The close relationship between the extent of Anhui Opera's survival and the national policy is supported by a significant number of historical facts. The waxing and waning of Anhui Opera's history, from prosperity to decline and back again, underscores the fact that a beneficial policy can have extensive positive effects, while conversely, the enterprise may be seriously damaged, even ruined, when such policy is counterproductive.

In recent years, especially after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, a series of favourable policies such as cultural rejuvenation and cultural confidence have been introduced. Through the guidance of these efficacious strategies, there has been marked progress in the protection and promotion of traditional culture in China, and for the future of Anhui Opera.

The insights presented in this chapter demonstrate the current state of Anhui Opera's maintenance and support base in China. They will contribute significantly to the findings that summarise this research and the conclusions drawn in Chapter 6.

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## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated how Anhui Opera was formed and still exists as a discrete theatrical tradition with its own distinctive characteristics. It contributed significantly to the formation of Peking Opera among many other Chinese operatic styles. Yet despite its historical renown across China, Anhui Opera had waned in popularity and almost disappeared before 1949. It was nearly extinct except for the few isolated areas where some of its repertoire was still occasionally performed before the provincial Anhui Opera Troupe was established to actively revitalise it in 1956.

This research has addressed important research questions concerning the historical development and key characteristics of Anhui Opera with respect to its musical content and performance practices, through detailed transcriptions and translations of lyrics and musical scores from old manuscripts, and the mediation of ancient Chinese musical concepts that have no direct equivalents in Western music theory. I have surveyed the successes and limitations of recent government policy and other contemporary measures aimed at supporting the continuing survival and development of Anhui Opera.

This investigation has attempted to rectify some basic academic gaps that have long prevented the progress of useful ethnomusicological research into Anhui Opera, and considered how artists and policy makers in China can best be supported by government policies and other measures in their efforts to ensure the survival of this tradition into the future. This final chapter summarises the main arguments of the thesis and is presented in three sections. The first will summarise my key findings concerning the historical development and main characteristics of Anhui Opera, the second will recommend better strategies for maintaining this tradition into the future, and the third will suggest possibilities for ongoing future research into Anhui Opera.

#### 6.1 Summary of Key Findings

As described in Chapter 1, Anhui Opera holds a special place in Chinese music history that links the past, present, and future. Though it began as a minor local style, Anhui Opera has nonetheless endured for nearly 400 years. Throughout its developmental history, it has had a long tradition of absorbing pre-existing Chinese opera styles with a spirit of inclusivity. Through the influence of its widespread popularity, it similarly went on to influence many other Chinese opera styles and was integral to the formation of Peking Opera, which eventually surpassed it in national esteem and is now widely recognised as the quintessential Chinese opera style.

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Because Anhui Opera had almost disappeared before 1949 due to its vastly decreased national status, few people today know that Anhui Opera exists and – because it contributed so heavily to the development of Peking Opera – cannot distinguish between these two styles. In this thesis, however, I have shown how Anhui Opera remains a distinct Chinese opera style both from the time of its early formation through to the height of its national popularity in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and since its revitalisation with the formation of the Anhui Opera Troupe in 1956. One important distinction here is that Peking Opera eventually developed its own characteristic Pihuang melodic form, which has never existed in Anhui Opera.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I have shown how Anhui Opera has its original roots in the elegant Huichi melodic form and the distinctive Erhuang folk opera style from the south of Anhui Province. I have also addressed Zhu's dissenting claim that Anhui Opera emerged in Shipai in Guangdong Province instead of Shexian County in the old Huizhou area of Anhui Province (2015), concluding that Anhui Opera originated in Huizhou and soon after became popular in Shipai.

These findings further show how the initial development of Anhui Opera out of Huizhou folk traditions into an operatic style with widespread popularity across China was directly linked to the affluence and national influence of wealthy merchants in Huizhou at a time when the south of Anhui Province was a major economic centre in China that could support multiple Anhui Opera troupes and theatres. These merchants commonly supported Anhui Opera as patrons and, in some cases, owned Anhui Opera troupes and theatres that reflected their own aesthetic preferences. The reach and popularity of Anhui Opera followed their mercantile networks across China and only began to wane in the Qing dynasty with the decline of Huizhou and rise of Beijing as the economic epicentre.

The findings are informed by my detailed transcriptions, analyses and translations of old Anhui Opera manuscripts in Chapters 3 and 4, and of contemporary approaches to Anhui Opera's revitalisation and new repertoire composition in Chapter 5. Through this original research, I have filled a significant gap in pre-existing scholarship of the historical development and key characteristics of Anhui Opera through direct consideration of this style's musical content and performance practice. It is hoped that these findings will support and encourage further useful ethnomusicological research into Anhui Opera.

In Chapter 5, I have identified how cultural policies have fluctuated considerably in China over the past century, due in part to the periodic rejection of historical cultural heritage even after the formation of the Anhui Opera Troupe in 1956. Anhui Opera nearly vanished again between 1966 and 1979, when performances of costumed dramas were banned, and only modern operas could be staged. Since 1979, however,

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artists have had more freedom to revive old Anhui Opera repertoire using traditional costume, while also creating new operas that reflect everyday contemporary life. Overall, my research in Chapter 5 has found that changes in government policy over time have directly affected the survival and growth of Anhui Opera among many other Chinese cultural traditions. The Anhui Opera Troupe, for example, has developed to the highest performance level in contemporary China, and now functions as a key training and education school for the protection of Anhui culture.

I have shown how contemporary opera troupes, including those performing Anhui Opera, are funded across a spectrum of state, private and community support. In Anhui Opera, three different funding and governance structures are now in use. There are state-funded troupes like the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre, private troupes that state-subsidised like the Fuling Children’s Society, and self-funded community troupes like the Shexian County Wangnong Society of Anhui Opera. All have produced good results and, despite their different approaches, Anhui Opera, unlike some other opera traditions, has not fragmented into divergent artistic styles. The state supports mature Anhui Opera artists and their scholarship by awarding them stipends for preserving China’s intangible cultural heritage and subsidising their private performance troupes.

I have also explored contemporary policies and methods for educating and training new generations of Anhui Opera artists. With its history of more than 200 years, the Children’s Society of Anhui Opera has created a school interest group that uses a dual system approach to training, which combines a standard school education with instructions in Anhui Opera performance by mature artists. A similar system is used by the Anhui Opera class offered jointly by Huangshan City and the Anhui Vocational College of Art. The Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre also offers an Anhui Opera class that organises its students into performance teams.

## **6.2 Cultural Maintenance Strategies**

There may always be challenges to the continuation of Anhui Opera into the future. Due to the influx of workers into cities, performance opportunities and audiences in rural areas have contracted. This loss of audiences is seriously affecting the growth of Anhui Opera troupes. The lack of willingness among young people to train as Anhui Opera artists today also threatens this tradition’s longevity. Learning opera requires hard work and commitment with an uncertain income and a relatively low social status. As such, many parents object to their children learning Anhui Opera. Protection measures for Anhui Opera’s material cultural heritage is also seriously inadequate with many old relics lost or at risk of loss.

All these problems should be of high concern to policy makers seeking to ensure the future survival of Anhui Opera and similar Chinese artistic traditions. A systematic approach enshrined in appropriate laws and policies should be designed and implemented to establish an effective way forward for the protection of Anhui Opera.

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With this goal in mind, the following is a summary of my findings concerning potential strategies for ensuring the future of Anhui Opera.

1. It is particularly important to understand the significance of protecting and inheriting Anhui Opera. A positive external environment must be created through appropriate ideology, organization and policy to position Anhui Opera objectively and accurately, and affirm fully its unique place in the history of Chinese opera traditions. Luo Haocai, Vice-Chairperson of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), has pointed out that the art of Anhui Opera is a precious cultural heritage with equal historical, cultural and scientific value, validating the past and opening up the future of Chinese drama (Wang, 2007). At present, efforts to rescue, protect and support Anhui Opera need to be significantly increased promptly and decisively.
2. The formation and training of performance teams and acting talent is at the core of any artistic transmission in China. The role of mature Anhui Opera artists should be fully utilised. They should be inducted as consultants and teachers to pass on, assist and guide Anhui Opera training, and those with extensive performance skills and knowledge should be hired to participate in transmission activities. They and their forebears created the most original works, passed on by word of mouth, which is of great benefit for the protection of Anhui Opera's core qualities. The older generation of artists is ageing, with many in poor health, so it is important to take advantage of their cumulative experience. Modern technological means should be used to start an audiovisual recording project of all Anhui Opera repertoire to promote digital preservation, record the valuable intellectual wealth of older artists, and immediately insert their knowledge into teaching practice. Many artistic treasures are hidden in the minds of the old Anhui Opera artists, and their passing without this measure would be an incalculable loss to Anhui Opera's heritage.
3. Successful artistic performance training depends on a well-designed program, appropriate ranking of skills and an educational format that combines regular schooling with specialist Anhui Opera teachers and mentors. The opera community needs to be robustly practical in discovering and training talented students, and actively encouraging them to aspire to prominence and fame. Traditional Chinese opera is an art of performing legendary roles, and requires mature, sublime performances to attract audiences. With its intertwining layers of scriptwriting, directing, acting, singing, dancing, musical accompaniment and stage design, Anhui Opera is a total operatic art form that demands the most well-designed training curriculum possible.
4. Good publicity is essential for Anhui Opera to claim its rightful share of the national and international theatrical marketplace. Popularising Anhui Opera via radio, television, newspaper, the Internet and other new media, would allow more people to notice, know, understand, love and appreciate its charm. This requires a coordinated campaign to showcase famous artists and repertoire, increase Anhui Opera's market presence, and promote new audience experiences through their introduction to campuses, workplaces and rural areas. Grassroots performance tours to such sites would allow new audiences to gather around the opera stage once again.



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5. A national standard for the protection of Anhui Opera should be introduced to offer support and necessary funding for those trying to protect it. This process should also advocate for both the voluntary donation and formal purchase of old Anhui Opera manuscripts, costumes, props and other relics still retained by the general public, so they can be afforded the maximum care and protection.
  6. Literary and artistic inventions are needed to encourage and nourish the composition of more and high-quality operas. These new operas and plays could be refined through self-editing, co-editing, customisation for differing audiences, acquisition through purchase, and the composition of new operas that reflect modern life and relatable subject matter. For example, the story of Hua Mulan was adopted in America and adapted by Disney as an animated feature film.<sup>93</sup> The Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre somewhat similarly adapted Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606) into a large-scale opera, *The Frightened Soul* (2012). Such bold endeavours should be greatly encouraged, as should the rearrangement and re-contextualisation of excellent traditional operas. The Palace Museum in Beijing still has a storeroom full of Anhui Opera repertoire in the Shengping Department of its Qing dynasty section, and those manuscripts need to be released and catalogued. If old Anhui Opera repertoire disappears, the entire tradition is at great risk of eventual loss. These precious relics can be protected and given new life through effective research and careful scripting in the rearrangement of traditional operas (Liao & Liu 2013).
  7. There is an old saying in Chinese: ‘Go to sea by a borrowed boat, lay eggs by a borrowed hen, and sing opera on a borrowed stage’. Its meaning is that one should take full advantage of all available resources to achieve one’s goals, even if they must be borrowed. So, in the spirit of this proverb, full use should be made of all available traditional venues, social activities, and arts centres to perform and preserve Anhui Opera. Through greater exposure of this kind, more operatic highlights can be showcased to more audiences, and the influence of Anhui Opera on contemporary culture can be expanded.
  8. A balance needs to be struck between inheritance and innovation, between tradition and contemporaneity. The growth of Anhui Opera cannot be separated from either its legacy or its need for innovation. Traditional opera should reform and redevelop. It must not be restricted to its original practice. Inheritance without development will suffocate this artform, while innovation without heritage will lose the unique attributes and charms of Anhui Opera. An opera style without a strong formal template is bound to decline. It is sensible to keep Anhui Opera’s originally established style, but also to revitalise it with inventive content from contemporary everyday life.
  9. Theoretical study of Anhui Opera should be increased with encouragement provided to professional and amateur researchers alike. It would be valuable, for

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<sup>93</sup> Hua Mulan, the heroine of the classic Disney animated film *Mulan* and its spin-offs, is the eighth member of the Disney Princess series and the first Asian princess in a Disney production. Mulan is famous for single-handedly rescuing the Chinese Empire.

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example, for the Anhui Opera Research Institute of the Anhui–Peking Opera Theatre to submit applications for relevant research projects and to offer suitable rewards to academic researchers who achieve breakthrough results in their work.

10. International cultural exchanges should be strengthened by introducing Anhui Opera to the world through foreign cultural institutions, performing arts companies and Chinese organisations. This would globalise the presence, influence and popularity of Anhui Opera internationally. In recent years, the Anhui-Beijing Opera Theatre has begun to perform outside China and initiated fruitful international cultural exchanges.
11. Health and safety are an important consideration, especially when dealing with an art form that requires such great physicality. Opera students and artists have a significant risk of being injured while training or performing, which should be no surprise in an artform involving acrobatic displays and choreographed fighting with real weapons. It is essential that labour laws be strengthened for the protection of performers to guarantee appropriate health cover and treatment. Anhui Opera workplaces currently offer little of this support. By providing this care, performers' concerns can be minimised, and environment for training and practice vastly improved.
12. It would be highly beneficial to improve the overall quality of opera management by reducing bureaucracy and promoting professionalism and enthusiasm within troupe administrations. At an international symposium on traditional arts in Beijing in 2003, it was stated that some officials did not value traditional music, even to the point of despising it (Ree 2012). Such negativity is obviously discouraging for traditional artists and arts administrators and has a damaging influence on the inheritance and dissemination of traditional music. This kind of pessimistic attitude towards traditional culture highlights why increased education around the value of Anhui Opera, and all Chinese musical traditions, is an important endeavour.

To resolve many of these concerns will take considerable and sustained efforts. Yet with the imagination and creativity of artists, broad policy support, better access to performance venues, engaged and supportive audiences, professional management practices, and innovations informed by dedicated research, Anhui Opera can continue to grow with its future secure.

### **6.3 Opportunities for Future Research**

The study of Anhui Opera requires extensive, ongoing research that cannot be covered in this single thesis. There is immense scope and an immediate need for continuing exploration into Anhui Opera across a range of potential trajectories that align with the scholarly concerns of ethnomusicology. Interviews with many Anhui Opera performers and experts, particularly those of advance age, still need to be undertaken urgently. As recommended in this chapter, equally pressing is the need to use modern technological means to start an audiovisual recording project of all Anhui Opera repertoire to promote its digital preservation, record the valuable intellectual wealth of older artists, and immediately insert their knowledge into teaching practice.

Research opportunities also lie in detailed studies of other aspects of Anhui Opera, including but not limited to:

- the aesthetic designs of its facial makeup, costumes and props,
- the specific training processes involved in learning its singing, speaking, acting and acrobatic fighting skills,
- the symbolic significance of the artist's hands, eyes, mouth, body and gait positions in performance, and
- the recent inclusion of Western musical instruments in its musical accompaniment

All future research into Anhui Opera should also continue to collect old manuscripts and relics before they are permanently lost, and search for previously unknown operas. There is also an immense amount of detailed research to be done in studying, transcribing, analysing and translating old manuscripts written in ancient Chinese musical notation systems, and in preserving Anhui Opera heritage materials and recordings for all in secure, yet accessible, public collections. All such research avenues would make highly useful and welcome contributions to the preservation and continuation of Anhui Opera into the future. As a musician and ethnomusicologist who was born in Anhui Province, I hope that this rich operatic tradition of my own culture's heritage does continue with the secure future that it deserves, and that this thesis can enable greater scholarly and public understanding about Anhui Opera in the interest of realising this ambition.

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CPPCC member, vice president and Secretary General of Anhui Opera Association, (Hou Lu, 2014, 2015 and 2017) interviewed for Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre public collection.

Deputy director of Anhui art research institute, former deputy head of Anhui Hui Opera Troupe, and the first generation of Anhui opera actors (Li Taishan, 2014 and 2015), interviewed for Anhui Historical and Cultural Research Centre public collection.

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### Music Scores

Qian Yulian's aria in the handwritten music score of *The Romance of a Gold Hairpin · Forced Marriage* from AHCRC main collection.

*Winds between Pine Trees* (Gongche notation) written by Cheng Zhulin in Qing dynasty, collected from folk from AHCRC main collection.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A:

#### Chronological timeline of the formation and development of Anhui Opera

Date	Ruling authority or power (dates of rule)	Stage of Huiju development	Additional information/world events
May 2006		Anhui Opera becomes one of the first traditions to be listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage	
1956		Anhui Opera Troupe established	
1949	Communist Party of China	People's Republic of China established	
1937-1949		Anhui Opera no longer active and rarely performed.	Second World War (1939-1945)
1910-1912	Chinese revolution and formation of People's Republic of China	Anhui Opera troupes disbanded.	
1875-1908	Emperor Guangxu		
1861-1874	Emperor Tongzhi		
1851-1864			Taiping Rebellion
1850-1861	Emperor Xian-feng [Hsien-feng]		Cheng Changgeng (1811-1880), head of Sanqing Troupe, is the most famous Huiju actor
1820-1850	Emperor Daoguang	Four major troupes	
1796-1820	Emperor Jiaqing		
1790		Four Huiju troupes move from South Anhui to Beijing	The support of Huizhou merchant class brought Huiju to its peak.
1735-1796	Emperor Qianlong	Huiju very popular in Huizhou and Anqing regions. Guild Hall established in Beijing. The beginnings of Peking Opera.	
1722-1735	Emperor Yongzheng		
1661-1722	Emperor Kangxi	Haiyan Qiang no longer performed	

<b>1644-1911</b>	Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty		
<b>1629-1642</b>			Wide-ranging peasant revolts began (1629), occupied Beijing (1642)
<b>1572-1620</b>	Emperor Wanli	Local folk operas in Huizhou and Anqing were popular and merged with similar styles such as Yiyang Qiang and Haiyan Qiang, brought to South Anhui through regional migration.	
<b>1521-1567</b>	Emperor Jiajing	Haiyan Qiang entered Huizhou	
<b>1426-1435</b>	Emperor Xuande	Chuanqi opera, a precursor to Kunqu, favoured by upper-class scholars and officials in South Anhui villages.	
<b>1368-1644</b>	Ming dynasty	Early types of Huiju called Hui Diao and Erhuang Diao	
<b>1280-1368</b>	Yuan dynasty	Yiyang Qiang and Yuyao Qiang combined with Anhui local folk music to form a precursor to Huiju at the end of the Yuan dynasty	
<b>960-1279</b>	Song dynasty		
<b>649-683</b>	Emperor Gaozong		
<b>618-907</b>	T'ang dynasty		
<b>581-618</b>	Sui dynasty		
<b>222-589 CE</b>	Sixth dynasty period	New Yuefu folk songs	

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**Appendix B (Please see the accompanying files attached)**

Appendix B, part 1: video example of the siping (四平) tune.

Appendix B, part 2: video example of the pihuang (皮黄) tune.

Appendix B, part 3: video example of the Chui-bo (吹拔) tune.