

Development Path of Rural Folk Opera in China

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Abstract. Rural folk opera troupe is a group of opera performances composed of villagers with common interests. Rural folk troupe is an important force for prosperity of rural culture which is strongly encouraged by the government. Lack of talents, excellent plays and funds are the biggest difficulties for the development of rural folk troupes. In order to develop continuously, rural folk troupes must determine their own characteristics, choose proper development direction and coordinate social and economic benefits. To promote development of rural folk troupes, the internal management and good external environment are necessary.

Introduction

Singing opera is a traditional form for rural residents to enjoy culture in China which used to be a unique view of the village. But with the popularity of television, Internet and mobile phones, this phenomenon is becoming less and less common in villages. In recent years, with the prosperity of cultural undertakings, the development of cultural industry and tourism industry in rural areas, the charm and value of opera will be found and loved by more and more people with promotion of local governments. Rural folk troupes also keep emerging and developing.

1 Development of Rural Folk Opera Troupes

With the support of government policies and funds at all levels, many rural folk troupes are active in villages and towns. This brings rich and colorful drama works to villagers and townspeople. When the villagers' cultural needs are met, troupe also receives corresponding economic returns. The professional level is low, the program quality is not fine enough and the market operation ability is insufficient of rural folk troupes. Therefore survival and development of rural folk troupes are also facing many difficulties.

1.1 Basic Situation of Rural Folk Opera Troupes

1.1.1 The basic purpose of establishment of rural folk troupe. Rural folk troupes are mostly spontaneously organized by people with same interests in villages and towns. The troupe usually entertains itself or participates in public welfare performances and also conducts business performances in villages. On the whole, rural folk troupes can be divided into several categories[1]. One is registered in local civil affairs department, they as a non-profit organization to carry out activities or participate in public welfare performance. Another kind of theatre troupe is registered with the local industrial and commercial administration department, which carries out market-oriented performances as enterprises. There is also a group of theatre troupes which are not registered, they are purely self-entertaining and participate in public welfare performances. The troupe comes from village, its performance content is very close to villagers. It is main force of various literary and artistic activities in countryside and has won wide recognition from all walks of life in countryside.

1.1.2 Rural folk troupes rely on themselves for operating expenses. The fund of troupe comes from fund raising of members, donation of society, sponsorship of enterprises and support of government. These expenses are used for the purchase of costumes, props and sound equipment, as well as for rehearsals and actors' remuneration. Some of larger troupes are solely owned by individuals who bear costs of construction and operation of troupes. They mainly perform for business purposes and part of their income is distributed to performers according to their work, while rest is owned by the owners of the troupe[2, 3].

1.2 Problems in Rural Folk Troupes

1.2.1 Lack of talent is the primary dilemma in development of rural folk troupes. Many folk troupes are short of not only actors but also talent in choreography, performance, make-up and sound. Some small-scale theatre companies can only undertake a number of tasks by one person. Most rural folk troupes adopt a non-fixed salary system, so staff turnover is frequent except for head of troupe and a few backbones are fixed. This is not conducive to training of talents and sustainable development of theatre troupes.

1.2.2 Lack of excellent plays restricts influence of rural folk troupes. Because of shortage of creative talents and excellent performers creative ability of troupe is limited. They can only rehearse traditional old plays and cannot provide audience with new works. This is more obvious in smaller troupes. In order to survive, some folk troupes can only repeat old plays or perform some low-level and vulgar plays to cater entertainment of some people. This practice not only reduces artistic level of troupe, but also makes it unable to grow or even disband.

1.2.3 Lack of funds has plagued operation and growth of troupe. Most of rural folk troupes are formed spontaneously out of their interests and hobbies. The troupe depends on self-financing and it also receives government subsidies or corporate subsidies. The theatre troupes which depend on revenue of commercial performances are usually larger and more successful ones. There are fewer such troupes. Because there is no fixed source of funding, the equipment renewal, repertoire creation and performance promotion of troupe can not be guaranteed. Even if barely maintained, it is difficult to achieve sustainable development[4].

2 Orientation of Development of Rural Folk Opera Troupes

With the development of cultural undertakings and industries in rural areas, rural folk troupes are becoming an important force to prosper rural culture, promote excellent culture, protect and inherit classical operas. It is difficult to ensure sustainable development of troupe by relying solely on government's support although local government has introduced various measures to support. If the troupe wants to develop and grow, it must seize the opportunity and choose the right development path to meet the needs of countryside.

2.1 Highlight Their Own Characteristics with Works and Performances

The performance conditions of rural folk troupes can't be compared with professional troupes and there is a certain gap in level and ability of performers. The troupe must determine characteristics of troupe according to local conditions. In order to have a place in market, the troupe must determine its own characteristics based on specialties of actors. Regardless of characteristics chosen, troupe should adhere to basic principle which is to meet cultural needs of rural residents. The troupe should inherit excellent culture and disseminate correct values. The performances should be understood by the masses. After watching performance audience gets pleasure and education.

2.2 Choosing Appropriate Development Direction

Different types of troupes choose their own development direction. Troupes with good foundation, large scale and high professional level can take the road of market-oriented development. Such troupes can operate in the form of enterprises and actively attract foreign capital to further consolidate the foundation of development. The theatre troupe gives full play to its advantages from the masses to vigorously carry out business performances. At the same time, it should also actively participate in public welfare performances in villages and towns which can establish a good image of the troupe. Rural folk troupes with small scale, limited strength and low professional level participate in various public welfare performances to win support of government and social groups in addition to self-entertainment[5].

2.3 Coordinate Social and Economic Benefits

The development of rural folk troupes should coordinate the pursuit of social and economic benefits. In the pursuit of social benefits, rural troupes should actively participate in public welfare performances organized by civil society organizations and governments. Perform in fields and courtyards of village, let villagers see a variety of drama forms and programs, let rural residents enjoy charm of drama art. In the pursuit of economic benefits, appropriate commercial performance activities are carried out according to actual situation of troupe, based on the market demand of the countryside. All kinds of activities, festivals and scenic spots in village are good platforms for commercial

performances of troupe. Public welfare performance can meet cultural needs of masses, also help to expand popularity of troupe and lay foundation for commercial performance. Commercial performance can obtain economic benefits, at the same time, it can improve professional level of troupe and lay foundation for sustainable development of troupe.

3 Development Measures of Rural Folk Troupes

The folk troupes which come from countryside are an important force in development of rural cultural undertakings and cultural industries. It needs guidance and support of government, as well as participation of professionals who have ability, love countryside and love drama. The good conditions have been created for development of rural folk troupes with the joint efforts of government, social forces and troupes.

3.1 Measures from Rural Folk Troupes

3.1.1 Create and perform around the needs of the villagers. Good works of art should put social benefits in the first place, but also should be the unity of social benefits and economic benefits. Rural folk troupes are established to meet the cultural needs of rural residents. To develop continuously, it is necessary to have a deep understanding of what kind of opera villagers like and what kind of performances they like. Show inner value and spirit of opera to villagers, let villagers experience charm of drama. For creation of works, troupe needs to actively explore and sort out traditional repertoire so that the connotation and value of traditional drama can shine brilliance of times through innovative rehearsal. In addition, troupe should actively create new plays that reflect villagers' thoughts, feelings and real life keep up with pace of the times. For performance, actors should not only show traditional skills of drama, but also increase interest and conform to villagers' appreciation habits. For example, some short plays can be performed, and villagers can be encouraged to improvise and participate in exchanges.

3.1.2 Improve actors' professional ability through various channels. The professional nature of opera performance is very strong so the development of rural folk troupes which can't be separated from continuous improvement of their professional level. It's a good way to invite excellent actors from professional troupes and teachers from professional opera schools to coach actors. It is also a good channel to improve level of actors with help of relevant departments of local governments and cultural centers. In addition, actors can participate in all kinds of opera competitions and various kinds of exchange performances to improve their professional skills. The troupe cooperates with other local art teams to learn from each other in performance, choreography, instrumental music, makeup and other aspects, so as to improve professional skills of troupe.

3.1.3 Actively strive for all kinds of funds. The performances of rural folk troupes have strong regional and unique characteristics. The audiences are mainly local rural residents and tourists who are interested in rural drama performances. The troupe plays an important role in prosperity of rural public cultural undertakings. Local government will give corresponding subsidies for this. The government will reward the troupe for its participation in cultural services and public welfare performances. Undertaking suitable commercial performances is also an effective way for rural folk troupes to obtain development funds.

3.1.4 Adopt scientific management methods to enhance the cohesion of troupe. Most of the members of rural folk troupes come from countryside, which is a relatively loose team. For management of employees, the mode of changing employees into partners is adopted to let employees participate in operation and management of troupe. This can realize self-management and self-education of staff and form a united development situation. In addition, the implementation of special incentive policies for excellent staff is conducive to cultivation of excellent talents.

3.2 Measures to Improve External Conditions for Development of Rural Folk Troupes

3.2.1 Improve policy to provide guarantee for development of troupe. The government should issue corresponding incentive policies and give corresponding policy support and rewards to qualified troupes if they participate in public welfare activities or competitions. Integrating performances of folk troupes into public cultural services purchased by government. This not only conforms to direction of carrying forward the traditional culture, but also provides financial support for folk troupes.

3.2.2 Government should strengthen support and supervision. Relevant government departments should actively

help rural folk troupes to solve their practical difficulties in development in program rehearsal, performance skills, troupe construction, etc. Promote exchange and cooperation between folk troupes and other excellent troupes. Relevant government departments should strengthen supervision of rural folk troupes to regulate their behavior and guide their healthy development.

3.2.3 Experts in industry provide help for development of folk troupes. Experts, old artists, excellent actors and excellent troupe managers in industry provide guidance for development of rural folk troupes or cooperate with them which can promote rapid development of rural folk troupes. Experts can write scripts for them and give performance guidance to actors according to abilities and characteristics of actors in rural folk troupes. In addition, all kinds of experts can also help folk troupes in market development, public service, team management and other aspects.

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