



Using The Narrative Embodiment to Create the Chinese and Thai Musical Theatre

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Abstract

Musicals in China and Thailand belong to the emerging industries in the 20th century. The narrative of musicals is the link of plot development and the main means of expressing characters' emotions and feelings. Studying the narrative embodiment of musicals is of great significance for deeply understanding the artistic characteristics and expression techniques of musicals and improving the level of musical creation and performance. The narrative of musical is the link of plot development, the main means of expressing characters' emotions and feelings, and the important basis for the audience to understand the plot. How to use the narrative of musical to create a successful musical work is the research goal of this paper. In this study, the narrative characteristics of musicals are taken as the starting point, and the China musical "Jinsha" and the Thai musical "Touching the Heart" are taken as the research objects to study the narrative characteristics of musicals, so as to obtain the necessary conditions for a successful musical. Through qualitative research and comparative study, this paper expounds the advantages and disadvantages of musicals in two countries, and expounds the narrative embodiment and important role of musicals from seven aspects: aria, accompaniment, story background, character emotion, dialogue, group dance and lighting. Through the research results, the necessary conditions for successful musical creation are excavated, and musical creation based on musical narrative is designed. According to the narrative embodiment of musical, the necessary conditions for musical creation based on musical narrative are designed. To draw a conclusion, we need to comprehensively consider creative ideas, script creation, music and dance arrangement, stage art design, rehearsal performance, marketing and audience feedback.

Keywords: Chinese musical theater, Thai musical theater, narrative embodiment, musical theater

Introduction

A good musical works, good drama expression is essential, and the narrative of music and dance is the key factor, among which music is the most important. The narrative of music can well show the development of the story and can well render the changes of the characters' emotions. The narrative of musical is one of its core elements, which tells a complete story through various artistic forms such as music, dance, dialogue and songs.



Studying the narrative of musical theaters is of great significance for deeply understanding the artistic characteristics and expression techniques of musical theaters and improving the level of musical creation and performance. Through the narrative research of musical, the creator can explore the theme, plot and role relationship of the story more deeply, so as to create more rich, vivid and interesting musical works. (Xiwei, L. 1983)

Research Objective

To analyze using The Narrative Embodiment to Create the Chinese and Thai Musical Theatre

Literature Review and Concepts

Li Xiwei was the first to suggest that "music can be narrated" in China. In 1983, he published an article in *Music Art: How does music describe lyrics and narratives?* (Xiwei, L. 1983). Three types of music are used to prove evidence, namely, music can be narrated through three techniques: sound simulation, form and dynamic analogy, and semantic symbol. Later, many scholars began to pay more and more intensive attention to music narrative, even film music narrative, novel music narrative, and symphony music narrative, such as (Xiao, L. 2008) states that the core motivation in the musical narrative works structure force to Yang Liqing symphony narrative, song's title is '*Wu Jiang Yuan*,' as an example. (Xuqing, W. 2009) *The Theme Development and Its Musical Narrative*. (Pinjing, F. 2009) *Music Narrative of Chinese Contemporary Novels* by Fu Pinjing. (Lin, Z. 2011) *Film music has narrative ability*.

Among (Xuqing, W. 2010) journal article "The Historical Trace of Music Narratives" and his book. (Xuqing, W. 2013) *The Art of Speech: An Introduction to Musical Narrative Theory*, he has systematically sorted out the historical context of the development of music narrative science. It elaborated on the development source and research methodology of musical narrative.

It has laid the foundation for the development of "musical narrative science." Through the efforts of our predecessors, the first periodical article to study the narrative of opera is (Liu Rong's 2009) "Exploring Yuan Ye of Drama in Music—Musical Interpretation of Opera." In this paper, the author of the work on drama structure and music's narrative function explores the implications of the opera works. Later, more articles about musical theater or operatic narratives appear in dissertations. For example, one article is (Yige, Z. 2021) "Musical Narrative Research of the Fiddler on the Roof." (Wenxu, Z. 2018), "Musical Narrical Structure"; (Tian, Z. 2018), "The Narrative Study of Romeo and Juliet"; (Ye, C. 2019), "Narrative Study of Boris Godunov in Opera"; *The Nationalities* by (Xiaochang, L. 2015), *Opera <Mulan Poem> Music Narrative and Its Social Value Research*, etc. These articles contribute to musical and opera narrative analysis, thereby broadening the research scope of narrative studies.

Each of us has a different understanding of narrative, but in the musical, it is not difficult to find obvious narrative music, characterization, story background, etc. It can



effectively make deductions and help viewers more clearly understand the development of things and express narrative deduction to bring viewers direct feelings and indirect feelings to make a narrative musical towards success.

Research Methodology

This paper focuses on the time range of modern musical theaters. In the 20th century, Chinese and Thai musical theaters began to flourish, and now the narrative embodiment is gradually obvious. Narrative research needs to read a lot of relevant literature but also go deep into the works themselves to find the answers. In this paper, the Chinese musical Jinsha and the Thai musical Touching the Heart are selected as the research objects. Through qualitative research and comparative research, using aesthetic theory and narrative principle, etc., they are analyzed and compared in seven aspects: aria, accompaniment, story background, characters' emotions, dialogue, body language and group dance, costumes, and lighting. In addition, the author collected data through in-depth interviews with relevant individuals, including the dean and vice president of the School of Music of Nanchang Hangkong University in China and a Thai professor. The narrative research utilizes the data gathered from the interviews. By comparing the research results, the method of creating a musical is analyzed, and then the final result is discussed and tested.

Research results

Musical theatre, a comprehensive art form that combines singing, dancing, drama performance, and stage art, attracts the attention of countless audiences with its unique narrative style. It tells a story and constructs a world full of emotion and imagination through the close combination of various artistic elements. Its narrative is not only reflected in the unfolding and climax of the story but also deeply rooted in the seven core elements of aria, accompaniment, character emotion, character dialogue, group dance body language, lighting, and clothing. According to the above research and analysis, we redefine the significance and function of the seven core elements of musical narrative.

1. Singing: A promoter of emotional bonds and storytelling. Singing is one of the most expressive elements in the musical, and it is not only a direct expression of the characters' inner feelings, but also a key force to promote the development of the plot. The singing paragraph can deeply reveal the characters' psychological state and convey their complex and delicate emotions through the ups and downs of the melody and the profound meaning of the lyrics. At the same time, the singing section is also the emotional link between the audience and the characters, so that the audience can feel the joys and sorrows of the characters in the song, and then put them into the plot. In the narrative, the singing section often serves as the emotional climax, reveals the central theme, deepens the conflict, and acts as a key force driving the plot's development.

2. Accompaniment: Atmosphere construction and emotional foil. Accompaniment plays a vital role in musical theater. It not only provides the musical background for the singing section, but also renders a different emotional atmosphere through the changes of the



rhythm, timbre, and volume of the music. Whether it is a joyful celebration, a sad parting, or a tense conflict, the accompaniment can guide the audience's emotions with its unique charm. Through different combinations of instruments and rhythm changes, the accompaniment can create various emotional atmospheres and make the audience more immersed in the plot.

3. Story background: The beginning and framework of the story. The story background is the time-space framework and historical environment of the story told by the musical, which provides the necessary bedding and basis for the development of the plot and helps the audience discern the actions and motivation of the characters. A clear story background can make the audience better integrate into the plot and resonate with the characters, thus promoting the development of the story and revealing the ending of the story.

4. Character emotion: The soul and core of the plot. Character emotion is the soul of the musical narrative. Through the superb performance of the actors, the inner world of the characters is vividly displayed. Their emotions—love, hate, and hatred—not only promoted the plot, but also touched the hearts of the audience. The audience finds resonance in the emotional fluctuations of the characters and then pays more attention to the direction of the plot and their fate.

5. Character dialogue: It advances the plot and reveals key elements. Character dialogue is one of the indispensable elements in the musical. Through the communication of language, it reveals the characters' personality characteristics, values, and the relationship between each other. The dialogue not only promotes the development of the story but also makes the characters more vivid and three-dimensional. Through the dialogue, the audience can have a clearer understanding of the plot and the relationships and conflicts between the characters.

6. Body language and group dance: Visual narrative and emotional expression. The body language of group dance is an important part of the musical visual narrative. Through careful arrangement and design, the body movements can vividly show the characters' emotional changes, psychological state, and key plots in the plot. The group dance, with its grand scenes and uniform movements, creates a strong visual impact so that the audience can appreciate the beauty of the dance and, at the same time, also feel the tension and shock of the plot, which deeply conveys the deep meaning of the plot and the inner world of the characters.

7. Lighting and Clothing: Atmosphere strengthening and emotional guidance, and the shaping of characters and the reflection of the times. Lighting plays an important role in musical theater. Through the change of light and shade, color collocation, and projection of light beams, it can create a different sense of space, time, and emotional atmosphere, but also guide the audience's line of sight focus and emotional direction and enhance the sense of hierarchy and three-dimensional sense of the stage so that the audience is more involved in the plot. The backdrop of light significantly enhances the narrative impact of the musical.

Clothing is one of the indispensable visual elements in musical theaters. It not only provides a unique appearance image for the character but also reflects the identity status, character characteristics, and time background of the character through the choice of the



design, texture, color, and other aspects of the clothing. The clever use of costumes not only makes the character image more vivid but also provides strong support and background explanation for the expansion of the plot.

To sum up, the seven aspects of singing, accompaniment, story background, character emotion, character dialogue, group dance body language, lighting, and costumes together constitute a multi-dimensional system of musical narrative. They interweave and support each other, jointly presenting a vivid and touching musical feast for the audience.

Research Discussion

Based on the analysis presented above, we have examined the similarities and differences between the Chinese musical "Jinsha" and the Thai musical "Love to Touch the Heart" regarding their narrative embodiment in musical theater, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 1 Similarities and differences in narrative embodiment

Similarities and differences in narrative embodiment		
Elements of musical narrative	Jinsha	Love Touches the Heart
Singing	"One Day" and "Beyond the Horizon" Analysis: In the Chinese musical 'Jinsha', all the songs serve the whole musical, and the creation of each song is based on the plot needs of the musical. The narrative of the aria is more obvious, and the cohesion is stronger.	"Just close your eyes" and "Love touches your heart" Analysis: In the Thai musical 'Love Touches the Heart', some songs are created according to the development of the story, and some songs are already created. Using the ready-made song "Just Close Your Eyes" is in line with the material the musical wants and reduces the cost.
Accompaniment	The cost of audio equipment is high, and the atmosphere is strong.	The basic contrast atmosphere can be satisfied.
Story background	Both ancient and modern viewpoints inform the story, which has a depressing conclusion and innovative themes.	Choosing a star perspective adds to the public's curiosity and a perfect ending.
Character emotion	The characters' emotions become stronger with the development of the plot.	The characters' emotions become stronger with the development of the plot.
Character dialogue	The characters have few	There are many dialogues among



	dialogues, which leads to the development of the plot and makes the audience unclear.	the characters, which promote the development of the plot and make the audience aware of it.
Body language and group dance	The atmosphere set off by the group dance is huge, and the sense of shock is strong.	Group dance plays a role in setting off the atmosphere and promoting the development of the plot.
Lighting and clothing	Gorgeous lighting makes the audience immersive, and the costumes are gorgeous, showing the timeline of the plot.	The lighting effects and clothing changes, which have a normal contrast atmosphere, vary according to the plot.

After analyzing the narrative of two successful musical theaters, research discussed how to create a successful musical. Designing a successful musical is a complicated and meticulous process, which involves creative conception, script creation, music and dance arrangement, stage art design, and many other aspects.

Table 2 Key points of musical design

Key points of musical design	
Music and dance arrangement	Music selection and creation Stage design and performance Dance Action and Emotional Expression
Stage layout and visual effects	Stage design Science and technology application Theme and emotional exploration
Story and plot construction	A compact and interesting story.
Stage design and technical application	Clothing and makeup design Target audience positioning
Publicity and marketing	Promotion channels and activities

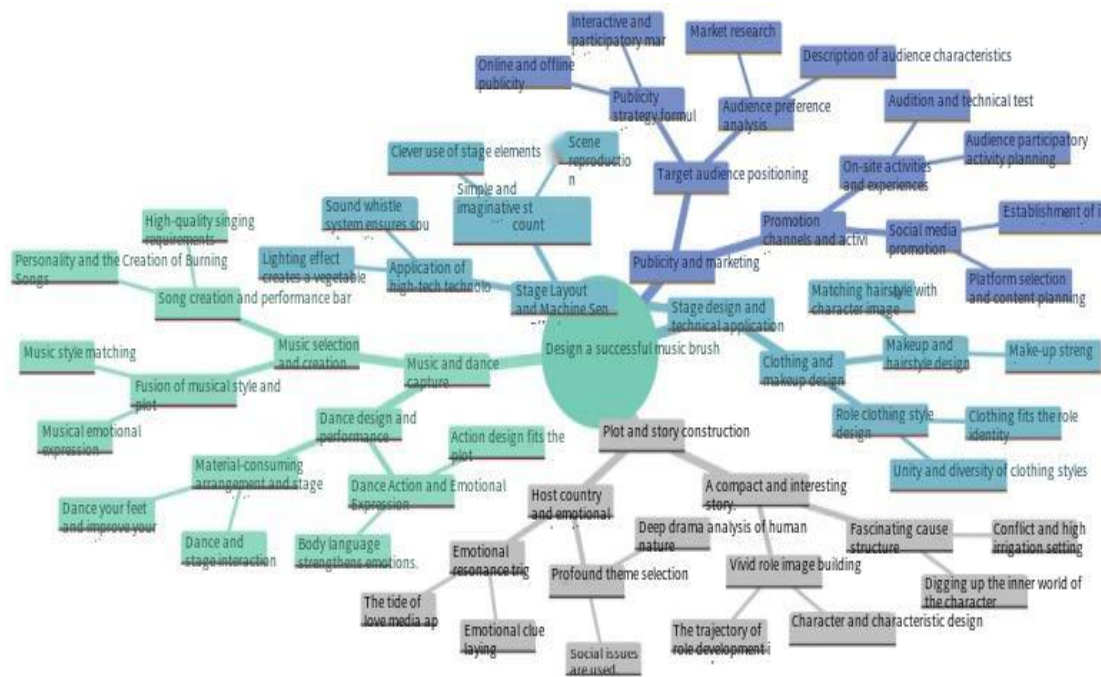


Figure 1: Designing for a successful of musical theatre,

Source: Bai, W. (2024)

Based on the professional knowledge of musical production, the analysis of successful cases, and the practical experience of related planning and performance, the diagram has high credibility and practicability. The graphic content covers plot construction, music and dance, stage design, promotion, and other aspects, which provides comprehensive and in-depth guidance for designing a successful musical. The following are specific measures.

1. Creative conception and theme selection. what is used here is the narrative embodiment of the story background, which is the basis of a musical, and it determines the development direction of the plot and the possibility of role-shaping. The creator should choose a fascinating and tense story background, which can attract the audience's interest and resonate. The story background can be based on historical events, literary works, real life, and other sources, but regardless of which background is chosen, it should be closely combined with the plot and logically reasonable.

1.1 Determine the theme and theme Select themes that possess a wide aesthetic base and closely align with the current political climate or fashion trends. The theme should be attractive, resonate with the audience, and conform to the mainstream ideology and the spirit of the times.

1.2 Identify the target audience. Understand the preferences and needs of the target audience and ensure that musical theaters can attract and meet their expectations.

1.3 Write a script: The script is the basis of a musical, which should include a fascinating story, vivid role-building, and intense conflict. The plot should be compact and logical and pay attention to emotional expression and human care at the same time.



2. Role-building. What is used here is the narrative embodiment of characters' emotions and dialogues. Character emotion is the core of a musical, which promotes the development of the plot through the inner world and emotional experience of the character. The creator should dig deep into the emotional level of the role so that the role has a distinct personality and a profound inner world. When expressing characters' emotions, we can combine aria, dialogue, dance, and other artistic forms to make the emotional expression more stereoscopic and vivid. At the same time, the creator should also pay attention to the emotional entanglements and conflicts between the characters to enhance the drama and tension of the plot. In musical theaters, character dialogue is a form of language art that reveals the plot and develops the characters through their spoken interactions. Creators should pay attention to the refinement and vividness of dialogue so that it cannot only convey the plot information but also show the character characteristics and emotional state of the role. Dialogue should complement aria and dance to jointly promote the development of the plot. Additionally, the creator should focus on both the rhythm and musicality of the dialogue to enhance its dramatic effect. The role should have a distinct personality and a profound inner world so that the audience can resonate. The relationship and interaction between characters should be rich and varied to promote the development of the plot.

3. Music and Dance Arrangement. What is needed here is the narrative embodiment of aria, accompaniment, and group dance body language.

3.1 Music creation: An aria is the soul of a musical, which expresses the emotion and inner world of a character through melody, lyrics, and voice. A successful aria needs to be closely connected with the plot, which can promote the development of the story and arouse the emotional resonance of the audience. Creators should pay attention to the beauty and diversity of melody and combine classical, pop, jazz, and other musical styles to make the aria both artistic and easy for the audience to accept. In addition, the lyrics in the aria should be poetic and deep, which can accurately convey the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Accompaniment is an important part of musical music, which provides rhythm and harmony support for aria and dance. Accompaniment music should fit in with the atmosphere of the plot and create a musical background suitable for its development. When choosing the accompaniment instrument and arrangement style, the creator should consider the background of the plot, regional characteristics, and the character characteristics of the role so that accompaniment becomes an organic part of the plot.

3.2 Dance arrangement: Group dance body language is a visual art in musical theaters, which shows the plot and shapes the atmosphere through group dance movements. The arrangement and innovation of dance movements should be carefully considered by the creators to ensure a close connection with the plot and role-building. Group dance can show the emotional state of the role, promote the development of the plot, and create a stage atmosphere suitable for the development of the plot. When arranging group dances, creators should also consider the diversity and hierarchy of dances to make the stage more colorful.



4. Stage Art Design. This section presents the narrative regarding lighting and clothing. Lighting and costumes are the elements of stage art in musical theaters, which provide visual support for plot and role-building.

4.1 Dance beauty design: Stage scenery, props, and devices should create an atmosphere and scene suitable for the development of the plot. Dance beauty design should pay attention to details and creativity and enhance the audience's sense of immersion and substitution.

4.2 Lighting design: Lighting is an important part of stage art, which can create different light and shadow effects and atmospheres. Lighting designers should choose lighting equipment and design lighting effects according to the plot atmosphere and role emotion, and lighting design should pay attention to the fit with the plot atmosphere so as to create a light and shadow effect suitable for the plot development.

4.3 Clothing design: Fashion design should be consistent with the character characteristics and background of the times. Clothing should pay attention to the collocation of color, material, and style, enhance the image characteristics of the role, and make the role image more vivid and three-dimensional.

5. Rehearsal and Performance

5.1 Actor selection and rehearsal: Select actors with excellent performance ability and artistic accomplishment. Pay attention to the rehearsal process for actors and ensure that they can accurately understand the role and fully display its charm.

5.2 Director and team cooperation: The director should have the overall concept and innovative thinking and be able to coordinate all creative departments. Team members should pay attention to communication and cooperation and jointly contribute to the success of the musical.

6. Marketing and Audience Feedback

6.1 Marketing: Formulate effective marketing strategies to improve the popularity and influence of musical theaters. Use social media, advertisements, brochures, and other channels for publicity and promotion.

6.2 Audience feedback: Focus on collecting feedback from the audience to continuously improve and perfect the musical. Audience feedback is one of the important criteria for evaluating the success of musical theaters.

To sum up, the design of a successful musical requires comprehensive consideration of creative conception, script creation, music and dance arrangement, stage art design, rehearsal and performance, marketing, and audience feedback. Through careful design and ingenious integration of aria, accompaniment, story background, character emotion, character dialogue, body language and group dance, lighting and costumes, careful planning and careful preparation, combined with the innovative thinking and cooperative spirit of the team, we can create fascinating and artistic musical works.



Conclusion

Musical theater, a comprehensive performance form that combines music, drama, dance, and visual arts, has become a bright pearl in the cultural field with its unique narrative technique and profound emotional expression since its birth. The narrative of musical, as one of its core elements, not only provides the audience with a rich aesthetic experience and leads the audience into a fantastic and colorful story world but also provides rich research materials and perspectives for the academic community, which has a far-reaching impact on literature, art criticism, cultural research, and other fields, providing a broad research space and profound ideological enlightenment for the academic community and providing a strong theoretical basis for musical creation in the future.

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