

# Dissemination and Development of Theatre Based on New Media Context: An Example of Integration of Theatre Elements into Film

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**Abstract.** With the continuous development of modern media technology, traditional theatre art, which has long been in stagnation, has also been allowed to harmonise with modern advanced media technology and convenient media communication technology in various ways to seek a more permanent development. The relationship between theatre and film is one of the things that many scholars have explored and experimented with in this attempt to reform the theatre. With this in mind, this paper explores the current state of theatre and some of the possibilities for ways of combining theatre and film. Through the summary and analysis of previous generations' cutting-edge improvement of traditional theatre to adapt to modern development, the commonalities between the two are searched for and in this way attempts to promote the combination and development of theatre and film. The traditional form of theatre expression is no longer applicable to the current explosive growth of information into the public gaze of society, in line with the trend of the new era, the human history of theatre cultural treasures into the feasibility of innovative practices, so that the theatre exists in all kinds of emerging means of artistic expression, reflecting the results of the combination of cinema and theatre and the significance of innovative theatre reform.

**Keywords:** New media; Drama; Communication; Development of theatre and film.

## 1. Introduction

This article focuses on traditional theatre in the context of the new era, the new media technology, and the rapid development of the media industry, through the visual communication art of film as a carrier to disseminate film and television works with theatrical elements, and discusses how the traditional stage performance art, i.e., theatre, can be presented in a new way in front of the general public. This study is of great significance to researchers and creators who are interested in promoting the development of drama in film and television. This study mainly focuses on the current development of theatre, the relationship between theatre and film, and the possibility of combining theatre and film, such as the currently popular innovative drama Environmental Theatre, by summarising the history of theatre and film to match the emergence of the art form and the use of theatre in the process of film production by some film directors to incorporate the concept of theatre creation. Elimination of the differences between theatre and cinema in terms of the actors' performances, and the fact that cinema has better dissemination and is better adapted to the aesthetics of the public than theatre; Literature analysis was used to find and read relevant information and literature, the advantage of this method is that it can be a good analysis of the effective impact of theatre in the film and television industry and find a good breakthrough, which is conducive to the conduct of research; The ultimate research goal of this study is to try to find more clear and possible prerequisites and templates for the combination of theatre and film. To achieve the goal, by analysing both theatre and film in terms of their nature and by looking for bridges of communication and development between the two, the intention is to provide a reference for future development strategies between the two [1,2].

## 2. Current Status of Drama Development

Drama has a history of more than two thousand years from the beginning. In the 21st century, after the fourth scientific and technological revolution, the development of new information technology



and communication engineering technology makes the media industry more extensive communication capacity, and the development of the traditional drama industry has been difficult to develop. Although it can be seen that workers engaged in theatre performances try to reform and innovate the traditional drama into small-scale drama and theatre forms, because it does not require too much depth of understanding and high cultural literacy indeed the drama of this drama derived from the popularity of this branch of the theatre is quite high, this kind of drama workers try to expand the scope of the dissemination of the drama of the pitifully small, to seek a way for the survival of the drama in the new era. This category of theatre workers tries to expand the scope of theatre dissemination for the survival of theatre in the new era, but it can be seen that there are still big limitations.

In addition, based on traditional theatre, there are also innovative forms of theatre such as Environmental Theatre, in which practitioners try to enhance the audience's sensory experience and interaction to improve the theatre art in the current popular entertainment activities, and its way of integrating traditional modern art with many modern entertainment elements has indeed given this kind of theatre art a new lease of life. However, the problems are equally obvious.

Many of China's current Environmental Theatre performances, because of reasons such as the time of the performance and the layout of the scene in which the performance takes place, mostly have a lot of room for improvement in the connotation of the content of the script of the play itself, which makes some of the Environmental Theatre performances partly disappointing [1].

At the same time, new media and mediums are developing rapidly, and in this context, with the convenience of the times and the nature of the present, providing a new creative thinking, production, and dissemination process for traditional arts that used to be more than theatre, such as sculpture, painting, architecture, music, literature and so on, which is an unprecedented opportunity for the cultural products of the arts in the past to be integrated with the times and to continue to survive and reproduce in the culture of mankind.

Among these new media cultural art forms, the closest relationship with theatre art is undoubtedly the film as a form of artistic expression, where the director, actors, and other aspects of the film are all developed based on theatre, and the narrative mode of most feature films is also dramatised. Most feature films are also dramatised in their narrative mode. It is often said in a film plot or a film shot that the plot or shot is "dramatic".

In such an era of new media popularity, cinema and theatre break down the barriers between them in the context of extremely similar creative ideas and performance forms, and it is also wonderful to find that the name "film and theatre" a hundred years ago map out that the two are destined to communicate and merge in the era of new media [2].

### **3. The Relationship between Theatre and Film**

Regarding the relationship between film and theatre, various scholars in the past have debated and discussed, among which the most divergent and initial question is whether theatre is the object of transformation of the medium of film. Or can cinema be said to have inherited most of the elements and content of theatre to some extent? At this point, although we can see that the relationship between theatre and film is so close, the film in the birth of a series of later developments of the process, from Sergei Eisenstein and Edwin Bowater began to montage techniques into the film, greatly enriching the expressive power of the film art and infectious, the film this art gradually began to break away from the traditional drama of the way of artistic expression, showing the characteristics of the audio-visual language art.

Film theorist Bazin has argued in his book "What is Cinema? (Theatre and Cinema), the film theorist Bazan used the biological analogy of the "infantile" state of the salamander to argue that the view of cinema as an advanced stage of the theatre limited the development of cinema itself. Also in 1916, Gramsci's Theatre and the Cinema argued that the reason why there was no need to worry about

cinema replacing theatre was because "the general theatre is the cinema", and that cinema would not succeed the long-established theatre. Such views are also consistent with Bazin's analogy [3].

Although in the more than a century-long history of cinema, various filmmakers, directors, and actors have explored various types of films that break away from the traditional style of cinema and gradually diversify the development of cinema as an art form, we can still see many examples of blending theatre and cinema to achieve innovative purposes. For example, the Danish film *Dogville* immediately attracted the attention of many, including theatre and film researchers, upon its release in 2003, and was nominated for the Palme d'Or. The fact that the film was able to achieve such a great response and success also reflects that dramatically presenting the film did not make the two art forms of film and theatre completely independent or even antagonistic to each other, but instead saw a breakthrough in the possibilities of combining film and theatre to achieve a new kind of innovativism. In the film "*Dogville*", the director shooting props draws on the techniques of theatrical creation, in the shooting scene, the film plot of the American town is the director in a small town located in Sweden in a warehouse set up, the crew with a theatre-like stage instead of the traditional film scenes of the live-action filming techniques, the plot of the town is restored in a reduced type of three-dimensional space, the audience in the theatre The audience can see almost any corner of the set-up space in a theatre-like setting. In addition to the simple basic props, the film weakens other items that appear in the plot to simple lines; the buffer between the wall and the door in the film is separated by lines drawn on the floor with white chalk. Symbolist dramatists such as Gordon Clay and Abijah argued that the significance of the stage set lies in the use of representative representations to link the empirical world with the supra-empirical world. Thus such a stage set also corresponds to some extent to the critical function that theatre has [4].

There are countless modern examples of theatre and cinema being used as forms of artistic expression with rich expressive connotations, and although Bazan expresses the view that cinema is not an advanced stage of a theatre, we can still incorporate elements of the traditional type of theatre as an accessory form of cinema.

In the 1920s in Shanghai, China, the stage of some entertainment venues appeared as a very novel form of artistic expression known as "serial theatre", which in those days was still known as the nature of the form of performance, is divided into two parts, one part of the actors perform on stage, that is, in the traditional sense of the theatre performance, and the other part, due to a variety of reasons can not be shown in the scene on stage by the way of the film broadcast in the same scene. The content of these "serials" was mainly the traditional Chinese theatre of Beijing and civilisation. At the time, this combination of theatre and film was intended to attract audiences, but it was also an organic combination of theatre and film (which had just been introduced to China) in modern Chinese history [5].

At the same time, in this example, some differences can be found between theatre and film in terms of the actor's performance. Generally speaking, traditional theatre performances are very pompous or abstract about the reality of real life. Whereas film performances, in this case, most mainstream films, are generally close-to-life, realistic renditions, we need to be mindful of how to eliminate this discrepancy (trying to make trade-offs) when focusing on these two forms of artistic expression, especially when producing the product of the conjunction of the two. At the same time, from the perspective of the overall content of the theatre, the most central and unique aspect of the theatre is the performance. Thus, it seems that whether or not the dramatic performance part of theatre can be the dominant part of the hybrid between theatre and film also depends on how the director perceives the role of theatre in the film for this production [6].

#### **4. Combining Theatre and Film**

Although previous generations have gone on to incorporate elements and concepts of theatre and its critical role in society into films in a variety of ways, this still does not seem to be an effective solution

to the current predicament of theatre in the world, whether it is the traditional European theatre or the traditional Chinese theatre.

Before we explore how theatre and film can be organically integrated, we need to be clear about one thing. Cinema has been around for more than a century, and compared to the new media that are currently trending, film can still be considered a traditional visual art form rather than a novel one. Cinema itself needs to be adapted to the development of such a new media technology, and integrated with different and innovative mobile phone software and computer platforms that provide convenience to the general public, such as new Internet-based interactive software under the continuous development of information engineering technology and communication engineering technology. In India, for example, the new media-driven Internet has changed the way Indian cinema is viewed, allowing moviegoers to freely and conveniently choose the films they want to see on online platforms built with Internet technology. And this phenomenon has been prevalent in China since about 2013 [7].

Theatre's long-term development needs to have a certain combination of mainstream elements with film, which needs to clarify some common points between theatre and film, such as in the process of transforming the script into a visual dynamic communication process, both theatre and film are to turn the text into a visual narrative mode, the director's conceptualization of the process is to visualize the output of the script (theatre or film), to use the screen set, the actors' station, the movement and so on as a drawing board for the art form expression, to adjust the various factors of the displayed picture according to the director's creative concept and the meaning of the work. The set of the screen, the actors' positions, looks, movements, etc. are used as a drawing board for the expression of the art form, and the director's creative concept and the significance of the work are taken as the criteria for adjusting the various elements of the displayed screen. It's also a difference created by the bridge of communication between the director and the writer [8]. From this, it is clear that theatre and film are mostly the same, at least in terms of the translation of the script to the actual output of the expression.

The performance form of theatre is recorded in the same way as film for others to watch, and the limited number of quality theatre resources are re-presented and extended in front of the audience in a video format. One of the most successful examples is National Theatre Live, which has been running at the National Theatre of Great Britain since 2009, creating an immersive experience for the viewer through the use of professional theatre actors and a team of staging and filming crews, leading the way in filming from the main point of view. By making films that are all about theatre and showing them in public in places called theatre theatres, they are presenting theatre in the form of film and television.

In addition to this, drama can also be transformed directly into part of a film through partial adaptation. Some commercially successful film adaptations in China include *Donkey's Water*, *Goodbye Mr. Loser*, and *12 Citizens*, etc. Among them, *Goodbye Mr. Loser* was made by a small drama troupe that raised a lot of money after becoming famous and starting to appear in the public eye through its performances. The film was made by a small theatre troupe that raised a lot of money after becoming famous in the public eye, with a lot of comedy in the plot and a cast of professional comedians. *12 Citizens*, on the other hand, is an adaptation of the 1957 American film *12 Angry Men*, whose film itself is set and its sets are simple, and the scene is interpreted in the same way as the aforementioned *Dogville*, which is generally like being in a theatre. These are not unlike theatre in their incorporation of some theatrical elements or their creative concepts or even the starting point for the connotation of their work. These are either additional dramatic elements that are integrated into the film and become the main theme of the film, or there are still a large number of traditional classic dramas that are presented in film and television, which will eventually come into the public's view in a variety of forms due to the development of the modern media industry.

Theatre in such an age of information explosion will not disappear from people's view as a historical culture but continue to exist in a variety of ways in the emerging means of art, art of a variety of independent disciplines sometimes seem to be independent but have a relationship with each other

from generation to generation, seemingly contradictory but tend to be reasonable. Art as a discipline should be like any other kind of discipline, developing as well as inheriting and learning from it.

## 5. Conclusion

The result of this article is to break down the opposition between theatre and film, to try to find one or more breakthroughs in the area of similarity between the two, and to make innovative improvements to traditional theatre in terms of the form of expression and mode of communication, to further conclude that the elements of the theatre can be found in different forms in the film or directly affect the thematic ideas, creative direction and rhythm of the whole film. This study provides a lot of valuable references for future research in this direction, mainly affecting the change of communication methods between theatre and film in the sense of new media and the breakthrough of barriers between the two in the process of transforming scripts into visual expressions.

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