

History of Yue Opera





Yue Opera, originated in the area of **Sheng County** in **Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province** in the early period of the century, is a rapidly developed local opera with a short history in China. It is the second most popular opera in China, next to Jing Opera. It was named "Yue Opera" because it has its origin in part of Yue State in the Spring and Autumn Period dating back about 2,000 years ago.

At the beginning of 20th Century, Sheng County was just started to develop. People came to this beautiful place and was inspired to sing anywhere they like to. Those casual performances are the origin of Yue Opera. Known as "Xiaogeban" or "Diduban" (Small Singing Group), the opera was circulated first among the country folk in its early period of development. At that time Yue Opera was simple as it had developed from folk talk and singing. Later it moved into Hangzhou, Shanghai and other parts of the country. By now, many

years' development has made it a most important opera style next to Beijing Opera in China, taking its theme from fairy tales, literary classics and historical stories. The voices of Yue Opera are soft and beautiful, and easy to learn. Different voices from various schools were developed which led to the emergence of large numbers of fans devoted to each school. The famous and heart-rending Chinese violin concerto **Butterfly Lovers** drew its musical materials from Yue Opera. The film of Yue Opera from the same play won an award at an international film festival in the music category. The male role in a Yue Opera play is always played by women and the characters appear exceptionally charming, natural and unrestrained.

Yue Opera as a folk opera style has its origins in Hangzhou. Yue Opera lovers would meet regularly and sing. If you come to Hangzhou and stroll along the lakeside in the early

morning, you will certainly hear opera lovers heartily singing Yue Opera.

The resident Yue Opera companies in Hangzhou are the Zhejiang Yue Opera Troupe and the Hangzhou Yue Opera Troupe. The "Xiaobaihua" Performing Group of the Zhejiang Yue Opera Troupe is best known in Hangzhou and very influential across the country, and in Hong Kong and Macao.

Women Playing men

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Yue opera is noted for its lyricism, and singing is dominant in it. Its tunes are sweet and beautiful and the performance vivid and full of local color. Originally Yue opera was only performed by males and then changed to all female performances.

After 1949, male and females work together.

However, the stage of Yue Opera is in fact dominated by actresses, with women cross-dressing as male characters for a largely female audience. As Yue opera actresses initiated reforms to purge their theatre of bawdy eroticism in favour of the modern love drama, they elevated their social image, captured the public imagination, and sought independence from the patriarchal opera system by establishing their own companies. Throughout history of Yue opera, we can see Chinese women's struggle to control their lives, careers, and public images and to claim ownership of their history and artistic representations.



Introduction of Performance

Usually, a Yue Opera performance lasts for two or three hours. Each

performance tells a complete story. It is usually divided into several sections. The video clips included in this collection are famous ones from different sections in different performances.

9 pieces of video clips

- [Daiyu's arrival at the Rong-guo House](#) belongs to performance: *Dream of the Red Chamber*
- [Cry of Baoyu](#) belongs to performance: *Dream of the Red Chamber*
- [Daiyu's Death](#) belongs to performance: *Dream of the Red Chamber*
- [Reading "Romance of the West Chamber"](#) belongs to performance: *Dream of the Red Chamber*
- [Recollections](#) belongs to performance: *Butterfly Lovers*
- [Eighteen Miles Away](#) belongs to performance: *Butterfly Lovers*
- [Meeting at the Tower](#) belongs to performance: *Butterfly Lovers*
- [Tell the Fortune#Part 1#](#) belongs to performance: *Prince of the Desert*
- [Reluctant to depart](#) belongs to performance: *Peacocks Flying To The Southeast*

