

## The Preservation and Literacy Transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera in Chongqing, China

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### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the preservation and literacy transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera in Chongqing, China. The study employed a qualitative research methodology, which entailed conducting interviews and making observations. The findings of the study are as follows: The preservation and literacy transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera carry great historical importance as it encapsulates the essence of courage, perseverance, and love for one's country during the era of China's anti-Japanese War. The Sichuan Opera is crucial in preserving traditional culture, portraying literary historical events, and emphasizing the achievements of women. Preserving and literacy of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera is crucial, despite obstacles such as an aging audience and budgetary restraints. Strategies encompass governmental assistance, educational initiatives, community involvement, and modernizing efforts. The objective of these endeavors is to guarantee the long-lasting significance of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera and its cultural heritage and literacy transmission, establishing a connection between the past and present for the benefit of future generations.

**Key words:** Preservation, Literacy, Transmission, Jiang Jie, Sichuan Opera

### INTRODUCTION

Sichuan Opera is a renowned regional opera that is performed in the Bashu region, as well as in Yunnan, Guizhou, and other areas. An opera performance group, consisting of opera practitioners, is the fundamental unit for a specific genre of opera. Hence, the number, caliber, and living conditions of Sichuan Opera performance troupes can serve as indicators of the preservation, propagation, and advancement of Sichuan Opera art. Within the Sichuan Opera performance group, the survival and growth of Sichuan Opera have been significantly influenced by several unique historical factors, resulting in a distinct trajectory (Nie, 2022; Minglun et al., 1986).

Sichuan Opera was officially included in the national intangible cultural heritage protection catalog on December 31, 2005. The occurrence of this event has presented both advantageous prospects and difficulties to the realm of Sichuan opera. As China's economic power continues to grow, the national ideology is becoming more enriched, and there is a constant improvement in spiritual and cultural development. As a result, folk music, which was in decline, is now making a comeback and heading towards a path of revitalization. In order to ensure its success and development, Sichuan Opera, one of the most influential local operas in Chongqing, must strive to make progress in literacy transmission in the face of competition (Ma, 2016; Yue & Seekhunlio, 2023).

Sichuan Opera is a valuable and significant part of Chinese opera. However, it has lost its prominence due to various factors. In order to prevent it from becoming a mere relic, it is necessary to safeguard its essence, form, and other aspects. This will help revitalize Sichuan Opera and address challenges such as aging, a lack of theoretical research, and political demands. Consequently, the preservation and literacy evolution of Sichuan Opera will prioritize addressing this awkward predicament through comprehensive theoretical exploration, practical implementation, and keeping up with contemporary trends while also fostering innovation. To determine the future development path of Sichuan Opera music, it is essential to have a thorough comprehension of its existing state (Liao, 2003).

Sichuan Opera was officially included in the national registry for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage on December 31, 2005. This event has presented both advantageous prospects and difficulties in the realm of Sichuan opera. China's growing economic power has led to a strengthening of the national ideology and continuous improvements in spiritual and cultural development. As a result, folk music, which was earlier declining, is currently undergoing a rebound and moving towards a path of revitalization. In order to guarantee the ongoing prosperity and expansion of Sichuan Opera, a profoundly influential regional opera in Chongqing, it is crucial to achieve progress in response to competitive forces. To gain a comprehensive comprehension of the artistic essence of Sichuan Opera, it is

imperative to scrutinize its musical composition and adopt Marx's perspective that consciousness molds form, and form exerts a dynamic impact on consciousness. Studying the intricate musical composition of Sichuan opera offers a valuable understanding of its fundamental nature as an artistic form. This comprehension enhances the acquisition, preservation and literacy transmission of Sichuan Opera as an artistic medium (Li, 2022).

This study will utilize Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera as a case study to investigate preservation and literacy transmission options for Sichuan Opera. Sichuan Opera Jiang Jie is a contemporary production of Sichuan Opera, developed and organized by the Chongqing Opera House. Since its debut in 2018, the performance has been staged more than 130 times across the country during a span of 5 years, attracting an audience of over 100,000 individuals (Du, 2022). Jiang Jie, a piece in the Sichuan Opera, is widely regarded as one of the most successful and often performed modern works in this genre. Therefore, it serves as a highly representative case study for this research.

In conclusion, the study describes the evolution of the Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera and its distinguishing features. It also investigates the present issues confronting the Sichuan Opera music form as well as the evolution of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera from the standpoint of cultural treasures and cultural legacy. The study seeks to find appropriate preservation and literacy transmission mechanisms for the Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera heritage, as well as to provide a more solid theoretical foundation and thorough practical recommendations.

### Research Question

- How are the preservation and transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera in Chongqing, China?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### General Knowledge about Chinese Music and Cultural Tradition

This section explores the extensive legacy of Chinese music culture, encompassing its beginnings, distinctive characteristics, historical development, and current impact. The evolution of Chinese music culture was significantly influenced by Confucianism, ceremonial customs, and regional variety, which evolved alongside the progress of civilization. It is imperative that we preserve and transmit this cultural heritage.

The fundamental attributes of Chinese music culture include the pentatonic scale, a wide range of musical instruments, complex compositions, poetic lyrics, meticulous instrument craftsmanship, and a significant focus on traditional music instruction. The historical development of Chinese music culture encompasses different periods, commencing with ancient ceremonial music and advancing through court music, traditional music, and modern popular music, with each age distinguished by unique styles. Preserving and transmitting this cultural legacy guarantees its uninterrupted existence (Hou & Seekhunlio 2023).

Chinese music culture has achieved worldwide prominence and exerted a significant impact in the contemporary period. It has influenced the development of modern music, preserved the core of the country's identity, obtained increased safeguards for its cultural legacy, made significant contributions to the tourism and culture sectors, and grown through artistic interactions and partnerships. The preservation and literacy transmission of Chinese music's cultural history symbolizes a vibrant and influential legacy that has significantly influenced both traditional and contemporary music, as well as international cultural interactions (Gao & Karin, 2023; Ye et al., 2023).

### General Knowledge about Chinese Drama

This section discusses the origin, evolution, and contemporary situation of Chinese drama, which encompasses opera and traditional drama. Prominent opera forms such as Peking Opera and Kunqu Opera are emphasized. Chinese play originated from ancient sacrifice practices, which gradually transformed into theatrical art. Drama gained popularity among the general populace during the Spring and Autumn Periods and the Warring States Period, and it subsequently developed and improved over time (Nie, 2022).

The evolution of Chinese drama has undergone various phases, one of which involved assimilating Western cultural aspects towards the end of the Qing Dynasty. During the Republic of China era, there was significant progress and the rise of novel opera genres and performing ensembles. Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Chinese drama witnessed an unparalleled expansion and received substantial backing from the government. Nevertheless, Chinese drama has encountered novel obstacles and prospects in recent years as a result of shifts in society and cultural variety (Chen, 2022).

A wide variety of various styles and themes are present in the contemporary Chinese drama scene. Traditional operas such as Peking Opera and Kunqu Opera maintain a robust artistic influence, while newer forms of opera, such as theater and opera, continue to develop and change. The advent of the Internet and new media has given rise to novel kinds of drama, such as online dramas and microfilms. In addition, avant-garde forms of play, such as multimedia drama and interactive drama, provide novel experiences for spectators (Xie, 2018).

### General Knowledge about the Characteristics of Sichuan Opera

Sichuan Opera has a long history, dating back to the Tang Dynasty and flourishing during the Song Dynasty. It gradually evolved into a new art form known today as "Sichuan Opera." During the Qing Dynasty, Sichuan Opera grew in popularity and became one of the most valued local operatic traditions (Gao, 2023; Jing, 2017).

Sichuan Opera's creative traits include a variety of singing techniques such as gaoqiang, Kunqu, huqin, playing, and lantern tones. Its performing arts promote authenticity, subtle expressions, and expressive depictions

of characters and emotions. To enhance the whole performance, stage art comprises costumes, props, lighting, and sound aspects. Sichuan Opera's opera art blends singing, reading, acting, playing, dancing, and other elements to offer fascinating stories and dynamic action sequences (Wang & Liu, 2023).

Sichuan Opera is unique for its creative qualities, which include plurality, creativity, national identity, and fusion. Pluralism is seen in the variety of musical forms and expressive strategies. Innovation fosters continual research and adaptation to modern components, ensuring their preservation and transfer. The opera proudly maintains strong national and local features in its numerous components. Furthermore, it smoothly incorporates elements from different opera forms and modern art, extending its repertory and adapting to evolving audience preferences while ensuring the preservation and transfer of this valued cultural institution (Zou, 2023; Sha et al., 2022).

### Research Theory

The theoretical framework of ethnomusicology was applied in this study, which focuses on Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera and its cultural setting. This interdisciplinary field investigates the complex relationship that exists between Jiang Jie's music and numerous areas of culture, society, history, politics, and economy. To acquire insights regarding Jiang Jie's role in the cultural heritage of Sichuan Opera and its broader societal relevance, ethnomusicologists use a variety of research methodologies, including field investigations, literary analysis, comparative studies, and historical research. This study not only advances musicology but also plays an important role in the preservation and literacy transmission of the cultural heritage linked with Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera. It is also used to explore how Jiang Jie's music is linked to various cultural contexts and socioeconomic components. Fieldwork, oral history, ethnography, and comparative analysis are used in this study to shed light on the cultural and social significance of Jiang Jie's contributions to Sichuan Opera while also supporting its preservation and transmission (Nettl, 2005; Wang, 2022).

## METHODOLOGY

The research approaches used in this study include a diverse approach to investigating the preservation and transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera in Chongqing, China. The following research methodologies were used:

### Field Research

The work relies heavily on field research. It entails personally visiting and immersing oneself in the cultural and artistic surroundings of the Sichuan Opera in Chongqing. Researchers undertake observations, obtain firsthand information, and document their results in order to gain a thorough grasp of the current situation of Jiang Jie preservation and transmission.

### Interviews

Interviews are an essential component of the research approach. Researchers consult with key stakeholders such as Sichuan Opera performers, directors, teachers, and cultural specialists. These interviews provide unique insights into the issues, tactics, and initiatives related to the preservation and literacy transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera.

### Questionnaires

Questionnaires could be distributed to a larger sample of people involved in or knowledgeable about Sichuan Opera. These organized surveys enable the collection of quantitative data and opinions on the issue, supplementing the qualitative insights gathered via interviews and field research.

### Literature Review

A complete review of available literature, academic studies, historical documents, and cultural references relating to Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera is conducted. This secondary research aids in understanding the historical context and progression of Jiang Jie's presence in Sichuan Opera.

### Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis entails comparing the preservation and transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera to other types of traditional Chinese opera or related cultural practices. This technique aids in identifying unique difficulties and opportunities related to Sichuan Opera.

### Historical Research

It is critical to investigate the historical development of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera. Researchers use historical records, archives, and cultural artifacts to trace the evolution of this art form over time.

### Expert Consultation

Collaborating with specialists and researchers specializing in Sichuan Opera and Chinese music culture gives depth and credibility to the research. Their contribution adds valuable views and validates findings.

Using this multifaceted research technique, this study attempts to provide a full and nuanced explanation of how Jiang Jie is kept and literacy transmitted with Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera in Chongqing, China.

## RESULTS

### The Significance of Preserving and Literacy Transmitting Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera

The historical significance of maintaining and passing down Sichuan Opera, which depicts the life of Jiang Jie, a hero of China's anti-Japanese War era, is significant. Jiang Jie, an early Communist Party leader, was an underground party

traffic officer and the women's working committee secretary during the Anti-Japanese War. Her role in the drama exemplifies the spirit of bravery, tenacity, and unflinching dedication to the revolutionary cause, especially in the face of enemy threats and persecution. Her ultimate sacrifice for the liberty of the Chinese people serves as a striking reminder of the Anti-Japanese War period. The Anti-Japanese War spirit, as embodied by Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera, continues to inspire and serve as an example of the Hongyan spirit, despite the fact that contemporary culture may not actively promote such subjects in literary and creative works. The narrative of the play is based on true historical events, notably the heroic efforts of women like Jiang Jie during the Anti-Japanese War. Sichuan Opera Jiang Jie guarantees that these critical events are never lost by conserving this historical narrative through character development and plot building, promoting greater knowledge and remembering of history (Figure 1).

Sichuan Opera, being a venerable genre of Chinese opera, fulfills the role of safeguarding, disseminating, and advancing traditional culture and Bashu culture through the incorporation of Jiang Jie's narratives in its artistic expressions. This undertaking actively contributes to the conservation and dissemination of traditional culture, allowing a broader audience to acquire comprehension and admiration for the essence of traditional Chinese opera. The production adeptly depicts the living conditions, life experiences, and prevailing ethos of the people in Chongqing during the Anti-Japanese War, thereby generating an authentic depiction inside the play. The opera effectively portrays the history of Chongqing and its folk culture, guaranteeing the preservation and literacy transmission of these cultural aspects. The powerful percussion-driven musical style and dynamic drum beats support the performance, which successfully conveys the passionate and straightforward nature of Chongqing's citizens (Figure 2).

Sichuan Opera highlights the courage and tenacity of women throughout the War of Resistance by presenting the character of Jiang Jie. This creative activity is crucial in fostering the preservation and transmission of a revised



**Figure 1.** The embodiment of the spirit of the Anti-Japanese War in Jiang Jie  
Source: Huan Li

understanding of women's historical and present responsibilities, highlighting their substantial contributions to the development of nations and societies. Before the emergence of "Jiang Jie," the literary landscape mostly revolved around a single notable character, Hua Mulan, who assumed a male identity during the Southern and Northern Dynasties in ancient China, more than a millennium ago. The portrayal of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera serves as a connection between the past and present. The ongoing appeal of the image of Jiang Jie as a heroine in China strongly connects with the people, symbolizing the advancements made in raising the status of women and acknowledging their essential contributions to the country's cultural legacy and social growth (Figure 3).

The depiction of Jiang Jie as an unshakeable patriot, profoundly dedicated to her motherland, has a lasting impact on the viewer. Her unwavering dedication to her country and its citizens, despite constant threats and persecution from the adversary, exemplifies patriotism. By actively participating in the performance, individuals gain a more profound comprehension of the importance of patriotism and are motivated to adopt both a strong sense of national pride and a



**Figure 2.** Jiang Jie performance  
Source: Huan Li



**Figure 3.** Jiang Jie is a typical heroine  
Source: Huan Li

feeling of obligation. Jiang Jie's selfless act of sacrificing for communism and the newly established People's Republic of China highlights the fundamental nature of patriotism. Understanding the arduous battle for New China is an essential lesson in patriotism, as it helps preserve and pass on this significant part of the nation's past, especially in a society that frequently prioritizes consumerism.

"Jiang Jie" is the most commonly performed Sichuan Opera performance in China, which contributes to the social and historical significance of Sichuan Opera. The continuous popularity of Sichuan Opera greatly contributes to its continued relevance in contemporary culture, assuring its lasting presence in the realm of Chinese opera. The declining significance of any type of intangible cultural resource should be seen as a worrisome indication. The preservation and literacy transmission of "Jiang Jie" is of utmost importance for the larger preservation of Sichuan Opera in the contemporary world, as it acts as a protection for this art form. The opera "Jiang Jie" from Sichuan Opera goes beyond just a basic form of entertainment. It serves as a significant piece that embodies the spirit of the anti-Japanese War and the Hongyan spirit. Additionally, it plays a crucial role in maintaining traditional culture and promoting patriotic education. Furthermore, it strengthens the social and historical importance of Sichuan Opera, with profound consequences for the preservation and literacy transmission of this valuable cultural legacy.

### **Challenges in Preserving and Literacy Transmitting Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera**

The conventional style of Sichuan Opera has resulted in a primarily older audience, with less appeal to younger generations. Consequently, the demand for Sichuan Opera Jiang Jie is decreasing, which presents a difficulty in safeguarding traditional culture. Survey findings reveal that a small proportion of young individuals have had the opportunity to witness Sichuan Opera, but the majority of the spectators are comprised of older individuals. The younger generations are becoming more apathetic towards investing their time in watching Sichuan Opera. The waning enthusiasm among the youth is causing apprehension over future audience engagement with this creative form.

The diminishing demand for Sichuan Opera Jiang Jie has resulted in fewer possibilities for performances and a depletion of skilled actors. Insufficient financial support has impeded the upkeep and updating of performance venues and equipment, hence impacting the overall quality of performances. Although "Jiang Jie" maintains a higher frequency of performances compared to other plays, it heavily depends on government assistance, mostly aimed at fulfilling political objectives. In order to maintain a strong and sustained performance market, it is essential to build a resilient market mechanism that promotes the preservation and literacy transmission of "Jiang Jie."

Sichuan Opera Jiang Jie predominantly depends on conventional components in its performances, lacking originality and the integration of contemporary features. The lack of complexity in the performing style poses a difficulty in

appealing to younger demographics. While there exists a genre of contemporary Sichuan Opera, exemplified by Jiang Jie, these adaptations often center around narratives from the era of the Republic of China and do not completely embrace the concept of modernity. Sichuan Opera provides a higher degree of adaptability for experimentation and improvement in comparison to other kinds of opera. This advantage may be utilized to appeal to a wider range of spectators.

The market's declining revenue and a lack of financial support make it difficult to effectively conserve and protect Sichuan Opera Jiang Jie. Although there has been a certain level of support in terms of policy and finances for Sichuan Opera, it is still inadequate and not viable in the long term. Allocating specific financial resources to promote Sichuan Opera will significantly bolster efforts to preserve and transmit Jiang Jie's cultural heritage.

### **Preservation and Literacy Transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera**

The preservation and literacy transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera, which portrays the life of Jiang Jie, a prominent figure during China's anti-Japanese War period, carries immense historical importance. Jiang Jie's depiction epitomizes the essence of the anti-Japanese War, advocating for patriotism, traditional culture, and the historical significance of women. The ongoing impact of these issues is best conveyed through the Sichuan Opera. Government assistance in the form of specifically designed policies for the preservation and transmission of Jiang Jie in the Sichuan Opera is essential. These policies should encompass safeguards, economic assistance, and state-sponsored endeavors, such as exhibitions and educational activities. Promoting community engagement enhances endeavors to protect this enduring cultural and artistic gem for future progenies.

In order to properly preserve and disseminate Sichuan Opera, a range of education and training initiatives are needed. These measures encompass the integration of Sichuan Opera into the educational curriculum, the establishment of dedicated training institutions, and the recruitment of seasoned performers to impart traditional expertise. Students have the chance to engage in and observe Sichuan Opera, augmenting their hands-on experience and literacy comprehension. Furthermore, it is to utilize Sichuan Opera Skills Inheritance workshops, digital educational materials, and interactive online platforms to enhance the process of learning and communication. By providing support to Sichuan Opera clubs, contests, and mentorship programs, we may enhance student participation. The objective of these endeavors is to foster a fresh cohort of Sichuan Opera performers and guarantee the ongoing preservation and literacy advancement of this conventional artistic expression.

The strategy for safeguarding and conveying the traditional expertise of Sichuan Opera entails aggressively engaging esteemed Sichuan Opera performers and instructors in mentoring aspiring new pupils. It includes providing rewards, establishing a favorable learning environment, and coordinating frequent enrichment activities. A monitoring method is built to assess progress and efficacy. This strategy prioritizes

cooperation among government, cultural organizations, and schools to guarantee the ongoing preservation and literacy transmission of Sichuan Opera's traditional expertise.

The preservation and transmission of Sichuan Opera, namely through performance and program design, necessitates meticulous curation and reenactment of traditional repertoire, the involvement of skilled professionals, the incorporation of innovative elements, and the integration of contemporary themes to appeal to a wide range of audiences. The organization seeks to expand its influence through regular performance tours, providing assistance to rural communities, and enhancing venue facilities. The global promotion of Sichuan Opera is facilitated by international cultural exchanges and cooperation. Facilitating chances for aspiring performers and coordinating contests and festivals serve to enhance creativity. These endeavors guarantee the preservation and literacy transmission of Sichuan Opera, protecting its abundant cultural legacy while accommodating modern audiences and requirements.

Community participation is crucial for the preservation and literacy transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera. This entails disseminating Sichuan Opera to diverse populations via live performances, establishing educational institutions and workshops to impart the art, and fostering the development of community troupes. In addition, cultural centers are constructed with the purpose of exhibiting the historical and cultural aspects of Sichuan Opera. Educational initiatives and partnerships with community groups are also undertaken to enhance public knowledge and garner support for the preservation of this art form. Documentaries are produced with the purpose of documenting the participation of the community in Sichuan Opera, ensuring the preservation and continuation of its history.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The discussion and conclusion section delves into the key findings and their implications regarding the preservation and literacy transmission of Sichuan Opera, particularly in the context of Jiang Jie's role within it. The continued popularity of "Jiang Jie" in Sichuan Opera demonstrates its critical role in the preservation and revitalization of this classic art form. This preservation effort is in line with Chenchen Du's (2022) views, which emphasize the merging of Sichuan Opera's legacy with modern influences such as pop music. China must prioritize cultural communication as a method of maintaining and spreading its rich cultural past, supporting the rebirth of Chinese traditional culture and increasing the international influence of national cultural development plans. Furthermore, in accordance with Hou Lu's (2013) research in "Analysis of the Development of Sichuan Opera in Chongqing," which underlines the obstacles that Chongqing opera has encountered since 1983, it is critical to acknowledge Sichuan Opera as an important aspect of Chongqing's intangible cultural heritage resources. Efforts should be made to pass it down and promote it.

The strengthening of the discourse system within traditional Sichuan Opera music culture remains critical to the revitalization of Sichuan Opera music. This method not only

assures Sichuan Opera's continuous profitability by appealing to audiences both locally and abroad, but it also secures the opera's enduring relevance in contemporary society. Guoyan Wang's (2021) examination of Sichuan Opera's accompaniment band, as mentioned in "Contemporary Chongqing Sichuan Opera Art under the Sense of Fine Works," emphasizes the importance of the accompaniment band in Sichuan Opera's legacy. The accompanying band, with its relevance, appropriateness, and adaptability, continues to play an important role in the preservation of Sichuan Opera. Its job goes beyond only providing musical accompaniment; it also influences performers' voices and emotional emotions, adding to the entire narrative framework. Furthermore, Zhang Yu's (2021) insights on the aesthetic aspects of drama music and appraisal techniques underline the distinction of drama music as a separate kind of art that combines the essence of theater and music. This requires more investigation and appreciation. Strengthening understanding of theater culture, participating in attentive emotional appreciation, and exploring novel viewpoints in appreciation are all methods of enjoying drama music aesthetics.

In conclusion, the preservation and literacy transmission of Jiang Jie in Sichuan Opera is imperative for conserving the historical value and cultural legacy of this artistic tradition. The challenges encompass an increasingly elderly population, diminishing demand, budgetary limitations, and a dearth of innovation. Government assistance, education and training efforts, community participation, and strategic planning are crucial in tackling these difficulties. The objective of these endeavors is to guarantee the continuation of Jiang Jie's literacy in Sichuan Opera, which serves as a source of inspiration and enlightenment for spectators. This artistic form serves as a link of literacy transmission between the past and present while simultaneously safeguarding China's abundant cultural heritage.

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