



A Study on the Spatial Pattern of Contemporary Chinese Drama: A Case Study of Edward Lam's Drama

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Abstract

This paper aims to take director Edward Lam's contemporary drama as an example to study the dramatic spatial patterns in contemporary Chinese drama. As a unique director of contemporary Chinese theatre, Edward Lam has devoted himself to exploring contemporary life in the theatre space. He hopes to express various events and life experiences in the theater space through a creative space layout. In his view, life is always between the beginning and the end to find their own space, and in this space to carry out some imagination. Edward Lam presents a unique space concept through drama, trying to explore the meaning of life and express individual emotional experience, creating a stage space that combines emotions is also an important topic for contemporary directors. This paper explores how director Edward Lam uses drama space, analyzes the spatial patterns of contemporary Chinese drama, and discusses the influence of this spatial concept on contemporary Chinese drama. Through an in-depth study of works such as *The Three Kingdoms*, we will explore director Edward Lam's unique contributions to the use of theatre space, including innovations in stage setting, character movement, and audience interaction. This paper explores the implications and influence of the spatial style of drama on the development of contemporary Chinese drama in order to provide new ideas and inspiration for the field. Through Edward Lam's plays, I explore how theatre can be a medium for expressing life's experiences and imaginations, and how space can be designed and constructed to explore and express life's emotions and experiences. Finally, this paper aims to provide a useful reference for the development and innovation of contemporary Chinese drama and promote the diversification and innovation of contemporary drama directors.

Keywords

Contemporary Chinese Opera House, Lin Yihua, Deconstruction

As a unique style of contemporary Chinese theatre, Director Edward Lam has always devoted himself to exploring contemporary life in theatrical space. Edward Lam hopes to use space as a collection of events and expressions of life in theatre space. And with the help of drama to present a unique educational concept. "The Three Kingdoms" is the third in a series of four masterpieces directed by Edward Lam. Unlike the portrayal of Jia Baoyu in *Red Mansions* as a woman, director Edward Lam uses a unique perspective to reinterpret the manly "Three Kingdoms" with women as the main body of history. On the battlefields of the past three countries, men were the subjects of war. Their uniforms were armor. Now in the classroom debate, school uniforms and cheongsam have become women's war robes. Edward Lam leads the growing female image into the struggle for survival and destruction in the male world. He tries to lead the audience into the theatre experience of thinking and aesthetics (Tian Chen, 2018).

"The Three Kingdoms" fully expresses director Edward Lam's theatrical philosophy. Through the reproduction of classroom teaching and the integration of historical content in the three countries, a platform for communication between the past and present has formed a unique theatrical expression. The use of space in his works shows the director's unique thinking, not only to decorate a scene such as an old factory as the main presentation space of the drama but also to promote the development of the drama (Marvin Carson, 2020).

First, the essence of the concept of "space" in drama Space, as a complex and special vocabulary, has multiple meanings, and it provides the possibility of studying physics, philosophy, literature, psychology, art, and so on. Space is a relative concept, that constitutes the abstract concept of things, and the abstract concept of things is referenced by space. With the development of contemporary drama, the use of the concept of drama space has become an important vocabulary of directors (Ma Wenqi, 2019). The spatial treatment of works has not been limited to the traditional concept of scheduling and setting.

In his book *Empty Space*, Peter Brooke puts forward the famous 20th-century playground-shocked quote: "I can choose any space and call it an empty stage. A man walking through the space under the gaze of others is enough to form a play. Richard Shekner, another dramatist who influenced modern theatres, seems to have expanded the space beyond the theatre, using actors as dots and lines to create new spaces outside the theatre. "From the point of view of the two theater directors and theorists, it is easy to see the importance of the concept of space in the field of theater.

First of all, the most basic theater space or the physical properties of the place we call "theatre", here we say theater space is "reality", drama from the beginning has the dual attributes of time and space. From the perspective of the development of drama, we can divide drama space into physical, psychological, and multimedia triple, from the physical attribute of drama space is only innovative in orientation and size.

Secondly, from the perspective of psychological space, the change of drama space began to mysterious, space has some ritual, imagination, and utopian "illusion", with the development of drama, many contemporary directors began to find their own "road" from the traditional drama. The concept of "Knowing Space", which gives the audience the color of "God's Suspension", also points to the psychological aspect of the audience, such as Lin Zhaohua, a famous Chinese drama director, in his work "Orphan Zhao".

At last, besides the "real" and "fantasy" space of appeal, there is a space in contemporary theater which is called multimedia space by many post-modern directors. With Meyerhold's call for cinematography, some directors with modern consciousness began to wonder if they could learn from it. With the development of photography technology, real-time image technology, the emergence of the live theater, the camera into the theater, the large screen with new meaning, and even the creation of the Dutch famous director Ivo van Hof.

1. Use of physical space

The physical space of drama creation can also be called a visible space, more directly, that is, the substantial stage facilities, equipment, costumes, curtains, lighting, and so on that the audience can see. Throughout the development of drama, the use of substantive space is also evolving. From the circular stage of the Three Tragic Poets, the theater has not been given more meaning. Its core appeal is the place of performance. Europe in the 16th century was a period of great differentiation of theatrical forms, the birth of the "frame stage" that continues to this day, the frame stage separated into theatrical space and theater viewing space, for the development of naturalism. Of course, Chinese opera is highly developed in this period. It is a highly hypothetical stage form that combines substantial space and psychological space. Of course, Chinese opera still needs theatre, stage, and theater as performance space. Europe in the 16th century consolidated theatrical and theatrical spaces, while also tightening the comprehensive nature of theater development in this period, this period began to be used for theatrical space or drama "spatiality".

Of course, as a frame stage in physical space, under the influence of contemporary theater theory, it is also developing and changing. The outstretched stage, center stage, variable stage, and glotov's bold creation of the ceremonial stage are all unique. Of course, it is not only the visual distance but also the psychological distance; it is not only the physical space but also the spiritual space that draws closer. The above-mentioned creative ideas prompted me to step out of the frame stage and perform the play in the style of the central stage. "The changes in physical space also reflect the changes in contemporary theatrical thinking.

No matter what kind of drama, there needs to be a space where we collectively call it "theater". Even Shekner's environmental drama also needs a physical space as a carrier, so to speak, any drama needs a place to be called an actual performance. The choice of theater form is that the director, as the expressor, wants to communicate with the audience, that is, the choice of theater space directly affects the mode and mode of dialogue. As Aristotle mentioned

in Poetics, "Tragedy is a description of an action worthy of serious attention, the action itself has integrity and has certain significance; "... purify this feeling by arousing pity and fear. This is also known as "Cartassius", which is why the frame-style stage is easier to carry content with a certain amount of weight away from the audience, as some historical dramas are suitable for frame-style stage performance. However, in "Detective of the Heart", Edward Lam consciously used the extended stage to help the actors approach the audience and express their thoughts. The extended stage played a positive role in expressing themselves. It is said that modern theater directors need to be half a philosopher and half a psychologist, so as in some of the major debates about the times, the "center stage" has its own meaning, such as in Edward Lam's "Waiting for Hong Kong. "

Lin Yihua makes full use of empty space as the main space of drama, creating different concrete spaces under the same space, showing the director's unique thinking. The "Three Kingdoms" stage is still designed as a box-shaped space that Edward Lam is good at handling, but it's not closed. The lines are simple, the lines are railings, the lines are stairs, and the windows and doors are visually balanced with relatively high white walls, and the facade is sometimes outdoors and sometimes indoors, like a surreal painting. The two large circles on the left and right are two large vents, which appear to be time tunnels that take different personas into and out. Chen Yourong, a former artist, has worked with Edward Lam since *The Beauty and Sorrow of Madame Bovale* (2006). "He usually does shop window design in Hong Kong and the Mainland. "The closest thing I get to him is that we all like simplicity. And what I like most about him is his proportion. It's like cutting a dress for a person and hiding it properly. In fact, we just need a space for actors to move around, but we need to know how to wrap it up so that everything looks reasonable. I've seen too many set designs, and the reason why they're not valid for me is because they're too full. In fact, the stage over there must let the audience look, while generating a very strange desire to go up and go, the more can absorb the audience's imagination, the more patient to see."

2. Use of psychological space

Yu Qiuyu mentioned in "Audience Psychology" that in drama aesthetic activities, there are more important psychological factors, such as perception, attention, emotion, imagination, and understanding. So constructing the audience's psychological space is one of the main points of contemporary drama director's creation. First of all, perception is first, then imagination is generated by attention and emotion. To construct psychological space, perception is the first premise, that is, space needs to be perceived to produce meaning. There are many practices in contemporary drama about perception. Imagination begins to work after perception. Meyerhold's "hypothesis" and Brooke's "empty space" are all reflected in the use of consciousness after the audience's perception.

In most of his works, Edward Lin uses comprehensive factors to construct the real feeling of "perception" so that the audience can form real emotional feelings in unrealistic plot paragraphs. The term "perception" first existed in phenomenology, proposed by Husserl, Melo-Ponty further studies "perception is not an event in a world that can be explained by cause and effect, but as a re-creation and re-constitution of the world at all the time". Furthermore, two basic propositions of Melo-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception influence the relationship between contemporary art and perceptual space:

Perception subject and perception object are inseparable systems. Perception is not just a matter of vision but of the whole body. The artists under the influence of Melo-Ponty's thought create according to their own understanding of phenomenology, showing different forms of expression. But this type of installation focuses on similar thinking: first, on the basis of the installation experience, more emphasis is placed on the participation and co-creation of the viewer; second, the art of perception focuses on mobilizing the body and the body.

From this theory, we look at the "empty space" of Peter Brook, one of the most famous theatrical theorists of our time, and we see that Ponty's first idea of artistic perception is to connect subjects and objects to form a common experience space. One person walks through this space under the gaze of others and that's enough to form a play," as Ponty puts it, connecting the subject and the object. This discussion points directly to the audience's perception, that is, perception forms the relationship between observation and performance, and the preliminary construction of psychological space can be achieved. Peterbrook's empty space, one of the most important theatrical concepts since the 20th century, has injected new thinking into directors around the world, leaving room for the main actors to perform. That is to create an empty space on the stage, using actors' performances to realize the audience's perception. In Peter Brook's *Cherry Garden*, the set is an unfinished theater (which Brooke emphasizes was not designed specifically) where we can see the rough ground, dirt behind it, and worn concrete walls. This minimalist setting is used to push the actor over the audience to focus on the performance, and this sense of decadence creates a sense of sense for the

audience and a sense of "reliability" as mentioned in the Experiential School.

Director Edward Lam's credibility space in "The Three Kingdoms" is similar to Brooke's, in which characters use live environment, music, and plot to guide actors into their roles, allowing actors to express themselves in a historical tone. At the same time, the three teachers' performances constitute a reliable and sexy knowledge of the "classroom" space, forming the expression and exploration of the educational concept.

3. Fusion of symbols and space

The characters and characters often cross each other in Lam's works, i.e. there are often no actors assigned to play a particular role, and the same actors may play multiple roles at the same time. The stage symbol is simply the director's symbolic treatment of dance beauty and stage space, that is to give meaning to the above-mentioned stage elements, which belong to the category of stage space. The main source of this statement is Hans-Tiss. In Post-Drama Theatre, Lehman's interpretation of "action space" in traditional drama is also greatly reversed. Space is no longer the space itself, everything on stage is a symbolic factor. Furthermore, how to choose the symbol expression is of great significance to contemporary drama director creation.

In the 19th century, the French panoramic painting (Daguerre's giant transparent painting), in which light moves the scene and architecture, a process that can directly link Wilson's scene change, music, and then darken[]In his work, hierarchy is a prominent feature, and this also creates a lack of plot, namely, breaking Aristotle's arrangement of six elements of the play, where the characters, such as Bishop's, are puppets on the line, or the robots mentioned by Alto. Wilson sees man as the symbol of space, actors exist to assist the space expression, where man and light, and color are on the same level, does not mean anything. Wilson's landscape is mainly embodied in "static", like a painting without perspective, here is also like the "empty" meaning of the Diamond Sutra, that is, neutral and objective.

If we go into a contemporary theater, we may find that the audience has become an important part of the theater's creation, that is, the traditional viewing position of the audience, and that the audience has been included in the performance space. In Edward Lam's relative realism drama "The Great Entertainer", the director also tries to use the way actors come out of the audience and communicate with the audience to enhance the audience's participation and creative desire. In the more varied contemporary theater, the audience was even removed from the seats and placed directly on the stage, freely choosing the viewing angle. This concept, which was born from Shekner's "environmental drama", is now widely used in China's immersive drama (Li Guoxiu, 2017).

"The Three Kingdoms" focuses on the relationship between viewing and performing, including the audience in the theater, using the adjustment of the actor's performance angle, using the coordination of the stage schedule and sound effects. Audiences can become creators and interpret more information in their work. The director hopes to increase audience participation by changing the viewing space, transforming the audience into creators, freeing them from fragmented information, and returning to the theater (Hu Weimin, 2019).

But when we really start to think about the meaning of drama and life, we may be able to understand the meaning of what director Edward Lam wants to express in his works. Perhaps just like the "Three Kingdoms" play, the process of change is inescapable, the process of taking time. Although our empathy for the creation itself may be lacking, director Edward Lam's reflection on the audience's psychology and the use of space are worth sitting down and savoring.

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