



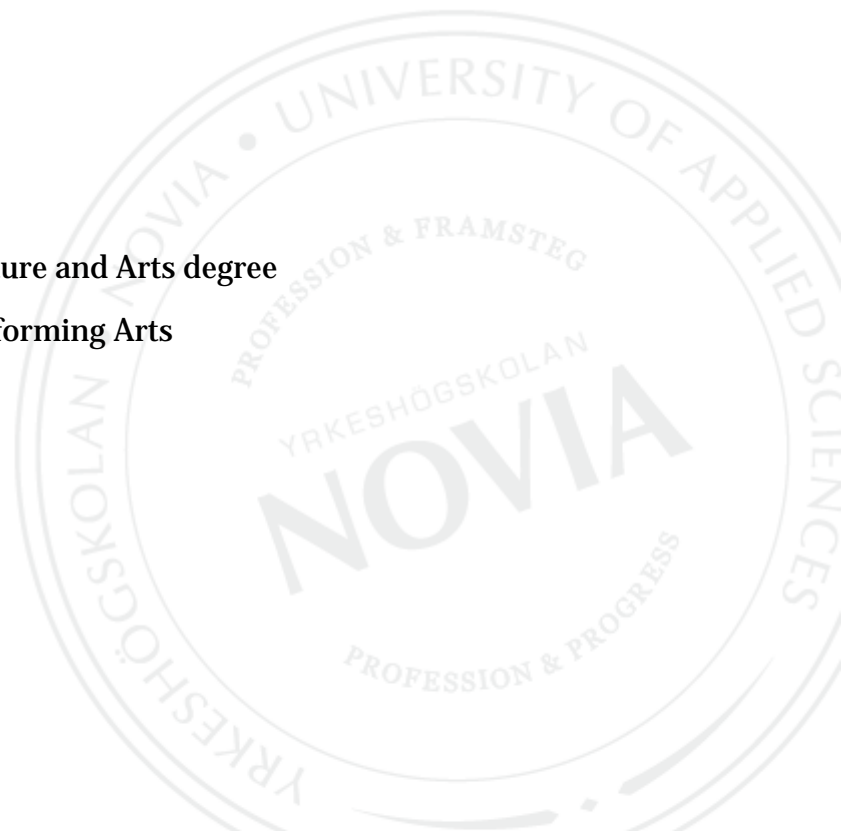
Adding Beijing opera flavour to the Finnish stage

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Abstrakt

I detta projekt kommer läsaren få del utav mina personliga erfarenheter då jag studerade Peking opera i Kina. Jag går igenom träningen och ämnen vi studerade samt några saker som lärarna sade som han tyckte var väldigt viktiga då man uppträder med Peking opera. Jag förklarar hur jag använde peking opera tekniker i mitt konstnärliga slutarbete "Vem äger skogen!?" och beskriver några viktiga element i Peking opera. I min sammanfattning delar jag mina visioner och mina drömmar då det gäller uppföringen av Peking opera på den Finländska teaterscenen. Jag reflekterar över min tid i Kina och det jag lärt mig under skriv processen och hur det påverkat mig som person och som skådespelare.

Som bilaga har jag skrivit ett kapittel om Peking opera som jag tycker är väldigt viktigt att läsaren till detta arbete läser ifall den inte sett eller vet vad Peking opera är.

Språk: Engelska Nyckelord: Fysisk teater, Peking opera, Beijing, Kina



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Abstract

In this project the reader will read about my personal experiences, studying Beijing opera in China. I go through the training and the subjects we studied as well as some of the teachers' comments while teaching us and some things he found vital to our understanding of performing Beijing opera. I also explain how I have used the techniques of Beijing opera in my final performance "Vem äger skogen!?" as well as describing a few important elements in Beijing opera. Concluding I share my visions and dreams concerning Beijing opera on the Finnish stage. I reflect over my time in China and what I have learnt as well as writing this project and how it has affected me as a person and as an actor.

As appendix I have added a chapter on Beijing opera which I think is important to read for the people who have never seen Beijing opera.

Language: English Keywords: Physical theater, Beijing opera, Beijing, China

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1 Beijing opera

- 1.1 History of Beijing opera
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1 Introduction

I am writing about how I can use the techniques existing in Beijing opera on stage without being a professional Beijing opera actor. In a later chapter I will explain what Beijing opera is. My journey up to this point started in a dark movie theatre where I saw the film *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*.

During most of my life I have been interested in martial arts and have been given the opportunity to study quite a few of them. Early in my life I realised martial arts suited me well. At the time martial arts gave me a versatile workout with a high energy level and taught me movements no one else could do.

At the age of 13 I joined a drama group. In my junior high school there was a theatre group which I was a member of throughout senior high school. My interest for both theatre and martial arts reached a fusion in “kung fu films”. A kung fu film is a film with a martial arts star, usually a bad story and lots of fighting. The films I watched were mostly made in China or Hong Kong. My favourite actor at the time was Jet Li (Li Lian Jie 李连杰). He had practised modern *wushu*¹, a Chinese exhibition martial art, as a child. Later in my teen years, I started practising the same martial art with a teacher who had practised with Jet Li as a child. Another big influence was Jackie Chan (Chan Kong-sang, 陳港生). I didn't know that much about him only that he was very acrobatic and funny in front of the camera. Later during my physical theatre studies I would find out that he had a background as a Beijing Opera actor.

The following years my interest for both martial arts and Chinese culture grew. I was often logged on to a forum on the internet aimed for people who have an interest in *wushu* and on that web page were some video clips of the *Beijing Wushu Team* who are still considered to be the best *wushu* team in the world. On this forum I met some people who had been in China studying *wushu*. To me this was so amazing that I decided I would travel to China and study *wushu* at Shi Cha Hai (什刹海) Beijing Sport University as soon as I turned 18.

¹ Modern wushu is traditional wushu or what most people know as kung fu, but it is made into a sport. It has many similarities to gymnastics. The competitor steps onto the carpet and executes his choreography which is about 2½ min long and receives points for his performance. The performance contains many acrobatic movements and movements similar to that of Beijing opera.

However, I never realized that dream. When I was a senior in high school I came in contact with the physical theatre option at SYH, which was the name of the school at the time. What caught my interest about this school was that kung fu was one of the basic subjects and that there was a possibility of going abroad in the third year to countries like China.

During the three years leading up to my trip to China my interest in both theatre and martial arts deepened and when I discovered Beijing opera, which combines both theatre and martial arts in an aesthetic way, I was hooked and I realised that this would become my specialisation in the vast field of physical theatre. In my third year it was therefore with a feeling of great excitement that I stepped on the plane which would take me to China. For the next four months I would be fortunate enough to study Beijing opera at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts (中国戏曲学院 *Zhongguo xiqu xueyuan*).

Coming back to Finland, after four months, I started reflecting more and more on what I actually gained from my studies in China as an actor. It is very difficult for an actor who hasn't trained Beijing opera all his life to perform Beijing opera in a convincing way and also quite difficult for an audience, who is not used to seeing and hearing the elements of Beijing opera, to understand and appreciate them. So, I'm writing about how I manage to make these two meet halfway.

I love the aesthetics in Chinese traditional theatre, but sometimes the acting is very stiff. It has come to my understanding after studying, performing and reading about Beijing opera that the high technical level makes it more difficult to give the movements a dramatic purpose while at the same time being in the situation. You have to concentrate on executing a movement perfectly while at the same time thinking about who your character is and why he is doing what he is doing. This is accomplished by vigorous training and years of experience.

While I was in China studying Beijing opera I realised, to my great disappointment, I cannot ever become a professional Beijing opera actor because I started my training at the age of 20, not four, as most of the students there, but I still love the movements and the training. I write this as an example on how I used the acting techniques in Beijing opera to create my personal style of acting. I hope this can be an inspiration to those who are faced with a similar problem.

I travelled to China one more time for almost two months in order to create a performance together with my friend Timothy. This performance was based, to some extent, on Beijing opera techniques, the movements as well as the dramatics. However, the challenge was to motivate the movements in a dramatic way.

At this point, I would like to give a short background on the cultural exchange between China and Finland when it comes to Beijing opera. The first time Beijing opera was performed in Europe was in connection with an International theatre festival in Paris in 1955. On the 27 July the Suomi-Kiina seura invited them to perform and on the 9 September it actually came to pass.²

In this paper I will describe the style Beijing opera so that the reader can better understand and follow my personal thoughts how I apply and have applied the techniques in my work as an actor. I also use some books as a reference to support my thoughts as well as my experiences practising this theatre style.

Unfortunately there were very few good books on the subject Beijing opera. The books I read only gave a superficial view on the subject. I have yet to find a book that in depth discusses the dramatics, the stagecraft and the techniques in Beijing opera. The best books I found were *Stagecraft of Peking opera* and *Mei Lanfang and Peking opera*. Although these were the best books they sadly could not satisfactorily account for all the things I needed to know for this project.

² Kiina sanoin ja kuvin 2, 2005 (Suomi-Kiina seura's magazine)

2 Training in Beijing Opera

2.1 Body training

There is a certain basic training that everybody who studies Beijing opera must go through. The training that *wushu* sportsmen, acrobats and, dancers go through is very similar to this. It is the basic training for all virtuous movements and as far as I know, it is considered to be the core training of movement. It consists of stretching, pirouettes and acrobatics. Our teacher in basic training (*Ji ben gong* 基本功) in China planned his lesson as follows.

First you warm up all the joints in the body followed by stretching. *ya tui* (压腿) is a leg stretch where your leg is on a bar parallel to the floor and you are looking at your toes and then you push down. The counting is very important. First you bounce 4x8 and then press down 4x8. After the parallel stretch you turn out and stretch sideways, 4x8 bouncing and 4x8 pressing. After stretching you kick, starting with the front kick, *ti tui* (踢腿) and then the side kick, *pang tui* (旁腿). You do this on both legs always starting from the left one. Stretching the splits then follows and then the five basic kicks is the following order *ti tui*, *xie tui* (斜腿), *pang tui*, *pian tui* (片腿), *kai tui* (盖腿). The pirouettes *fan shen* (翻身) and *dun fan shen* (蹲翻身) are very often used and help you learn how to tighten your body, which is essential in Beijing opera. The feeling is similar to that of a ballet dancer who, by tightening his or her body, makes every movement seems light and effortless. The secret to this illusion lies in the way you tighten your stomach muscles.

Now comes the jumping. Before each acrobatic movement we would do a handstand for a moment just to “make us light”. I think this was to make our arms tired and easier to relax which is important in all the following movements. We started off with warm up jumps (双飞腰): split jump and another jump where you bend your back while grabbing your legs behind your back.

Other typical Chinese movements that can be used by every *Wu Xi* character in Beijing opera are: *fei jiao* (飞脚), which is a jump twist kick also known as the tornado kick or the 540, and *xuan zi* (旋子), known as the “butterfly kick”. The next movement depended on our teacher’s mood. Sometimes we would continue with cartwheels and sometimes work longer on the other jumps,

skip cartwheel all together and go directly to preparation exercises for back somersault, front somersault and back handspring before actually executing the movements themselves.

We did this training daily during the time of 1½ hours.

This training is designed to make the body more flexible and explosive and to give you an all-around body. The ideal is a well trained body that can accomplish anything in the form of movement.

The difference between the training we did in Beijing and the training I've done in Finland is that the Chinese training has the perfect body as its aim. I, with all my weaknesses and strengths, strive to achieve something and fit into a form that I'm not naturally fitting into to the point that it becomes natural. However, the training in Finland that I've received tends to have the body as a focus point and one tries to develop one's strengths and have the freedom to use one's body in a way that comes naturally. Every person has their own small defects and problems with their body and it is these "flaws" that I am able to use and utilize when I practise and perform. For example, my neck leans forward somewhat and playing a character that has a body like that is not a big problem for me. It is the same with all characters one plays. In my school I have a freedom to interpret the character I play and, to a point, shape it according to myself. But in Beijing opera on the other hand I had to move like the character, sound like the character and play him in a certain way. I would like to call this subjective and objective theatre. In my work in western theatre I generally shape the character and adapt it according to myself while in Beijing opera I shaped myself to fit in with the character. It was very different returning to Finland and continuing my studies here. I felt my body was more susceptible to new movements and I had a greater respect for the characters I created. When creating a character I think of the way I want him to be and try to accomplish that with my body and with who I am. I try to see the character as an independent person not derived from my personality. This creates some distance between me and the character while at the same time making it more objective and stylised. The movements I choose to use are not my personal gestures and personal expressions, but I try to choose movements that the character in question could use and improvise the character's personal gestures.

At this point one might ask oneself why an actor has to go through such a vigorous training or any training at all. “Anyone can act” is a statement one can hear when talking to people who have little to no experience of theatre. This claim is as absurd as saying that anyone can sing or anyone can play the piano. I believe anyone can LEARN to sing, act or play the piano some with greater success than others, but to say that someone can act without any training or practise is, in my opinion, a very ignorant statement. What we today understand as physical training for actors has only a short history of a few hundred years, but in Asia this tradition most probably dates back several thousands of years³. So why does a Beijing opera actor who studies the old man (*lao sheng* 老生) have to know how to do a back flip? Questions like these haunt me. Why do you have to know something you will never use? My answer is pure speculation, but has given me peace of mind.

I believe that the body should not stand in the way of creativity and artistic expression. Picasso would never use a bad brush and B.B King would never play on any other guitar than his “Lucille” so why would an actor not train his body? I think a broad repertoire of movements opens your mind and gives you several options of expression. You have more notes to choose from. I also believe that the trained body moves smoother than the untrained one. Even if you don’t use every movement you know, practising them gives you certain fluidity and can be seen in your smallest movement. If you can raise your leg to a 90° angle then your normal step will be more controlled and conscious and if you have trained ballet you can easily manipulate your walk when creating a new character.

2.2 Blocking

The way of blocking the Chinese teacher used was quite different from the way we work here in Finland. In Finland we usually get to know the material and then we study the characters and the themes and we begin to improvise. We go through long periods of improvisation keeping the things we like and which are good and throwing away the rest and slowly a whole play begins to emerge. You could say that in China one begins with the movements and choreography since there are certain movements that have to be included in the scene in order for it to be Beijing opera.

³ The *Natyashastra* in traditional Indian theatre which dates back to 200 B.C – 200 A.D and there are speculations that the writings there derive from an even older texts. (http://chandrankantha.com/articles/indian_music/natyashastra.html).

This is exactly what happened when we did *Three-forked Crossroads* and the teacher told us that this scene had to include certain movements in order for it to be a scene in *Three-forked Crossroads*. In Finland we start with the essence, the conflict, the relation or the theme and express it in the way we see fit, whereas in China it is the other way around. There the form is the basis for everything and when we came back to Finland after being in China we had to work hard on the chain of thoughts and relations in order to make the scene dramatically correct and not just do Beijing opera movements.

In China when the teacher gave us exact movements and a strict choreography that we had to adhere to the word *ganjue* (感觉), which can be translated into *emotion*, often came up. It was important for the teacher that we had the right emotion and that we sensed the atmosphere of the scene. When we did the famous fight in the dark scene from the play: *Three-forked crossroad* (San Cha Kou 三岔口) the atmosphere of actually being in the dark was important in order to give the audience the impression that we were actually fighting in the dark on a brightly lit stage. Every reaction had to have this *ganjue*. When the innkeeper *Liu Lihua* feels the air on his face from the sword that just slashed the air in front of him the actor has to have the right *ganjue*. This *ganjue* is something many Chinese Beijing opera actors don't have. They show off their technical level since, as I explained in an earlier chapter, the audience knows the play by heart and the only thing new you could add to the play without breaking the conventions would be new impressive movements on a technically higher level. Our teacher liked us because although we lacked the technique the Chinese had we could act and fill the movements with purpose and emotion. Our teacher perceived us to be the most skilled foreigners he ever taught. This was not because of our level of technique which although good, was on a far lower level than that of the Chinese, but because of our years of experience combining movement and emotion or choreography and a sense of being in the moment, thus having *ganjue*. Without *ganjue* the performance would just be empty movements, a display of tricks and resemble something like a circus. After my first Beijing opera experience at *Zhongyang xiju xueyuan* (中央戏剧学院) I heard members of the audience commenting: "Nice circus performance". This indicates that either the actors lacked *ganjue* or that these audience members failed to understand or did not pay enough attention to the performance.

3 Application

After coming to understand a bit more of what Beijing opera is one might start to wonder what this has got to do with the theatre in Vaasa or Helsinki in Finland. What can we benefit and more importantly what can we use from all this and why should we? These are questions I've asked myself since first coming in contact with Asian theatre and even more these past couple of years since studying Beijing opera. I have reached a few conclusions that I have personally applied to my life and my style as an actor and artist. First I would like to describe some of the elements I find important in Beijing opera and how some particular expressions are illustrated in this unique theatre form.

3.1 Expressions in Beijing Opera

Beijing opera is a highly stylized theatre form which means it is non-realistic. Everything on stage has a purpose and adds to the understanding and the aesthetics of the theatre form. It is very different from classical western theatre. The stage has a big piece of carpet on it and no special lighting is used. One table and two chairs are the décor most commonly employed and a curtain is briefly closed when a change of scenery is in order.

When it comes to the individual characters, a person with a trained eye can learn very much from the first impression of a character. The clothes in all their rich detail and the make up with all its colours tell the audience of the nature of the character, his age and marital status and so on.

All the gestures and movements in Beijing opera are stylized. The theatre form is conventionalised. A convention is an arrangement between the actors and the audience of how things are supposed to be expressed. However, there is more to conventions than this. Convention is more than a form it is about the essence of the form: Entering the stage is a practical example⁴.

⁴ “As soon as a player enters the stage, he or she must firstly stop and present himself or herself to the audience by striking a pose known as *liang xiang* (亮相). These differ for the different roles. A *Lao sheng* (or *Xu sheng*) first sets his hat right and then smoothens his beard with both hands before walking to the centre-front of the stage.” (Yang, Fushen Richard, Mei, Shaowu , 2009, 79: *Mei Lanfang and Peking opera*).

Each character has a different nuance or a slightly different way of performing these conventionalised movements. All characters have a different gait and expressions of feeling vary somewhat from character to character, take for example crying.⁵

Here we see clear directions and forms for how movements are executed.

There are many other conventions and once they have been learnt you can understand the actions on stage much better. Furthermore, I would like to stress the point that, in my opinion, you do not have to fully comprehend the actions in order to enjoy Beijing opera. I believe that beauty transcends understanding.

3.2 Gestures

I want to use the aesthetics and the beauty of Beijing opera. Beauty is very subjective, but I would still like to try and explain what I, at the moment, perceive as beauty.

There is a difference between the beauty in Beijing opera and the theatre I have seen in Finland. Earlier I mentioned that Beijing opera is conventionalised, but I would like to further explore that term⁶. I want something more than a realistic action on stage or realistic clothes. The aesthetics are based on reality, but are more than realism.

I want to take an example from the project we did “Vem äger skogen!?” The nature spirit was washing his wound in the water. In a realistic play I might have had real water, a wet cloth or a band aid wrapping it around my leg. This was not the case here. I, as an actor, pictured in my head

⁵ “Male characters cry on special occasions. In *Si Lang Tan Mu* (Fourth Son Visits His Mother), Yang Yanhui, who had been imprisoned by the enemy for 15 years, suddenly thinks of his beloved mother, and cries, ‘Oh, mother – my beloved, old mother!’ He raises his right sleeve, not by moving his sleeve, but rather by turning his head from left to right.[...]To signify crying, a female makes a sound similar to ‘Wei-ei-ei-ei.’ She covers her face with a sleeve, and make a motion as if wiping tears away with it. Afterwards, she brings her sleeve back down, and resumes her normal pose.” (ibid. 82-83.).

⁶ “If the keynote to Western art is realism, what then is the essence of traditional Chinese art? ... In Chinese we have a word for it – *xie yi* – but I have not been able to hit on its English equivalent... While western painting is basically realistic, traditional Chinese painting is “*xie yi*”. Take for instance the horses drawn by the Italian artist Guiseppe Castiglione exhibited at the Palace Museum in Beijing. His horses are as good as real. But take a look at those horses drawn by Xu Beihong (Péon Hsu), they are over and above the real. Well versed in anatomy, Xu, when he painted, did not go too far away, anatomically speaking, from the real horse and yet with those few bold touches of his brush, he made his horses not only appear physically true but at the same time he made them seem spiritually alive... the Chinese painter is preoccupied ‘with the essence rather than the appearance of things’. Here I came across a very suggestive word ‘essence’. For short in apt translation, could we say that realism is the keynote of western art and ‘essentialism’ (*xie yi*) that of Chinese art”. (Huang, Zuolin, 1980, 28-29: *Peking opera and Mei Lanfang*).

a small stream of water quickly pouring down a small slope. I pictured as hard as I could, mimicked the flow of the water with my hands while looking at them and throwing a quick glance at the audience as to share this action with them. Right after completing the movement I showed the character's attitude towards the water. While washing the leg I, as an actor, used the female hand⁷ of Beijing opera as to show sensitivity and carefulness, scooped the water in circular movements and gently rubbed the water without touching the leg itself. While doing this I tried to be in the realistic situation of a person with a wounded leg washing it with water showing pain and certainty that this was for the best.

In my opinion this was far more beautiful than if I had been washing my leg with real water in a crude way with realistic hand movements.

I like technique in the sense that I need it for my way of expression. It has annoyed me that an impression prevails that music is art, visual arts is art, but theatre is theatre. In the two former you have a strict technique that you use as a basis. There are certain rules to painting a corner or a man and certain scales you have to master in order to play the blues. What techniques do we have in the theatre of today that we can practise till our fingers bleed or until our wrists hurt? In the visual arts and music you copy the master's works to the last brush stroke or to the last tone in order to practise your technique and in order to learn something about the master. What masterpieces or etudes are there for us in the western realistic theatre to copy? I touched upon this subject in an earlier chapter and I believe theatre deserves to be equal to the other artforms. Therefore, I think Beijing opera is a great example of how to make theatre into an art form. I am not saying it is the only way or the best way that will work for everybody. It just happened to work for me. Beijing opera has skills that can be categorized into four groups.⁸ There are also the etudes when you copy the master i.e. the teacher as explained in an earlier chapter. By practising my own skills and being inspired by my master I start to become inspired. Inspired enough so that

⁷ This hand form is called *lotus hand* where you connect the thumb and the middle finger and drawing the rest of the hands fingers closer together.

⁸ "Four skills (*gong*): song (*chang*); recitation (*nian*); dance-acting (*zuo*), which includes pure dance, pantomime, and all the visible, physical results of 'acting' in the Western sense; and combat (*da*), which encompasses not only actual fighting with fists, knives, swords, and spears, but also acrobatics as well." (Wichmann, Elisabeth, 1991, 2: *Listening to theatre; The aural dimension of Beijing opera*).

when I returned to Finland I was able to utilize all I learnt and it culminated in the performance “Vem äger skogen!?”

3.3 Form and content

The general conflict I see in the theatre today is what I would like to call form vs. content. In western realistic theatre I often hear movie actors “going with the moment” or “feeling in the moment” and in order to produce a feeling realistically the general opinion among Hollywood actors seems to be you have to feel it yourself⁹.

In Beijing opera, however, there is always a technique and a way to show an emotion¹⁰. In this quote Mei Lanfang has a very intellectual view on his acting. He is completely aware of what he wants to achieve and how he should use his techniques to accomplish this goal. These are two very good examples in my opinion. We have a person who is so “in the moment” that she begins to cry and the other who sounds like a mechanic operating a robot. This I assume is a great division in theatre, form or content, technique or emotion. I have heard many discuss this matter for example during a panel debate at our school. I am personally of the opinion that theatre cannot exist without technique. The most dexterous technique every actor uses is walking. Just plain walking. It is a technique that takes about two years for every human being to master. Walking is a very complicated process that demands the attention of all your muscles and the most fundamental of techniques when it comes to our daily lives. There is not one actor amateur or professional who I have seen on stage not mastering the technique of walking. Most actors can even use it to express emotions on stage. A quick paced, long stepped gait used for anger, a shaking slow walk backwards in fear and even more challenging a bouncy rhythmical walk to express joy. Walking is the perfect example of how to use techniques on stage another technique could be breathing or waving your hand. Imagine if you could use a cartwheel the same way you use a walk. Imagine if you could stand on your hands as well as on your feet. Consider the

⁹ (Ex. Kate Winslet interview for “Inside the actor’s studio”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwG9YVteyVw&feature=related> 30 - 1:30).

¹⁰ “In order to play Zhan Yanrong, I realised that it was essential to show the emotional changes of the character as the story unfolded. First, I need to show her heartbreak and sorrow. Next, I had to convey shock at discovering the plot against her. Then, I had to show an insane Yanrong. I used different facial expressions and body movements to show the character’s feelings” (Mei, Lanfang, 1956, 2009, 24: *Mei Lanfang and Peking opera*).

enormous dynamics your expressions could have and the range of movements you could use to express big feelings and emotions. This, however, is not as simple as it sounds. When you have a movement you have to connect it to the emotion and some emotions are easier to connect with some movements than others. As an example we can take the emotion of sadness which in western pantomime has a body and face with the directions down and inward. The chest is sucked in while the upper body is somewhat hanging. It is very hard to make a connection between this emotion and backhand spring which is a back bent explosive movement. You do not have to feel an emotion in order to express it, but the more you practise the connection between emotion and movement the easier it becomes and in rare cases this technique has been perfected so the actor also starts to sense the emotion he or she is expressing through a certain movement.

Therefore, one has, in my opinion, a form in order to have something to fill and if you have a form you have to fill it. Mei Lanfang is a great example and representative for the Beijing opera way of acting and Kate Winslet is a good example of how many actors perceive their work thus making them the best opposites I have found so far. So if you could take Kate Winslet's content and combine it with the technical mastery and knowledge of Mei Lanfang it would perhaps be the perfect combination.

3.4 What can I use on a stage in Finland? Audio, Clothes and Make-up

The question we have yet to answer is what can we learn from Beijing opera and translate to the western stage? As an actor in Finland what should I change and strip away from Beijing Opera in order to give the audience a good experience?

Let us start with the audio world. I cannot perform a play in Chinese in Finland because people would simply not understand the text and the music. The voice and the way it is performed can be used. In our play, "Vem äger skogen!?" I experimented with using the Finnish language and the Beijing opera tone of the language and it was well accepted by the audience since it was a stylisation which worked for the character in question. My friend, Antti, who has studied Beijing opera and gone to the same school as I, experimented with the singing on stage using the Beijing opera melodies and singing techniques and I think it worked pretty well. During the history of

Beijing opera the singing and recitation became the most important, so important that people would go to the theatre to listen to theatre¹¹ In the same chapter the author explains the different styles of singing and the different melodies and their origin further on he explains how the audience could recognise different patterns sung by the actors using their keen ears. These keen listeners do not exist in Finland since they barely exist in China anymore. Therefore I have drawn the conclusion that a perfect understanding of recitation and singing is not the most important for me when adapting Beijing opera to the stages of Finland.

I am also rather sceptical towards the use of Chinese instruments. The musicians who support the actors with music have studied it for the greater part of their lives and for a person to learn something as complicated as that in a few months is, I believe practically impossible. Therefore, even here, I would suggest the use of traditional Finnish instruments or at least some instruments which the Finnish audience can recognise. I wouldn't like to shock the audience with both a visually exotic experience as well as an exotic audio experience. I would still like to learn more about the way the Beijing opera actors use their voices and how I could adapt that to the Finnish stage.

The visual world is also very extensive. Every symbol on each article of garment has a purpose and reveals a lot to the true Beijing opera fan very much. Then again if a member of the audience is so familiar with the meaning of the clothes he has probably seen the play a few times and doesn't really need that knowledge since he already knows how the play will end. That is why I think they are beautiful to watch, but the extensive decorations add nothing to the character. I strongly believe I can use the clothes as a source of inspiration and if they are in the right colour and fit the purpose I can even use them on stage in some interesting and creative way. This is, however, uncharted territory for me. My friend Timothy used some Beijing opera clothes in our play "Vem äger skogen!?" He used a shortened long belt (*da dai* 大帶) as a tie, a read beard (*ran kou* 髯口) as hair and a pair of acrobatic pants as his pants. It was a successful adaptation. It added something new to his character while putting Beijing opera clothes and costuming into new use.

¹¹ "In the past, some Peking opera fans sat in the theatres with closed eyes, nodding their heads and moving their hands to the musical rhythms enjoying the beauty of the singing (*chang*). These people were never said to 'watch,' but to 'listen to' the opera. Also, they would call the actors singers. This shows the importance of the singing." (Pan, Xiaofeng, 1995, 56: *The Stagecraft of Peking opera*)

The makeup is another question of importance. The *jing* character has a very extensive makeup which may be very surreal to use on a stage in Finland. I feel that it would be an interesting contrast to the more realistic makeup and “standard” makeup that I’ve usually worn. Again in our project “Vem äger skogen!?” we used the Beijing opera colours, but invented new makeup designs. I used the green colour. I painted my eyebrows green with a brush and smeared the green colour under my eyes to bring them out more. I chose green because I was a nature spirit. Timothy had the same design, but with red as to give a contrast. I am very keen on continuously experimenting with makeup and hope to do so in the future.

3.4.1 Movements

This following part is the one I think I feel most passionately about. I find the movements and choreography to be very pleasing to the eye. I think the choreography patterns diagonals, laterals, verticals and circles should be consciously chosen and given a purpose. If the actors you are working with cannot execute beautiful movements they can at least with lesser effort be taught to do nice movement patterns in space. This was confirmed to me while directing an amateur group¹². It was easier to say “follow me” than “do this”. I even believe that the meaning of some of these movement patterns can be directly put on the stage in Finland since they resemble the meaning of the traditional European pantomime and mime, pantomime being the story telling in silent theatre using gestures instead of words and mime being the silent theatre where you use movements and the body to show objects and settings. When you change character in pantomime you can do a pirouette and to show the audience you change places you walk a half circle or a full circle. In Beijing opera you show you’ve walked to a different place by making a circle on stage and to show you’ve undertaken a long journey the actors usually walk a few more circles or make a beautiful pattern on stage resembling that of a viper crawling across stage, squirming.

I am of the opinion that the movements such as hand movements (*yun shou* 云手) and other leg work and poses can be adapted. The circular arms that the whole system of arm movement is based on are very natural to the actor and can be used with various dynamics to create effect. I have them in my repertoire of movements as an option and not as a “must use”.

¹² I directed *Wasaspexet* which is a student union and they produce a play of comical or even burlesque character every year according to the “Spex” tradition and convention.

The walk I have learnt is a quite noble walk that a character can use as a contrast in a moment of pride. Using the walk all the time is an option if it fits the character, but I would unwillingly do that all the time. The fast walk can come up several times in a character that I do. It gives an illusion of a floating movement or gives the impression that the actor is levitating.

I find that the principal of striking a pose is very usable in all kinds of physical theatre. It comes in three steps: step 1) I keep my weight on the opposite leg, that won't have weight on it in step 3. The hands follow the same principle, if they end up down I have them up at this moment but I look towards the direction I will look in the end. Step 2) I put my feet in the position that I will end up in I make a preparation with my arms and turn my head away from the spot where I will be looking. Step 3) I bend my knees, making the position deeper or if I'm standing on one leg I might have the one leg stretched in step two while bending it in step 3 or at the very least lifting it higher. The arms take their final position and the head turns to look at the final spot as an accent. I can vary the dynamics to fit the situation. This could be compared to Mayerholds otkas, posyl, stoika¹³, but the principal of striking a pose is a bit more complicated.

The acrobatics and fighting I find more challenging to fit in. Acrobatics are usually big movements and if they are emotionally motivated they are motivated by a big emotion, for example the bigger the emotion the bigger the movement and the greater the expression. My character is so happy that he does a back somersault as an expression of joy. Normally I would smile, but on stage if I need a big expression I could use a back somersault. Then again if the sommersaults are physically motivated the same principle applies. If I am to do a cartwheel the person giving my character this impulse has to throw me sideways.

I find it important to have a very good technique in my movements. The reason is quite simple. If I can show the audience a perfect cartwheel they can't see the limit of my movements. They are conned into thinking "If he can do a cartwheel that well he must be able to do even bigger and more expressive movements just as well". I would rather do a perfect cartwheel then execute a sloppy backhand spring.

¹³ Intention, Realization, Reaction

When it comes to fighting I feel I don't have enough knowledge yet. Nevertheless, I will try to map out my experience thus far. I really like the way of fighting in Beijing opera. It is much stylised and you can incorporate all kinds of movements and acrobatics and the basic still keeps the movement in space very simple, but beautiful. I spent a lot of time working on the fight scene for "Vem äger skogen!?" writing down the movement patterns we did on stage and thinking of what movements would suit what part and, later employing the thoughts and emotions of the character making it more alive and dynamic. I prefer the stage fighting used in Beijing opera as opposed to the realistic one that is popular on most stages in Finland. Martial arts are making a bigger impression on the fight scenes on the stages here in Finland today, for example some of my friends who used the Indian martial art kalaripayattu in their play. I just don't think you can take a martial art and use the exact same movements on stage or a pair exercise from a martial art and apply it to a fight situation on stage. The martial art forms are made to be practised with a partner striving to improve your technique and aid in a situation of self defence of war. The philosophical aspects, which, are often related to a religion are always present as well as the aspect of health and how practising martial arts is strongly connected to traditional Asian health care. Our kung fu master in school also knew massage, acupuncture and cupping. During the time I've practised martial arts I've always been aware of the origin of the martial art. Martial arts don't always look so beautiful or at least not as beautiful as Beijing opera stage fighting which, again, is a stylized fighting system. The stage fighting in Beijing opera has no deeper philosophical thought as its base and is designed purely for stage purpose. This is, in my opinion, the big difference between martial arts in general and the stage fighting of Beijing opera.

The realistic stage fighting sometimes involving sticks is in my eye appalling. I think the brutality, the hair grabbing and choking can even be frightening to see and many times it looks uncontrolled. Watching *Nils Holgerson at Teatteri hevoskenkä* I felt afraid that someone would get hurt when they couldn't even hold, throw or catch a stick without almost dropping it. Again I think perfect technique in the movements gives the audience this feeling of limitlessness that I explained earlier where a perfect movement is performed so well that you cannot see the actor's limitations.

In Beijing opera circles are very important and add the third dimension, as opposed to other fight scenes where they go back and forth laterally on stage. Rhythms are applied giving varied dynamics and varied intensity depending on the need of the situation. You even consider the actors endurance in the performance. In *San Cha Kou* the Hero *Ren Tanghui* catches the innkeeper *Liu Lihua* in a lock and is very satisfied. During this static position the actors have a chance to catch their breath while *Liu Lihua* expresses pain and *Ren Tanghui* expresses satisfaction. Another example would be from "Vem äger skogen!?" when the nature spirit is thrown in the water. He shows water while the actor gets a chance to somewhat relax.

In Beijing opera there are five basic series with every weapon against every weapon and the different movements have different names (*xiao wu tao* 小五套). A similar thing exists in ballet in a way. There are different movements like *plié*, *tandeu*, and arm and foot positions. These have a certain form and certain names. There are standard series of movements that everyone who studies ballet comes in contact with like the bow at the end and series with names, for instance *tanlié*.

The pictures in *xiqu bazi gong* 戏曲把子功 (The Skill of stage fighting in traditional Chinese theatre) show some movements from these forms. They are also very dynamic for example picture 215 on p. 67 and picture 281 on p. 81, when one is up the other one goes down as to create balance and contrast between the two opponents. Principles such as these are what I have yet to learn and something I believe I will have much use of in the future.

3.5 Inspiration

During my time in China I have never been so inspired. Every week you had a chance to watch several hours of people practising the performing of Beijing opera. It has affected my view of theatre and transformed my style as an actor. I do not think I have to be able to perfectly copy the movements I've seen. For me it is more about re-creating an impression I received. For example the impression of beauty and serenity that I felt watching the play *White snake* (*Bai She* 白蛇?) combined with the playfulness that inspired me while watching the monkey king fooling around in

Havoc in Heaven is what I tried to achieve in our project “Vem äger skogen!?” and to some degree I think I did. To me studying Beijing opera is very much a source of inspiration and makes me more aware of the limitless potential that theatre has.

When it comes to the principle of adapting movements I feel I have to see the situation or the scene and after that I can apply the techniques, style or method I see fitting. Beijing opera movements are as mentioned earlier just a part of my repertoire and an option when it comes to expression. Also, I think it is important to point out at this moment that the movements and choice of movements should be adjusted to the requirements and not be a performance with technique as the starting point. As another basic principle I would like to state that no movement should be executed without purpose. Nothing should be on stage without thorough thought. These are the principals I base my art, expression or work on. Furthermore, I would like to express my opinion when it comes to the translation of movements. Jacques Lecoq¹⁴ talks about something called a “Universal poetic sense” in his book *The Moving Body* (*Le corps poétique*). With this he means that there is a universal impression that we all perceive when coming in contact with something. As an example he uses the Eiffel tower which he states gives an impression of stability¹⁵. We can imitate these impressions and from these emotions aroused by the Eiffel tower we could create a movement. This movement, or rather position, now exists in mime. His idea of a universal impression or emotion aroused from art is intriguing and to some extent I agree, but it is yet to be examined how far we can stretch this principle. Is there a universal impression or emotion that everyone can perceive? If so, it should definitely be employed on the theatre stage. This is, however, not my topic, I just want to plant the thought that movements that give one impression in China might give a different impression in Finland and this is, I find, is an important fact. As an example I gave the walk which gives me a noble impression. Here Mr. Lecoq would be happy to hear that this is exactly the purpose of it and has the same meaning in China, but other more complex movements should, in my opinion, be carefully examined, analyzed and questioned before using them on stage. When I use a movement from Beijing opera as a means to express something I have to build it up first. My teacher Maya Tångeberg–Grischin told me an anecdote

¹⁴ Jacques Lecoq (1921 – 1999) was a teacher, mime and actor instructor most famous for his methods on physical theatre, movement and mime.

¹⁵ Lecoq, Jacques, 2002, 46: *The moving body*).

from her time studying for Mr. Lecoq. She did an improvisation, an unprepared scene, where she was a huge giant who hit its head on the stars. Mr. Lecoq stopped her stating that no person could ever have that kind of vivid imagination to understand what she was showing. You have to prepare the scene and guide the audience. When the nature spirit in "Vem äger skogen!?" was washing his leg I had to, already early on, show the audience that he was in a forest and create a magical and nature atmosphere. Only then could the audience possibly imagine a water stream. I wanted them to be able to follow my trail of thought.

4 Conclusion

I think one can study Beijing opera and benefit a lot from it as a western physical actor. I know I have. I have gained body awareness and space awareness which can be adapted in every project I undertake. My archive of movements has also been extended and the basic principles of body understanding and tension have increased. I think I am able to move my body swifter now and I am more aware of the lines in the body and in the space thus making the learning of new movements and choreography easier.

On a more fundamental level, Beijing opera has changed me as a person and how I view art and especially theatre. It has also changed me as an artist or actor and my way of expressing theatre as well as affected my goal with theatre. I am more focused on giving people a feeling of beauty and I am certain of that it is possible to achieve. My future goal is to be able to do an extensive submersion into the traditional culture of China, specialising on traditional theatre and Beijing opera, as well as focusing on acrobatics and stage fighting. I hope that maybe someday I will be able to do my masters degree in China or at least study there for an extensive period of time. On my return I hope to inspire others to find their own way, help them understand what they like, how theatre can be used and how you can express different things as an alternative. In the future I want to stand on stage doing beautiful things and, perhaps, direct and create epic dramas. I have one further dream, I hope to one day be a teacher teaching and inspiring people and in the long run changing the way people view theatre and being able to offer them an alternative. I still have much to learn. On the technical level I am but a beginner and I've only started training my body. On a deeper level I would like to be educated in all the plays and their stories and origins as well as the history of performing. I heard from an old master that the play we studied there, *Three-Forked Crossroad*, was actually a massive play in the beginning. It had over 50 actors in it and many characters, but the operas have met the same fate as the language. It was simplified more and more so that only the most necessary components were left. Nowadays you can perform the play with only two people. I would like to, in depth, learn the language so that I could talk to the people who are still alive and who have experienced Beijing opera before the Cultural Revolution. It will probably take a lifetime, but ultimately I want to use my knowledge to present people with new influences and different angles. I hope my studies of Beijing opera will affect me as a person

to the core so that Beijing opera can be reflected in everything I create, direct or choreograph. This is my dream right now.

In writing and researching this subject I have gotten a theoretical base for all my experiences and confirmed many of my assumptions. While watching Beijing opera in China I could only draw conclusions on my own not really knowing what was true and what was only in my head. Reading about these things and especially reading the thoughts and methods of the distinguished Beijing opera actor, Mei Lanfang, I got a better picture of how a Beijing opera actor thinks and acts on stage.

The process of writing has been very fruitful for me. I have had the possibility to on a deeper level reflect on my experiences there, filtering out the things I did not like and the things I find to be essential. I also got a clearer historical overview of Beijing opera. How it was and, during the Cultural Revolution, changed to become what it is today. I also began to understand more about what the actors used to be like, how they trained and how they perceived their art. Through my own experiences, I came to realize how it has changed. After going through the process I see how much I have learnt, not just about Beijing opera, but about the Chinese culture as such. I have also received a better theoretical understanding on how I can adapt the style to our culture and our theatre stages here in Finland.

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Appendix 1

1 Beijing Opera

1.1 History of Beijing Opera

The history of Beijing opera dates back to over 200 years ago, 1790 during the Qing dynasty to be more exact, when four opera troupes from Anhui travelled to Beijing, or Peking as it was called at the time, to take part in celebrating the emperor's 80th birthday. They blended in tunes from local provincial operas to create something extra for the emperor. The emperor found the new style very interesting and took a liking to it and therefore everyone in Beijing followed his taste. The reputation of the new opera grew rapidly and everyone wanted to see it. It grew to the point that the emperor announced this opera to be the opera of the capital, hence the name Beijing opera.

Through the history of China opera has had some tough times not to mention art in general. Every time an emperor was overthrown, or when one died and his successor took over, new rules and censorship was applied. This imperial edict from 1798 is a typical example of this.¹⁶

The Cultural Revolution has arguably had the most devastating effects on Beijing opera yet. Mao's wife, who was a former third rate actress, took it upon herself to change the opera to suit the revolution better. She created the "Eight model plays" which are modern Beijing opera infused with more dancing than the traditional ones. These "Eight model plays" were the only ones allowed to be performed at the time as all the other plays were considered to be counter-revolutionary. This had a monumental effect on the traditional opera in China and many opera masters and other artistic masters fled to Taiwan. Mao's death in 1976 and the capturing of Mao's wife and

¹⁶ "Not only is the music of Luantan, Bangzi, Xiansuo, Qin-*qiang* and such plays of a nature which indicates to lewd immorality, but the subjects of their performances are invariably sordid, depraved, indecent and profane stories, or weird, monstrous, seditious and rebellious tales, which have a considerable effect on social customs and individual attitudes [...] Hereafter, apart from the Kunshan-*qiang* and Yiyang-*qiang* forms of music, which are still permitted, plays using Luantan, Bangzi, Xiansuo and Qin-*qiang* music are one and all no longer allowed to be performed."

(Dolby, William, 1976 155-156: *A History Of Chinese Drama*)

accomplices marked the end of the Cultural Revolution and the traditional plays of Beijing opera were allowed to be performed again in 1978. However, the Cultural Revolution had led to a 20 year gap for the Beijing opera. Today the level of the performances is not as good and most of the young people do not like, nor understand the performances. The Chinese people I've talked to are uninterested and see opera as something boring and traditional.

Personally I hope the art isn't dying as an online article suggests¹⁷. Therefore, I hope that my studies in Beijing opera can inspire people and help revitalize the art and if the Chinese youngsters of today won't watch it then maybe the Finnish youngsters of today will.

Beijing opera is a young opera style compared to Kun opera, which is over 600 years old, and is a combination of many local opera styles from different provinces. The operas in China have some basic elements which are the same: makeup, singing and music. The opera melodies and songs vary from province to province and the acting and aesthetics are sometimes more refined and other times a bit cruder. Beijing opera is a more refined and stylized opera style and, as its popularity states, very accomplished.

In Chinese the term Beijing opera translates to 京剧 (*jing ju*) the first character 京(*jing*) comes from the character for Beijing 北京. The first character translates to north and the second translates to capital. The second character 剧 (*ju*) comes from the word of drama or theatre 戏剧 (*xi ju*). The first character translates to trick, drama, show and the second one translates to drama, show, severe. So the literal translation would be capital theatre or Beijing opera.

1.2 Characters in Beijing Opera

There are four character groups in Beijing Opera. The actor specialises in playing only one character for his whole life since all the characters demand a life time of devotion to master. Every character has its own way of walking, talking and singing that differs from the others characters.

Sheng: These are the male characters which are of the old man *lao sheng* (老生).¹⁸ The *lao sheng* has a baritone voice while singing.

¹⁷ (<http://www.chinapage.com/xwang/index0.html>, 07.02.2011)

Young man *xiao sheng* (小生).¹⁹ They also have a falsetto voice when singing, but not as high as the women's voice.

The male warrior *wu sheng* (武生)²⁰ They sing in a register in between that of the *lao sheng* and the *xiao sheng*.

There are some common factors in these characters apart from their sex and that is the gait and some ways of expression like crying and laughing.

Dan: These are the female characters. The old woman *lao dan* (老旦),²¹ the noble woman *qing yi* (青衣),²² and the young servant woman *hua dan* (花旦)²³

The warrior woman *wu dan* (武旦) and the horseback riding warrior woman *dao ma dan* (刀马旦)²⁴

The female character also has some common ways of expression like laughing and crying

Jing: Perhaps the most famous, the painted face character²⁵

Chou: These are the clown characters that are on stage to amuse and they always speak the local dialect which the audience definitely understands. There are two clown characters the speaking clown *wen Chou* (文丑)²⁶ and the warrior clown *wu Chou* (武丑).²⁷

¹⁸ The *angong laosheng* are generally men of letters who behave with composure, have a calm mind, and live in a natural and unrestrained way" (Xiafeng, Pan, (1995), 1995, p 40).

¹⁹ "The *xiaosheng* stand for all the young male characters who don't wear artificial beards." (ibid, p.42)

²⁰ "The *wusheng* stand for all the male characters who appear in battle scenes." (ibid, p.41).

²¹ "The *laodan* usually represents aged mothers and aunts, empress dowagers and other elderly ladies." (ibid. p.45).

²² "The *qingyi* represents the good matron, faithful wife or filial daughter. Singing is greatly stressed while acting is subsidiary." (ibid. p.43).

²³ "The *huadan* is a role for a vivacious maiden or a woman with a frank and open personality, or a woman of questionable character, great emphasis being placed on the acting. Instead of keeping strictly to the rhythmic pronunciation of Peking Opera, this type of role usually recites in the *jingbai* style (Beijing dialect). With every movement vibrating with life, a characteristic *huadan* usually sways with airy grace on the stage, her left hand on her waist and her right hand holding her handkerchief" (ibid, p.43).

²⁴ "The *wudan* are female characters skilled in the martial arts. The difference between *wudan* and *daomadan* is that the former stress on acrobatic skills. the characters they impersonate include both the positive and the negative ones." (ibid. p.45)

²⁵ "The *jing* are the painted face roles, known popularly as *hualian*. They represent warriors, heroes, statesmen, adventurers and demons. Divided into civilian (*wenjing* (文争) and military (*wujing* (武争), they are required to paint their faces in various styles, hence the name *hualian* (painted face)" (ibid, p.46).

²⁶ "According to the different characteristics such as costume, age and the way of speaking, they are further subdivided into... groups" (ibid, p.49)

²⁷ "In contrast to the *wenchou*, *wuchou* roles require mastery of acrobatics." (ibid, p.50)

1.3 *wen xi* (文戏) and *wu xi* (武戏)

I like this categorisation of Beijing opera plays which consists of two types: *wen xi* (文戏) and *wu xi* (武戏). The same division can be read about in *Mei LanFang and Peking Opera*, Fusen Yang, – Richard and Mei, Shaowu. Famous plays would include: *Farewell My Concubine* (Ba Wang Bie Ji 霸王别姬), *Picking Up the Jade Bracelet* (Shi Yu Zhou 拾玉镯) and *The Precious Consort Gets Drunk* (Gui Fei Zui Jiu 贵妃醉酒)

wen xi (civil drama) is often melodramatic plays where the focus lies on singing, recitation and drama, while *wu xi* (military drama) focus on the martial arts and acrobatics.

The *wen xi* role characters are always the main character in these. The *wen xi* characters are: *Xiao sheng* (小生), *hua dan* (花旦), *qing yi* (青衣), *lao sheng* (老生), *lao dan* (老旦), *wen chou* (文丑) and *wen jing* (文净).

wu xi (military drama) is what I am more fascinated by. It focuses on acrobatics and martial arts. The *wu xi* characters are: *wu sheng* (武生), *wu chou* (武丑), *wu dan* (武旦), *dao ma dan* (刀马旦) and *wu jing* (武净).

Famous plays would include: *Three-Forked Crossroad* (San Cha Kou 三岔口), *Havoc in Heaven* (Nao Tian Gong 闹天宫), *Hu Family Village* (Hu Jia Zhuang 扈家庄)

The art of singing and recitation in Beijing opera is too complex to comprehend if you have not been bred into the style since childhood and unnecessary for this project. However, I will try to give a short summary of the most important things. Beijing opera has its very own way of singing and the pitch and way of doing it varies from character to character. At first it sounds very nasal, but that is because even the voice in this art form is stylized. Every character has its own voice and tone. Even the crying and the laughing is not the same for all characters. The female (*dan*) characters with exception from the *lao dan* have a very high pitch falsetto voice. The male (*sheng*) characters have a slightly lower, but very nasal voice. The painted face (*jing*) characters have a lower and slightly growling voice, while the clown (*chou*) characters speak nasally, but in a normal pitch.

Beijing opera is an epic theatre form which means that all singing, dialogue and monologue is delivered directly to the audience. When the hero enters he gives a short introduction to who he is, what he does and where he is going. Singing is often used in combination with movements to strengthen the emotional feeling the character has. For example, in *Hu Family Village* (Hu Jia Zhuang 扈家庄) the heroine, after capturing her fiancé, sings a victory song while twirling her spear to emphasise the hatred she feels toward him.

1.5 Music

The music has a vital part in Beijing opera. All acting and all movements are accompanied by four instruments: The leader of the orchestra has a small drum or *bangu*. He looks at the actors and follows their movements. Then there are three other instruments following the *bangu* player these are the small gong *xiaolu*, the cymbals *naobo* and the big gong *daluo*. There are two different *daluo* there is the smaller one, *jingluo*, used for *wu xi* plays and the slightly bigger, *suzhoulu*, used for the *wen xi* plays. There is a whole system how to use these instruments and a system how to speak the sounds that they make. In class when you are rehearsing and there is no orchestra the teacher will yell *kong, tei, kong, tei* to mark what the orchestra would be playing at that specific moment.

The melodic instruments are generally divided in three groups. bowed instruments (*la*), plucked instruments (*tan*) and blown instruments (*chu*). String instruments used to accompany singing is first fiddle and second fiddle (*jing hui* and *er hu*). The string instruments consist of the round mandolin (*yue qin*), a three-stringed lute (*san xian*) and sometimes a multi stringed lute (*pi pa*).

The blow instrument is mainly used for effect in Beijing opera and that is a Chinese clarinet (*suo na*).

These instruments are the orchestra of Beijing opera and create the unique sound. The melodic orchestra is only used for singing while the percussions are used with or without the melodic part. However, it is still the *bangu* player who conducts the whole orchestra.