

The Integration of Traditional Opera and Folk Songs in Chinese National Opera —A Case Study of The White-Haired Girl

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Abstract. The creation of the grand opera *The White-Haired Girl* represents a significant milestone in the evolution of modern Chinese national opera. This seminal work has profoundly influenced both contemporary Chinese vocal music and the advancement of national opera. This study examines *The White-Haired Girl* through the lens of folk songs and operatic elements, using the method of data collection and music example analysis, focusing on two primary aspects: the application of operatic techniques and the incorporation of folk melodies. Furthermore, it explores potential future directions for Chinese national opera, considering the synergy between folk songs and traditional operatic forms. Chinese national opera has undergone nearly a century of development, and it has become increasingly mature in terms of content and form. However, in the new era context, Chinese national opera has encountered both opportunities and challenges. Therefore, this study aims to explore the innovative practices of the opera *White-Haired Girl* in terms of national style, in order to provide some reference experiences for the development of Chinese national opera in the new era context.

Keywords: Chinese national opera; the *White-Haired Girl*; traditional opera; folk songs.

1. Introduction

Chinese national opera, a significant extension of traditional Chinese theatrical art, synthesizes local folk music with operatic elements, embodying unique artistic characteristics and cultural significance. The early 20th century witnessed the gradual emergence of Chinese national opera, progressing through distinct phases: a “germination period” in the 1920s, an “exploration period” from the 1930s onwards, and a “development period” commencing with *The White-Haired Girl* in 1945. Throughout this evolution, Chinese national opera was not only influenced by Western operatic traditions but also deeply rooted in traditional Chinese opera and folk melodies. Traditional opera, with its distinctive stagecraft, vocal techniques, and narrative methods, has exerted a profound influence on national opera. Concurrently, folk songs, integral to traditional Chinese music, contribute strong regional characteristics, infusing new vitality into Chinese national opera.

The White-Haired Girl, a quintessential work of Chinese national opera, has maintained a prominent position in Chinese operatic repertoire since its 1945 debut in Yan'an, a pivotal location in Chinese revolutionary history. Its acclaimed arias, including *Qingyang Zhuan*, *Little Cabbage*, *The North Wind Blows*, and *Tying Red Hair Rope*, continue to resonate with audiences. The opera's central theme, encapsulated in the phrase “The old society turned humans into ghosts, the new society turns ghosts back into humans,” illuminates the stark class conflicts between landlords and peasants in rural China of that era. Its poignant social commentary and compelling artistic execution render it an invaluable subject for scholarly analysis in Chinese national opera studies.

This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the folk songs and operatic elements in *The White-Haired Girl*, examining their specific applications and integrated effects within the opera. The study is structured around three key areas: First, an examination of the historical context surrounding the creation of *The White-Haired Girl* and its significance in the development of Chinese national opera. Second, an analysis of how folk songs and operatic elements in *The White-Haired Girl* contribute to character portrayal, musical development, and plot progression, as well as their role in enhancing the opera's overall expressiveness. Third, an exploration of strategies for creating national operas with distinctly Chinese characteristics in the contemporary era.

2. Overview of the Opera *The White-Haired Girl*

2.1. Origin of *The White-Haired Girl*: The Folk Legend *The White-Haired Fairy*

The narrative of *The White-Haired Girl* originates from a folk legend entitled *The White-Haired Fairy*, which circulated in the northwestern region of Hebei province within the Shanxi-Chahaer-Hebei Border Region in 1940. The story unfolds as follows: A mountain village, recently liberated by the Eighth Route Army, struggled to progress due to the villagers' deeply entrenched superstitious beliefs. Local folklore spoke of a "fairy" with white hair and pale skin residing in the Grandmother Temple at the village entrance. This entity allegedly demanded regular monthly offerings from the villagers. Failure to comply resulted in ominous warnings emanating from the temple: "Neglect the fairy at your peril!" This situation instilled a perpetual state of fear among the villagers. Upon learning of this, an Eighth Route Army cadre determined to investigate and dispel these feudal superstitions. That evening, armed and accompanied by the leader of the anti-espionage team, he concealed himself within the Grandmother Temple. At midnight, as a cold wind swept through, footsteps were heard. They observed a white-haired "fairy" enter the temple and seize the offerings from the altar. The cadre suddenly emerged, demanding, "Identify yourself!" Startled, the "White-Haired Fairy" lunged at them but was wounded by the cadre's gunfire and fled in panic. The pursuit led to a cliff edge where the "fairy" vanished, but faint infant cries were heard. Following the sound to a cave, they discovered the "White-Haired Fairy" huddled in a corner, cradling an infant with similarly white hair. At gunpoint, the cadre compelled her to reveal her true identity: She was the daughter of Yang Bailao, a tenant farmer in Hebei. Living alone with her father, her beauty had attracted the attention of Huang Shiren, the local landlord. Huang, using debt as a pretext, drove Yang Bailao to his death and abducted the girl. She was subsequently assaulted by the landlord and subjected to severe mistreatment. A compassionate servant secretly facilitated her escape to a mountain cave. She survived by consuming offerings from the Grandmother Temple. Prolonged salt deficiency and lack of sunlight had caused her hair to turn completely white over time. Deeply moved by this tragic account of societal oppression, the cadre was brought to tears. He then explained the recent societal changes, how the Eighth Route Army had liberated the people, and that the tragedies of the past had ended, with people now experiencing unprecedented prosperity. Finally, they rescued the "White-Haired Fairy" from her dark refuge, welcoming her into the bright sunlight, where she could begin anew, truly living as a free individual once more.

2.2. Creative Context of *The White-Haired Girl*

In 1942, the "Rectification Movement in Literature and Art" was launched in Yan'an. During this campaign, Mao Zedong delivered his seminal *Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, which addressed the fundamental issues of artistic creation, specifically the questions of whom art should serve and how it should serve them. Mao emphasized that artists should focus on creating works that resonated with the lives of ordinary people and aligned with the interests of the masses. He exhorted artists to immerse themselves among the people, using their works to inspire the masses and advance the ongoing revolution. This initiative gave rise to the "New Yangko Movement" and fostered a trend of learning deeply from the masses. Mao's *Talks* and the subsequent New Yangko Movement directly catalyzed the creation of *The White-Haired Girl*. The opera was a collaborative effort of the Lu Xun Academy of Arts in Yan'an. The creative team, led by Zhang Geng, initially commissioned writer Shao Zinan to draft the script. Following Shao's departure, He Jingzhi and Ding Yi assumed responsibility for the writing, while Ma Ke, Zhang Lu, and others composed the music.

The White-Haired Girl encapsulates two central themes: 'it vividly portrays the feudal oppression of old China and the suffering of peasants under its rule, while simultaneously depicting the bright future of liberated areas in the new democratic China under the Communist Party's leadership, where peasants achieve emancipation'[1]. The protagonist, Xi Er, suffers oppression and abuse at the hands of the landlord Huang Shiren, ultimately fleeing and transforming into the "White-Haired Fairy." This narrative arc poignantly illustrates the concept that "the old society turned humans into ghosts."

During the War of Liberation, as peasants acquired land and villages were liberated, farmers cast off the yoke of landlord oppression under the Communist Party's guidance. Consequently, the "White-Haired Girl" undergoes a metaphorical rebirth, becoming truly human--a powerful allegory for the notion that "the new society turns ghosts back into humans." The folk tale of The White-Haired Girl emerged as Chinese peasants, oppressed for centuries, found liberation under the Communist Party's leadership, experiencing profound changes in their lives and a spiritual awakening. In conclusion, the story of *The White-Haired Girl* presents both a positive, realistic significance and a romantic portrayal of the people's struggle for emancipation.

3. Nationalistic Characteristics in the Opera The White-Haired Girl

The White-Haired Girl is a seminal work that marks the emergence of modern Chinese opera. Its classification as a new operatic form stems from its innovative approach, which deviates from traditional Western operatic structures while maintaining essential operatic elements. This foundation is further enhanced by the incorporation and adaptation of traditional Chinese music. The opera's musical composition demonstrates a rich tapestry of regional folk influences. For example, Xi Er's primary thematic melody, adapted from the Hebei folk song *Little Cabbage*, poignantly illustrates the protagonist's suffering within the Huang household. Similarly, the Shanxi Yangko tune Picking Up Wheat Roots is employed to portray Yang Bailao as a simple, honest man beset by life's adversities. The character of the landlord Huang Shiren, depicted as a cruel and hedonistic tyrant, is musically represented by the Shanxi suona piece *Worship at the Hall*. Further folk influences are drawn from sources such as Hebei's *Taiping Tune* and Shanxi's *The Walnut Tree Blossoms*. This creative approach exemplifies a sophisticated method of 'adapting diverse regional folk songs, dramatically reinterpreting them musically, and synthesizing them with various local theatrical music styles. The result is a refined musical narrative that enhances and complements the libretto'[2].

3.1. Folk Song Themes and Character Development

Folk songs, as integral components of traditional Chinese music, serve not only as repositories of cultural memory and emotional expression but also provide a unique musical foundation for character development through their distinctive tones, rhythms, and melodic patterns. *The White-Haired Girl* extensively utilizes folk melodies from regions including Hebei, Shaanxi, and Shanxi as thematic motifs for its characters. These motifs undergo a process of adaptation and development in accordance with the plot's progression and character evolution, a technique referred to as "musical dramatization." 'This approach engenders intense dramatic tension, effectively conveying the complexity of interpersonal relationships and the depth of emotional expression within the narrative'[3].

3.1.1 Xi Er's Thematic Melody: Little Cabbage

The thematic melody associated with Xi Er's character is derived from the Hebei folk songs *Little Cabbage* and *Qingyang Zhuan*, as well as elements of Hebei Bangzi opera. These traditional sources have been adapted into various arias, including *The North Wind Blows*, *Wind Sweeps Snowflakes*, and *Kill Me with a Knife*, *Chop Me with an Axe*. Of particular significance is *The North Wind Blows*, the most acclaimed aria, which is a direct adaptation of *Little Cabbage*.

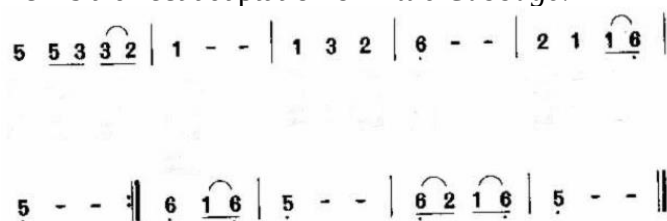


Fig. 1 Musical score of *Little Cabbage*[4]

Little Cabbage is a traditional folk song that has gained widespread popularity in the Hebei region. Its lyrical content depicts the poignant tale of an innocent, impoverished young girl from a rural

background who, having lost her mother, endures abuse and suffering in solitude. The melody is characterized by its emotional resonance, complemented by lyrics that are both simple and evocative. The song's musical structure employs a descending scale with a lamenting quality, utilizing a technique of gradual melodic descent. The concluding phrase, featuring a sighing intonation to call out "Dear mother! Dear mother!" serves to intensify the emotions of yearning and desolation (Fig.1).

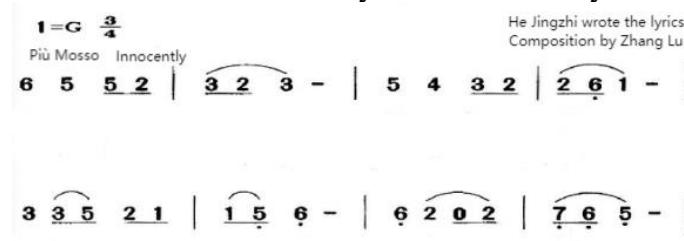


Fig. 2 Musical score of *The North Wind Blows* [4]

The North Wind Blows serves as the opening aria in the opera. A loose translation of the lyrics reads: "The north wind blows, the snowflakes float, the snowflakes come in the year. Father had gone out to avoid paying the bill for seven days, and he had not returned on New Year's Eve" (Fig.2). This aria is performed by Xi Er as she anticipates her father's return for the New Year celebrations. While its melodic progression and variations bear a strong resemblance to *Little Cabbage*, several modifications have been made to the original composition: First, the time signature has been altered from the relatively uncommon 5/4 in *Little Cabbage* to 3/4 in *The North Wind Blows*, resulting in a more condensed rhythmic structure. Second, the melodic line exhibits increased complexity and dynamic range, accompanied by a more intricate rhythmic pattern. Third, the incorporation of the filler word "nage" in the lyrics contributes to a richer musical expression. It is significant to note that despite their musical similarities, the lyrics of *The North Wind Blows* offer a commentary on the class struggles prevalent in traditional Chinese society. The line "The north wind blows, the snowflakes float, father had gone out to avoid paying the bill for seven days" serves to illuminate the exploitation and oppression endured by the peasant class at the hands of the landed gentry, while also highlighting the challenging living conditions faced by farmers in pre-modern China (Fig.2).

3.1.2 Yang Bailao's Thematic Melody: Picking Up Wheat Roots

Yang Bailao's arias are predominantly featured in the first act. As Xi Er's father and sole companion, Yang Bailao epitomizes the oppressed farmer in the old society, subjugated by the landlord Huang Shiren. His thematic melody is primarily derived from the Shanxi folk song *Picking Up Wheat Roots*.

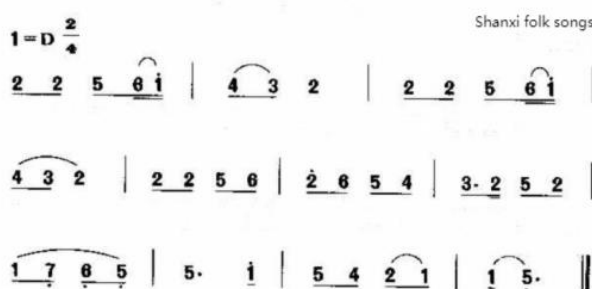


Fig.3 Musical score of *Picking Up Wheat Roots* [4]

Picking Up Wheat Roots portrays farmers gathering wheat roots post-harvest. With their livelihood secured, the farmers sing exuberantly. This song not only commends the farmers' diligence but also embodies their aspirations for a brighter future. The composer's selection of *Picking Up Wheat Roots* as Yang Bailao's thematic melody serves to depict an honest, unassuming farmer. The tragic irony of such a humble individual being driven to suicide by the landlord Huang Shiren accentuates the class conflicts inherent in the old society, thereby intensifying the dramatic tension and propelling the narrative towards its climax (Fig.3).

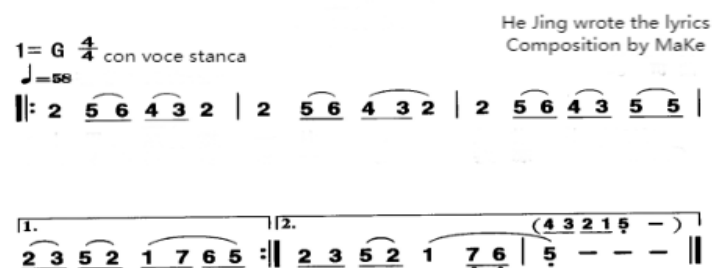


Fig. 4 Musical score of *Ten Miles of Wind and Snow* [4]

The melody of *Picking Up Wheat Roots* is initially employed in the opera in *Ten Miles of Wind and Snow*. The lyrics, roughly translated, read: “Ten miles of snow and wind, a white expanse of snow, hiding for seven days to return home. I can endure it. Persevering through this, freezing and starving, I came home. It can be endured.” While the original *Picking Up Wheat Roots* is lighthearted and upbeat, *Ten Miles of Wind and Snow* presents a stark contrast with its slow tempo, extended beats, heavy rhythm, and lowered pitch. These techniques effectively portray Yang Bailao’s exhausted return home after enduring hunger to avoid debt, transforming the original folk material to better represent Yang Bailao’s aged and solemn character. Yang Bailao’s musical persona is principally derived from the core melody of *Picking Up Wheat Roots*, with variations developing in tandem with the plot and the character’s emotional changes, thus expressing the evolution of Yang Bailao’s psychological states (Fig.4).

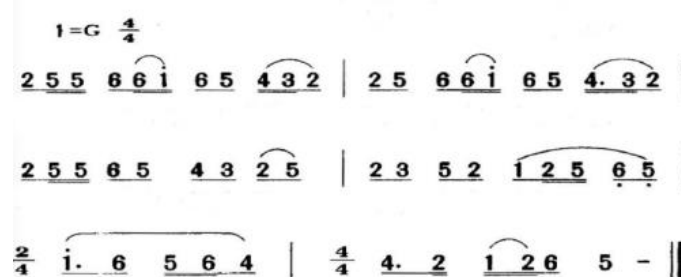


Fig. 5 Musical score of *Tying Red Hair Rope* [4]

The father-daughter duet *Tying Red Hair Rope* is also adapted from *Picking Up Wheat Roots*. While the two arias share similar melodies, they differ significantly in emotional tone. Xi Er’s part features a flowing melody with a lively rhythm, culminating in a high note to emphasize her innocent and vivacious nature. However, as noted by a critic, ‘Xi Er’s innocence and naivety are by no means idyllic, they are already overshadowed by class oppression’[5]. In contrast, Yang Bailao’s part exhibits a markedly different rhythm. Xi Er’s section employs a pattern of sixteenth notes at the beginning and end of phrases, creating a bright and energetic atmosphere. Yang Bailao’s part, however, is characterized by a slow rhythm with descending melodic lines in each phrase, conveying a sense of helplessness and sorrow (Fig.5).

3.2. Integration of Traditional Opera Elements in The White-Haired Girl

The remarkable success of the opera *The White-Haired Girl* can be primarily attributed to its innovative incorporation of traditional Chinese operatic elements into its musical composition. This unique fusion enabled the opera to evolve into a distinctively Chinese national production during a period when Western musical influences were profoundly shaping Chinese compositional practices. The most salient feature of the opera’s utilization of traditional elements lies in ‘the superimposition of highly dramatic conflicts onto the foundation of Chinese theatrical performance forms, effectively portraying and articulating acute social contradictions and class struggles’[6].

The White-Haired Girl drew inspiration from various forms of folk opera, including Hebei Bangzi, Shanxi Bangzi, and Mulian Opera. A prime example of this influence is evident in the aria *I Must Survive*, which was adapted from and created based on the Hebei Bangzi style.

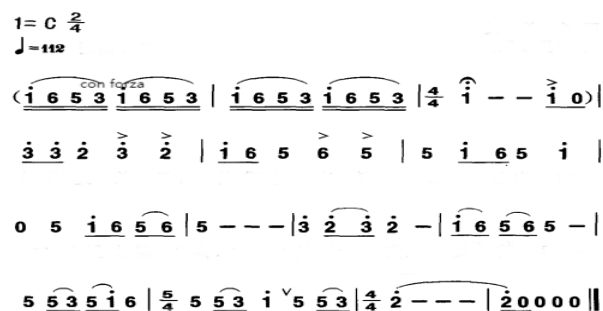


Fig. 6 Musical score of I Must Survive [4]

Hebei Bangzi, a traditional Chinese operatic art form, originated in Hebei Province and its adjacent regions in northern China. Its repertoire predominantly comprises historical narratives, classical novels, and folk legends, with performances placing significant emphasis on character development. The musical style of Hebei Bangzi is distinguished by its high-pitched, vigorous vocals, predominantly employing high notes. It is characterized by its powerful delivery, adeptness in expressing intense emotional conflicts, and its rapid, dynamic rhythm.

I Must Survive serves as a pivotal aria performed by Xi Er in *The White-Haired Girl*. The lyrics convey the following sentiment: “They attempted to end my life. They intended to bring me harm. I escaped the tiger’s jaws, I fled the wolf’s lair! My mother bore me, my father raised me. I must survive, I must survive!” (Fig.6). This aria is performed when Xi Er discovers her impending sale by the Huang family and manages to escape with Zhang Ersao’s assistance. Following a period of extreme anguish and internal conflict, and confronted with her tumultuous fate, Xi Er ultimately issues a powerful declaration of her will to live: “I must survive!” This outcry not only reflects Xi Er’s defiance against her destiny but also embodies her intense resentment towards the oppressive forces of the old society. Despite its brevity, the aria comprises a few concise sentences, each carrying substantial weight and encapsulating Xi Er’s profound hatred towards the Huang family and the antiquated societal structure. The initial line of lyrics attains the highest pitch in the aria, with the phrases “They attempted to end my life” and “They intended to bring me harm” inherently conveying intense dramatic conflict. The emphasis placed on “end my life” and “bring me harm,” coupled with the high-pitched vocal style, engenders a potent effect that reflects Xi Er’s intense anger. Notably, in the concluding lines, “I must survive,” the melodic range spans six and seven degrees respectively, abruptly transitioning from low to high pitch. This musical shift expresses Xi Er’s explosive desire for survival emerging from despair, maximizing the musical impact and giving voice to her anguished cry and desperate emotions. This compositional technique bears similarity to the accented and high-pitched passages commonly employed in Hebei Bangzi, wherein performers utilize elevated notes and sustained tones to portray characters’ emotional apexes (Fig.6).

The incorporation of sanban (free measure) represents a significant manifestation of traditional operatic elements in *The White-Haired Girl*, as exemplified in the aria *Kill Me with a Knife, Chop Me with an Axe*.

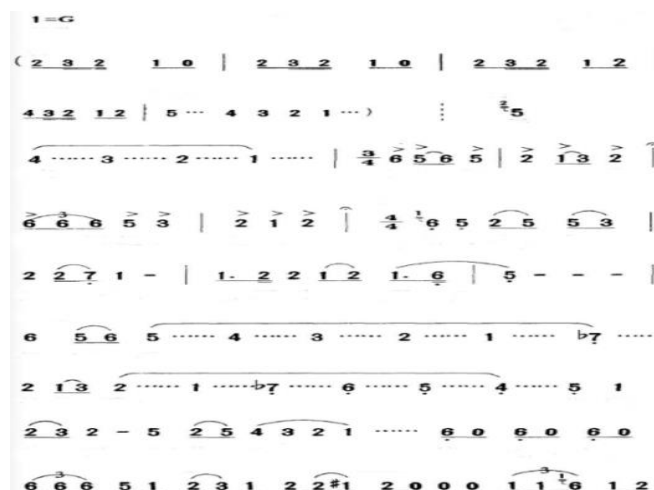


Fig. 7 Musical score of *Kill Me with a Knife, Chop Me with an Axe* [4]

Sanban, a metrical form in traditional opera, is characterized by slow, protracted singing. It features improvisational performance without fixed strong-weak beat patterns, allowing performers to express themselves freely based on emotional context, often employed to convey melancholic sentiments. ‘While the meter is free, it does not imply that its rhythm is arbitrary or unstructured; certain patterns exist within its free meter’[7]. The essence of this section’s lyrics can be summarized as follows: “Heavens! The blade has slain me, the axe has hewn me; such unwarranted cruelty! Since my entry into the Huang household, I could never have foreseen this day. My mother bore me, my father raised me; why have they treated me thus? How can I face the world? How can I endure?” In the lyrics *Kill Me with a Knife, Chop Me with an Axe*, the technique of Qinqiang opera’s crying tone is employed, and the sanban rhythm is utilized to elevate Xi Er’s indignation over the abuse she endured in the Huang family to a climactic point. This passage is performed when Xi Er is in a state of extreme anger, and the application of sanban, which conveys rhythm based on emotion, proves more expressive than a fixed strong-weak rhythmic pattern. Consequently, the composer employed the crying tone technique to augment its dramatic impact (Fig.7).

4. Development Path of Chinese National Opera in the New Era

The White-Haired Girl stands as China’s first relatively mature modern national opera. Since its inception, it has consistently garnered attention and acclaim, becoming a significant milestone in the history of Chinese national opera. Not only has it achieved remarkable success in the operatic realm, but it has also been adapted into other art forms such as film and ballet. The continuous reinterpretation of *The White-Haired Girl* across various artistic media reflects its adaptability and vitality in different contexts. Furthermore, it demonstrates the public’s appetite for exceptional operatic works. As a successful national opera, the artistic experience embodied in *The White-Haired Girl* warrants careful study by contemporary opera creators.

4.1. Pursuing the Path of Nationalization: Drawing Material from Life

To create national operas with distinctive Chinese characteristics that are both popular and appealing to the masses, it is essential to adhere steadfastly to a nationalized creative approach. This involves artistically processing specific events from people’s lives that occur in particular environments and possess social significance. Concurrently, it is crucial to incorporate elements of traditional Chinese music and opera deeply, aligning with the aesthetic preferences of Chinese audiences. Moreover, music creators must understand that nationalization is not merely a mechanical reproduction of traditional Chinese culture. Rather, it involves synthesizing the essence of national culture with contemporary life, integrating familiar, relatable stories and music into opera, and creating works that genuinely resonate with the public. This approach enables audiences to connect with the opera and experience the unique charm of Chinese culture. Renowned musicologist Ju

Qihong argues in *Maestro Verdi and Chinese Opera* that ‘the classical number opera structure is outdated and lacks contemporary spirit, while Wagner’s music dramas are too profound and academic to gain traction in China. He further posits that modern operas, while exploratory, are unlikely to achieve widespread acclaim in China. Consequently, these three operatic models cannot occupy a mainstream position in Chinese opera creation’[8]. Only Chinese national operas built on a foundation of nationalization will possess enduring vitality. The core of this nationalization path lies in deeply exploring materials from traditional Chinese music, combining them with contemporary aesthetics and social consciousness to create artistic works that possess both national characteristics and meet the demands of the times. ‘For Chinese opera to gain international recognition, it must have a high-quality, internationally acknowledged repertoire’[9]. These operas should possess three key elements: typical characters with national personalities, a strong national music style, and a distinct spirit of the times. Artists and writers must recognize that ‘the essence of national character has always been the fundamental source of vitality for Chinese drama’[10]. When creating Chinese operas, it is crucial to position oneself accurately and, while utilizing the general framework and models of opera, ensure that all elements within the play are developed and combined with national style. This approach is paramount for the future of Chinese national opera.

4.2. Synthesizing Chinese and Western Cultural Essences: A Global Perspective

The integration of Chinese and Western cultural elements in Chinese national opera represents a critical avenue for artistic exploration. As globalization advances and China’s international engagement expands, national opera must not only preserve its distinctive cultural identity but also assimilate and adapt the strengths of Western opera in musical language, narrative structure, and expressive forms to achieve a harmonious fusion of Eastern and Western artistic traditions. The groundbreaking opera *The White-Haired Girl* introduced Western operatic forms to China, innovatively incorporating traditional elements and techniques from modern Western opera into its musical composition. This work employs duets, ensembles, and choruses, utilizing harmonic and polyphonic compositional methods. While embracing Western musical techniques, the opera’s melodies retain the essence of traditional Chinese folk songs and operatic styles. It exemplifies a new genre of national opera that ‘implements and explores the ‘Sinicization’ of Western opera and the ‘operatization’ of Chinese narratives’[11], serving as a testament to the dialogue between China’s rich cultural heritage and the global literary landscape. Following *The White-Haired Girl*, recent years have witnessed the emergence of multiple successful national operas that seamlessly blend Chinese and Western cultural elements, such as *The Long March* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*. These works not only incorporate Western operatic musical techniques but also introduce innovative approaches to stage design, character development, and narrative progression. This synthesis has enhanced the depth and richness of Chinese national opera, rendering it more accessible to international audiences. The success of these productions demonstrates that to enhance the distinctive Chinese character of national opera and gain international recognition, it is imperative to actively assimilate elements of foreign cultures while maintaining fidelity to national traditions. This approach ensures that newly created operas possess both a profound cultural foundation and appeal to contemporary aesthetic sensibilities, allowing them to flourish on the global stage. As noted by scholars, ‘Only through continuous innovation and refinement can we create truly artistic classics with Chinese characteristics’ [12]. It is through this process of evolution and adaptation that Chinese national opera can establish its unique artistic identity in the contemporary era and secure its position in the international cultural arena.

5. Conclusion

The opera *The White-Haired Girl* stands as a testament to the indefatigable efforts and innovative spirit of China’s early music pioneers. This seminal work established a robust foundation for the development of a novel operatic form that resonates deeply with Chinese aesthetic sensibilities. The

opera's intrinsic qualities exemplify a harmonious blend of national character and international appeal. Its subject matter adeptly reflects the societal complexities of its time, forging a profound connection with the lived experiences of the masses. As a comprehensive art form, it has exerted a significant influence on the trajectory of modern Chinese music. In the wake of *The White-Haired Girl*, a plethora of exceptional operas emerged, including *Liu Hulan* and *Chiye River*, further enriching the genre. In the contemporary era, Chinese national opera continues to evolve, demonstrating a trend towards greater diversity and global integration. Nevertheless, it remains imperative that the core of its creation adheres to the dual principles of cultural inheritance and innovation--a crucial lesson derived from the enduring success of *The White-Haired Girl*.

This study's analysis of the integration of traditional operatic elements and folk songs in *The White-Haired Girl* illuminates the unique developmental path of Chinese national opera in the modern context, offering valuable insights for future compositions in this genre. However, it is important to note that this paper primarily focuses on the traditional musical aspects of the opera. Further research is warranted to explore the various iterations of the work that have emerged over time, as well as to investigate its inherent aesthetic and educational value.

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