

Analysis of Aesthetic Characteristics of Variety Shows on Traditional Chinese Culture

Ruo Jia^{1,a,*}, Xun Yin^{1,b} and Jingda Fan^{2,c}

¹School of Media Science/School of Journalism, Northeast Normal University, Changchun, China

²School of Media Science/School of Journalism, Northeast Normal University, Changchun, China

^a17816793@qq.com, ^b1223292880@qq.com, ^c18865781995@139.com

*Corresponding author e-mail: 17816793@qq.com

Keywords: Chinese traditional culture; Aesthetic appreciation; Audience; Aesthetics

Abstract: In addition to its specific cultural attributes, variety shows carry an enormous aesthetic value on Chinese traditional culture. It can not only give the audience a graceful visual and auditory enjoyment during the program, but also acquaint the audience with Chinese culture through lively activities. These shows primarily aim at inheriting the traditional culture by facilitating the perception onto Chinese historic and cultural treasures for its audiences so as to make it truly enter the daily lives of the public. The successive broadcasts of "National Treasures", "Everlasting Classics" and "Chinese Poetry Conference" have improved the audience's cultural literacy, cultivated the public's aesthetic consciousness, allowing more people to appreciate the charm of the Chinese classic culture. The analysis of the aesthetic characteristics of variety shows has a relatively high social value.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the variety show genre has been flourishing. With improved intellectual, artistic, informative, and sentimental characteristics, the new cultural variety shows emerge in response to the national policy of "promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese excellent traditional culture". The main subject of this thesis is the programs that functions to inherit traditional cultural classics among various cultural variety shows. The variety shows with the function of inheritance should not only play a role in introducing literature and historical knowledge and cultivating the public, but should also conduct cultural renaissance and inheritance in line with the national call and the public expectations. The 5000-year-old Chinese cultural treasures should be integrated into the popular elements of the 21st century, thus revitalizing the charm of classic culture and carrying forward the spirit of the time. The three representative programs of "Chinese Poetry Conference", "Everlasting Classics", and "National Treasures" are selected for analysis in order to find the general characteristics and significance of the aesthetics of cultural variety shows.

2. "National Treasures" Displays the Beauty of the Great Powers' Civilization Through Ancient Artifacts

"National Treasure" is a program covering traditional Chinese culture that CCTV has been working on for nearly two years. It has been broadcast for two seasons. The specific form is presented with the help of relevant film and television stars to acquaint the audience with the ancient artifacts' stories in the past as well as today. The cultural backgrounds behind the cultural relics have been introduced by these stories. Relevant experts then make important reviews by making use of ancient ideas for today's reference, ultimately enhancing the public's aesthetic and

national pride. Unique techniques of records and stage drama have been borrowed in the production of the program, which created a new expression with the help of the variety show, the attitude of recording, and the temperament of drama based on culture.



Figure1. "National Treasures"

2.1. With the setting depicted and the emotions expressed in perfect harmony, the "stage drama" embodies the beauty of artistic conception

Artistic conception is a theory of Chinese classical aesthetics, which has been reflected evidently in one of CCTV's popular variety shows — "National Treasures". The program has received strong attention since its launching, with the ratings repeatedly breaking new records. Such satisfactory results were not only due to the excellent production of CCTV variety shows and the effect of popular stars. What matters most was that this program could offer the audience a pleasing enjoyment while educating the public. It has obvious aesthetic implications. The program has been illustrating the cultural treasures and historical stories of the Chinese nation by telling the past and present of the national treasure, presenting a program introducing Chinese culture that is unique to its origins. The audience won't feel bored in the process of explaining the past and present of the national treasure. On the contrary, the program reflected the aesthetic expression technique. The stars have been invited to interpret the roles of the legends related to the cultural relics in the form of stage dramas. The stage settings were vivid and artistic, making the audience immersed in it as if they are really crossing the vast river of history. The grand presentation of this kind of stage drama is novel and unique. The dramatic adaptation has been made based on the respective history, which added to the entertainment, and enabled the audience to experience the joys and sorrows of roles in the drama. This dramatic expression paid more attention to the true feelings and emotional expressions, and continuously gave the audience an emotional and visual enjoyment. While conveying the profound heritage of Chinese culture, the method of harmonious blending of feeling and setting has formed an artistic effect of the artistic conception with relatively high aesthetic value. This kind of stage drama, featuring the harmonious blending of sentiments and setting, made the original cultural relics, which tended to be cold and incompatible to our daily life, instantly turn lively and vivid, as if they have entered the life and vision of the public. The audience could easily learn the "joys and sorrows" of the national treasures with the help of the first-class dance effect, as well as science and technology

What left a deep impression on the audience in the second season of the "National Treasure" is Tong Liya's performance. The movie star wore gorgeous costumes of the Tang Dynasty and presented a warm and legendary ancient story with her charming and graceful manner, which led

the audience to the flourishing and prosperous chapter of the Tang Dynasty. The performer, in gorgeous costumes and exquisite makeup, presented the past stories of the wooden figurines of silk and painting. Her *Huadian* (a forehead decoration) was eye-catching, which served as the finishing touch of the whole makeup. *Huadian* has gained popularity since the Tang Dynasty. The shape could be plum blossoms, as well as small birds and small fish, which made it exquisite and interesting. The stage background was fabricated by computers. The tall and green vines were packed with purple grapes. The contrast of color was obvious. Tong, along with other two dancers, were gentle and pretty in a light-colored long dress. All of the presentations, from the stage setting to the costumes, performers' makeup and stage props, which were exquisite and delicate, gave the audience great enjoyment. An audience commented, "Beautiful appearance in the prosperous Tang Dynasty". The fusion of emotions with setting completely shows the beauty of the artistic conception, the attraction of the costume and the elegance of the dance, making the audience linger.

2.2. Classical cultural relics exhibition embodies the beauty of Chinese treasures

An exquisite and solemn cultural relic can not only show the audience the beauty of its own form, but also give people a beautiful enjoyment. More importantly, it can inspire the audience's aesthetic consciousness to make corresponding exclamations while enjoying the national treasure, such as "Look just how great our ancestors are!" or "the spirit is worthy of admiration". This is what really counts. For example, the Changxin Palace lantern in Hebei Museum is known as the first lamp of China. It is a cultural relic of the Western Han Dynasty, and dates back to more than 2,000 years ago. It has been preserved until today and holds an extraordinary charm. From the perspective of the form, an actor, holding a lantern in hand, sat on both heels with knees close to each other. The program used a personification technique to transform the palace lantern into a maid of honor. The combination of the actual female actor with the artifact vividly showed the beauty of our Chinese nation. The combination of a real female figure with the lantern vividly embodies the virtuous morality — dignity. Visually-inspired attention and thoughts educate the audience with an aesthetic sense, while also stimulating the spread of beauty of dignity at the present age. The internal structure of the seemingly simple palace lantern was presented in an extremely sophisticated manner, as if scientific principles recently discovered in the modern world have been used by our ancestors. This also shows the world the wisdom of the people in the Western Han Dynasty, which is still admired by the world. In the meantime, it also conveys the extraordinary craftsmanship of the Great Han Dynasty to the world.



Figure 2. "National Treasures"

The deeper significance of this palace lantern is to convey to the world that the lantern is considered as a wish for country's prosperity and people's well-being. It also contains the great wisdom and broad mind of Empress Dowager Dou (in the Western Han Dynasty), who was concerned about the country and the people. She gave a lantern to Liu Sheng (grandson of Empress Dowager Dou) to warn that he should focus on Han's foundation. While the Empress Dowager had the absolute political power as a woman, she preferred to dedicate her role silently. The broad mind of Empress Dowager Dou has also been highlighted in the show, thus elevating the significance of the theme and allowing the audience to feel the charm of the national treasure as well as the greatness of the long-standing civilization of the Chinese nation.

3. "Everlasting Classics" — Reading Poems in the form of Songs Adds the Beauty of Rhythm to Poetry.

"Everlasting Classics" has reached a new aesthetic level in the inheritance of classical culture and program innovation. From the analysis of cultural roots, Chinese ancient poetry is not separated. For example, poems with epigraph name are full of melodies. "Everlasting Classics" has restored the original melody of ancient poetry. In addition, the poems are accompanied by modern melodies to make them catchy and easy to spread.^[1] In this way, the ancient poetry draws the public's attention once again. For instance, Su Shi's *Calming the Waves, Listen not to the Rain Beating against the Trees* is adapted by adding popular musical elements to it and then sung by a singer, Huang Qishan. For young people, this program has allowed them to perceive the charm of traditional culture in terms of emotion and aesthetics and it makes ancient poetry more energetic and easier for young people to understand and accept. For the performers, they are aesthetic subjects as well as aesthetic objects. There were interactions between the performers, which produced aesthetic effects through interaction and played a key role in whether this program was worth watching for the audience. The performers varied from young stars with a large number of fans to veteran artists who can bring feelings to the public. This combination of the young and the elderly is more able to spark of aesthetics.



Figure 3. "Everlasting Classics"

In addition, instilling ancient poetry with melody improves the innate beauty of the artistic conception that can carry forward the traditional Chinese virtues. For example, *The Song of Mulan* sung by Shang Wenzhao incisively and vividly displayed the filial piety that the heroine Mulan

showed for her father. Wang Junkai's *Song of Tomorrow* and Wang Lihong's *San Tzu Ching* reflect the integrity of children and adolescents. As mentioned, strong youth leads to a strong country.

4. "Chinese Poetry Conference" relives the literary beauty of classical poetry

"Chinese Poetry Conference" is a large-scale studio program on culture and puzzle independently developed by the CCTV Science and Education Channel (CCTV-10). Through the competition mechanism and the principle of integration, on the one hand, the audience has been mobilized to participate enthusiastically, on the other hand, the audience has been allowed to revisit the ancient classic poetry and experience the charm of Chinese national poetry gems. The re-emergence of excellent traditional culture has become the main theme of the current era, and classical poetry as the most basic aesthetic education is an important foundation for the public. The beauty of poetry which is reflected by the variety TV show has brought about a unique flavor.



Figure 4. "Chinese Poetry Conference"

In the "Chinese Poetry Conference", the revival of traditional aesthetic culture begun with a classical poetry, but it was not just about the appreciation of poetry, but more importantly, acknowledging that poetry is the basis of traditional culture. The aesthetic significance of Chinese classical poetry lies more in the audience's ability to understand and then apply the philosophy of life and the virtuous moral character of the poets, which are revealed in the poems to our own lives so as to enrich our experience and characters. The over three thousand years of development of poetry has further laid its' position in the Chinese traditional culture. Its influence on the development of the Chinese nation is far beyond our imagination. It has already been integrated into the blood of Chinese people, while the Chinese nation's integrity and mind can also be reflected in classical poetry, which was the original intention of CCTV to produce this program.

The scene of the program has been filled with antiquities and charm, and the program has also highlighted the classical Chinese characteristics during the competition. When the participants were about to select the topic for answering, the flags were waved and the drums were rumbled to enhance the momentum. Meanwhile, this brings the audience back to the ancient atmosphere. The beauty was reflected even more when the poetry was explained, the screen corresponded to the slowly unfolding scroll, which was not only magnificent but also beautified the poetry. It gave the audience a beautiful visual enjoyment while also improving the audience's knowledge, bringing in both delight and instructions to avoid the lack of loftiness in the presentation. "Chinese Poetry Conference" has actively conveyed the aesthetic connotation of Chinese classical poetry, made the Chinese cultural treasures yield unusually brilliant results and allowed the audience to experience the beauty of poetry and benefit from it.

5. Conclusion

The real significance of the Chinese traditional variety shows on culture is to enable young people in the current era to understand the five-thousand-year-old Chinese history and the traditional culture that has been passed down from ancient times, so that our country's cultural charm could be everlasting. The classic cultural variety show can arouse every Chinese's enthusiasm for history as well as our admiration and pride of our country's possession of so many cultural treasures, and make the audience touched by the beliefs in the show and respect the classic art and the spirit of craftsmanship. This is the true charm of the classic cultural variety shows since they bring us knowledge, inspire our feelings, enable us to immerse deeply while watching the show. Today's Chinese traditional TV programs on culture strive to restore the beauty of the Chinese ancient culture and the beauty of the artistic conception from the aspects of artifacts, literature, music, dance, drama, etc. Although it is only a small step towards the long road of the revival of culture, it indeed has brought tremendous impact on the public and has promoted the spread and popularity of Chinese traditional culture.

References

- [1] Ruo Jia and Fangye Liu, Creative path of cultural programs "Everlasting Classics", [J].Contemporary TV. 2018(12):56-57.
- [2] Li Yu, Xie Chun. On the Application of Chinese Traditional Aesthetic Cognition in TV Programs——Taking Cultural Program "Classic Wings" as an Example [J]. Contemporary TV, 2020 (01): 34-37.
- [3] Zhou, H. (2011). Aesthetic inheritance of Chinese traditional etiquette and custom from intangible culture perspective.