

## UNIT 2 TOPIC 7 CHINESE OPERA, CROSSTALK, FILM AND DANCE

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### Pre-knowledge

Before class, students should read Unit 2 Topic 7 and watch some videos on Chinese opera, crosstalk, film and dance to gain some basic understanding.

### Aim and Objectives

Topic 7 aims to provide students with some knowledge of the origins and development of Chinese opera, crosstalk, film, drama as well as Chinese dance. It will also equip them with the basic ability to appreciate these various forms of Chinese arts.

### Teaching and Learning Activities

#### Activity 1

Find and watch a video clip each of modern Beijing opera and modern Western opera. Then have your students compare the two types of opera.

#### Activity 2

Watch a video clip of a crosstalk performed by Hou Baolin. Then have a class discussion on what Chinese humour is.

#### Activity 3

Watch the Chinese cartoon *Three Monks* published by Will Hobbs (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z802JqJ2A7A>). Then have a class discussion, comparing it with a cartoon made in the United States or the United Kingdom. Have your students talk about the similarities and differences.

#### Activity 4

Ask your students to research online the influence of Chinese Kung Fu movies around the world.

#### Activity 5

Have your students study a Chinese female movie star such as Zhang Ziyi and Gong Li. Then have them prepare a PowerPoint presentation for the class.

#### Activity 6

Explain the meaning of “乐者为同，礼者为异” to your students. Have them take down notes and then write a 400-word article on the relationship between 礼 and 乐.

#### Activity 7

Watch these videos:

- 丝路花雨, starring 贺燕云, published by Tuen Tony Kwok (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqwYBQLHyTo>)
- 扇舞丹青, starring 王亚彬, published by Adjani86 (available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BAT9noEoSDI>)
- 宝莲灯, starring 赵青, published by yk-fjminxi (available at: <http://v.qiye10000.com/v/XNTYuMTAoODM1.html>)

Then have a class discussion on the similarities and differences between classical Chinese dance and Western dance.

### Activity 8

Explain to your students the meaning of 形 (form), 神 (inner spirit), 劲 (power) and 律 (rhythm). You may use the article 中国古典舞“形、神、劲、律” as reference (available at: <https://dancebettyyu.weebly.com/blog2133823458/5307390>). Then have your students learn and experience a classical Chinese dance. Finally, have them share their impression of these aesthetic characters of classical Chinese dance.

### Activity 9

Ask your students to do Exercise 7 of the Workbook according to your teaching needs and progress.

## **Resources/Materials**

Apart from those listed in the activities, you may also consult these resources/materials:

1. Li, Xia (2007), *50 Topics on Chinese Culture*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
2. Baranovitch, N. (2003), *China's New Voices: Popular Music, Ethnicity, Gender, & Politics, 1978-1997*. University of California Press.
3. Yuan Mu, Wang Weiming & Peng Bo (2014), *Glimpses of Contemporary China: Chasing an Art Dream*. Sinolingua Press.

## **Assessment**

1. Collect the notes taken by your students during all group and class discussions.
2. Prepare some questions and assess your students when they answer them verbally.
3. Students are required to write a 500-word report on the similarities and differences between Chinese and Western opera, film or dance.

## **Workbook Answer Key**

1. Pair Work  
With a partner, design a poster or brochure to promote Beijing Opera. Include a brief history of Beijing Opera, its main characteristics and famous artists of this art.

Suggest video: *Peking opera*

Published by UNESCO on 5 November, 2010

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtV3iAuYN48>

Assess the work as presented by your students.

2. Internet Search + Pair Work  
With a partner, find out and write down the key differences between Beijing Opera and Western Opera.

Student may compare the two types of opera in these aspects:

	Beijing Opera	Western Opera
Origin		
Music		
Plots		
Contents		
Props		
Audience		

Assess points as presented by your students.

3. Internet Search + Pair Work

With a partner, read up on the make-up and *Lianpu* used in Beijing Opera. Identify two opera masks and draw them below.

Refer to pages 112 and 113 of the Textbook.

Assess the work as presented by your students.

4. Watch the movie *Mei Lanfang* on YouTube or any other video sharing website. How did Mei Lanfang become a Beijing Opera artist? How important was Beijing Opera in people's lives in those days?

Refer to pages 113 and 114 of the Textbook.

Suggested video: *Mei Lan-Fang Movie*

Published by Jessica McGonagle (Movie for Asian Theater at Bridgewater State University) on 8 December, 2015

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qo7sWkjbCL8>

The importance of Beijing Opera in people's lives in those days:

- It was the only form of entertainment for many people.
- With its rich combination of singing, dancing, storytelling, martial arts and colourful costumes and masks, its cultural importance was highly valued.

5. What is Crosstalk? Why is it so popular in China? Is there a similar art form from the West?

Students should consider these points:

- Crosstalk is a traditional Chinese comedy-like performance featuring jokes and funny dialogues.
- It is satirical in nature and seeks to criticise vile practices of society, to reflect social phenomena or to give praise to the good things that have happened in society. This resonates with people.
- It is like stand-up comedy from the West.

6. Internet Search + Pair Work

With a partner, compare Crosstalk with Western comedy. Explain briefly what Chinese humour is and how it differs from Western comedy.

Crosstalk	Western comedy
There are different numbers of performers, ranging from one to more than three.	The lone performer, known as a comedian, usually speaks directly to the audience.

He usually uses puns, allusions and quick and playful banter.	He usually shares humorous stories, short jokes called “bits” and one-liners in quick succession.
He may hold a folding fan but it is more of an accessory than a prop.	Some comedians use props, music or magic tricks to enhance their acts.
It has been performed in large performance arts centres for the past few decades but is now seeing a revival in using small teahouses as venues.	It can be performed in comedy clubs, bars, colleges and theatres, and also distributed on television, DVD and the Internet.

#### 7. Internet Search + Pair Work

With a partner, find out the history of the Chinese film industry. Design a chart showing the key stages of its development and listing representative works as well as directors and actors/actresses at each stage. Write down the key genres in Chinese film.

Key genres in Chinese film:

- Action and Adventure
- Biographical and Historical
- Children and Teens
- Comedy
- Crime and war
- Disaster
- Documentary
- Historical
- Romance
- Suspense and mystery
- Thriller

Refer to pages 116 and 117 of the Textbook.

Suggested video: *History of Chinese cinema*

Published by Cairo International Film Festival on 19 November, 2016

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIM0O4hzLqc>

#### 8. Class Discussion

Watch a film directed by Zhang Yimou and one directed by Ang Lee. As a class, discuss and compare the plot and artistic merits of both films. Write a short reflection on each film.

Assess points as presented by your students.

#### 9. Watch the film *Eat Drink Man Women*. Write down your thoughts on the Chinese cuisine featured in the film.

Assess points as presented by your students.

#### 10. Internet Search

Identify a personality in the Chinese film industry whom you are interested in knowing more about. He/She could be a director, scriptwriter, actor/actress, music composer or someone who undertakes any other key role in the making of a film. Find and watch an interview of him/her on YouTube or any other video sharing website. Write a short introduction to his/her profile based on the interview.

Suggested video 1: *Life of Pi | Ang Lee Interview (2013)*

Published by moviemaniacsDE on 25 April, 2013

Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mbEU-m\\_zOs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-mbEU-m_zOs)

Suggested video 2: *Life of Pi: Ang Lee answers your questions*

Published by The Guardian on 17 December, 2012

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=229vKIGbxrl>

Suggested video 3: *Ang Lee: A Life in Pictures Highlights*

Published by BAFTA Guru on 2 January, 2013

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iL0P9T7pYY>

Assess points as presented by your students.

11. What is your general impression of Chinese dance?

Assess points as presented by your students.

12. What is 礼 and what is 乐? What is the relationship between the two?

Students should consider these points:

- 乐 was a particular style of dance created during the Zhou Dynasty. A mixture of court dance, music and poetry, it consisted of two main categories that each comprised six works from various periods of the past.
- 礼 was a set of rules governing ethical values and behaviour. It was used to govern the people and rule the country.
- 乐 was a tool for enforcing 礼.

13. Why is the Tang Dynasty known as a period of brilliance in the history of Chinese dance?

It was during this period that many different types of dances were created and refined to high standards. Many dancers had great accomplishments during this period.

14. Internet Search + Pair Work

With a partner, write down the differences between classical Chinese dance and classical Western dance.

Assess points as presented by your students.

15. How many kinds of Chinese folk dances do you know? Write down two of them and describe briefly the main features of each dance in the following table:

Name of the Dance	Main Features
红绸舞	A form of rice field dance with folk music and different Chinese symbols of luck
新疆舞 《掀起你的盖头来》	A Uighur dance with Uighur music and costumes

Suggested video 1: 红绸舞 (汉族男女群舞——红绸带)

Published by lingbo dancer on 10 December, 2008

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BscVmGQtiiY>

Suggested video 2: 新疆舞 《掀起你的盖头来》

Published by Taichier on 19 February, 2012

Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVQExGmBT\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVQExGmBT_Y)

Assess points as presented by your students.

16. Name a famous Chinese dancer whom you know or admire and tell his/her story to the class. Next, write a review of 300 words about him/her.

Suggested video: 杨丽萍 《孔雀舞》 - *peacock dance*

Published by zchangel on 29 November, 2008

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoXNG2n3GiY>

Assess points as presented by your students.

Note: All URLs listed herein were ascertained to be accessible on 11 September, 2020.