

《梅兰芳之子谈梅兰芳对京剧的影响》

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Mei Lanfang's son Mei Baojiu, the only descendent to carry on the family tradition, will lead the Beijing Peking Opera Theater troupe to the US in August for a series of performances, to celebrate his father's 120th anniversary. CCTV News reporter Fei Ye sits down with Mei Baojiu to talk about Mei Lanfang's legacy, and the kind of father, mentor and teacher he was.



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Mr. Mei thank you for your time. This year we are celebrating your father's 120th anniversary. What does it mean for you and your family?

"These events have been organized to carry on his legacy. I want this art to continue the way I learned it, acted it, and taught it to my students and now present it to the world," Mei Baojiu said.

You yourself have been promoting Peking Opera all your life and at 80 years of age you are still traveling around the world. Can you tell us what keeps you going?

"Well, I'm still healthy and can still move around fairly easily. My father was always so dedicated to his art, always welcoming foreign guests to our home, always finding opportunities to teach foreigners about this beautiful artform. I want to follow in his footsteps; do practical things and try to teach as many students as I can," Mei Baojiu said.

Born in 1894 as the son and grandson of noted opera singers, Mei Lanfang began studying Peking Opera at age 8 and made his stage debut at 11, playing a weaving girl. At the time women were not allowed to perform on stage so all female characters were played by male actors. Mei played mostly female roles and his style of dance and singing won such acclaim over the years that it came to be known as the Mei Lanfang School.

He was also the first artist to spread Peking Opera to foreign countries, participating in cultural exchanges with Japan, the US and other regions. He toured the world starting in the 1920s, forming friendships with the western contemporaries of his day, including Charlie Chaplin. In 1930 he toured the US, visiting Hollywood, where he was welcomed by Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. Mei Baojiu showed us the photo album from that trip.

"Look this is him in Hawaii with hula dances and here is the ship that he traveled to the US on. It took them almost a month to get there. His team planned this trip for 5 years. The trip was during the Great Depression so it was very risky. My father sold our house and took out a loan for the trip. Everything came out of his own pocket. My mother was so worried, if this trip wasn't a success, everything would have been a waste. But fortunately, it was very well received and the impact was huge, he even received two honorary doctorate degrees from Pomona University and the University of Southern California," Mei Baojiu said.

I know that you have two brothers and a sister. How come your brothers didn't carry on your father's legacy?

"They weren't good at it. You can tell when someone has the right physical attributes for Peking Opera. I wasn't afraid of the stage, I looked most like my dad compared to my brothers, and because I was able to sing in falsetto, my dad chose me to learn the female role," Mei Baojiu said.

Mei Lanfang wasn't just your father but was also a teacher. Can you talk to us about the different roles he played in your life?

"He was a strict but loving father. He never used force to teach me things. After performances, he would point out problems and then always try to inspire me. He was also a very curious person taking up hobbies in many different fields of Chinese traditional art, like painting and he loved listening to western operas and classical music. He tried to teach me a variety of different genres of art as well, so that I got a comprehensive understanding of the artistic world," Mei Baojiu said.

What's the legacy you would like to leave behind for the next generation?

"My one and only job is to make sure that the Mei Lanfang School will be passed down and thrive for another generation. This is what I want people to remember me for," Mei Baojiu said.



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