

Intercultural Perspective on Drama Adaptation: A Case Study of "Waiting for Godot" (2023 Wuzhen Theatre Festival Edition)

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Abstract: This paper conducts an in-depth study on "intercultural" drama adaptation in the context of globalization, taking the version of "Waiting for Godot" presented at the 2023 Wuzhen Theatre Festival as a case study. It explores how to make innovative and profound intercultural adaptations while retaining the spiritual core of the original work. The article proposes and applies analytical perspectives such as "form and physicality", emphasizing the importance of preserving the "core" meaning of the original work during the adaptation process. This paper employs field research methods for on-site study, observing and analyzing "Waiting for Godot" performed at the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, and proposing various intercultural adaptation methods. Additionally, this article conducted audience surveys to gather feedback from the viewers' perspective, making the research more comprehensive and in-depth. The innovation of this paper lies in the first-time application of field research methods to the study of drama adaptation, obtaining data from actual performances and audience feedback, which makes the research findings more realistic and practically valuable. Moreover, our proposed concept of preserving the "core" of drama provides a new theoretical perspective and practical direction for future drama adaptation research.

Keywords: Intercultural; Drama Adaptation; "Waiting for Godot"; Tzvetan Todorov.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of human information transmission, drama adaptation from an "intercultural" perspective has become an inevitable choice for the globalization of drama. This article will take "Waiting for Godot" as an example to explore how we can make excellent adaptations from an intercultural perspective.

"Waiting for Godot" is a representative work of Irish absurdist playwright Samuel Beckett and a pioneering work of absurdist drama. It premiered at the Théâtre de Babylone in Paris, France, in 1953, changing the face of modern Western drama ever since. The play roughly tells an absurd story about a pair of vagabonds who cause much ado about a void waiting, filled with either boring or humorous anecdotes.

The latest version of "Waiting for Godot", adapted by Greek director Theodoros Terzopoulos, was a special invitation to this year's "2023 10th Wuzhen Theatre Festival" [1]. Theodoros Terzopoulos is one of the internationally recognized masters of 20th-century drama. He is famous for his original adaptations of Greek tragedies and classic texts, combining ancient and modern artistic practices.

Currently, most academic research on drama adaptation focuses on comparing adaptations with the original versions, lacking a truly fitting "intercultural perspective" study in the context of today's era.

Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the following questions: What kind of adaptation method is appropriate and excellent from today's intercultural perspective? What is the most important part of a cross-cultural adaptation of a drama? How should I grasp the degree of adaptation under different cross-cultural perspectives?

To solve these problems, the author conducted a field study on "Waiting for Godot", which was just performed at the Wuzhen Theatre Festival, by using the method of field

research. The author summarized and generalized the multi-perspective cross-cultural adaptation methods such as "form and physicality", as well as the theory that the most important thing in drama adaptation is to retain the "core". At the same time, the author conducted a questionnaire survey on the audience who watched this drama, obtaining feedback from the audience's perspective. This provides some experience and help for future drama practitioners in the process of "cross-cultural adaptation of drama works".

2. Methodology

2.1. Research on Cross-Cultural Drama

The study of cross-cultural drama has always been a hot topic in the field of drama theory. Domestic scholars mostly focus on the "context", believing that different cultural contexts are key to influencing cross-cultural drama. Professor Liang Yanl pointed out in the article "Cross-cultural Drama in the Context of Globalization" [2] that the most important mission for playwrights in the era of globalization is to explore the "drama language" of cross-culture. This so-called "drama language" will definitely produce different drama effects in different cultural contexts. At the same time, Professors Yan Chengying and Li Qibin summarized the current situation and achievements of cross-cultural drama research in recent years in the article "Review of Cross-cultural Drama Research in Recent Years" [3]. They emphasized that the research objects of cross-cultural drama should be the encounters between different races and cultures in different cultural contexts and the cultural conflicts and value choices they trigger. In summary, the author believes that we can learn from the research perspectives of various scholars, and think about whether there are other angles to carry out excellent cross-cultural drama adaptations besides the context. Therefore, the author has focused on the

two aspects of "form" and "body".

2.2. Research on the Formal Adaptation of "Waiting for Godot"

"Waiting for Godot", adapted by the famous Greek director Theodoros Terzopoulos, was a special invitation to the "10th Wuzhen Theatre Festival" in 2023. It is an adaptation of "Waiting for Godot" that premiered worldwide. The director presented a post-war "wasteland world" to the audience with unique geometric installation art. Director Terzopoulos once said, "The play takes place in war zones filled with death and bloodshed. My goal is not to have a realistic or naturalistic performance. What I want is a curved, terrifying space and a cruel slow-motion time, an ending without an ending."

Director Terzopoulos is a director who pays special attention to stage performance. Based on respecting and preserving the original text, he boldly confines the main performance stage within a mobile rectangular installation. This installation can open in four directions along the horizontal and vertical center lines, and the middle presents a "performance area" like a cross, filled with a narrow and oppressive atmosphere. The large black rectangular installation opens and closes, revealing the cramped and desolate interior corridor. Orderly life advances repeatedly until the cube is fully opened and divided into four quadrants, and the audience can see the true appearance of this ancient and powerful cube. In this desperate cross, the slave master Pozzo stands at the top of the cross, while "Gogo" and "Didi" lie on either side of his feet. Between them, a head stands at Pozzo's feet, which is the slave "Lucky" who drilled out from the bottom passage. The four of them are confined in a small space, forming a human "cross". In the climax of the work, one blood-stained knife after another is connected in series, forming a cruel and desperate line from the sky. The element of the "knife" is the personal style of Director Terzopoulos. He likes to add this element to his works. In this work, what he wants to express is the "plunder, violence, and blood" of human beings in war.

In the process of interviewing the main creative team, the author asked the actors about their understanding or feelings about the director's "rectangular installation". Paul, the performer of Pozzo, answered, "I think Director Terzopoulos wants to express an intention of "hell" with the cross after the installation is divided. He wants to use the cross to divide this desolate world and then find a balanced relationship." The performer of Lucky put forward, "This is also an interpretation of power relationship, and it also symbolizes people's repression and struggle in life, falling into a predicament. And Lucky finally breaks out of the "cross" and gets freedom." His answer confirmed the author's guess about "class relations", and also echoed another theme the author was thinking about, "predicament". Each era has its own unique predicaments, and how to explain the predicaments of the current era to the audience is one of the significances of cross-cultural drama adaptation.

2.3. Research on the Physical Adaptation of "Waiting for Godot"

Director Theodoros Terzopoulos is particularly attentive to physical training. The Attis Theatre that he established has a unique method of performance training called "The Method of Attis." [4] The actor who played the lucky role of "Waiting for Godot" acting team happen to be part of the "Terzopoulos" troupe, having been trained extensively in the "Method of

Attis." Therefore, during the performance, a monologue lasting several minutes left a unique impression on the audience. At that moment, he shattered the cross representing "predicament," stepped out from the rectangular set, and began his gibberish in a crazed yet poetic manner. In this process, his body erupted with immense energy, yet his movements were suppressed tremors, as if a great struggle was taking place within him. Simultaneously, he coordinated the three elements of "language, body, and emotion" with exaggerated breath control, propelling the play's scope and rhythm to a climax. In the original text, Beckett's description of this monologue is chaotically unintelligible. However, Terzopoulos used the actor's energetic and explosive physicality to almost perfectly convey the core expression of this passage from the original work. According to a subsequent survey of the audience, as many as 75% particularly favored this form of physical expression and were also able to feel the essence of the work through it.

After the performance, when asked whether they had undergone physical training, the actor playing the Lucky character responded, "Director Terzopoulos places special emphasis on the body's energy, spending a lot of time training physical energy. Throughout the training, he constantly asks us if there is anything suppressed within our minds, urging us to provoke the 'devil' inside our bodies. Before each performance, we would engage in forty minutes of physical training while fasting." The character Lucky's breakthrough from "predicament," liberating the repressed energy and emotions in his body, corresponds to the oppression stemming from various "predicaments" faced by people in the current era. Terzopoulos believes that, similar to Lucky in the play, people have too many issues suppressed within themselves, hence he hopes that we can vent them out and embrace "freedom."

3. Result

Therefore, in terms of form, Director Terzopoulos' adaptation respects the original author Beckett while boldly adding personal stylistic adaptations. While forming a strong personal style, it does not lose the "core" of the original work. Instead, it deepens this core, namely "human predicament", through various forms and details.

In terms of physical expression, Terzopoulos has applied the "Method of Attis" in training actors over an extended period. This enabled the actors to transcend the barrier of "language" on stage, using exquisite physical performance and their own powerful energy to interpret the essence of the original text. Moreover, by integrating with the contemporary era, they excellently realized cross-cultural communication, evoking strong shocks and resonances among the audience.

4. Discussion

Research on Audience Feedback for "Waiting for Godot" Wuzhen Theatre Festival Version of "Waiting for Godot" Audience Feedback Research Report: Introduction: This report aims to summarize and analyze the recent audience feedback research on the Wuzhen Theatre Festival version of "Waiting for Godot". The study surveyed the audience through the online questionnaire tool "Questionnaire Star" on various social media platforms, collecting opinions on aspects such as the evaluation of the work, its impact, and comparisons with the original text. A total of 120 audience responses were received. Method: The researchers conducted

an extensive survey across various social platforms by posting questionnaire links. The questionnaire included the following key questions: Are the audience familiar with "Waiting for Godot," Beckett, or the director Theodoros Terzopoulos? Do they like and why do they like the Terzopoulos version of "Waiting for Godot"? These questions aimed to understand the cultural background of the audience and their level of knowledge about this play and its director, as well as the impact and feedback the play has had on the audience level.

Conclusion: According to the information provided, the majority of the audience held a positive evaluation of the Wuzhen Theatre Festival version of "Waiting for Godot", believing that the play successfully presented the essence of the original while also incorporating the director's personal style. Particularly, the audience's appreciation for the unique geometric set design, the creation of atmosphere, and the strong physical control of the actors indicate the success and influence of the Terzopoulos version of "Waiting for Godot" among the audience.

For the future, the author suggests conducting a more detailed data analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the audience's specific feedback and feelings towards the Terzopoulos version of "Waiting for Godot". Furthermore, the success of this survey provides us with an effective method of evaluating the impact of theatrical works, which will help to better meet the expectations of the audience in future

productions.

5. Conclusion

In summary, when engaging in cross-cultural adaptations of drama, it is essential to pay attention to the "presentness" of the work, combining it with the contemporary zeitgeist. Additionally, the issues of cross-cultural "context" can be addressed from two perspectives: "form and physical expression". The most crucial aspect in the process of dramatic adaptation is to capture the "core essence" of the original work.

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