

Connecting link between European Opera Theatre and Indian Folk Opera Theatre (Swang)

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ABSTRACT

Both Opera art forms defined dramatic story, told through lyricism of songs. It is considered one of the most complete art forms, combining all of the elements of arts, words, music, drama and dance. The unique thing in both art form is the use of music to convey an entire story/plot. This is based on the feelings that music can communicate with the reactions and emotions of the people better than words (read or spoken) or pictures depicted. Opera and Swang take any type of dramatic story and tries to make it more exciting and believable with the help of music. Many famous stories have been used in performance like Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, and Romeo and Juliet, Heer and Ranjha, Satyawan and Savitri, Kichak, Draupdi etc.

INTRODUCTION

Opera :- means "work", both in the sense of the labor done and the result produced. opera supposes a free will and desire to serve". According to the Oxford English Dictionary, this word was firstly used in the sense of "composition in which poetry, dance, and music are combined". Opera is an art form in which artist perform a dramatic work with help of music. Opera combines music, plot and the spectacle provided by the sets, costumes and staging, the result is much more than the sum of the parts. It is truly an audio-visual art form. Opera is a dramatic story told through song..

European Opera Theatre Opera is a form of theatre in which music is a fundamental component and dramatic roles are taken by singers, but is distinct from musical theatre. Such a "work" (the literal translation of the Italian word "opera") is typically a collaboration between a composer and a librettist and incorporates a number of the performing arts such as acting, scenery, costume and sometimes dance or ballet. The performance is typically given in an opera house accompanied by an orchestra or smaller musical ensemble which has been led by a conductor in the 19th century.

Indian Folk Opera Theatre (Swang) Swang comprises a mixture of songs and acts but the main attraction of swangs are its raginis. Raginis which can be described as long narrative poems. They can tell about bravery, love or narrate a comic event and they are able to bind the audience with their power of memorization. Swang can be considered as the most ancient folk opera theatre form of India. Swangs are centuries old and are addressing issues of contemporary issues.. Musical swangs came up near 1800 around the regions of Hathras.

Elements in Opera Theatre

Music

Music moves the action of a story, expresses emotions and moods, and deepens our understanding of the characters. Musical themes are complete ideas that are crafted to be memorable to the listener. They are heard throughout operas and associated with a particular character /characters, a situation, an idea, object, or emotion.

Orchestra

In most cases, operas are accompanied by a group of musicians. Led by a conductor, an orchestra is an ensemble that is comprised of string, woodwind, brass, and percussion instruments.

Chorus

Often providing background music for the above, a chorus is a group of people singing together in parts or in unison. Both musical form is sung by lead actors/singers.

Drama

Operas unfold a dramatic or comic story involving a protagonist, antagonist, and/or a hero/heroine. Actors that portray these roles must be very good in both singing and acting. Certain characters' tendencies often exist for each vocal category.

Blocking

The patterns of movement of the people onstage as the opera progresses

Costumes

The outfits worn by each actor to reflect the time and place of an opera as well as the personality of each character.

Properties

Items that may be carried onstage in an actor's hands or that "dress" the set (such as furniture or decorative accessories).

Origination of Both Opera Theatre Forms:- Both Opera theatre forms were originated in 16th century. European opera theatre originated in Italy with Jacopo Peri's mostly lost *Dafne*, produced in Florence in 1598 and the origin of Indian Folk opera theatre. *Swang* is also traced in 16th century with Pt. Kishan Lal Bhaat,

European opera theatre originated in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though it drew upon older traditions of medieval and Renaissance courtly entertainment. The word opera meaning "work" in Italian, was first used in the modern musical and theatrical sense in 1639 and soon spread to the other European languages. The earliest operas were modest productions compared to other Renaissance forms of sung drama but they soon became more lavish and took on the spectacular staging of the earlier genre known as intermedio.

At the end of the 16th century especially from works by Claudio Monteverdi, notably *L'Orfeo* and soon spread through the rest of Europe Heinrich Schutz in Germany, Jean Baptiste Lully in France, and Henry Purcell in England all helped to establish their national traditions in the 17th century. In the 18th century, Italian opera continued to dominate most of Europe (except France), attracting foreign composers such as George Frideric Handel. Opera seria was the most prestigious form of Italian opera, until Christoph Willibald Gluck reacted against its artificiality with his "reform" operas in the 1760s. The most renowned figure of late 18th-century opera is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who began with opera seria but is most famous for his Italian comic opera, especially. *The Marriage of Figaro* (*Le nozze di Figaro*), *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*, as well as *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), and *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*), landmarks in the German tradition.

The first third of the 19th century saw the high point of the *Bel Canto* style, with Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti and Vincenzo Bellini all creating signature works of that style. It also saw the advent of Grand opera typified by the works of Daniel Auber and Giacomo Meyerbeer as well as Carl Maria Von Weber's introduction of *German Romantische Oper* (German Romantic Opera). The mid-to-late 19th century was a golden age of opera, led and dominated by Giuseppe Verdi in Italy and Richard Wagner in Germany. The popularity of opera continued through the verismo era in Italy and contemporary French Opera through to Giacomo Puccini and Richard Strauss in the early 20th century. During the 19th century, parallel operatic traditions emerged in central and eastern Europe, particularly in Russia and Bohemia. The 20th century saw many experiments with modern styles, such as atonality and serialism (Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg), neoclassicism (Igor Stravinsky) and minimalism (Philip Glass and John Adams)

Indian folk opera theatre depicts the emotions and feelings of the people of that area in a very easy and natural way. *Swang* is one of the most prominent genre of folk theatre. It travels from one generation to another generation through the age in old oral tradition. Along with the problem of anonymity the boon of it is. It belonged to everyone thus uniting the society in cultural and moral platforms. Common life of the region serves as nutrition for folk literature and folk literature serves as the documents of common life and its morals that leaves legacies for the future generations to come. *Swang* or village plays/dramas play a vital role in the culture of Haryana. It contains seeds of joys and sorrows, expectations and fears of the commoners and their life in it.

Some people gives credit for originate *swang* to Kavi Shankar Dass, a poet artiste who belonged to Meerut. Another notable early pioneer was Ali Bux of Rewari also

There are some major Lok Kavi(Folk Artists) who puts the Haryanvi Culture at the Peak.

- Pt Deep Chand Bahman (1884-1940)
- Pt Lakhmi Chand (1903-1945)
- Jat Mehar Singh(1918-1944)
- Baje Bhagat(1898-1936)
- Pt Mange Ram (1906-1967)
- Pt Ramkishan Vyas (1925-2003)
- Pandit Tuleram - (1939-2008)

Different Opera Styles Around the World

Operas have been written in a diversity of languages with many countries or regions developing their own operatic style, tradition and history. Different singing styles were developed for the opera, such as recitative imitating the pattern and rhythm of speech, when a character expresses feelings through a flowing melody.

Italy was the first country where opera became popular. It was the homeland of Jacopo Peri and Claudio Monteverdi. In time, this exciting form of entertainment spread in the rest of Europe. France and Germany joined Italy as the principal opera producers.

Eventually, opera came to reflect the stories and musical styles of each of these countries. The Italians have always been famous for their love of singing, and so in Italian opera there has always been great emphasis placed on the singer and the beautiful sounds of the human voice. It wasn't until the late 19th century and early 20th century with the later works of Verdi and the operas of Puccini was a balance achieved between the role of the orchestra and that of the singer, and the combining of these two forces, to give a more effective presentation of the story. The French have favored the pictorial side of drama, and this has led to a continuing emphasis on the visual spectacle, especially with dancing. An example of this: the Paris opera in the 19th century would not accept a work for performance if it did not contain a major ballet. Verdi, an Italian composer, had to add ballets to all of his works to get them performed in Paris.

The Germans sought to extract from both the Italian and French traditions, and go beyond both in an attempt to present more than just a story. In fact, one of the greatest German opera composers, Richard Wagner, chose legends or myths for most of his opera plots so that he could communicate ideas as well as just a story.

In India Nautanki, Saang, Bhagat Mach, Tamasha, Jatra originated from the Swang traditions. Old Swang traditions are: "EK MARDANA EK JANANA MANCH PAR ADE THE RAI" "EK SAARANGI EK DHOLAKIA SAATH MEIN ADE THE RAI" (One male and one female performers start the story. One saangi(string instrument) player and one dholak (Rythem Instrument) player joins the performance.) This Swang/Saang performance was active at the time of SantKabir and Guru Nanak.

Tradition credits Kishan Lal Bhaat for laying the foundation of the present style of Swang about two hundred years ago. During Mughal period and specifically at the time of Aurangzeb women were strictly banned from public performances. Since women did not participate in the dance-drama form, men have traditionally enacted their roles. Later on different performers changed the style according to the socio-political situations. It is possible to have differences on lingual levels as languages has slight variations according to regions but the zest and morals at a large remains the same. It is following in larger as compare to the written literature of that area and it appeals easily to everyone as it uses the local language of that area

Themes in European Opera theatre

The concept of opera was developing many years before the first opera was written. Its beginning can be traced into the ancient Greeks. They fused poetry and music, creating plays that incorporated song, spoken language and dance, accompanied by string or wind instruments. In the 1100s, the early Christian church set religious stories to music, a style known as liturgical drama. The first true opera, *Daphne*, was composed by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633). It told the story of a Greek myth. The first great composer of opera was Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). Some of his operas are still performed today.

Bel Canto

This Italian phrase means "beautiful singing". These operas grew from a style of singing emphasizing long phrases, breath control, and flexibility in singing both loudly and softly. Because the voice is considered the most expressive element, the words are often secondary. Gaetano Donizetti composed in this style.

Opera Buff

Comic opera, always sung in Italian. The jokesters in these operas are usually the working class, such as maids, peasants, or servants, who keep busy getting the best of their employers. Gioachino Rossini composed in this style.

Opera Seria

Serious opera. These stories are often tragic, and typically involve heroes and kings or ancient myths and gods. Some of Handel's operas are in this style. Singspiel "Song play" evolved in German speaking countries out of the comic opera tradition. It includes elements of comic opera, spoken dialogue interjected among the sung phrases, and, often, an exotic or fanciful theme. Mozart's *The Magic Flute* is an example of this style.

Grand Opera

Spectacular opera. It is performed with elaborated sets and costumes. Many people are needed to make it happen. Grand opera involves royalty, heroism, an elaborate ballet scene, and is often long. Composer Giacomo Meyerbeer wrote opera in this style.

Music Drama

A style of opera that is created by a single artist who writes both the text and the music to advance the drama. This style fuses many art forms, and makes each one as important as the others. Composer Richard Wagner defined this style.

Themes in Indian Folk Opera theatre (Swang)

Folk Theatre is a composite art form in India with a fusion of elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic and ballad recitation, graphic and plastic arts, religion and festival peasantry. Swang having roots in native culture is embedded in local identity and social values. Besides providing mass entertainment, it helps Indian society as indigenous tools of interpersonal, inter-group and inter-village communication for ages. Swang has been used extensively in India to propagate critical social, political and cultural issues in the form of theatrical messages to create awareness among the people. As an indigenous form it breaks all kinds of formal barriers of human communication and appeals directly to the people which realizes the importance and powerfulness of this traditional medium.

Swang themes draw variously from themes of morality, folk tales, lives of inspiring personalities, stories from Indian mythology and in recent times, more current themes like health and hygiene, literacy, AIDS awareness and women empowerment by a group of ten or twelve persons in an open area or an open air theatre surrounded by the audience. In temple based religious theatre, Indian epics and Puranas are the major source material for characters, while the community-based secular theatre is of lighter variety. Several themes may be mixed together - mythological love, popular history, and religious themes, all with overtones of secular values. All dramas typically end with the victory of good over evil. The two important styles of Swang are from Rohtak and Haathras. In the style belonging to Rohtak, the language used is Haryanvi (Bangru) and in Haathras, it is Brajbhasha. Artists performs up to 5 hours/sometimes whole night also . Some of the men dress as women and women dress as a men to act and dance

CONCLUSION

European Opera theatre and Indian Folk Opera theatre (Swang) are almost very much close with each other. There are a lot of similarities between these art forms. The unique thing in both Opera theatre form is the use of music to convey an entire story/plot which is based on the feeling that music can communicate people's reactions and emotions better than words. Both styles led by a director or bed band. The director is the in charge of the staging for the production and directs the acting of the singers. Story telling with the help of music is the main motive in both Opera Theatre Forms.

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