

Analysis of design strategies for stage costume patterns

Riren Ge

Anqing Normal University, Anqing, Anhui, 246000, China

Abstract: Patterns play an important role in theatre costumes, and when watching a stage performance, people can distinguish the patterns of the costumes to understand the roles involved and the information related to the roles. In the process of designing costume patterns, the designers not only take into account traditional elements, but also use modern design methods to add more modern elements. With this in mind, this paper focuses on strategies for designing theatre costume patterns, which can provide useful references for the design of theatre costume patterns in the present day.

Keywords: stage costumes; costume patterns; design strategies

Patterns have been used in a wide range of costumes in China since ancient times, both for life and for stage performances. As the saying goes, art comes from life but is higher than life, so the patterns that appear on stage costumes are closely linked to people's everyday lives, but the patterns on stage costumes are designed using a variety of strategies to make the patterns more colourful. In the new era, the design of theatrical costume patterns has become more modern, and the design strategies have been modernised.

1. The basic characteristics of colour

The world in which people live is full of colour, which makes life better and is the basis of human art, the absence of which will inevitably lead to many negative effects. Colour is not only present in nature and human art, but also permeates all aspects of human life, for example, the saying 'people depend on their clothes' suggests that there is an abundance of colour in clothing. For example, black has a solemn and sad meaning to people, so people tend to wear black dresses on formal occasions; green has a meaning of life to people, and in recent years more people are concerned about environmental protection, and most plants in nature have green leaves. In recent years there has been a greater focus on environmental protection, and most plants in nature have green leaves, so green has been given a new meaning of 'environmental protection'. The meaning given to colour varies according to country, region and nationality, and changes with the times, reflecting practical, aesthetic and symbolic underpinnings.

2. Traditional clothing pattern related connotation

Traditional motifs are an important part of our traditional culture, reflecting the spiritual connotations of Chinese civilisation. Divided into three types, geometric, botanical and animal motifs, traditional patterns are presented in a variety of vehicles, such as clothing, ceramics and architecture. The birth of traditional patterns in China can be traced back as far as the Neolithic period, and as human society progressed and production levels increased, the forms of traditional patterns gradually increased. In terms of traditional clothing patterns, different clothing patterns have different connotations, and clothing patterns can reflect the message of the wearer, such as the dragon pattern on the dragon robe of the emperor in ancient China, which has a sacred meaning and represents the Son of Heaven, who is one of the nine to five, so the dragon pattern can only be used by the emperor. How to apply traditional costume patterns with different connotations to the design process of stage costumes has become one of the key directions in the study of the spiritual connotations of traditional Chinese culture^[1].

3. The characteristics of traditional clothing pattern

3.1 Beautiful colour features

In ancient times in China, the upper classes often gave colours and patterns on their clothing when expressing their status and setting off their majesty. In our ancient text, "Shang Shu - Yi Ji", it is clearly recorded that "the elephants of the ancients, the sun, moon, stars, mountains, dragons and Chinese insects, made the meeting; Zong Yi, algae, fire, powdered rice, embroidery and embroidery, linen embroidery, with five colours manifested in five colours, made the clothing." Traditional costume patterns are often matched with colour, for example, in *The Lady with the Hairpin*, there are various types of exquisite patterns on the ladies' costumes, such as turtle-back patterns, purple and green floral patterns, purple cluster flowers and coloured cranes, giving people a sense of the graceful and luxurious temperament of the ladies in the painting. This shows that traditional costume patterns have beautiful colours and can be used in just the right way.

3.2 Context-rich features

Traditional clothing patterns are not only beautiful and artistic, but they also have a rich cultural connotation that conveys the content of our traditional culture to the viewer. In our ancient feudal society, there was a clear division between classes, so there were significant differences in the costume patterns that could be used by people of different classes. In the case of traditional Chinese opera, the costume patterns for characters of high status were usually dragons, pythons, phoenixes and other animal prints representing nobility and good fortune, and embroidered with gold and silver threads; while the costumes of characters of lower status used fewer patterns and did not use animal prints such as dragons, but more often used plant prints to express the character traits of the characters; the costumes of commoners' characters sometimes did not even have any patterns. The costumes of the commoners sometimes do not even have any motifs and are made of plain fabrics. Today, the design of costume motifs is no longer restricted by class and the content of the motifs continues to expand. [2]

3.3 Well laid out features

The traditional costume patterns of China are brightly coloured and have a unique connotation, allowing the viewer to distinguish between the main and secondary characters on stage through the patterns of the different characters, and to identify the identity of the characters. Traditional patterns, like modern patterns, focus on the distribution of points, lines and surfaces on the costume, with the main two types of distribution being symmetrical and staggered. Although traditional costume patterns look more complex and some of them take up almost the entire costume, they do not make the viewer feel disorganised, but produce a sense of dignity and grandeur; there are also some stage costume patterns with a small area, resulting in a large amount of "white space" in the costume, but they do not look monotonous and look more elegant. Whatever the pattern layout, it can give the viewer a sense of artistic beauty while successfully portraying the character on stage.

4. The use of different patterns in theatre costumes

4.1 Patterns and colours commonly used in traditional opera costumes

As one of the traditional stage performances in China, the patterns of stage costumes include plants, animals, and geometric patterns of various shapes, usually done using embroidery techniques, with vibrant colours and strong contrasts. The colours of the patterns often have a high degree of purity, complementing or emphasising the colours of the costumes, and thus expressing the character of the characters on stage. In order to ensure a harmonious relationship between the pattern and the costume, designers often focus on the ornate nature of the pattern, such as the gold and silver threads mentioned above, which provide a sense of opulence while also reducing the abruptness of multiple high purity colours appearing at the same time. In addition, traditional stage costume patterns contrast high saturation colours with low saturation colours, and high brightness colours with low brightness colours. Thanks to the use of changes in brightness, colour gradients and intervals of intermediate colours in the design of the pattern, the stage costumes become brightly coloured, maximising the advantages that colour has to offer. [3]

4.2 The identity of a person can be identified through clothing patterns

The pattern of the stage costume not only has an irreplaceable artistic quality, but also reflects the identity of the stage character, which is similar to the faces in traditional Chinese operas such as Peking Opera. Typically, yellow costumes and patterns are used when portraying members of the royal family, and red and purple costumes and patterns are used when portraying high-ranking officials, the reason being that in ancient times, the colours of the costumes of high-ranking officials were red and purple, which is the origin of the idiom "Da Hong Da Zi". Some of the stage costumes are coloured in cooler colours such as green and white, with golden python patterns and a distinctive glossy pattern, which were often used for military generals. For example, in the opera "The Meeting of the Young Guns", the costume of the character Zhou Yu is a white python robe in a lighter shade of blue with a gold patterned python, with pink as an embellishment, reflecting the handsome and youthful character of Zhou Yu.

5. Strategies for designing stage costume patterns using modern elements

5.1 The use of modern and innovative motifs

As our modern society is free from serious class attitudes and more and more people are interested in watching theatre performances and are more willing to get in touch with and learn about our traditional culture, pattern design has become more liberal when applied to theatre costumes. Not only do designers choose to use traditional patterns, but they also add modern design elements so that the patterns on stage costumes are in line with modern aesthetics. In addition to this, the designers have also made bold innovations in the production of patterns based on tradition, combining modern elements such as openwork, printing and dyeing, and cutting to give the costumes more beautiful patterns and impressive aesthetics.

Not only that, but the costume patterns themselves have also changed significantly. In the new version of *The Peony Pavilion*, the costume of the female lead, Du Liniang, has a brightly coloured butterfly pattern, which did not exist in the ancient costumes. The new motifs are more figurative in nature than traditional stage costume patterns, and are more colourful and bold in their approach. The designers have succeeded and developed the traditional patterns, but have also introduced modern painting and design concepts and used them through abstraction.^[4]

5.2 The use of modern material innovation techniques

Some of the current designers of stage costume patterns in China use advanced technology to change the material of the pattern, or even the whole material of the stage costume, to make the expression of the costume pattern more diverse. After the pattern material has been transformed, the texture changes and the content of the pattern changes, producing a more modern aesthetic sense of art, even though it does not have the rigour of traditional costume patterns. However, modern material innovations can currently only be used in new, modern stage performances, and if used in traditional stage performances, such as our traditional opera, they can lead to a significant loss of aesthetic appeal, which requires more exploration by the designers involved.

5.3 The use of modern technology and innovation techniques

Modern technology is still in a constant state of advancement, so theatre costumes can use more diverse expressions in terms of pattern design. Nowadays, patterns are not only expressed by the textures of the costumes themselves, but can also be combined with stage lighting, which can be changed by the staff in charge of managing the lighting during the performance, so that the patterns can be displayed in a very different way, using light and projection to give the viewer a richer and more original visual experience. However, the use of modern technology in the design of motifs has some drawbacks that cannot be ignored: the use of technology entails significant capital costs, and some of the traditional connotations cannot be fully demonstrated through technology. Designers should pay more attention to these issues in the design process in order to find new ways to solve them.^[5]

6. Conclusion

As mentioned above, the use of stage costumes is essential to any stage performance, and when

patterns are added to stage costumes, their appearance becomes more exquisite and they have a stronger sense of art. The current stage costumes have been influenced by modernisation in terms of pattern design. By combining traditional patterns with modern designs, new stage costume patterns can be designed that are more in line with current aesthetics, enriching the content of the stage performance and presenting people with a new, interesting and connotative visual feast.

References

- [1] Hu Bingqian. *A brief discussion on the colour matching of stage costume patterns [J]. Textile Report, 2020, 39(11):59-61.*
- [2] Li Ping. *The application of ethnic style elements in stage costume design [J]. Screen Printing, 2022(14): 34-37.*
- [3] Zhao Xubin. *Exploring the design of stage costume patterns [J]. Textile Report, 2022, 41(03):81-83.*
- [4] Huang Yunfang, Wu Hongfang, Zhu Zhenzhen. *An artistic study on the stage costumes of Anqing Huangmei opera--Tianxianmiao as an example [J]. Journal of Beijing Printing Institute, 2021, 29(S2): 55-57.*
- [5] Jin Yunji, Lv Wenfeng. *Research on makeup modeling and design of modern stage costume performance [J]. Footwear Craft and Design, 2022, 2(20):19-21.*