



# 神功弟子： 廣州的茶座文化

## TEA HOUSE CANTONESE OPERA - A VANISHING LIFE-STYLE IN GUANGZHOU

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午後廣州，走進任何一家茶座，四周是茶客雷鳴般的說地談天聲、杯碗盤筷叮叮噹噹的敲擊聲，還有從侍應喉嚨中喊出的各種點心名字。忽爾一下「的」一聲的木魚聲打破這片喧鬧，緊接是台上女子的唱出的旋律，伴隨著各種樂器的伴奏聲。聚光燈下的她，妝容和歌衣閃閃發亮，賣力的表演吸引在場所有人的目光。她是一位粵曲界新星，剛剛從學院畢業，年輕、美麗、才華橫溢。她並不孤單，因為在廣州，還有許許多多和她有同樣背景的粵曲藝人。

**In the tea houses in Guangzhou every afternoon,** one can hear visitors chatting out loud, dishes clinking against cups and chopsticks, and waitresses shouting the *dimsum* names. A resounding “dic” made by a wooden percussion instrument breaks through this clamour, followed by a melody sung by a female singer, accompanied by different music instruments. She stands under the spotlight with shiny make-up and glittering costumes, acts her role lively catching everyone's attention. She is a freshly graduated new Cantonese opera star: young, beautiful and talented. But she is not alone in Guangzhou. There are many others like her.



粵劇曲藝團中除了歌者，還有許多年輕樂師受聘演出。自從廣東粵劇在二零一零年成為聯合國教科文組織非物質文化遺產，廣州政府就推出了相應的文化政策，大力發展粵劇。不少青少年或自己選擇、或因服從父母而學習粵劇，希望將來在曲藝界有穩定發展，賺取生活所需。但「粵劇樂師」這行業真的那麼前途無量嗎？他們的樂師生涯仍有漫漫長路，廣州的粵曲茶座文化卻似乎正逐漸消亡。

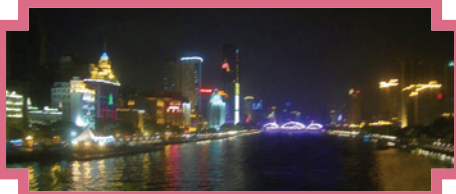
## 茶座文化

茶座文化，源於有現場粵曲表演的茶館或茶樓。顧名思義，「茶座」就是讓茶客能夠邊「坐」邊喝「茶」，一邊欣賞音樂表演。在香港，茶座還有「一盅兩件」的別稱，因為茶客進入茶樓必須付「最低消費」，也就是至少一盅茶兩籠點心的價錢。到茶座坐坐，你固然能夠欣賞到傳統的粵劇樂曲選段，但台上也會不時演出反映社會現狀的新曲、嘻笑怒罵的趣劇和即興演奏。作為粵劇發源地的南中國卻不是唯一擁有茶座文化的地方，近似的表演形式亦在北京可見，像一些供社會上流人士邊品茶邊聽京劇的茶樓。但是廣州的茶座文化依然獨特。不同於只為上流人士而設的北京茶座，廣州茶座價錢既便宜又大眾化，多數民眾都能夠負擔，茶客由工人到中產階級都有，不論階層，歡迎內進；只需付最低消費，茶客就能坐足整個時段。不過到付賞錢時，還是看到茶客的階級之別。演出途中，茶客可自由走到台前，打賞小費給他們欣賞的粵曲藝人，形式由現金、利是錢甚至多張鈔票摺成的大紙扇都有。收的賞錢越多，這位藝人就越有聲望。藝人每演唱十五分鐘，平均會被打賞五至十二次。

Despite these Cantonese opera singers, numerous young musicians are also employed in the music ensemble. Since Cantonese opera was inscribed in the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list in 2010, the Guangzhou government adopted the cultural policy that developed Cantonese opera intensively. Many youngsters either chose to or were forced by parents to study music to ensure a secure future in the music industry. However, is the job of being a Cantonese opera musician promising in reality? While life of Cantonese opera musicians goes on, the life-style of tea house Cantonese opera in Guangzhou seems vanishing.

## The *Chàhjoh* Culture

The *chàhjoh* culture refers to the setting in tea houses with Cantonese opera performances. In Cantonese, *Chàh* stands for tea and *joh* means to sit. It implies that the attendants sit down and drink tea while enjoying the music performance. In Hong Kong, *chàhjoh* is also known as “one pot two pieces” because the attendants have to pay a minimum cover charge which includes the price of one pot of tea and two sorts of *dimsum* dishes. Musically speaking, one can definitely expect to hear traditional Cantonese opera excerpts in the setting of *chàhjoh*. On top of that, many contemporary pieces that reflect the current society, slapsticks and improvisations are often performed as well. *Chàhjoh* is not unique in Southern China where Cantonese opera is originated; for instance, similar performing style can be observed in tea houses in Beijing where higher social class appreciate Peking opera and enjoy tea at the same time. However, in Guangzhou, the audience members experience *chàhjoh* differently from elsewhere. Instead of offering the performances only to high social classes, *chàhjoh* in Guangzhou is inexpensive and affordable by the wide public. The audience crowd ranges from members of the lower class to the bourgeoisies. *Chàhjoh* is open to everyone disregarding the social classes. Attendants only need to pay a minimum cover charge and can stay at the tea houses for the whole time slot. However, social hierarchy can be expressed through the practice of tipping at the tea houses. During the singing performances, audiences can walk freely to the stage giving tips to the singers they appreciate. They tip in forms of cash, money in red pockets, or even a handful of dollar bills in a paper fan shape. The more they give, the more prestige they get. In average, a singer gets tipped five to twelve times during a fifteen-minute performance.



## 曲藝一條街

二十年前，到茶座聽曲是一種非常受歡迎的娛樂，當時茶座在廣州舉目皆是。但在過去十年，茶座一間接一間結業，剩下來的除了零零落落地散佈在廣州市，就幾乎全都集中在珠江河岸一個當地市民稱之為「曲藝一條街」的地區。這條大街可謂全廣州最古老又最別致的街道，許多知名老牌的酒店、茶樓都在此營業。「粵曲茶座」就開設在茶樓裡或酒店的食肆裡，在指定時段提供粵曲表演。這條三百米的長堤上，至少就有五家在開設下午茶曲藝茶座的酒店或茶樓，包括愛群大廈、威力斯酒店、大同酒家等等。茶座每天表演兩場，第一場約在下午二至四時，第二場在晚上九至十一時。藝人輪流上台獨唱或二人對唱粵曲短段約十五分鐘，負責伴奏的樂團則整場不變。由於「曲藝一條街」是茶座集中地，藝人就能在一個下午茶時段穿梭於不同的茶座駐唱，唱完一家便跑到五十米外的另一家茶座，向不同的觀眾獻技，之後又走到第三家。雖然「曲藝一條街」的地利為藝人添了方便，卻令茶座業界和粵劇樂團面對更大競爭，他們須用不同方法吸引更多觀眾來看他們的表演。事實上，「曲藝一條街」近年的發展也是越來越艱難。

為慶祝共產黨成立九十周年而在劇院舉辦的粵曲音樂會  
Cantonese opera event in a theatre celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Communist Party



## The Cantonese Opera Music Boulevard

*Chàhjoh* was a very popular form of entertainment and could be found in many parts of Guangzhou twenty years ago. Yet, *chàhjoh* venues closed down one after another in the past decade. Nowadays, despite the very few tea houses scattering around the city, most of them concentrate along the Zhujiang River. Locals call this area the "Cantonese Opera Music Boulevard." The boulevard depicts the oldest and the most picturesque district in Guangzhou, where many famous and traditional hotels and restaurants are located. The *chàhjoh* tea houses integrate into these restaurants or hotels and provide Cantonese opera performances during the designated time slot. Along this 300-meter-long boulevard, at least five hotels and restaurants offer *chàhjoh* sessions during afternoon tea, such as the Aiqun Hotel, Venice Hotel, and the Datong Restaurant. These tea houses provide *chàhjoh* performances twice a day: from approximately two to four o'clock in the afternoon and from nine to eleven o'clock in the evening. Singers take turn to perform solo or duet short pieces for around fifteen minutes, whereas the music ensemble remains the same to accompany the singers. The concentration of *chàhjoh* venues at the Cantonese Opera Music Boulevard makes it practical for singers to hop around different tea houses during tea time. For instance, after they sing at the first tea house, they walk fifty meters to the other tea house next door for another audience, and then travel to other *chàhjoh* locations in walking distance. Although the location of the Cantonese Opera Music Boulevard creates a more convenient working environment for singers; for the *chàhjoh* business and music troupes, it becomes more competitive and they have to adopt different strategies to attract more audience members for their performances. Cantonese Opera Music Boulevard, in recent years, is obviously having a hard time in development.



下午茶時段粵曲茶座的爆棚盛況  
Afternoon session of *chàhjoh* with a full audience





## 無法跨越的年代隔閡

我第一次看茶座表演是在二零一零年，最令我注意的卻不是表演者有多光芒四射，而是台下觀眾幾乎全部是年過七十的白髮老人。初出茅廬的表演者和年老觀眾間的巨大鴻溝，多少反映出「茶座粵劇」現時的困境。茶座文化群體所面臨的最大挑戰是市場需求的轉變。二十世紀九十年代是茶座粵劇最鼎盛的時期，之後茶座變得不再流行，現在只有老人家才喜歡上粵曲茶座了。色士風樂手阿森也對這個轉變感到難過。

「好些觀眾非常年邁，來這裡聽我們演奏就是他們生活的唯一意義。」他舉例說，有位老婆婆每天都會準時到茶座聽戲，她還說假如有一天見不到她，那她大概是死了。有一天，老婆婆真的沒有出現，阿森就知道她已經去世了。「這些最年老的觀眾們，許多都是某天離開茶座後就再沒回來了。」這些年輕樂師在我面前細數越來越嚴重的觀眾老化問題。廿多歲的娜娜被問到自己未來五年的計劃時，竟幾乎哭了起來，因為不知現在這群戲迷到時還剩下多少，也就難怪她擔憂自己的未來了。「我唯一懂得的事情就是玩音樂。除了音樂，我沒受過其他的教育了。」她覺得自己像被困在廣東音樂的死胡同，也找不到其他的出路。年輕的阿德十六歲開始當樂師，他記得自己八年前初入行時，日賺逾一百元人民幣是輕而易舉的事情，如今每天平均只能賺四十元。他坦言：「只靠茶座玩音樂賺來的錢，根本不能維持生活！」許多樂師尤其是年輕一輩便得努力尋找其他收入來源，例如暗中打打兼職或做起小生意來。

## The “Generation Gap”

I first attended a *chàhjoh* performance in 2010. What grabbed my attention was not how glamorous the performers were, but how the audience crammed with grey-haired seniors in their seventies. The giant age gap between the freshly-graduated performers and the senior audience members reflected the hardship that tea house Cantonese opera faced. The biggest challenge that the *chàhjoh* community had to overcome was the struggle with the changing market demand. After the peak time of tea house Cantonese opera in the 1990s, *chàhjoh* became less prevalent. Now, it is only popular among grey and white haired elderlies. A saxophone musician, Sam, felt saddened by this change, “Some of the audience members are really old. Coming here to listen to our music has become the only meaning of their lives.” He gave the example of an old woman who used to attend *chàhjoh* as part of her daily routine and who said that if she would not show up at the tea house, she probably would have died. One day, this woman did not come to the tea house and Sam knew that she had passed away. “These elderly among the audience, a lot of them leave and never come back again.” The young musicians reckon the worsened situation of the aging audience population. Selina, a musician in her twenties, almost burst into tears during an interview when asked about her plans for the coming five years, because she was insecure about the remaining audience by then and felt anxious about her future. “Playing music is the only thing I can do. I have never received other kinds of education.” She felt trapped in making Cantonese opera music and could not find

a way out. Fred, a young musician who started his music career at the age of sixteen, recalled that when he first started eight years ago, he could earn more than 100 RMB per day easily, but now, he could only earn 40 RMB in average. He told me honestly, “If one just relies on the money earned from playing at the tea houses, one cannot survive!” Many musicians seek other ways to earn their livelihood, especially the young ones, they started to look for part-time jobs or find their own business in secret.



重新裝修過的國家級劇院，上演標準的粵劇劇目。

A renovated national theatre for standardized Cantonese opera performances

## 當粵劇成為非物質 文化遺產……

根據聯合國教科文組織於二零零三年通過的《保護非物質文化遺產公約》，「非物質文化遺產」的定義是「被各社區、群體，有時是個人，視為其文化遺產組成部分的各種社會實踐、觀念表述、表現形式、知識、技能以及相關的工具、實物、手工藝品和文化場所。」各方面例如語言、音樂、節慶、飲食文化等等傳統都可以成為非物質文化遺產。自此，中國每年都積極提名非物質文化遺產，廣州市政府亦開始把粵劇提升為「遺產」的一種，以突出它的藝術、文化和歷史價值。二零零六年，粵劇名列國家級非物質文化遺產，獲得了大量資金以助其發展。為了令這種藝術形式得以流傳下去，政府還開設了粵劇學校，大學和音樂學院也陸續出產主修粵劇的畢業生。二零一零年，粵劇在廣東省、香港及澳門聯合申報下，成功列入聯合國教科文組織的人類非物質文化遺產名錄；為慶祝成功申遺，政府還加強了有關粵劇的文化政策。粵劇彷彿由一種地區生活文化，昇華至代表全中國的文化符號。為

向外地遊客推  
廣粵劇表演，  
廣州所有粵  
劇劇院都經  
翻新整修；

## Cantonese Opera as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

According to the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage authorized by UNESCO (The United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 2003, intangible cultural heritage is defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.” It includes all aspects of tradition, such as languages, music, festivals, food ways, and so on. Since then, China has participated actively in the nomination of intangible cultural heritage each year. The Guangzhou city government started to promote Cantonese opera as a heritage form to highlight its artistic, cultural and historical value. In 2006, Cantonese opera was listed as national heritage. Large amount of funding was poured into its development. The government established Cantonese opera schools so as to sustain the art form. Also, universities and music conservatories recognized graduate students who majored in Cantonese opera. In 2010, jointly declared by Guangdong province, Hong Kong and Macau, Cantonese opera was listed as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage representation. An intensified cultural policy for Cantonese opera development was adopted to celebrate the successful inscription. Cantonese opera transformed from a local life-style to a national representation that stands for the whole China. All Cantonese opera theatres in Guangzhou were renovated to showcase the performances to tourists. Cantonese opera troupes are sent all over the world to perform. In an interview with a troupe director,



廣州著名的傳統粵劇組織  
——八和會館

A famous and traditional  
Cantonese opera association -  
the Chinese Artists Association  
of Guangzhou

粵劇團也被派往世界各地演出。訪問過一位劇團團長，他說對於粵劇能夠代表中國感到驕傲，而他最大的心願則是中國各地的戲曲藝術能夠團結起來。事實上，自二零一零年起，粵劇在許多方面都被「國家化」，希望能在國際舞台發光發熱。那麼，最草根的粵劇——比如像茶座般的本土表演形式，是否已湮沒在「文化遺產」的光環之中？

端午節時在某公園舉行的粵劇活動  
Cantonese opera event in a park during Dragon Boat Festival



he expressed that he was proud that Cantonese opera can represent China and his biggest wish is to see the unification of all local Chinese operas. Indeed, Cantonese opera has been nationalized in many ways since 2010 in order to shine on the international stage. However, what about Cantonese opera on the ground, such as the typical local performing style like *chàhjoh*?



廣州一所粵劇學校  
A Cantonese opera school in Guangzhou

## 茶座，走到盡頭了嗎？

現在偶爾還見到一些年輕人陪伴他們的祖父母輩上茶座聽樂曲，但在表演途中，他們也只顧低頭把玩智能電話，塞著耳機播放著自己喜歡的音樂。由於市場轉變、科技發達，當地年輕人不再欣賞如茶座表演般的傳統藝術。茶座觀眾的老化與青黃不接，證明粵劇成為非物質文化遺產並沒有為茶座行業帶來好處，反而產生了一大堆從粵劇學校畢業，卻在音樂行業前路茫茫的年輕人。粵劇以另一種更高檔的形式存在，例如在大型活動中演出一式一樣的選段，或在劇院上演的精美劇目。粵劇提升到「國家級」層面的背後，是本土傳統的逐漸消亡。我們怎樣才能延續這些消失中的傳統，使它們能夠代代相傳下去？

## Conclusion: Becoming a Vanishing Life-style

Occasionally, there are youngsters accompanying their grandparents to *chàhjoh*. But they usually occupy themselves with cell phones and plugged with their own choice of music. Due to market changes and the advanced technology development, local teenagers no longer appreciate traditional art form like *chàhjoh*. The aging audience proved that the declaration of Cantonese opera as intangible cultural heritage did not benefit the *chàhjoh* business, except for the influx of a group of desperate graduate students from the Cantonese opera schools who try to find a job in the music industry. Cantonese opera take place in other forms instead, such as the standardized pieces performed during big events and the beautified repertoire played in theatres. The nationalization of Cantonese opera led to the fading of local traditions. How can these vanishing traditions be sustained? ☯