Digital Animation in the Spread of the Oriental Ballet -- Huagu Opera

Liu Dan, Shen Nan

School of Art, Anhui University of Finance and Economics, Bengbu 233030, China

Abstract: Firstly, this study analyzes the current way to promote Huagu Opera, a type of the intangible cultural heritage, and the obstacles in its development. Secondly, the study gives some viable suggestions to better promote this art by sorting out, reorganizing and coding the aesthetic elements of Huagu Opera via digital animation. The strategies and technical means of the development and utilization of this new technology are discussed. Finally, the study demonstrates some design examples to illustrate and prove the feasibility of using digital animation to promote Huagu Opera.

Keywords: Digital animation, Oriental Ballet, Huagu Opera, Cultural communication, Inheritance

Huagu Opera Art, which is called Oriental Ballet, is an epitome of the unique cultural concept of Huaihe people. As one of the first national intangible cultural heritages, it is an important reflection of Huaihe culture. At present, although the Huagu Opera Art has achieved unprecedented development, due to the ineffective promotion and outdated content and form, the public, especially the youth groups, know very little about Huagu Opera Art. Digital animation, a hot visual communication medium, undoubtedly provides a good opportunity for the development of Huagu Opera Art. It transcends the limitations of time and space to transform interpersonal communication and group communication into mass communication. It integrates technology, thinking, and culture. The traditional intangible cultural resources of China are transformed into a visual, audible and perceptible animation form for the audience, which enhances the social attractiveness and social influence of the Huagu Opera Art.

1. The performance and promotion of Huagu Opera Art

1.1. The characteristics of the performance of Huagu Opera Art

The performance of Huagu Opera Art is an entertaining and comprehensive art activity that integrates opera, songs and dance, acrobatics, martial arts, and the play of wind instruments. The Huagu Opera Art originates from the folk, and it is shown to the audience through oral expressions and body movements. Huagu Opera Art entails a group of people doing impromptu performance. Therefore, there is usually no fixed venue for performances, and the venue is flexible and unconstrained. The procedure of performance is also not fixed. The music of Huagu Opera Art basically comes from folk tunes, with a lively rhythm, a strong feeling and a setting of country life, concerning extensive topics. In the Huagu Opera Art performance, the female actor is called the *Orchid*, the male actor is called the *Drum Shelf*, and the lead dancer is called the *Umbrella Head*. The *Umbrella Head* usually leads dancing and singing with the *Orchid* and the *Drum Shelf*. [1] Huagu Opera Art is easy to begin and stop, and is highly flexible and varied, investing itself with both great randomness and meticulousness. For example, the male actor *Drum Shelf* has the vigor and simplicity of the north, while the female actor *Orchid* has the flexibility and beauty of the south. The source of a certain traditional Chinese culture comes from the performance which can be seen as a complete and colorful art language.

1.2. Promotion of Huagu Opera Art

In the long historical process, the Huagu Opera Art has been well inherited and carried forward, thanks to the effective inheriting method. For example, the largest Tushan Yuwang Temple Fair held in Huaiyuan County, Anhui Province on March 28 of the lunar calendar every year exemplifies a typical folk activity of Huagu Opera Art and a link between the people on both sides of the Huaihe River. The traditional way of promoting Huagu Opera Art is mainly through Huagu Opera Art Temple Fair, Huagu Opera Art Festival, large-scale Huagu Opera Art Plaza performances, newspapers, radio, and television. However, in the wake of the global integration, modern entertainment is gradually replacing traditional

entertainment with the impact of rising foreign cultures. The public's interest in Huagu Opera Art is decreasing, threatening the survival and development of Huagu Opera Art.

The 13th Five-Year Plan clearly pointed out important guidelines and policies such as promoting the integrated development of traditional media and emerging media, accelerating the digitalization of media, and creating a batch of new mainstream media as well as innovating external communication, cultural exchanges, and cultural trade methods. Therefore, the inheritance of traditional culture needs to be combined with the development of the time and follow the trend, break free from the shackles of traditional ways of promotion, absorb new ideas, and use new technologies for innovative development. Only by eradicating the traditional indoctrination and rigid ways of dissemination, catering to the needs of the masses, and using a myriad of promotion ways in new media, can we truly prosper the Huagu Opera Art.

2. The application of digital animation in Huagu Opera Art

2.1. Expanding the spread of Huagu Opera Art culture

The advent of new media has eliminated the limitations of space, time, and place in the inheritance of traditional culture, and has increased the choices and demand of users. The traditional way of spreading Huagu Opera Art is highly physical in the form with the inheritors of Huagu Opera Art performing it to the public. The application of digital animation technology can effectively reduce the use of traditional physical methods in the spread of the art by converting its visual elements into data information, including pictures, text, sound, video, etc. In this way, the dissemination of this art can be much more effective and reaches a larger group of people. At the same time, the capacity of Huagu Opera Art recording and storing cultural information can be greatly improved, which is of great significance for promoting the Huagu Opera Art and eradicating the predicament in the cultural inheritance of Huagu Opera Art.

Effective dissemination is the foundation of sustainable development of Huagu Opera Art. While we make good use of traditional media to promote it, we also needs to take advantage of the immediacy, entertainment, convenience, and interactivity of new media and mobile media to develop brand apps, WeChat official accounts, etc., develop topical marketing and other communication channels through social media of great participation, originality and interactivity, and broaden the scope of performance of digital virtual technology. In this way, the animation industry will have a more profound impact on the audience. [2]

2.2. The sustainable development of Huagu Opera Art

Digital animation technology plays a pivotal role in promoting the sustainable development of Huagu Opera Art. At present, in the protection and inheritance of Huagu Opera, this art is normally handed down from one generation to another. It is realized through physical activities, which are completely different from the digital, cross-time, cross-media and diversified demonstration of digital animation technology. Huagu Opera is very easy to learn and has some characteristics which coincide with the characteristics of digital animation, such as the interest, simplicity, and popularity of folk dance.

The use of digital animation technology to protect the Huagu Opera Art can help to display the information conveyed by the Huagu Opera in a multi-angle, omni-directional and three-dimensional manner, which can promote and raise the reputation of Huagu Opera and allow Huagu Opera to reach more people who can possibly know more about, fall in love with and become supporters of this art. We can effectively convert the cultural value of Huagu Opera into economic value, and then use this economic value as a guarantee for the long-term development of Huagu Opera. As a result, the mutual conversion of cultural value and economic value can be realized through digital animation technology, so as to realize the sustainable development of Huagu Opera Art.

2.3. The increase of the value of Huagu Opera

Huagu Opera is famous for its magnificent artistic form and spiritual connotation. It is the cultural treasure of Anhui Province and shoulders the social function of carrying forward and disseminating the information about Huai River culture. We can display Huagu Opera in the form of digital animation, infusing it with new vitality. It is an interactive and entertaining new experience based on traditional culture. The merge of traditional culture and modern science and technology empowers the promotion of

Huagu Opera and creates a new image for Huagu Opera Art. While inheriting the traditional culture, it also shows the contemporary aesthetic value, so that immersive and interesting experience may replace tedious watching.

Performing Huagu Opera in the form of digital animation can make the audience enjoy the Huagu Opera Art more easily, so as to reduce the appreciation threshold of foreign audiences and help to break the boundary between Chinese and Western cultures. With more modernized and relaxing presentation forms, it attracts audiences from different regions and with different ages, cultures, and customs to enjoy Huagu Opera. The use of digital animation can effectively realize the inheritance and innovation of the cultural connotation of Huagu Opera across regions and media, help to hand down the art of Huagu Opera which possess some distinct characteristics, allow Huagu Opera to go out of Anhui, of China and go to the world, and let more people know, understand and appreciate the beauty of Huagu Opera Art from multiple perspectives and in a comprehensive way.

3. The strategies to promote Oriental Ballet --Huagu Opera Art via digital animation

3.1. The application of digital animation technology in the presentation of Huagu Opera Art

The development of animation is inseparable from the soil that nurtures it. In recent years, Chinese animation has greatly improved in production and creativity, bringing about an enthusiasm among Chinese people for domestic animations, such as *Big Fish Begonia*, *White Snake: Origin*, *Ne Zha* and *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*. Their common feature is to use digital animation to tell Chinese traditional stories and fairy tales. Digital animation technology has injected new blood into Chinese traditional stories and broadened the space for creativity and application. We can use various digital technology methods, such as photography, digital recording, motion capture technology, digital scanning technology, etc., to collect, sort out, classify and store the data concerning Huagu Opera, digital virtual technology to get a better understanding of the essence of this art, and 2D animation, 3D animation or VR to carry out the performance, so that we can realize the integration of the denotation and connotation of Huagu Opera.

Digital animation technology not only gives Huagu Opera Art new vitality, but also makes Huagu Opera Art show diversified development, so as to expand its communication channels through Internet technology. With the help of digital animation technology as the carrier to spread the Huagu Opera Art culture, highlight the unique cultural connotation of the Huagu Opera Art, and expand the Huagu Opera Art and culture industry. In addition, when building the Huagu Opera Art culture brand, carry out multi project platform promotion with the help of digital animation forms and digital animation industry products, and use high-tech emerging animation culture industry projects, such as animated films, animated TV media, new 3D digital animation and animated short videos, to shape and carry forward the Huagu Opera Art culture, so as to improve the convenience and timeliness of communication.

3.2. The application of digital animation to improve the awareness of protecting Huagu Opera Art

Huagu Opera is a cultural heritage originating from the people on both sides of Huaihe River over a long period of time. At present, in order to seek new ideas for the development of Huagu Opera, people produce a series of documentaries about the inheritors of the Huagu Opera, introduction films of the Huagu Opera Art, and Huagu Opera performances combined with the modern stage. However, these measures often have little effect, and can't make Huagu Opera receive warm welcome from the public, so that the public's awareness to protect Huagu Opera Art culture has not improved. Animation shoulders the new mission of spreading and developing traditional culture. The artistic symbols of Huagu Opera, such as gongs, drums, dance, pace, and music are the treasure house of animation design. Animation and Huagu Opera echo each other and blend together. For example, the movement, speed, melody, rhythm of gongs and drums in Huagu Opera should be consistent with the relevant characteristics of animation. This medium, which has popular appeal, great communication capability and affinity, can not only enrich the visual presentation of Huagu Opera and the content of animation, but also attract young people and improve people's understanding of Huagu Opera Art culture.

Story telling in digital animation is a unique communication means of human beings. It can provide information and entertainment for the audience. In the whole process of digital animation production, the choice of story is very important. First, the innovation of theme is immensely important, and the animation should contain new connotation and artistic conception from different angles or ways. Second, the range of the theme should be expanded to reflect people's longing for a better life and their optimism. The story telling, character modeling, action characteristics and style design techniques should be

consistent with the theme selected. Only new stories can bring new experience to the audience. For example, the creators can take the origin of the Huagu Opera as the theme. It is said that Da Yu, an ancient Chinese hero to harness the flood, passed by his house three times but did not enter, and Da Yu's wife, Nv Jiao, missed her husband so much that she stood on the hillside and looked into the distance every day and eventually turned into a huge stone. The people along the Huaihe River played gongs and danced in order to praise them. Over time, Huagu Opera was formed. This story can be used as a prototype for animation. The typical script, character modeling, stylized action design, life scene setting and the performance characteristics of folk music of Huagu Opera Art are integrated into the interesting script, personalized character modeling, virtual scene setting, exaggerated action design and popular music of animation, to show the unique charm of Huagu Opera Art animation. [3] In addition, in respect of the performance of Huagu Opera, we should not only innovate in the performance content, but also find a unique way in the external form and adds the cultural background, so as to produce animation of Huagu Opera teeming with vitality, which is in line with the appreciation taste of the contemporary public.

3.3. The application of the interactivity of digital animation in increasing people's love for Huagu Opera Art

Digital animation brings people a new experience in digitalization and interaction. Digital animation realizes the purpose of creating an emotional atmosphere through the changes of visual elements such as light and tone with the help of coding or animation software. Compared with stage performances, documentaries and film and television works, animations can be more exaggerated and freer, so that the audience can fully feel the thoughts and emotions conveyed by animations. With the development of technology, modern animation is not limited to two dimensions, while 3D animation has been widespread. The animation with the integration of various technologies will make the audience feel the animation in a multi-directional and immersive way from vision, hearing and touch. The interactivity of digital animation has improved the entertainment for the performance of Huagu Opera.

At present, the game market is hot, and many young people are very keen on games. Dance and music game animation can be combined with the dance posture and music of Huagu Opera. More specifically, we can put the dance action of Huagu Opera into the game and allow the audience to dance correspondingly. The game can not only widely spread the Huagu Opera, but also let the public participate in it, personally feel the charm of Huagu Opera by dancing to the music. In addition, the Huagu Opera can be made into cartoons that introduce the origin and development of it, so that children can have a certain understanding and interest in the Huagu Opera from an early age. Promoting Huagu Opera through these ways can bring economic values and development for cultural industry, and enhance the public's enthusiasm for Huagu Opera.

The unique interactivity and immersion of digital animations can make the public intoxicated in the Huagu Opera, personally feel the charm of the Huagu Opera, make the audience become receivers and participants of it, and willing to promote of the art themselves. This interactivity can accelerate the speed of cultural communication, improve the communication efficiency, and imperceptibly affect the public's acceptance and love for Huagu Opera, so that the traditional culture can continuously adapt to the development of mass culture and meet the public's aesthetic needs. It is of great value in the inheritance of Huagu Opera to improve the communication efficiency.

4. Case analysis of digital animation of Huagu Opera

The following is a case of designing the character image of Huagu Opera according to the requirements of a customer. Because the customer is engaged in the traditional folk wedding industry, three design requirements are put forward. First, the character style is festive, and the message told from its shape and color should be consistent with the traditional wedding values. Second, the characters need two sets of schemes – static standing posture and dynamic dance, which are convenient for use in various occasions such as advertisements and wedding videos. It is best to design some props based on Huagu Opera. Third, the story setting needs to be simple and eye-catching, matching with the wedding occasion. Based on the above requirements, after repeated discussions with customers, we have determined the following schemes.

4.1. Subject selection

I chose this theme from my own point of view. For a period, I liked to purchase new mobile phones.

Even if I finally got a mobile phone, I still didn't feel satisfied because I couldn't catch up with the upgrading of electronic products. This is the consequence of desire. Therefore, I chose the desire of human as the theme of this short film.

4.2. Theme of the short film

The theme of the short film is to control desire, but desire belongs to the a study subject of psychology. In order to better illustrate the theme, I used metaphor by turning desire into a monster to tell what I want to express. On the way of growing up, a little girl's desire was constantly amplified. Then, to meet her psychological desire, the girl had to work hard to feed the monster, which made her physically and mentally tired. One day, she realized that the monster would never be completely full, and her desire could not be satisfied, so she controlled her appetite and made her desire smaller, and the monster would live in peace with girls instead of running after the girl. Through the little girl's relationship with the monster, the story reflects how to control one's inner desire and teaches people that happiness consists in contentment.

4.3. Story outline

The short film called *Chasing Monster* is mainly about a 5-year-old girl. A monster suddenly appeared around her and played with the little girl. No one else, except for the little girl, can see the monster. With the time passing by, the little girl and the monster are growing up. The monster had to be fed every day while its appetite is increasing day by day. If the little girl didn't feed him enough, he will keep chasing the girl. In order to satisfy him, the girl had to work continuously for 12 hours every day, which exhausted her. Until one day, the girl realized that the monster would never be full and began to limit the monster's food. As a result, the monster became smaller.

First, when the monster first appeared, it had no desire. Second, with the growth of time, the monster's appetite grew. Third, the girl realized that the monster could not be satisfied, so she limited its food. Unexpectedly, because of this act, the monster no longer ran after the girl. In this way, the story unfolds its theme that desire needs to be controlled and happiness consists in contentment.

4.4. Film style and production effect

In Figure 1, this design has been tried out at many local wedding celebrations, proving a positive response from the audience, and it was finally accepted by the customer.

Fig 1 Author design

5. Conclusion

The Huagu Opera Art, known as Oriental Ballet, is the crystallization of the wisdom of countless folk artists for thousands of years, holding a special place in Chinese folk songs and dancing. How to make the traditional art form of Huagu Opera Art permanent in the annals of human culture and civilization is a question worthy of careful consideration. Digital animation is an effective means to facilitate the spread of Huagu Opera Art culture. It provides new opportunities and challenges for the spread and development of Huagu Opera Art. The rapid development of information technology has given birth to diversified animation types, such as game animation, interactive animation, website welcome page Flash animation, mobile MMS animation, etc. This has created plenty of creative possibilities for the protection and spread of the Huagu Opera Art in the Huaihe River Basin. Although there is still a long way to go to inherit and develop the Huagu Opera Art culture, as long as we endeavor to continuously absorb new methods and seek new technologies, the Huagu Opera Art will prosper in the future.

Acknowledgements

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