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## Zhenfang Zhao's Widow Xianglin [xianglin sao] and New Directions in Modern Huai Opera

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ZHENFANG ZHAO'S *WIDOW XIANGLIN* [*XIANGLIN SAO*] AND NEW DIRECTIONS IN  
MODERN HUAI OPERA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

The School of Music

by  
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## ABSTRACT

Huai Opera, a category of Chinese opera performed in Shanghai as well as the Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces, has been a popular type of entertainment ever since its creation sometime in the nineteenth century. With the beginning of the twenty-first, the art form has begun to lose audiences, in part due to the changed economic circumstances, which no longer made it feasible to attend three- to four-hour performances, in part due to problems inherent in the genre, such as old-fashioned plots, the common, unrefined style of the libretto, and the inflexible use of role types, modes, and metrical types.

Zhenfang Zhao's *Widow Xianglin* (2002) has begun to address these problems. The opera lasts only about two hours and the libretto (by Liancheng Yuan) is no longer based on folklore or history but on a short story addressing pressing social issues in feudal China (such as the position of the woman in general and of the widowed woman in particular). In addition, the opera reforms long-standing musico-dramatic traditions by mixing modes and role types, liberating the metrical types from their conventional functions, and introducing the Western concept of leitmotives.

The success of *Widow Xianglin* appears to have struck a chord with Chinese audiences, as it won several prestigious awards at the Fourth Huai Opera Festival, including the ones for best opera, best libretto, best performance, and best costume design. The success also rekindles hope for the survival of Huai Opera in particular and Chinese opera in general. By investigating the historical significance of *Widow Xianglin* from a scholarly perspective, this thesis seeks to make a contribution to the survival of a musical tradition protected as an Intangible Cultural Heritage.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Huai Opera is a category of Chinese opera that originated in the Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces during the middle of the Qing Dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Under the influence of other genres, such as Beijing Opera, Anhui Opera, and Yang Opera, it grew from a simple entertainment or ritual of deity worship involving only two performers into a major art form involving several character types and an orchestra.<sup>2</sup> Huai Opera soon existed in two variants, one in the eastern part of Jiangsu Province, one in the western part. Although both parts included as the most prominent tune the so-called *Huai* tune [*huai diao*], they treated it with distinction regarding mode and dialect. When Huai Opera was imported to Shanghai (which borders Jiangsu on the south), it developed yet a new variant, drawing on two new types of tunes, the *La* tune [*la dia*] and the Free tune [*zi you diao*], the latter marking the beginning of modern Huai Opera. After the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, local Huai Opera troupes attracted the attention of composers who not only knew traditional and modern Huai Opera but also possessed the compositional skills to lead the genre into a new and flourishing era.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis focuses on a groundbreaking new work of Huai Opera, *Widow Xianglin*, a collaboration of composer Zhenfang Zhao, librettist Liancheng Yuan, and singer Cheng Chen. It was composed in 2002 and given its premiere by the Taizhou Huai Opera Troupe in Taizhou on 18 November 2002. The libretto, adapted from the short story *The New Year Sacrifice* [*zhufu*] (1924) by Luxun, a leading figure of modern Chinese literature, portrays the struggle of a poor woman, Widow Xianglin, for women's rights, especially with regard to marriage practices. Since

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<sup>1</sup>Most genres of Chinese opera emerged from tunes sung by peasants, with the transition from informal entertainment to formalized genre having been a gradual one. Scholars loosely place it in the mid-to-late Qing Dynasty (sometime between 1821 and 1908).

<sup>2</sup>Tan Ye, *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Theater* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 137.

<sup>3</sup>The Committee of Editing Chinese Operatic Music, ed., "Huai Opera," in *The Collection of Chinese Operatic Music—Jiangsu* (Beijing: Center of China ISBN, 1992), 1421.

*The New Year Sacrifice* was published, it has been turned into movies, Yue Operas, and, with Zhao's contribution, a Huai Opera.<sup>4</sup>

Compared to earlier modern Huai Opera, *Widow Xianglin* introduces some important innovations, beginning with the libretto. Most librettos of earlier modern Huai Opera are adapted from folklore or history (*qin xianglian*, for instance, is adapted from the folk story *The Punishment of Chen Shimei* [*qin xianglian*], *Yue Fei* is adapted from the biography of a national hero, both dating from the Song dynasty [960–1279]). The libretto of *Widow Xianglin*, however, is adapted from a modern short story that reveals abuses of the feudal society in China during the 1920s. In the short story, Widow Xianglin, a typical Chinese woman of the feudal period (ca.1912–ca.1949), is passive with regard to her lack of rights; in the libretto, however, she has a questioning and fighting spirit. In one of her arias, looking back at her life, she asks: “What am I supposed to have done wrong now? Why is everybody lying to me? [wo daodi zuocuole shenme, weishenme meigeren dou yao qipian wo?]”<sup>5</sup> Although the destiny of Widow Xianglin is not ultimately different from that of other heroines of Huai Opera, she is not willing to accept her fate. The libretto not only emphasizes Widow Xianglin's countless frustrations with her life but also focuses on love (between her and Mr. He), a theme not common in earlier modern Huai Opera.

The music of *Widow Xianglin* is innovative without abandoning the traditional core of Huai Opera. Earlier modern Huai Opera is built on approximately thirty-two types of tunes, of which the *Huai* tune, the *La* tune, and the Free tune are the most important. The *Huai* tune, one of the oldest and most popular, is used every time the plot reaches a climax. But whereas Huai

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<sup>4</sup> Examples include *The New Year Sacrifice* [*zhufu*] (1956), a movie directed by Hu Sang; *Widow Xianglin* (1946) by an anonymous composer and *Widow Xianglin* (1962) by Ruceng Liu, both Yue Operas.

<sup>5</sup> Liancheng Yuan, *The Libretto of Widow Xianglin*, photocopy of the librettist's typescript (in the possession of Yuxi Zhao), 27.

Opera uses the *Huai* tune either in a standard Chinese pentatonic mode or an altered pentatonic mode, Zhao, in *Widow Xianglin*, uses both versions, sometimes even combining them in a single aria to create a striking new color. Furthermore, in *Widow Xianglin*'s aria "Question God [tian wen]," Zhao abandons the traditional functions of "metric types" to increase the dramatic interest.

This thesis investigates Zhao's contribution in two steps. In chapter II ("The Conventions of Modern *Huai* Opera") it outlines the conventions of *Huai* Opera prior to Zhao's *Widow Xianglin* and in chapter III ("The Historical Contributions of *Widow Xianglin*") discusses the innovations of Zhao's opera with regard to the conventions outlined in chapter II. Chapter III is based on the study of such primary sources as the original short story, the libretto, the score, and the recording made with the original cast. The short story and the recording are published and readily accessible. The libretto and score, however, are as yet unpublished but have been made available to me by the composer and librettist.<sup>6</sup> Additional primary sources include, among others, reviews of the world premiere and, as both the librettist and composer are still alive, interviews with them.<sup>7</sup>

The recent innovations of modern *Huai* Opera have attracted little scholarly attention. Although some general theses and dissertations on *Huai* Opera exist, they primarily focus on the genre's history, rarely its music or drama. And although *Widow Xianglin* has enjoyed popular success, no research has addressed its innovations. In addition, *Huai* Opera, along with other types of Chinese opera, is protected as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, the survival of which is

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<sup>6</sup> Zhenfang Zhao, *The Score of Widow Xianglin*, photocopy of the composer's typescript (in the possession of Yuxi Zhao).

<sup>7</sup> An example of a review is Xiaomeng [pseud.], "Chencheng: *Widow Xianglin* on the Stage of *Huai* Opera," *China Federation of Literary and Art Circles*, 19 March 2004.

threatened.<sup>8</sup> It is my hope that this thesis will help draw much-needed attention to this cultural treasure and thus in some small way contribute to its survival.

#### A Note on Chinese Titles, Names, and Sources

All titles, names, and sources will be given in transliteration using the Romanization system called *pinyin*. In the bibliography, the Chinese titles will be followed by the English translation (placed in parentheses), in accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style. For ease of use, footnotes will provide the English titles only. Titles of works (operas, short stories, etc.) will be introduced in their translation, followed, if appropriate, by the original Chinese (in *pinyin* and square brackets); in future usage, only the translated title will be used. Names will be treated according to westernized usage with given name followed by family name (in the Bibliography the family name is followed by a comma and the given name). For reference, an appendix will compile all titles of works in English and Chinese, organized alphabetically by the English title.

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<sup>8</sup> Official Chinese Web site of the Intangible Cultural Heritage List.  
<http://www.ihchina.cn/show/feiyiweb/html/guojiaminglu/dierpi.html> (accessed 29 May 2016).

## CHAPTER II: THE CONVENTIONS OF MODERN HUAI OPERA

The various branches of Chinese opera are distinguished primarily by their types of melodies. The earliest melody of Huai Opera, the *Huai* tune, absorbed musical elements of the Begging Tune [*mentan ci*] (a tune sung by beggars in Jiangsu Province), the *Xianghuo* Play [*xianghuo xi*] (a play about witchcraft), local work songs, and eventually characteristics of other local Chinese operas such as Beijing Opera and Hui Opera.<sup>1</sup> The *Huai* tune is characterized by a narrow range, syllabic text setting, and melodic features derived from its sources.<sup>2</sup> Huai Opera at the time was monophonic and performed by one or two people. After 1927, when Huai Opera was introduced to Shanghai, composers who had moved there for economic reasons developed a new type of tune, the *La* tune, and, influenced by Western music, occasionally drew on simple string accompaniment.<sup>3</sup> The expressive palette of the *La* tune, however, was still rather limited, leading in 1939 to the development of a third type of tune, the Free tune, which initiated the period of modern Huai Opera. The *Huai*, *La*, and Free tunes thus represent the three historical periods of Huai Opera.<sup>4</sup>

A modern Huai Opera has several acts, each consisting of dialogue, arias, duets (arias for two singers in dialogue), chorus (rare), and pantomimes. The dialogue is usually unaccompanied or accompanied only by simple percussion instruments, such as cymbals and drums. The arias are always accompanied—whether by strings, winds, percussion, or electronic instruments—and

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<sup>1</sup> Xiaoqiu Deng, “The Origin and Formation of Huai Opera,” *Traditional Chinese Drama Research*, no. 1 (1995): 184.

<sup>2</sup> A *Huai* tune tends to begin on a downward trajectory encompassing the following structural pitches *zhi – jiao – shang* or *gong – yu – zhi*. The same trajectory will apply to a *La* tune as it is melodically derived from the *Huai* tune.

<sup>3</sup> Quan Zhang, “Huai Opera and Shanghai,” *Shanghai Drama*, no. 8 (2006): 10.

<sup>4</sup> *The Collection of Chinese Operatic Music—Jiangsu*, ed. The Committee on Editing Chinese Operatic Music (Beijing: Center of China ISBN, 1992), 1422.

commonly consist of one tune presented in one or more metrical types (see below).<sup>5</sup> Due to the distinct vocal or physical requirements of the main characters types of Huai Opera (Male, Female, Painted-face, and Clown), performers generally attend a vocal school—in the sense of joining a teacher’s studio— specializing in the training of their type of choice.

### The Principal Types of Tunes of Modern Huai Opera

There are three major types of tunes in modern Huai Opera (the *Huai* tune [*huai diao*], *La* tune [*la diao*], and Free tune [*ziyou diao*]), providing the melodic material for most arias, duets, and choruses. Each type has its own characteristics. The *Huai* tune, the oldest of the three, is stylistically derived from the Begging Tune and the music of the *Xianghuo* Play, especially in its narrow range of about an octave and its predominantly syllabic text setting (see example 2.1).<sup>6</sup>

ban wei - niang du - guo - le sang - yu wan - jing,  
 er ye you - ren zhao - ying han wen mu - nv chang - ju,  
 le xu tian - lun, wei - niang bai - nian gui - xi - qu,

Example 2.1. Excerpt of a *Huai* tune from Fengling Pan’s *Visit the Cool Cave* [*tan hanyao*] (1998)

<sup>5</sup> Jun Luo, “The Development of the Orchestra in Huai Opera,” *Drama and Film Journal*, no. 5 (2014): 115.

<sup>6</sup> Transcribed from Haisen Bo, *Huai Opera and Its Vocal Schools* (Shanghai: Shanghai Music Press, 1987), 66. Words consisting of more than one Chinese character (and thus of multiple words, comparable to the English “bookstore”) are reproduced in the musical examples with hyphens between the compound parts. All transcriptions are by the author.

Sometimes, a short melismatic passage of five or six notes per syllable or a somewhat wider range will appear at the beginning or end of an aria; in most cases, however, each syllable is sung to one or two notes. The *Huai* tune is used for narrative passages, in agreement with its predominantly syllabic style, but, due to its status as the oldest tune of the genre, also at emotionally climactic moments, even though stylistically it is not exactly suited for this purpose. An example of a narrative *Huai* tune is Yueying's description (in Liang Ma's *Yueying Wang* [*wangyueying*]) of all the characters (adults, boys and girls, even monks) coming out onto the street to see her; an example of a climactic *Huai* tune is Suzhen Bai's reaction (in Fengling Pan's *The Legend of White Snake* [*baishe zhuan*]) when finally being allowed to see her son and tearfully telling him what she had been through while she was imprisoned in the Leifeng Pagoda.

In their training at the vocal schools, singers learn to ornament the tunes, not unlike their counterparts in Western opera.<sup>7</sup> In *Huai* Opera, however, a performer ornaments a note not only by adding notes (a mordent or grace note, for instance) but by sliding off a pitch, modifying the volume of a note, or changing its tone color, a set of techniques collectively called tune tropes [*yinqiang*].<sup>8</sup> Tune tropes have an expressive function and may be used, for instance, to emphasize important portions of the text.<sup>9</sup>

The *La* tune is melodically derived from the *Huai* tune, but in contrast to the *Huai* tune, it is melismatic, enriching the genre's expressive palette (see example 2.2).<sup>10</sup> The vocal range is still narrow but may on rare occasions expand to reach an octave and a half (see example 2.3; parentheses mark passages played by primary string instruments).

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<sup>7</sup> Zhenfang Zhao, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Yangzhou, 14 June 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Qia Shen, "A Discussion of Tune Tropes," *Journal of the Central Conservatory of Music*, no. 4 (September 1982): 14.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Transcribed from Bo, *Huai Opera*, 199.

Example 2.2. Excerpt of a *La* tune from Shentong Li’s *Lu Wenlong* (ca. 1981)

The *Huai* and *La* tunes follow a tripartite form consisting of “rise [*qi*],” “level [*ping*],” and “fall [*luo*],” terms that have structural rather than gestural significance. The tune begins with the first sentence of the text (or most of it), set to either a metrical or non-metrical melody (the rise), then repeats the text in meter and continues in the same meter but on new text (the level).<sup>11</sup> In example 2.3, the first sentence is “tingshuo [shi] yi [(na)] sheng chuan su (a) san (na), pi [(a)] jia dai suo (a) chu shen (na) jian.”<sup>12</sup> The rise extends through m. 13 (the beginning of the instrumental transition), covering the entire first sentence except for the last three words. At that point, the sentence begins anew, launching the level (mm. 20–48). The level is usually the longest section of the aria, its music conceived freely, without any obvious repetition of earlier musical material. The fall is normally very short and either metrical (as here) or non-metrical and repeats all or part of the last portion of the level (here the final four vocal pitches of m. 51 repeat the final four pitches of m. 46). Each formal section normally appears only once per aria. If an

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>12</sup> Words in parentheses are fillers; those in brackets appear in only one of the two statements of the sentence.

aria includes a second statement of the tune, the second statement may either be formally free or again follow the sequence of rise, level, and fall.

*La* tunes are used for arias in which a singer offers the audience background information of no particular dramatic significance.<sup>13</sup> In “I Heard Susan Was Summoned [tingshuo yisheng chuan Susan]” from *Susan Was Sent to Prison under Escort* [*Susan qijie*] (example 2.3),<sup>14</sup> for instance, Susan, who was framed for murdering her husband, is summoned to court and, on her way there, describes what she sees and what is going through her mind. She sings, “I heard I was summoned, and now, on the way to court, I am locked in chains. I don’t know where to look. I hope the judge will listen to what I will say. [Tingshuo yi sheng chuan su (a) san (na), pi jia dai suo (a) chu shen (na) jian. er mu bu zhu chao li (ya) guan. Tang qian daye ting yi (na) fan.]” This prosaic style of language is typical of modern Huai Opera prior to *Widow Xianglin*.



<sup>13</sup> Zhenfang Zhao, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Yangzhou, 14 June 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Transcribed from *The Collection of Chinese Operatic Music—Jiangsu*, 1470–71.

7 sheng chuan su

9 san (na),

11 pi (a) jia

13 dai suo (a)

15

17

19 Level  
ting - shuo yi sheng

21 chuan su (a) san (na),

23 pi jia dai suo (a)

25 chu shen (na) jian.

27 xing yi - bu lai zhi zai du - cha - yuan,

[...]

45 ku jin

47 du - cha - (la) - yuan (na),

49

51 Fall  
jian - guo - le san - wei da - ren

53 zhu - lei bu - gan.

Example 2.3. *La* Tune “I Heard Susan Was Summoned [tingshuo yisheng chuan Susan]” from *Susan was Sent to Prison under Escort [Susan qijie]* (1985)

*Huai* and *La* tunes have only limited stylistic variety. In examples 2.1 and 2.2, the notes commonly stay in the lower register, hardly exceeding the range of an octave (in example 2.2, for instance, the melody extends from *g* to *a'*, not counting the measures played by the string instrument). The tripartite form and the dramatic function, too, are rather limited. In the late 1930s, composers therefore introduced a more flexible type of tune, the Free tune, with the goal of having at their disposal greater stylistic and formal variety to do justice to the dramatic variety of the text. As a result, the Free tune quickly replaced the *Huai* and *La* as the predominant tune.

Introductory Beat

hun - chen - chen zhi - ting-  
de kou - hao ru - lei - xiang,  
bu - shi meng - zhong

Slow Beat

shi xing - - - chang,  
ji - de bai - fei  
jiang wo bang, ke - lian - de  
xiao hong ku - han (na) niang,  
tong - zhi - men bei ya cun - tou shang, bai - gou - zi jia - qi



Free Beat



wo jiang, ta shuo you pan - tu  
zai dang nei cang.  
Serial Beat  
shi he - ren jing - bu - qi feng he lang? shi  
he - ren zhuan - yan bian - le li - chang  
shi he - ren tou - xiang guo - min - dang?  
shi he - ren chu - mai zu - zhi  
Free Beat  
ba tong - zhi - men shang  
(a)!

Example 2.4. Example of a Free tune, the beginning of Yumei Li's aria "I Was Feeling Dizzy When I Heard the Marching Cadence outside as Loud as Thunder [hunchenchen zhi tingde kouhao ruleixiang]" from *The Daughter of the Party* [*dang de nver*] (ca. 1952–1954)

Compared to the *Huai* and *La* tunes, the Free tune has an expanded vocal range, especially toward the upper register (see example 2.4).<sup>15</sup> The highest note in example 2.4 is  $d'''$ , the lowest  $d'$ , making for a total range of two octaves. This wide range allows composers—not unlike those working in Western opera—to exploit a greater variety of emotions.

<sup>15</sup> Transcribed from Bo, *Huai Opera*, 296.

In addition to the greater vocal range, the Free tune introduced the so-called metrical melody system [*banqiang ti*], a method of composition found in other Chinese operas as well (“*ban*” means “metrical type,” “*qiang*” “aria type,” and “*ti*” system). Every metrical type is defined by a set of stylistic characteristic used in response to the dramatic or structural requirements of the text. The term “metrical type” thus has a slightly different meaning from the Western term “meter,” as it refers not only to strong and weak beats but also to tempo, mood, and dramatic function. For example, the “introductory beat” implies not only a free meter but also a moderate tempo and a position at the beginning of an aria (see table 2.1).<sup>16</sup> Once the Free tune was invented, the formal sections of the *Huai* and *La* tunes were reinterpreted as metrical types without musical or conceptual change of the tunes themselves.

Compared to the *Huai* and *La* tunes, the Free tunes are used in arias of greater emotional variety.<sup>17</sup> Example 2.4, the beginning of an aria from *The Daughter of the Party*, shall illustrate the function of the metrical types. The opera tells the story of Li, a model party member, who rescues compatriots from the clutches of the internal enemy (the Chinese Nationalist Party) during the War of Resistance with Japan. In this aria, Li vows to find the traitor within her party and avenge her fallen comrades. The beginning of the Free Tune is cast in introductory beat. Li, herself already rescued, recalls her capture by the enemy. The text states “I was feeling dizzy when I heard the marching cadence outside as loud as thunder. I thought I was having a dream, but realized I was on execution ground. [Hunchenchen zhitingde kouhao ruleixiang. Bushi mengzhong shi xingchang.]” She sings a melody prominently rising across more than an octave, culminating on a word (“xiang [loud]”) befitting the climactic pitch. Beginning with the slow beat, she turns to a gentler meter (4/4) as she sorrowfully narrates the details of her

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<sup>16</sup> *The Collection of Chinese Operatic Music*, 1431.

<sup>17</sup> Bo, *Huai Opera*, 272; and *The Collection of Chinese Operatic Music—Jiangsu*, 1424.

Table 2.1: Metrical types and functions in Free tunes

Name	Beats	Meter	Tempo	Function
Fast Beat [kuaiban]	2 strong beats, no weak beats	1/4	fast	used in dramatically active passages
Free Beat [sanban]	free; notes carrying a syllable are accented	free	moderate	used at emotional climaxes if the rhythm of the text favors free meter
Introductory Beat [daoban]	free; not every note carrying a syllable is accented	free	moderate	used at the beginning of some arias to attract the audience's attention through a musically powerful statement (usually including a marked melodic rise)
Moderate Beat [zhongban]	1 strong beat, 1 weak beat	2/4	moderate	used in dialogue sections of duets
Refrain Beat [dieju]	1 strong beat, 1 weak beat	2/4	fast	used at emotional climaxes if the rhythm of the text favors a fast tempo and alternates strong and weak beats
Serial Beat [lianhuanju]	1 strong beat, no weak beats; regular eighth notes; includes musical repetition in imitation of parallel phrases of text	1/4	fast	used at emotional climaxes if the rhythm of the text favors a fast tempo and mostly strong beats and if the text features parallel phrases
Slow Beat [manban]	1 strong beat, 3 weak beats	4/4	slow	used when narrating in a melodious style and expressing mild and sorrowful feelings

imprisonment: “I still remember that gangster tying me up, then we were sent away; my little daughter was crying. I witnessed their killing of other compatriots, the betrayers took out their machine guns; some brave comrades sacrificed themselves in Peach Blossom Village. [Jide baifei jiang wo bang, keliande xiao hong kuhan (na) niang. Tongzhimen bei ya cuntou shang, Baigouzi jiaqi jiguanqiang; womende zhishu duo yingyong, tongzhimen (a) zhuanglie xisheng zai taohuazhuang.]” After the slow beat comes the climax, encompassing two sections of free beat framing a section of serial beat. In the first section of free beat, Li first expresses her

gratitude to her comrades for having saved her life, then recalls mention of a traitor in the Party. She becomes angry, singing in an interrogative tone in the serial beat on the typical parallel phrases of text: “What kind of person can not brave wind and waves? What kind of person changes sides? What kind of person turns to the Nationalist Party? What kind of person betrays our Party and hurts our compatriots? [Shi heren jingbuqi feng he lang? Shi heren zhuanyan bianle lichang? Shi heren touxiang guomindang? Shi heren chumai zuzhi?]” Then follows the second section of free beat, again focusing on her anger.

The Free tune is usually developed from the two initial musical phrases of the beat immediately following the introductory beat. The first phrase is set to about seven words (here: words equivalent to Chinese characters, not compound words), the second to about ten. These phrases then yield certain formulas that recur in new melodic contexts and in new metrical types through the remainder of the aria.<sup>18</sup> The two initial sentences begin with the second measure of the fifth system in example 2.4. The first phrase includes seven words, “ji-de bai-fei jiang wo bang” (here amounting to five compound words), the second phrase eight words, “ke-lian-de xiao hong ku-han (na) niang” (here amounting to five compound words). The pitches of the first two measures (the second and third measure of the fifth system), *d''-g''-e''-e''-d''-e''-g''-g''-g''-e''-e''-d''*, recur at the beginning of the free beat with only minor modification. In the serial beat, the last measure of the first system and the third measure of the second system repeat the beginning of the original formula. Likewise, the pitches *d''-b'-b'-a'-a'-a'-g'* in the second measure of the third system of slow beat recur on the last two beats of the first measure of the fifth system and, somewhat abbreviated, on the first beat of subsequent measure.

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<sup>18</sup> Francesca Rebollo-Sborgi, “China, §IV: Living Traditions,” *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/43141pg4>, accessed 5 January 2016. The technique is not unlike that used in chant (Gregorian and Byzantine) and for a period of time was described as “centonization.” See Geoffrey Chew and James W. McKinnon, “Centonization,” *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/05279>, accessed 5 January 2016.

## Mode

The Chinese pentatonic scale consists of five notes (*gong, shang, jiao, zhi, yu*) constituting a transposable system in which each note may function as the fundamental of a specific, homonymous mode (the fundamental is usually the last note of the tune, as in plainchant). For example, if *gong* were C, the scale of the mode of *gong* would be C, D, E, G, A; that of *shang* D, E, G, A, C; that of *jiao* E, G, A, C, D; that of *zhi* G, A, C, D, E; and that of *yu* A, C, D, E, G. The modes of C *gong*, D *shang*, E *jiao*, G *zhi* and A *yu* all belong to the C *gong* system. If *gong* were G, then the mode of *shang* would be on A, *jiao* on B, *zhi* on D, and *yu* on E, all belonging to G *gong* system. *Qingjiao, biangong, qijngyu*, and *bianzhi* are “modified notes” sometimes added to the notes of the pentatonic scale or replacing them in order to change the scale’s color. *Qingjiao* stands for *jiao*-sharp, *biangong* for *gong*-flat, *qijngyu* for *yu*-sharp, and *bianzhi* for *zhi*-flat.

Examples 2.2–4 show the basic modes of *zhi* on G (C *gong* system), C (F *gong* system), and D (G *gong* system), respectively. The scale of example 2.2 is G, A, C, D, E, G, with G as the final and thus fundamental pitch; the scale of example 2.3 is C, D, F, G, A, C, with C as the final and thus fundamental pitch; the scale of example 2.4 is D, E, F-sharp, G, A, B, C, D with D as the final and thus fundamental pitch, a heptatonic scale distinct from the major or minor scales of western music.<sup>19</sup>

Example 2.1 is in the altered mode of *zhi*. Built on A in the D *gong* system, the scale of the altered mode is A, B, D, E, G-sharp, A, that of the basic mode A, B, D, E, F-sharp, A. In the altered mode, the note *jiao* (F-sharp) is replaced by a modified note, *bianzhi* (G-Sharp = *zhi*-flat).

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<sup>19</sup> In a heptatonic scale, all of the seven notes will appear: five structural notes and two modified notes. The principal rule regarding modified notes states they must be used rarely and never on strong beats. Chongguang Li, *The Fundamentals of Music Theory* (Beijing: People’s Music Publishing House, 1962), 67.

Ever since its inception, the *Huai* tune has existed in two variants differentiated by mode; the basic one has been used in eastern *Huai* tune, the altered one in western *Huai* tune.<sup>20</sup>

### The Orchestra and Accompaniment of Modern Huai Opera

The orchestra of Modern Huai Opera draws primarily on Chinese instruments, on rare occasion also on western ones. Table 2.2 shows the composition of the orchestra.<sup>21</sup> The string section includes a primary instrument, that is, any one of the two-stringed bowed instruments but most commonly the *zhuhu*;<sup>22</sup> it doubles the vocal part when a vocal part is present and plays the transitions between vocal phrases. A secondary instrument, usually the *erhu*,<sup>23</sup> improvises a related tune in heterophony. In addition to the bowed stringed instruments, the orchestra includes plucked stringed instruments such as the *pipa*,<sup>24</sup> the *zhongruan*<sup>25</sup> (both with a fretted fingerboard), and the *sanxian*<sup>26</sup> (a fretless instrument with three strings) and hammered stringed instruments such as the *yangqin*<sup>27</sup> (a Chinese hammered dulcimer). Composers began to borrow the cello and double bass from the western orchestra because almost all Chinese string and woodwinds instruments cover upper registers.<sup>28</sup> These bass instruments play either structurally important notes of the melody or closely related ones (usually a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or octave apart) based on the performer's intuition.

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<sup>20</sup> *The Collection of Chinese Operatic Music—Jiangsu*, 1421.

<sup>21</sup> Luo, "The Development of the Orchestra in Huai Opera," 115.

<sup>22</sup> All Chinese string instruments associated with "hu" are two-stringed bowed instruments, such as *jinghu*, *banhu*, *erhu*, *gaohu*, etc.

<sup>23</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erhu>.

<sup>24</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pipa>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhongruan>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanxian>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yangqin>.

<sup>28</sup> Luo, "The Development of Huai Opera Orchestra," 115.

The wind section includes two Chinese instruments, the *sheng*<sup>29</sup> (a free reed instrument) and the *suona*<sup>30</sup> (a brass instrument similar to the trumpet); borrowed from the western orchestra are the flute, oboe, and clarinet. The wind instruments are used rarely; when they are used, they play in unison with the primary string instruments and thus the vocal part.<sup>31</sup> Sometimes, the orchestra also includes a synthesizer for occasional sound effects not specifically notated.

Table 2.2: The Orchestra in modern Huai Opera

string instruments	1 <i>zhuhu</i> 1 <i>pipa</i> 2 <i>erhus</i> 2 <i>zhonghus</i> 1 <i>yangqin</i> 1 <i>zhongruan</i> 1 cello 1 double bass
wind instruments	2 flutes 1 oboe 1 clarinet 1 <i>sheng</i> 1 <i>suona</i>
percussion	1 small drum 2 cymbals 1 big gong 1 small gong additional instruments as needed
electronic instruments	synthesizer, electronic organ, etc.

In addition to the essentially heterophonic accompaniment discussed earlier, Huai Opera includes a distinct type of accompaniment played by the percussion section (the most important instruments are listed in table 2.2); both the percussion section itself and the accompaniment it plays are called *luogu* (literally “gong and drum”). The *luogu* has three functions: (1) at the

<sup>29</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheng\\_\(instrument\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheng_(instrument)). Other free reed instruments, in which a reed vibrates in an enclosed frame, include the harmonica and reed organ.

<sup>30</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suona>.

<sup>31</sup> Zhenfang Zhao, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Yangzhou, 14 June 2015.

beginning of an opera, it creates suspense by delaying the appearance of a character, sometimes for several minutes; (2) it introduces the first vocal phrase of an aria or, when there is a pause between two phrases, fills the gap of one to four measures, either by all itself or in conjunction with other instruments; and (3) it decorates the dialogue, reinforcing the mood of the performers or coordinating their steps and gestures.

The texture created by the Chinese string and wind instruments is, with the exception of an occasional chordal passage, heterophonic. Unlike in western music, the score does not include parts for the instruments of a Huai Opera orchestra. Composers usually only write the vocal parts and then mark short passages of interlude (normally three to four measures played by the primary string instrument) in parentheses (see examples 2.2–4).

The primary string instrument will play throughout the aria without interruption: it follows the vocal part exactly and, when the vocal part stops, continues with the parenthetical part; as soon as the vocal part resumes, the primary instrument again follows the vocal part. The other Chinese string instruments will improvise in heterophony. For example, instead of a melodic quarter-note of C, they might play sixteenth notes of C, D, C, A or C, E, D, C, never straying from the written pitch by more than a third. Conversely, instrumentalists might simplify the vocal melody, reducing a group of notes to only one. There are no strict rules for the execution of heterophony; performers follow unwritten conventions derived from long practice and handed down orally from preceding generations.

The orchestra of Huai Opera is small because only a few of the instruments listed in table 2.2 are actually used. Regardless of the dramatic situation, the primary and secondary instruments are always needed in the accompaniment of arias and some percussion instruments

are needed for the *luogu*. The role of most other instruments is still evolving; only that of the primary instruments is clearly defined.

### The Main Role Types and Their Vocal Characteristics

Modern Huai Opera includes four main roles types: the Male [*sheng*], Female [*dan*], Painted-face [*jing*], and Clown [*chou*]. The first two comprise subtypes: the Male may be an Old Male [*laosheng*], a Young Male [*xiaosheng*], or a Acrobatic Male *Wusheng* (a martial character performing combat scenes); the Female may be an Old Women [*laodan*], a Virtuous and Elite Woman [*qingyi*], or a Vivacious and Unmarried Woman [*huadan*].<sup>32</sup> The Painted-face and Clown are always male; the Painted-face plays forceful characters and is characterized by elaborate face painting and a particularly strong voice;<sup>33</sup> the Clown makes the audience laugh. With regard to vocal production and area of resonance, the role types can be distinguished as outlined in tables 2.3 and 2.4.<sup>34</sup>

Most artists specialize in the performance of a specific subtype because each subtype calls for a unique set of skills, each of which takes a long time to perfect. Artists are thus listed in the program book together with their subtype, preceded by the designation “famous” in the case of those performing the role of a principal character, even if they are not particularly well known (for instance, “Wenyan Xiao, Famous Young Female”). Artists well known for interpreting a certain subtype might establish their own school.

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<sup>32</sup> Duo Chen, *Aesthetics of Drama* (Chengdu: Sichuan People’s Publishing House, 2001), 90–93.

<sup>33</sup> Barbara E. Ward, “Not Merely Players: Drama, Art and Ritual in Traditional China,” *Man* [New Series] 14, no. 1 (1979): 20.

<sup>34</sup> The information in tables 2.3 and 2.4 is primarily taken from Elizabeth Wichman, *Listening to the Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 213–22. See also Johan Sundberg, Lide Gu, Qiang Huang, and Ping Huang, “Acoustical Study of Classical Peking Opera Singing,” *Journal of Voice* 26, no. 2 (2012): 137. The vocal characteristics of the basic role types in Huai Opera are identical to those of Beijing Opera.

Table 2.3: Vocal characteristics of the male voice types

Painted-face [ <i>jing</i> ]	Clown [ <i>chou</i> ]	Old Male [ <i>laosheng</i> ]	Young Male [ <i>xiaosheng</i> ]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sings with a powerful and sonorous voice</li> <li>• raucous sound quality</li> <li>• chest is the principal resonating area in conjunction with as many of the other resonating areas as possible</li> <li>• more nasal than the Old Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• always sings in regular voice</li> <li>• often uses exaggerated nasality</li> <li>• the pitch is generally lower than that of the Old Male</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• always sings in normal voice (and thus sounds older than the Young Male)</li> <li>• the mouth is the principal resonating area</li> <li>• makes considerable use of wave-tone vibrato (one of the tune tropes)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mixes falsetto and regular voice</li> <li>• nasal quality</li> <li>• broad range of timbre, suggesting a young man’s changing voice</li> <li>• sings mostly in head voice with some chest voice</li> <li>• the voice “breaks” occasionally from falsetto to regular voice</li> </ul>

Table 2.4: Vocal characteristics of the female voice types

Old Woman [ <i>laodan</i> ]	Virtuous and Elite Woman [ <i>qingyi</i> ]	Vivacious and Unmarried Woman [ <i>huadan</i> ]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sings in regular voice</li> <li>• the head is the principal resonating area, the throat and chest the secondary ones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sings in falsetto<sup>35</sup></li> <li>• somewhat lower, heavier, and stronger voice than the Vivacious and Unmarried Woman</li> <li>• relatively steady tone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sings in falsetto</li> <li>• somewhat higher and lighter voice than the Virtuous and Elite Woman</li> <li>• greater dynamic subtlety (one of the tune tropes)</li> </ul>

Wenyan Xiao (1922–2013), for instance, was an excellent interpreter of female characters. Her Xiao Female Vocal School [*xiaopai danqiang*] specialized in the training of ornamentation, that is, the tune tropes, especially the addition of grace notes and mordents (the

<sup>35</sup> With regard to the female falsetto, Wichman (*Listening to the Theatre*, 213) states: “It may not be technically accurate to say that women who perform these roles use a falsetto voice—some performers and scholars believe that falsetto vocal production is physiologically possible for men only. However, when young dan roles are spoken and sung well, it is virtually impossible to distinguish the voices of female performers from those of male performers. The same can be said of young sheng roles. For convenience and consistency, as well as to reflect standard Beijing opera terminology, I shall therefore use the term ‘falsetto’ to characterize the timbre of the small voice.” I am following this guideline. The characteristics distinguishing the Virtuous and Elite Woman from the Vivacious and Unmarried Woman are my own.

types of ornamentation most popular with audiences).<sup>36</sup> Yuhua Li's Female Vocal School [*lipai danqiang*] specialized in singing long passages in a single breath or taking breaths in imperceptible ways, conveying the impression of not taking breaths at all.<sup>37</sup> In a long passage of serial beat, Li sang technically demanding passages with excellent diction and amazing breath control.

Jiaotian He was a famous interpreter of male roles. His He Male Vocal School [*hepai shengqiang*] specialized not only in ornamentation but also alternation between regular voice and falsetto. Lintong Ma was a famous fighting male (*Wusheng*) but, due to his hoarse voice, also sang Painted-face roles. He created the Ma Male Vocal School [*mapai shengqiang*], which specialized in the training of hoarse-voice singing and fighting techniques.<sup>38</sup>

### The Libretto

According to Yancao Guan, the repertory of Modern Huai Opera in 2008 included eighty-five works.<sup>39</sup> Of the librettos, a small portion is based on stories dealing with the Second Sino-Japanese War, such as *Susan was Sent to Prison under Escort* (see example 2.3), and *Eight Female Heroines* [*banv toujiang*], which eulogizes the sacrifice of eight female patriots. The bulk of these Huai Operas, however, is based on folklore, including such classic stories as *Jinlong and Fuyou* [*Jinlong yu Fuyou*] and *The Legend of the White Snake*. A brief synopsis of these two tales will provide a sense of their nature.

When his imperial city was destroyed by a rebellion, prince *Jinlong* escapes capture. Under the name of one of his loyal ministers, Niugu, he marries a fisherwoman with whom he has son, Fuyou. Longing to return to his home city and claim the throne, Jinlong abandons his

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<sup>36</sup> Quan Zhang, "The Artistic Characteristics of Chen's Vocal School in Huai Opera," *One Hundred Schools of the Arts*, no. 3 (June 2004): 65.

<sup>37</sup> Bo, *Huai Opera*, 452.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 447–51.

<sup>39</sup> Yancao Guan, *A Repertory of Huai Opera* (Shanghai: Shanghai Culture Publishing House, 2008), 5.

family and, after twenty years, succeeds in becoming emperor. He also kills the real Niugu, a loyal minister from the days of the rebellion, for fear of competition. In the meantime, Fuyou himself has married and had a son. But Fuyou misses his father and sets out to find him, leaving his wife and son behind. When at the imperial palace he introduces himself as the son of Niugu, Jinlong, who does not recognize his son, has him castrated in the hope of eliminating potential competition. When Fuyou's wife shows up, she is made Jinlong's concubine. Only with the appearance in the city of Fuyou's mother and son does Jinlong realize what he has done. His grandson stabs him, and the dying Jinlong passes the throne to his grandson.<sup>40</sup>

In the *Legend of the White Snake*, a white snake, who can transform into its spirit and into a woman named Suzhen Bai, has been practicing Taoist magical arts in order to become immortal. One day, after having transformed herself into Suzhen Bai, she reconnects with Xian Xu, whom she first met when he was a boy. As it is raining, he lends her an umbrella. The two fall in love with each other and are eventually married. Fahai, a terrapin transformed into a Buddhist monk, is jealous of the white snake's magical powers and tries to break up her relationship with Xian Xu. After several failed attempts, he imprisons Xian Xu in the Jinshan Temple. Suzhen Bai tries to flood the temple and rescue Xian Xu but fails because her pregnancy (she is bearing Xian Xu's child) limits her magical powers. Xian Xu finds a way to escape from the temple and reunite with Suzhen Bai. After the birth of their son, Fahai traps Suzhen Bai in a magic bowl, transforms her back into a snake, and imprisons her in the Leifeng Pagoda. Twenty years later, Xiaoqing, Suzhen Bai's closest friend, defeats Fahai in a fight. Suzhen Bai is freed and reunited with her husband and son.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ping Ting, "Jinlong and Fuyou," *Chinese Theater*, no. 1 (January 1994): 14.

<sup>41</sup> Qiufan Chen, ed., *The Legend of the White Snake* (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2012), 1-236.

A modern Huai Opera normally has between four and eight acts and lasts from three to four hours. *The Legend of the White Snake*, for example, has ten acts of which each has a subtitle indicating the theme of the act (see table 2.5); it lasts almost four hours, challenging the performers and audiences alike.

Table 2.5. Titles of the acts of *The Legend of the White Snake*

Act 1	A Tour of the West Lake [ <i>youhu</i> ]
Act 2	United by Marriage [ <i>lianyin</i> ]
Act 3	Slandorous Talk [ <i>jinchan</i> ]
Act 4	Unexpected Change [ <i>jingbian</i> ]
Act 5	Stealing Celestial Grass [ <i>dao cao</i> ]
Act 6	Swindling Xu [ <i>kuang Xu</i> ]
Act 7	Fighting over the Water [ <i>shui dou</i> ]
Act 8	Broken Bridge [ <i>duanqiao</i> ]
Act 9	Shut the Bowl [ <i>he bo</i> ]
Act 10	Destroying the Pagoda [ <i>hui ta</i> ]

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, audiences began to criticize certain aspects of modern Huai Opera. They took issue, for instance, with the coexistence of an eastern and western variant of the *Huai* tune. Furthermore, they began to dislike the old-fashioned plots and the prosaic style of the libretto.<sup>42</sup> And with the economic growth and accelerated pace of life, people no longer felt they had the time to sit through dramatic works lasting several hours.<sup>43</sup> As a result, Huai Opera has been losing audiences. Moreover, the performers began to complain about being perceived as entertainers instead of being appreciated as artists. To improve their image, they began to devote themselves to refining their vocal and acting skills, absorbing those of others by formal study at schools or observation. It is in this context that progressive composers such as Zhenfang Zhao began to reform modern Huai Opera.

<sup>42</sup> Xiaodong Sun, Ying Wang, and Heng Zhang, "An Assessment of the Survival of Huai Opera and the Plan to Respond," *Sichuan Drama*, no. 6 (June 2015): 125.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

### CHAPTER III: THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF *WIDOW XIANGLIN*

When composer Zhenfang Zhao and librettist Liancheng Yuan decided to base their opera on Luxun's famous short story *The New Year Sacrifice*, they were, in Zhao's words, at least in part influenced by a leading performer of Huai opera, Cheng Chen. Zhao recalls:

Cheng Chen was the most famous performer of Huai Opera at the time; we [thus] aimed to attract audiences by drawing on her fame. Besides, her vocal technique was perfect for our idea of a new style of *Widow Xianglin*. For these reasons, we tailored *Widow Xianglin* to fit her skills.<sup>1</sup>

Chen was an ideal prospective interpreter of the title role because she had long been an admirer of Luxun's writing in general and *The New Year Sacrifice* in particular and was confident that she could interpret the role well.<sup>2</sup> In addition, she already knew *The New Year Sacrifice* in the form of the two Yue Operas—also titled *Widow Xianglin* (see chapter 1)—and admired Xuefen Yuan in the title role.<sup>3</sup> The librettist, too, had a long-standing interest in turning Luxun's work into a Huai Opera. In consultation with Zhao and Chen, he decided to focus on the character of Widow Xianglin, a woman who tried to resist her destiny and failed.<sup>4</sup> With the concept in place and the libretto in hand, Zhao wrote *Widow Xianglin* in only half a month. The premiere by the Taizhou Huai Opera Troupe was a great popular and critical success.<sup>5</sup>

#### Innovations of the Libretto

The long duration and slow-moving plots of Huai Opera were two main reasons for the crisis of modern Huai Opera.<sup>6</sup> Huai Opera is rooted in an agricultural society, where it provided

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<sup>1</sup> “Chencheng zai dangshi de huaiju jie hen youming, suoyi women dangshi xiang jieyong ta de zhimingdu lai xiying guanzhong. Lingwai, ta de sangyin feichang shi he xianglinsao zhege jue. zuizhong, women jue ding wei ta liangshendingzuo yibu huaiju.” Zhenfang Zhao, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Yangzhou, 14 June 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Cheng Chen, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Yangzhou, 20 July 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Yue Opera is a local type of Chinese Opera that originated in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province.

<sup>4</sup> Liancheng Yuan, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Taizhou, 20 July 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Ming Ni, “Starting with Cheng Chen is Rewarded,” *Drama and Film Journal*, no. 3 (2005): 47.

<sup>6</sup> Sun et al., “An Assessment,” 122–23.

amusement to farmers with time to spare.<sup>7</sup> With China's joining the industrial and informational age, the need for a large work force increased. Moreover, Huai Opera is popular in Shanghai and the Jiangsu Province, two of the richest areas of China, where people made it their first priority to earn money, even if it encroached on their spare time. In addition, more types of entertainment such as shopping, video games, and movies became available and competed for audiences of theatrical productions such as Huai Opera.<sup>8</sup> If Huai Opera was to have any chance to survive, new works had to be shorter.

*Widow Xianglin* lasts only two hours, thus offering a more attractive option for entertainment than earlier works of the genre. Conceived in a single act and using a single set, it provides a sense of location and time through lighting and the use of a narrator (a speaking role) to connect the scenes. In addition, this conception has the advantage of not requiring changes of sets or the rising and lowering of the curtain, thus saving additional time.

*Widow Xianglin* is the first Huai Opera adapted from a socially relevant literary work, Luxun's *The New Year Sacrifice*. The short story focuses on the resistance to the feudal society and begins with the return of a fictional narrator to Luzhen, the small town where he had grown up and where he is about to spend the Chinese New Year at the house of his uncle, the Landlord Mr. Lu. During his visit, he runs into Widow Xianglin, who has been begging in the streets. A few days later, he hears that Widow Xianglin has died. It is at this point that the narrator recalls the stories of Widow Xianglin he has heard since he was young.

Mr. He, a hunter living in the mountains, is hoping to buy a wife. He pays a marriage broker who in turn approaches Widow Xianglin's mother-in-law and pays her to surrender Widow Xianglin to Mr. He. Widow Xianglin, whose first husband has died, does not know Mr.

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<sup>7</sup> Yujiang Zhu, "A Discussion of the Cultural Background of the Creation of Huai Opera," *Sichuan Drama*, no. 5 (2010): 102.

<sup>8</sup> Sun et al., "An Assessment," 123.

He, runs away, and becomes a maidservant at the home of Mr. Lu. She is hard-working and honest to the effect that, even though Mr. Lu does not like her (because she is a widow), he allows her to stay. One day, as she is washing rice, the marriage broker captures her and hands her over to Mr. He. They marry and soon have a son. Two years later, the son is killed by wolves, and Mr. He dies from a cold. A widow once again, Widow Xianglin returns to Mr. Lu, who believes that a woman widowed twice must be cursed. Still, she is allowed to stay but not to participate in the rituals of the New Year Sacrifice. As she is attracting contemptuous looks from the townspeople, Mr. Lu dismisses her. She becomes a beggar and dies not long thereafter.<sup>9</sup>

The story reflects the social tensions between the landlords and peasantry in China after the Revolution of 1911 and reveals the erosion, driven by feudal values, of women's humanity at the hand of the landlords. With *Widow Xianglin's* focus on a pressing social issue, Huai Opera broke with the conventional focus on folklore and history, following the example of other types of Chinese opera. This trend, which emerged in the 1980s, is called new realism and, according to Xingliang Hu, examines society through the experiences of a single, ordinary individual.<sup>10</sup> *Widow Xianglin* exemplifies this new trend: it exposes the exploitation of the unprivileged and criticizes the feudal system by highlighting the experiences of an everyday character.

In his libretto, Yuan enriched the emotional palette of the short story's characters. For instance, he made Mr. He a gentle and honest person, one whom Widow Xianglin might actually *want* to marry. When Widow Xianglin hears that her mother-in-law is going to sell her to a husband she does not know, Widow Xianglin runs away and loses her way in the mountains. Mr. He runs into her, accompanies her down the mountain, and introduces her to Mr. Lu, who, he

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<sup>9</sup> Luxun [pseud.], "The New Year Sacrifice" in *Luxun's Famous Short Story* (Jilin: Time Literature and Art Press, 2009), 129–44.

<sup>10</sup> Xingliang Hu, *Modern Drama and Its Modernity* (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2007), 80.

hopes, would give her a job. Neither Widow Xianglin nor Mr. He know at this point that it is he, Mr. He, who bought her as his wife. His help is selfless and generous. But when she is captured by the marriage broker and handed to Mr. He, she realizes who he is and already feels indebted to him. Moreover, he is not forcing her to marry him but is willing to let her go. Widow Xianglin is moved by his kindness and agrees to be his wife.

In addition to altering Mr. He's character, Yuan added a new character, Maifuren, a man who sells signs of fortune [*fu*].<sup>11</sup> During the Chinese New Year, people like to buy signs of fortune, hoping they will bring them luck in the coming year. Maifuren and Widow Xianglin have three encounters in the course of the opera. The first one occurs at the beginning, when Widow Xianglin buys from him a sign of fortune and, as she has no money, pays with her only hairpin. The second encounter occurs seven years later, after widow Xianglin has married Mr. He. She once again buys a sign of fortune because she believes it to be the reason why she has been living a happy life with Mr. He. When Widow Xianglin is banished and becomes a beggar, she meets Maifuren a third time. He asks her if she wants to buy a sign of fortune. A slight sneer creeps across Widow Xianglin's face, because the previous sign has brought her nothing but misery. The appearance of Maifuren highlights Widow Xianglin's destiny by adding an ironic component.

Finally, Yuan introduced the theme of love to the relationship between Widow Xianglin and Mr. He. When Widow Xianglin, after having run away from her mother-in-law, is lost in the mountains, Mr. He not only protects her on the way down from the mountain but helps her find a job in Mr. Lu's house. Never having been treated with respect, she is deeply moved by Mr. He's gentle personality. While working for Mr. Lu, she is thinking of Mr. He, recalling in an aria that

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<sup>11</sup> The sign of fortune consists of a piece of red paper with the character "fu" on it, which symbolizes good luck.

“it has been three months, and I still have not heard from him. His loving kindness has not been rewarded yet, and I don’t want the feelings and dreams in my mind to disappear [Sanyue lai, yinxinquanwu xin nan shao. Qing wei xie, en wei bao, qingqianmengrao heshi xiao].” When the marriage broker brings her to Mr. He, it is too dark in the room for her to recognize him; she thus refuses to marry him. Once she realizes, however, that the man she is supposed to marry is the man for whom she has already developed feelings, she is glad to enter the bridal chamber. With *Widow Xianglin*, the subject of love was finally freed, and audiences, for the most part, approved.<sup>12</sup>

The libretto sparked controversy, as most critics thought that the altered character of Mr. He, the added character of Maifuren, and the introduction of the love theme amounted to a misrepresentation of Luxun’s short story.<sup>13</sup> In an interview, Yuan responded:

In the original story, there is a hint that widow Xianglin was forced to consummate her marriage, but, after an initial refusal, consents. In a feudal society, a widow who remarried was a disgrace. So she would have had reason to refuse [the consummation of the marriage], but she didn’t. She presumably had true feelings for Mr. He. Moreover, there is no description of Mr. He that would suggest that he is anything but a good man. Therefore, I didn’t make an unreasonable conjecture.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike in earlier Huai Operas, the characters in *Widow Xianglin* are multifaceted. Widow Xianglin, for instance, feels desperate when pursued by the marriage broker, content when working for Mr. Lu, happy when married to Mr. He, guilty when faced with the death of her son, and wretched when begging in the streets. And Mr. He, in addition to providing a foil for Widow Xianglin, feels lonely living and hunting in the mountains, because he cannot find a woman willing to share the hardships of his life. He buys a bride but despite this loveless deed is

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<sup>12</sup> Lijuan Chen, “The Unique Tragic Beauty of the Huai Opera *Widow Xianglin*,” *Drama and Film Journal*, no. 4 (2014): 60.

<sup>13</sup> Tongkun Wang, “An Opinion on the Adaptations of Luxun’s Short Story,” *Luxun Research Monthly*, no. 5 (2007): 42.

<sup>14</sup> Liancheng Yuan, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Taizhou, 20 July 2015.

inherently good; he never forces Widow Xianglin to do anything she does not want to do and takes good care of her. As a result of Yuan's adaptation, the characters of *Widow Xianglin* are more vivid than in the original short story; they enhance the concept of new realism and thus the contribution to the history of Huai Opera.

### Mixing Role Types

There are seven main characters in *Widow Xianglin*: Widow Xianglin (played at the premiere by Cheng Chen), Mr. He (played by Mingkuang Chen), Mr. Lu (played by Delin Chen), Maid Liuma (played by Suping Huang), the Marriage Broker (Fei Yang), Widow Xianglin's mother-in-law (Jinzi Li), and Maifuren (Buquan Tan).<sup>15</sup> None of these characters conforms to any one of the traditional role types described in chapter II; instead, each one draws on more than one type, often mixing them. The system of the role types undoubtedly has its merits, especially that of allowing performers to specialize in a particular aspect of performance practice. It also has its shortcomings, however, because a role type allows for the interpretation of only a limited number of character types.

Delin Chen, a famous Young Male performer [*xiaosheng*], was instrumental in bringing change to the treatment of the role types. He believed that, compared to the voice of the Young Female, that of the Young Male sounded too "rough." Therefore, in the 1980s, he made the bold move, unprecedented in the history Huai Opera, of formally studying with a female teacher, Wenyan Xiao, who had specialized in the application of tune tropes. As a result, Chen, when performing Young Male roles, not only drew more frequently on falsetto but also on tune tropes, for instance in the aria "I Haven't Seen My Mother in Ten Years [*shinian wei jian niangqin*]" from *The Toothmark* [*yahen ji*] (1981). The popular success of this approach subsequently

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<sup>15</sup> All the names of the actors and actresses listed in the brackets are performers in the premiere.

inspired his students to mix the role types of the Young Male and Young Female and thus to include more falsetto and dynamic subtlety to create an “exquisite” effect.<sup>16</sup>

It was not until *Widow Xianglin*, however, that the mixing of role types was extended to all characters.<sup>17</sup> The focus naturally was on the title character, performed by Cheng Chen, the daughter of Delin Chen and Suping Huang (also a famous Huai Opera performer). Cheng Chen was well prepared for the challenge, not only because she had carefully observed her father’s new approach but also because, after having graduated from the Luxun Art School, married Mingkuang Chen, himself a student of Delin Chen’s. In addition, Zhenfang Zhao, Liancheng Yuan, and Delin Chen had been partners in the Taizhou Opera Troupe for at least ten years during which they grew into a creative team of unusual experience and vision. It was during this close collaboration that Zhao conveyed to the singers the idea of extending Delin Chen’s approach of mixing aspects of the Young Male and Young Female to all vocal parts of *Widow Xianglin*.<sup>18</sup>

In her life, Widow Xianglin goes through distinct emotional stages, each requiring the application of either a mixed or pure traditional role type. The latter, however, does not necessarily conform with her age or marital status but rather with her emotional state. When interpreting Widow Xianglin before she married Mr. He, for instance, Cheng Chen sings in the style of the Virtuous and Elite Woman—which, compared to the Vivacious and Unmarried Woman, requires a heavier and steadier tone—in agreement with the plain and modest life of Widow Xianglin. In the arias following her marriage to Mr. He, she applies the role type of the

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<sup>16</sup> Yunfei Ma, “A Discussion on the Innovations of Chen’s Vocal School,” *Journal of Jilin College of the Art*, no. 4 (2008): 7–8.

<sup>17</sup> Liancheng Yuan, interview by Yuxi Zhao, 20 July 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Hang Ma, “The Contribution of the Huai Opera *Widow Xianglin* to the Diversity of Adapting Works of Literature for Local Opera,” *Shanghai Drama*, no. 5 (2014): 39. The description below of the various vocal interpretations is based on the recording made with the cast of the premiere in 2003 (ISRC CN-E07-03-0044-0/V.J8).

Vivacious and Unmarried Woman—which is lighter and dynamically subtler than that of the Virtuous and Elite Woman—in agreement with her happiness. The role types of neither the Virtuous and Elite Woman nor the Vivacious and Unmarried Woman, however, with their pure falsetto, would have been appropriate to the portrayal of her life following the dismissal by Mr. Lu, because at that point she mostly whimpers and complains. Cheng Chen thus interprets that stage in Widow Xianglin’s life as a mixture of the role types of the Old Female and the Virtuous and Elite Woman, even drawing on aspects of the Old Male, especially the use of the mouth as the principal resonating area.<sup>19</sup>

The performer of Mr. He, too, is required to mix role types. As a middle-aged hunter, Mr. He is supposed to sound a little rough but not too old. When he sings the first aria (“Colorful Clouds Float around My Wrist [Wucai yunduo yao jian gua]”), centering on his present life, he mostly uses his mouth as the principal resonating area, occasionally adding some falsetto to avoid sounding too old. In his aria after the very brief wedding ceremony, he frequently changes between falsetto and regular voice and makes his voice sound more nasal to emphasize his gentle and attentive personality. And when he hears that his son has been killed by wolves, he is inconsolable, singing not only in falsetto and with greater dynamic subtlety but also with some wave-tone vibrato at the end of the passage to imitate sobbing. Before he dies, he sings an aria in which he complains about the unfairness of life. At that point, he wavers between anger and sadness, using the raucous voice of the Painted-face and the falsetto of the Young Male or Female, respectively.

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<sup>19</sup> Cheng Chen, interview by Yuxi Zhao, Yancheng, 20 July 2015.

## Innovations in the Music

In an unpublished article about the musical innovations of *Widow Xianglin*, Zhenfang Zhao states

The composition of Chinese opera has always been “limited.” The characteristic aspects of a Chinese opera [i.e., the role types, melodic types, and modes] have become formulas. These formulas have their own artistic charm [...]. Audiences become familiar with them and like them; some of them have long taken root in their hearts. Therefore, if the music completely abandons these formulas, that is, the “essence” of the opera, [the music] will go against the conventions of Chinese Opera, which would not be accepted by the audiences. Therefore, the most important task is to “transform” the “essence” in a way for it to meet the aesthetic needs of modern audiences and reveal the individuality of each work.<sup>20</sup>

In upholding the conventions, Zhao used the *Huai* tune in its conventional style (text-music relationship and range) and function, “satisfying the audiences both aesthetically and mentally.”<sup>21</sup> A prominent example is the aria “Question God” (already mentioned in chapter I), sung by Widow Xianglin at the main climax of the opera, immediately after having been dismissed by Mr. Lu.

In addition to using traditional elements of the *Huai* tune for the opera’s climatic aria, Zhao introduced innovative ones. For instance, he mixes in the same aria the modes of the eastern and western *Huai* tunes, especially in the accompaniment (see example 3.1). Measures 1–5 are in the basic mode of *yu* on B (D *gong* system), which contains the pitches B, D, E, F-sharp, A (*yu, gong, shang, jiao, zhi*) and an exceptional C-sharp (*biangong*) as an altered (and added)

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<sup>20</sup> “Xiqu yinyue chuanguo lilai shi ‘daizhe liaokao tiaowu’ de chuanguo. Ge zuozhong zuiju gexing de changqiang chengfen wangwang xingchengle mouzhong chuantong de chengshi. Zheyangde chengshi, youzhe zui miren de meili [...]. Guanzhong shuxi, guanzhong xihuan, shenzhi yibufen piaoyou ye yijing zhangwole ta. Yinci, changqiangzhong ruguo sheqile zheyang de chuantong, zheyang de chengshi, yiji sheqile ‘mizushengui de dongxi,’ zai guanzhong nali shi guobuleguande. Geng zhongyaodeshi, shi ‘mizuzhenguide dongxi’ ‘huanfaxinyan’, conger chuanguozhuchu shihe xiandai guanzhong shenmei xuqiu de, tongshi youneng zhangxian ben juzhong shengqiang yishu gexing de yinyue zuopin lai.” Zhenfang Zhao, “Bringing out the Artistic Features of the Arias in Local Operas—Focus on the Composition of the Core Aria in *Widow Xianglin*,” unpublished typescript.

<sup>21</sup> Quan Zhang, “The Evolution of the *Huai* Tune in *Huai* Opera,” *Journal of the Yancheng Teachers University (Humanities & Social Sciences Edition)*, no. 4 (August 2008): 121.

note.<sup>22</sup> Beginning with m. 8, the mode of the accompaniment switches to the altered mode of *zhi*, because the altered pitch, G-sharp (*bianzhi*) replaces F-sharp (*jiao*).

Example 3.1: Beginning of “Question God” from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*, with rests denoting measures filled only by percussion

The same combination of basic and altered modes—also of *zhi* on A (D *gong* system)—appears in the accompaniment of example 3.2. The frequent recurrence of F-sharp (*jiao*) from the second half of the third measure to the first half of the fourth measure points to the basic mode of *zhi*, the appearance of G-sharp (*bianzhi*) in the sixth and eighth measures to the altered mode of *zhi*; in the last two measures, the mode reverts to its basic form. This combination in the same *Huai* tune of the western and eastern modes was Zhao’s attempt to appeal to a broader audience.

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<sup>22</sup> The *biangong* is used as an altered pitch to add color (like a chromatic inflection in an otherwise diatonic tune). As it occurs only once, it does not have the force to mark the mode as “altered.”

hui - shou wang-shi — bu - kan (na) — gu — (wa). —

xing - fu meng er — po,

bi shang — le — bu gui — tu.

Example 3.2: Measures 103–112 of “Question God” from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

Zhao relaxed the conventions also with regard to the metrical types, eliminating their connection to a single dramatic function (see table 2.1). This innovation is particularly obvious in the first section (the “rise”) of the aria “Question God,” a section traditionally consisting of a single metrical type but now alternating between the slow and moderate beats (mm. 1–143). The slow beat (mm. 1–56) is used for the passage in which Widow Xianglin reflects on the contrast between her misfortune of having to beg in the street and the happiness of the families celebrating New Year’s Eve in their houses. Beginning with m. 57, the metrical type changes to the moderate beat, as she recalls her happy years with Mr. He, the loss of Mr. He and her son, her return to Mr. Lu, and her dismissal. The moderate beat, with its somewhat faster tempo, captures here the two basic emotions she felt after having married Mr. He (her happiness during her marriage and her devastation after her marriage). Then, at m. 98, in the middle of the sentence “And then I was dismissed and had nowhere to go,” Zhao returns to 4/4 for thirteen measures, mixing aspects of the moderate beat (the tempo) and the slow beat (the meter). At m.

113, after two measures of accompaniment, the pure moderate beat returns, as Widow Xianglin asks God what she has done to deserve her fate. The two metrical types are not used according to their conventional function (dialogue and mild and sorrowful feelings, respectively; see table 2.1), but to avoid metrical monotony and express contrasting emotions.

Zhao introduced greater variety also with regard to the position of the accented syllables within a measure. Traditionally, the syllable with the strongest accent had fallen on the downbeat, as in mm. 1–4 of example 3.3 (corresponding to mm. 73–76 of the aria). At mm. 6–9, however, Zhao placed the strongest syllable on the second and weaker beat of the measure, highlighting it with a preceding breath mark.

wo you cheng le lang - ji ku -

4 hai yi po - - chuan, cong - ci

7 yong - ren mei fa zuo, ren - men ji - hui zai - xing

Example 3.3: Measures 73–81 of “Question God”  
from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

In the second half of the aria, Zhao achieves a similar effect in the context of the serial beat, which traditionally consisted of running eighth notes and did not give the singer good opportunities to take a breath. Zhao thus modified the rhythm of the first twelve measures of example 3.4 and grouped them into four phrases of three measures, giving the singer opportunities to take a quick breath. This phrasing also has a dramatic function because it

corresponds with the syntactic and semantic structure of the text as Widow Xianglin enumerates the (overlapping) stages of her life: “having worked hard my whole life [yisheng xinlao],” “married twice [erci jiafu],” “miserable woman from the mountain [shancun kunv],” “being homeless [sichu dianbo],” “having tasted all flavors of life [wuweijuquan],” “having lost my whole family [liu qin quan wu],” and “having worried about food and clothing [chi chuan youchou].” The first four of these stages are set to rhythmically parallel three-measure phrases; with the fifth, the enumeration speeds up to one stage every two measures, thus increasing the tension.

The musical score consists of three staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: yi - sheng xin - lao, er ci jia - fu, shan - cun ku - nv, si - chu dian - bo, wu - wei - ju - quan, liu qin quan wu, chi chuan you - chou.

Example 3.4: Measure 170–87 from the second half “Question God” from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

Finally, in contrast to earlier Huai Opera, Zhao uses certain motives in *Widow Xianglin* in a manner reminiscent of Wagnerian leitmotives. These motives not only acquire a specific meaning but, due to their musical characteristics and repetition, are more easily remembered than is the remainder of the music. The motif of the “miserable Widow Xianglin,” for instance, sounds (always in the accompaniment) in connection with Widow Xianglin’s misery.<sup>23</sup> It is

<sup>23</sup> The identification and names of the leitmotives are mine.

introduced at the beginning of the “Introduction” (see example 3.5) as a lamenting melody in slow tempo and in the mode of *yu* (basically the natural minor in Western music) and returns unchanged as the introduction to the final aria (“Question God”; see example 3.1), linking the beginning and the ending of the opera to create a large-scale frame.



Example 3.5: Beginning of the “Introduction” of Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

The motif also sounds, transposed to the *D gong* system, at the beginning of Widow Xianglin’s first aria, in which she recalls the way in which she became a widow:



Example 3.6: Beginning of Widow Xianglin’s aria

“Where is My Home [hechi shi wo anshen chao]” from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

A transformed version of the leitmotif (example 3.7) appears in the instrumental interlude between the aria “Liuma ” (sung by Mr. Lu’s maidservant Liuma) and “Why did Liuma Give Me that Strange Look? [liuma weihe zhizhi chao wo wang?]” (sung by Widow Xianglin). Widow Xianglin has just returned to Mr. Lu’s house a double widow and, as she appears on stage,

notices that Liuma gives her a “strange look.” The rhythmic distortion of the leitmotive and the interpolated rests convey Widow Xianglin’s nervous reaction:



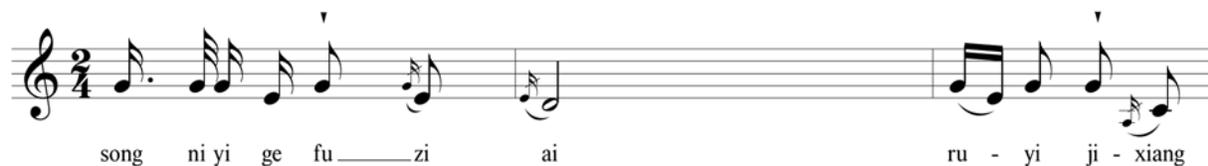
Example 3.7: Beginning of the interlude between “Liuma” and “Why did Liuma Give Me That Strange Look?” from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

Further leitmotives include those for Mr. Lu’s house (example 3.8) and Maifuren (example 3.9). The leitmotive of Mr. Lu’s house sounds only twice, each time to a change of scene to reveal Mr. Lu’s house, first at the beginning of Mr. Lu’s aria “I Couldn’t Finish Reading All the Books of the Sages [dubuan de zhihuzheyel]” and again in the instrumental transition from Mr. He’s death to Liuma’s aria “Lufu.”



Example 3.8: Excerpt of Mr. Lu’s aria “I Couldn’t Finish Reading All the Books of the Sages” from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

Maifuren appears three times in the course of the opera, each time trying to sell Widow Xianglin a sign of fortune. At each appearance, he begins singing his vendor’s song (example 3.9) but is interrupted by the appearance of Widow Xianglin on stage. The two characters then proceed with dialogue.



Example 3.9: Excerpt from “A Song of Selling Signs of Fortune [mai fu ge],”  
from Zhenfang Zhao’s *Widow Xianglin*

With the exception of the instrumentation, Zhao and Yuan updated all the elements of Huai Opera outlined in chapter II: they took a new approach to staging (relying for their visual narrative on a single stage set and an expanded role of lighting), created a libretto that meets the expectations of modern audiences, mixed role types, and relaxed rules regulating the use of the metrical types. I have discussed the latter innovation only with regard to the *Huai* tune, but it equally applies to the *La* and Free tunes as well as the twenty-nine remaining types, all minor variants of the three main tunes with regard to vocal range, structure, and dramatic function.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The *Shizi* tune, for instance, is a variant of the *Huai* tune; it has a first phrase ending on *gong* or *shang* (not, as the *Huai* tune, on *zhi*); only the second phrase ends on *zhi*. The variant tunes are often mixed with the main types.

## CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The year 2002 did not promise to be an auspicious one for Huai Opera. Several composers abandoned their career to find more lucrative jobs in the burgeoning market economy. Toward the end of the year, however, with the premiere of *Widow Xianglin* at the Fourth Huai Opera Festival, the genre's future suddenly looked brighter.

The work was a great success and garnered several major awards.<sup>1</sup> As Lijuan Chen pointed out in her review, Zhao, Yuan, and Chen succeeded in bringing the character of Widow Xianglin to life. The reasons are manifold, including the addition of love, which imbues the characters of Mr. He and Widow Xianglin with emotional depth, and the addition of Maifuren, who brings to the story an ironic dimension. Last but not least, the mixed role types allowed for more differentiated interpretations.<sup>2</sup>

*Widow Xianglin* has been performed at least once per year. The most recent performances took place at the Tianchan Yifu Theater on 24 March 2014, the Suzhou Great Hall of the People on 23 May 2014, the Hunan Grand Theatre on 23 June 2015, and the China Ping Opera Theater in Beijing on 20 November 2015. The Hunan performance is particularly noteworthy, as it marked the first performance of a Huai Opera in Hunan Province, an area that had developed its own branch of opera (called *huaguxi*) and that is both geographically and culturally remote from Jiangsu. Even here, the performance was well received:

It was unexpected that a large audience went to see [*Widow Xianglin*] and that a large portion was very young. [...] The plot contains a few changes compared to the short story; is rather different from [the *Widow Xianglin*] of other Chinese operas. [...] The differences, especially the love theme between Mr. He and Widow Xianglin, make good

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<sup>1</sup> The awards included those for best opera, best libretto, best performance, and best costume design. "The Award Winners of the Fourth Huai Opera Festival," in *Jiangsu Cultural Almanac*, ed. Jianhua Zhang (Beijing: China Photographic Publishing House, 2003), 387. For a review, see Fei Wang and Weidong Xie, "The Fourth Huai Opera Festival is Opening in Tazihou," *Yangzi Evening Newspaper*, 20 November 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Chen, "The Unique Tragic Beauty," 60.

sense and contribute to the enjoyment of the story. [...] The design of the tunes captivated the audience. There was even a member of the audience who came from Wuhan; he said that it was his first time to see a Chinese Opera and that the experience was much better than he thought it would be.<sup>3</sup>

The successful collaboration of the composer, librettist, and the members of the Chen family led to additional work in the mold of *Widow Xianglin*, including a new version of *Sunflower* [*taiyanghua*] (2005), *Sounds of Suona* [*suona shoeing sheng*] (2009), *The Eldest Son of the Family* [*jia you zhangzi*] (2011), and *Let It Be* [*tian yao xiayu niang yao jia*] (2013). All four works have been well received.

The well-known Yue Opera singer Xuefen Yuan once said that *Widow Xianglin* developed its own style and was a inspiration to local operas nationwide.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the success of *Widow Xianglin* rekindled the hope of older Huai Opera composers and encouraged younger ones to contribute to the genre of Huai Opera and to draw on the reforms of *Widow Xianglin*. The result is a repertoire of recent operas that include *Spring Water in the River Floats towards the East* [*yi jiang chun shui xiang dong liu*] (2007) by Jihua Song and Weijun Zhang, *Lotus Seed* [*lianzi*] (2013) by Jihua Song, and *Small Town* [*xiaozhen*] (2014) by Sujun Wang, all of which are one-act Huai operas that mix role types and metrical types.

*Widow Xianglin* brought Huai Opera back into the public view. If Huai Opera is to survive, however, I believe that composers need to further refine the ways in which the music can serve the libretto. Such refinements might concern the treatment of the orchestra, which still relies on a single notated melodic line serving as a cue for heterophony and, occasionally, harmony. The presence of western instruments in the modern Huai Opera orchestra, the

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<sup>3</sup> “Natian qu kanxi de ren hai zhenbushao,tebie haiyou bushao nianqingren. [...] Juqing yeyou bushao chuanguai, youbieyu qita juzhong. [...] Ziyuan jia helaoliu de qingjie geng fengman geng heli. [...] Ruqirusu de kuaiban rangren chizui. Shenpang yige Wuhan lai de guanzhong zhihu guoyin, tashuo shi diyici kanxiq, bi xiangxiangzhong haodong haokan.” Xiaoxianghandou [pseud.] “The Experience of Watching the Huai Opera *Widow Xianglin*,” blog post at [http://blog.sina.cn/dpool/blog/s/blog\\_607fab000102v1r4.html](http://blog.sina.cn/dpool/blog/s/blog_607fab000102v1r4.html) (accessed 2 June 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Ma, “A Review of Huai Opera *Widow Xianglin*,” 36.

successful use of leitmotives in *Widow Xianglin*, and the growing presence of western opera in China all seem to suggest that it is indeed the concepts and styles of western opera that may hold the clues to future reform of Huai Opera.

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APPENDIX: ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF WORKS REFERENCED IN THE THESIS

English Titles	Chinese Titles
<i>The Daughter of the Party</i>	<i>dang de nver</i>
<i>Eight Female Heroines</i>	<i>banv toujiang</i>
<i>The Eldest Son of the Family</i>	<i>jia you zhangzi</i>
<i>Jinlong and Fuyou</i>	<i>Jinlong yu Fuyou</i>
<i>The Legend of White Snake</i>	<i>baishe zhuan</i>
<i>Let It Be</i>	<i>tian yao xiayu niang yao jia</i>
<i>Lotus Seed</i>	<i>lianzi</i>
<i>The Luxun's Famous Short Story</i>	<i>luxun xiaoshuo xuanji</i>
<i>The New Year Sacrifice</i>	<i>zhufu</i>
<i>The Punishment of Chen Shimei</i>	<i>qin xianglian</i>
<i>Small Town</i>	<i>xiaozhen</i>
<i>Sounds of Suona</i>	<i>suona shoeing sheng</i>
<i>Spring Water in the River Floats towards the East</i>	<i>yi jiang chun shui xiang dong liu</i>
<i>Sunflower</i>	<i>taiyanghua</i>
<i>Susan Was Sent to Prison under Escort</i>	<i>susan qijie</i>
<i>The Toothmark</i>	<i>yahen ji</i>
<i>Visit the Cool Cave</i>	<i>tan hanyao</i>
<i>Widow Xianglin</i>	<i>xianglin sao</i>
<i>Yue Fei</i>	<i>yuefei</i>
<i>Yueying Wang</i>	<i>wangyueying</i>

## VITA

Yuxi Zhao was born in China in 1990. In 2013, she earned the degree of Bachelor of Arts (major in composition) at Shanghai University. During college, she published two papers—“Reflections on the Heritage of Jiashan Tian Ge in Zhejiang” and “On the Special Mode of Chinese Folk Music.” She will receive her master of music degree at Louisiana State University in August 2016.