

# Development and Teaching of Hunan Flower Drum Song in China

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## Abstracts

Hunan Flower Drum Song is one of the local Chinese opera repertoires. It originated from folk songs, mountain songs, and ditties. In its development, it has been refined by artists and has fused religious music, Beijing opera, Kunqu, rap, and other musical components to form its unique musical style and flavor. The music is flexible and varied and can be rough or delicate, showing the richness of rural life and the hard work and simplicity of the Hunan people. The folk culture of the Hunan Flower Drum Song has gradually become popular in China with its unique charm.

**Keywords:** Development; Teaching; Hunan Flower Drum Song; China

## Introduction

With the acceleration of China's modernization process, traditional cultural education has become an increasingly important issue of concern. Primary and secondary schools are responsible for the inheritance and development of traditional culture, and they play a key role in the dissemination and promotion of local traditional culture. Whether primary and secondary schools attach importance to local traditional culture education, especially how to strengthen the effective management of local traditional culture education in primary and secondary schools to inherit better and develop local traditional culture, is an important issue we must face. Curriculum originates from the need for cultural transmission, and without culture, there is no curriculum. The curriculum is an effective carrier of culture and an important means of cultural transmission. As an important part of the national three-tier curriculum, the development and implementation of a school-based music curriculum can not only improve the music curriculum system but also help to protect and inherit local music culture, meet the educational and development needs of local and school, as well as enhance students' sense of identification with their hometown music, thus cultivating their deep national emotions. Music teachers should actively explore local music and cultural resources to develop and implement a school-based music curriculum, which is an effective carrier to improve students' comprehensive local music ability and literacy and a useful way to explore music curriculum reform and implement quality education. The development of music curricula with ethnic and local characteristics has greater flexibility and appropriateness than the national curriculum, which constantly enhances students' aesthetic and artistic expression abilities through rich and diverse educational and teaching activities and strengthens students' knowledge and understanding of local music culture. With the vast territory of China and different ethnic characteristics in different regions, primary and secondary schools across the country can make full use of local resources to dig into the inherent spirit of traditional Chinese culture and foster students' determination to promote the heritage of national culture through the medium of diverse and interesting traditional

festival celebrations. In the management of primary and secondary schools, quality traditional cultural resources can be used to help improve the quality of teaching and schooling in primary and secondary schools, to enrich the way of improving the quality of the nation by running schools harmoniously and differently, and to transform the cultivating soil of traditional culture into teaching resources for nurturing people and talents (William & William, 2003 : 21).

### **Chinese Traditional Culture**

Culture is the soul of a country and a nation. Thousands of years ago, our great ancient Chinese civilization nurtured excellent traditional Chinese cultures, such as poetry, lyrics, songs, and fugues, as well as good food and wine culture. These are deeply rooted in the deepest spiritual aspirations of the Chinese nation and have been unique spiritual symbols of the Chinese nation since ancient times. In the daily teaching in schools, students can fully feel the spiritual enlightenment brought by the traditional culture of the nation through the dissemination of traditional culture, thus automatically accepting our traditional culture from the heart, willing to understand its essence, resonate and move towards the path of commitment to the inheritance and development of traditional culture, and achieve the recognition of our culture by people all over the world. For example, the philosopher Zhang Dai Nian and Fang Keli (2004 : 4) listed human-centredness, the unity of heaven and man, robustness and virtue, and respect for peace and harmony as the key elements of traditional Chinese culture; scholars such as Yang Min and Ji Xianlin defined *traditional Chinese culture* as material, and spiritual civilization is the creation and historical achievement of traditional Chinese culture. Luo Huawen (2006 : 53-54) points out that, at present, schools have the same educational philosophy. However, there are indeed obvious differences in the specific ways and means of teaching traditional culture, each operating according to its management model and never trying to make a unified template that can be used as a reference for everyone, and there is not much that is worthy of common study and reference. This problem needs to be addressed by the relevant departments in our country. The relevant departments should pay great attention to this matter and incorporate it into their official implementation plans so that more schools can spare the time and energy to conduct in-depth research on traditional culture teaching and innovative preparation of learning content so that traditional culture education in China can go further. In 'Out of the Dilemma of Traditional Culture Education,' Qin Ping (2006 : 74-77) points out that the development of traditional culture education is already an urgent priority and that we should focus more on life in practice. In other words, we should focus on finding breakthrough points in implementing traditional cultural education in our daily lives. Let us start with small aspects to slowly extend to larger aspects, eventually realizing a deeper excavation of the educational content. Since research into traditional Chinese culture education has been in full swing across the country, a large number of excellent books on traditional Chinese culture have been published, and traditional culture education has been carried out with great enthusiasm, attracting a large number of experts and scholars to take the initiative to engage in related work. As a result, the attention paid by experts and scholars to studying the value of traditional culture is increasing daily.

In the 1980s, there was a wave of root-hunting literature in China, with a group of literary figures such as Wang Zengqi, Deng Youmei, and Wu Ruozeng leading the way. In the following five years, writers such as Han Shaogong, Jia Pingwa, Ah Cheng, and Wang Anyi brought the creation of root-hunting novels to a climax. During the same period, many overseas Chinese returned to their homeland to search for their relatives and roots. Local governments actively promoted recreational activities such as root-hunting tours and introduced traditional culture to schools. During this period, many primary and secondary schools took the initiative to join the activities and spread the local traditional culture. However, this boom did not last long, and after the enthusiasm and passion had faded, the preservation and transmission of traditional culture still did not receive more attention. Currently, primary and secondary schools are the main implementation bases for education and an important stronghold for the transmission of traditional national culture. At the same time, students are the main group that receives and transmits traditional culture. The government, schools, and society must work together to stimulate their love and affection for excellent traditional culture to promote the country's sustainable development of traditional cultural education. In his article 'Educational Anthropology of National Cultural Heritage,' Professor Wang Jun (2006 : 9-14) emphasizes that schools can implement the transmission of traditional culture. In their article 'On the relationship between ethnic, cultural heritage and education,' Cao Nengxiu and Wang Ling (2009 : 137-141.) point out that schools, families, and communities can all carry out education on the heritage of traditional Chinese culture. In his article 'A Study of School Education Strategies for the Heritage of Shui Shui Culture,' Huang Sheng (2009 : 56-5) takes the heritage of Shui Shui culture as an example and points out that the most convenient way to implement cultural heritage is through school education. Yu Yingli (2009 : 21) argues that both schools and families can contribute to the transmission of traditional culture and that the two types of education can be carried out simultaneously and with the best results. In his article 'Cultural transmission in the changing contemporary Chinese family,' Wang Yunping (2000 : 4) points out that cultural transmission in China is not only taught passively by teachers but mainly through students' active participation and that the transmission mode can be enriched. From the analysis and understanding of what these scholars have said, the academic community recognizes the transmission of local culture through education.

Thirdly, a study on the management of traditional culture education in primary and secondary schools. Cui Xinwei (2006 : 50-53) defines school management as school management is the organization of a group of teachers in different positions through a planned and centralized organization to complete some creative activities to achieve group power far greater than individual power so that the school can move towards a better and broader development path and achieve high-quality development education model Ba. Wang Hong believes that the study of students' emotional development should be placed in an important position and that strengthening students' traditional culture education will be a strong impetus to the study of students' emotions and will be a key inspiration to students' future beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes. Ai Xing and Zhao Ruixue (2019 : 42-45) believes it is important to combine "traditional education management culture" with "contemporary school education principal leadership." "If the headmaster attaches more importance to traditional culture education and possesses a certain degree of traditional cultural literacy, he or she will be able to provide a lot of references and practical advice in implementing traditional culture education and management in schools. Suppose the head teacher attaches

importance to traditional culture education and has a certain level of traditional culture. In that case, he or she will be able to provide much practical advice and, to a certain extent, support the development of traditional culture education in the school, so the head teacher must, first of all, strengthen his or her learning and improve his or her management skills to achieve the complementarity of the two. In order for traditional culture to be inherited and developed among students, schools should find ways to guide students and parents to change their perceptions of the traditional culture education and to change the traditional structure of the school's curriculum by collecting cultural resources, identifying the most suitable content for modern students, and designing excellent cultural programs that students are essentially willing to learn, receive and actively disseminate it.

### **Teaching the Traditional Culture in Primary and Secondary School**

The first is an exploration of how traditional culture is transmitted in primary and secondary schools. In most countries abroad, traditional culture is passed on in a culturally inclusive way in response to the uniqueness of different cultures. In some Asian countries, studies have found that the centralized approach to learning and passing on traditional culture is more receptive to individuals regarding their ideology and is relatively more touching. This approach is also very similar to that of China. It creates an atmosphere of learning and then, through schooling, centralized teaching and learning, allows students to learn and explore together subtly. In the UK, school administrators attach relatively great importance to traditional cultural education. From primary and secondary school onwards, they have included traditional culture-related learning in the curriculum of students' history, geography, and art to enhance and develop students' thinking and morality. They teach in a variety of forms and varieties, which fully stimulate students' interest in school and achieve better results in the transmission of traditional culture. Some scholars also believe that popular and local cultures should not conflict but should be interdependent and interactive. School education should recognize local cultures but find a medium to balance them and adapt the learning content to the actual situation (Norwood, 1930 : 34).

Secondly, research on the value of traditional culture education in primary and secondary schools. Some scholars mention that traditional culture makes children experience a sense of mission and achievement in carrying on traditional culture and helps them find a direction for future efforts. In terms of practical operation, the Tokyo Board of Education in Japan has implemented a traditional culture education project, specifically designating several experimental schools, and targeted local traditional culture education in these designated schools, which has also achieved certain results. Japanese For example, Japanese high school students are also required to study Tang poetry, Song lyrics, and literary texts. Their teaching materials are drawn from Zhuangzi and the Analects of Confucius, and Chinese calligraphy is commonly taught in primary and secondary schools. In addition, in terms of the transmission of tea culture, many Japanese schools not only offer tea ceremony classes as a general education course but also have a club called the "tea ceremony section," which is reflected in many Japanese novels, TV series, films and even anime and other cultural works. After the daily classes, students are required to spend half an hour in a school club, which includes a wide range of traditional culture classes such as kendo, tea ceremony, flower art, and cooking.

In European countries such as the USA and the UK, teachers use individual participation to stimulate students' interest in learning and to develop the ability to collect and process data. European countries such as the UK attach more importance to preserving historical sites, and Paris and London have many cultural resources such as art galleries, museums, and historical pavilions. Most primary and secondary schools in the UK end their daily curriculum from 3-5 pm, after which parents are asked to lead students in social practice activities, and schools regularly organize visits to local cultural pavilions. Since the 20th century, more and more British schools have promoted a hands-on approach to social activities close to nature, where pupils can raise sheep, grow fruit and vegetables, and traditionally make jam and wool felting dishes. These forms of traditional cultural programs have positively impacted pupils' overall development and provided a practical basis for the school's curriculum. In Germany, primary and secondary education emphasizes the education of people and the transmission of traditional culture through museum education. They have shifted from the original focus on objects to the focus on people, attaching importance to studying the country's history and culture. They have also begun to study and disseminate it on an educational level. The value of traditional education is reflected in all educational practices in schools, and its importance is evident (Ven, 2018 : 21).

### **Flower Drum Song**

There are more studies on opera in China but fewer on small local operas. As of the end of October 2022, a search for the term opera on the China Knowledge Network (CNKI) brought up a total of 128,230 relevant documents, most of which were researched from the perspective of music and art. In the case of Hunan Flower Drum Song, 1804 articles were searched on the Internet, mostly on the analysis and study of music, performance, and other artistic aspects. A search of Flower Drum Song of Shaoyang city on the Internet yielded 46 articles on the subject, mainly on music, script, and other aspects. In terms of "intangible cultural heritage," a total of 41,830 relevant documents were searched, mainly from 2002 to 2021, especially in recent years when a wave of research on intangible cultural heritage started in China.

#### **Research in Flower drum song**

Although some scholars have carried out research on Shaoyang Flower Drum Song as a local opera of great influence in Hunan and throughout the country since the founding of the People's Republic of China, there are relatively few research monographs, and almost all of them are mentioned in other monographs as small local operas. In September 1988, Hunan University published a book by Mr. Long Hua, the former deputy director of the Institute of Literature and History of Hunan Normal University, entitled "A draft of the history of Hunan opera" chapter 12 of which is entitled "The colorful Flower Drum Song." The article mainly describes the historical evolution of the ground flower drum and flower drum song, the types of artists, and the genres of the Hunan Flower Drum Song, with a slight reference to the Yueyang flower drum song.

In April 1980, the Hunan Provincial Drama Studio published "The History of Hunan Local Opera," which mainly contains information on the history, repertoire, music, performances, sections, and surveys of famous artists of the various local opera genres in Hunan.

In January 1981, Mr. Jia Gu's "Study on the Music of Hunan Flower Drum Song" was mainly about the singing, tunes, musical characteristics, and artistic style of the Hunan Flower Drum Song.

In April 1986, the Editorial Department of the Chinese Opera Journal - Hunan Volume published a more comprehensive study of the art, scripts, and institutions of Hunan Flower Drum Song, including a more detailed account of the Yiyang Flower Drum Song troupe and its artistic development achievements.

In June 1997, Mr. Yin Bokang's "Outline of the History of Hunan Theatre" focuses on the traditional repertoire of the Flower Drum Song.

In December 2009, Hunan People's Publishing House published The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hunan Province, which mainly introduces various intangible cultural heritages and customs in Hunan Province, including a brief introduction to the Changsha Flower Drum Song genre, artistic characteristics, and repertoire.

In December 2014, Soochow University Press published Mr. Zhu Yongbei's Study on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Hunan Flower Drum Opera, which provides a more detailed survey and study of flower drum opera in Hunan Province, with a more detailed introduction to the historical lineage, troupes, and inheritors of Yiyang Flower Drum Song.

In January 2019, Hunan Normal University Press published "Research and Creation of Hunan Flower Drum Song," co-authored by Ouyang Juewen and Liu Zhaoqian, non-hereditary inheritors of Flower Drum Song, which provides a more in-depth analysis of many aspects of the art of Flower Drum Opera, including musical characteristics, cultural trends, musical creation, ontological evolution, performance and singing techniques, and elaborates on and answers various practical questions that arise in the current situation and development of Flower Drum Song.

In summary, there are many research works on Hunan Flower and Drum Opera, mainly on the opera's history, music, and repertoire. At the same time, some books on Flower Drum Song are mentioned, but fewer monographs.

Journal articles on Hunan Flower and Drum Opera have been published in the 21st century, especially after the development of intangible cultural heritage protection. There are more research papers on Flower Drum Songs in this period.

The first stage: from the 1950s to the early 1980s, the period was the heyday of the Flower Drum Song, and there were many critical articles about it. The Changsha Flower Drum Song, as one of the genres, is elaborated on in some detail.

The second phase: from the 1980s to 2005, was a period of decline, during which little research was done, mainly on the art, singing, and script of the Hunan Flower Drum Song. For example, Jiang Kui's "The Rhythmic Characteristics of the First Section of the Hunan Flower Drum Song <Liu Hai Chopping Woodcutter>" published in the Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music in 1986, and Hu Jianguo's "On the Origin of the Nuo Cavity and the Vocal Accent of the Hunan Flower Drum Song" published in Yixai in 1996, were both studies on art and singing, with little mention of the Shaoyang Flower Drum Song.

The third stage belongs to the development stage from 2006 to the present. Since 2005, when the state issued policy documents related to the protection of intangible cultural heritage, research on Flower Drum Song has gradually deepened. Studies have begun to be colorful, mainly divided into the following categories.

The 2007 doctoral dissertation by Class Zenming, "A Study of Hunan Flower Drum Song," provides a more comprehensive overview of the origins and socio-historical and cultural background of Hunan Flower and Drum Opera, its genres, musical characteristics, and artistic styles and introduces Flower Drum Song as a genre of Changsha Flower Drum Song in less than 100 words:

2020 Sun Wenhui's "Flower Drum Cui Chun ---- Exploring the Origin of Hunan Flower Drum Song" by a researcher at the Hunan Provincial Arts Research Institute provides an overview of the trajectory of the conception and formation of the Hunan Flower Drum Song.

In 2021 Hu Yiting's 'On the classification, style and artistic value of Hunan Flower and Drum Opera' gives an account of the formation and development of the Hunan Flower Drum Song and the classification of artistic genres.

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There are more studies of a single play, such as Liu Hai Xin Qiao (Liu Hai Xin Qiao), which has been widely circulated as a classic play of Yiyang Flower Drum Song, and almost everyone in the region can call out a few lines, with 14 journal articles on the play on the Internet. As many as 12 journal articles on the play have been published online. In 2012, Jiang Xi's "The New Expansion of Traditional Opera Adaptation - Research and Creation of Hunan Flower Drum Opera <Cai Kunshan Ploughing the Fields>" mainly composes and summarises the highlights of the play's adaptation, suggesting that the adaptation of traditional opera should focus on the living content, highlight the characteristics of the genre and be rich in contemporary connotations. In 2017, Zhang Yuanyuan's "Appreciation of the Traditional Hunan Flower Drum Song Liu Hai Xin Qiao" provides a more detailed discussion of the artistic style, song features, and singing characteristics of the classic play Liu Hai Xin Qiao while proposing initiatives to protect and support the development of traditional folk opera. In 2019, Zhang Linglei's master's thesis, A Study of the Script Form of Yiyang Flower Drum Song, provides a detailed discussion of the two script forms of Yiyang Flower Drum Song and a summary of the script creation and artistic achievements of Yiyang Flower Drum Song.

Yiyang Flower Drum Song provides a detailed discussion of the two script forms of Yiyang Flower Drum Song, as well as a summary of the script creation and artistic achievements of Yiyang Flower Drum Song. There are many studies on the internet about the music, staging, and singing of Hunan and Shaoyang Flower Drum Songs, mainly. He Jian's master's thesis in 2006, "A Study of the Singing Lyrics of Hunan Flower Drum Song," is a more comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of the singing lyrics of the Hunan Flower Drum Song, using the relevant theories of linguistics to comprehensively analyze the linguistic features contained in the singing lyrics of Flower Drum Song scripts, providing a reference for the creation and artistic appreciation of Hunan Flower Drum Song scripts and singing lyrics, with an analysis of Yiyang Flower Drum Song and related scripts in the text. Wang Sisi's Master's thesis in 2008, "Exploring the characteristics of Hunan Flower Drum Song rundown," focuses on analyzing and summarizing the methods, techniques, and characteristics of Hunan Flower Drum Song rundown, providing a study and reference for scholars of ethnic vocal music.

Xu Yanwen's master's thesis in 2014, *A Study of the Current Situation, Problems and Countermeasures of the Changsha Flower Drum Opera Troupe*, focuses on the origins of the Changsha Flower Drum Opera Troupe, introduces the current situation of the troupe's development, and proposes relevant measures to promote the troupe's development; the text partially examines and discusses the Yiyang Flower Drum Opera Troupe.

From 2013 onwards, theses dedicated to the study of the Yiyang Flower Drum Song have appeared, such as Xiao Cui's master's thesis in 2013, *'A Study of the Singing Characteristics of Hunan Yiyang Flower Drum Song'*, which focuses on the singing and singing characteristics of Yiyang Flower Drum Song and provides a detailed introduction to the unique embellishment techniques of Yiyang Flower Drum Song, according to which countermeasures for protection and development are proposed.

Wang Ying's master's thesis in 2014, *"Analysis of the Performance Characteristics of Hunan Yilu Flower Drum"*, elaborated on three aspects of the language characteristics, singing characteristics, and stage performance characteristics of Yilu Flower Drum, focusing on the artistic performance aspect:

Yang Bo's master's thesis in 2014, *"An investigation into the artistic style and performance characteristics of Yiyang Flower Drum Song"*, focuses on the artistic characteristics of Yiyang Flower Drum Song in terms of the material taken, language and singing style, and also puts forward thoughts and countermeasures on the crisis faced by Yiyang Flower Drum Song;

Wu Maojun's master's thesis in 2016, *"A Study of the Music of Yiyang Flower Drum Opera"*, focuses on the origin and development history, and artistic characteristics of Yiyang Flower Drum Opera from an artistic perspective and proposes countermeasures to promote the inheritance and development of Yiyang Flower Drum Opera. The master's thesis of Wu Yating in 2018, *"On the comparison of the music and singing characteristics of Huayugu Opera in Yiyang, Hunan and Yiyang, Hubei"*, made a comparative study of the music and singing characteristics of Huayugu Opera in Yiyang, Hunan and Jingzhou, Hubei, exploring the commonalities and individuality of the two. In 2018, Tan Liyuan's master's thesis, *'Research and Case Analysis on the Management of Local Specialties Culture - Taking the Management of Yiyang Local Flower Drum Opera as an Example'*, analyzed the development status of Yiyang local flower drum opera from the perspective of cultural management discusses the achievements and problems of the management of local specialties culture and proposes relevant countermeasures for solutions.

## **Development and Teaching Flower Drum Song**

In 2012, He Luxiang's master's thesis, *"On the Development and Promotion of Hunan Flower Drum Opera"*, mainly analyzed the origin and development of the Hunan Flower Drum Song, the classification and basic characteristics of the singing style, and proposed strategies for the development of Hunan Flower Drum Song from the perspectives of internal and external factors. In 2021, Huang Huiya's *"The Inheritance and Development of Yiyang Flower Drum Opera in the Perspective of New Media"* explored the path of inheritance and development of the Yiyang Flower Drum Song from the perspective of new media. In 2021, Zhou Jin published *"Research on Yiyang Flower Drum Song in the Perspective of Non-Foreign Heritage Protection"*, in which he proposed that Yiyang Flower Drum Song needs innovation in various aspects to promote the development of the genre by combining the singing tunes and musical characteristics of Yiyang Flower Drum Song, introducing the

basic situation of local troupes and inheritors. By combing existing research results, there is a relative lack of research on the Shaoyang Flower Drum Song, and the research is relatively homogeneous, mainly from an artistic perspective, with a few references to the protection and inheritance of the opera. As a comprehensive art form, it should be researched and analyzed in a multidisciplinary manner to expand further the connotation and scope of the Flower Drum Song. The author hopes to use the research theories and methods of folklore and communication to propose constructive measures and solutions for the preservation of the Flower Drum Song in contemporary times and to promote the simultaneous development of material and spiritual civilization so that this provincial intangible cultural heritage can continue to flourish in the new era and become a popular form of opera for young and old alike.

## Conclusion

At present, there are not many studies on the heritage protection and status of local music culture, only a few studies on opera or different types of opera in schools, and some articles only realize the importance of traditional local opera in schools but do not put forward specific methods and suggestions for local music in schools, let alone a systematic and feasible plan. Although several schools in Hunan have introduced Flower Drum Song in the form of clubs, the clubs are only for a small number of students, while the music classroom is for all students, so introducing Flower Drum Song into the secondary school music classroom would be a better way to pass on the tradition.

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