



Study on Localization Adaptation and Innovation Paths of the Stanislavski Performance System in Performing Arts Teaching of Chinese Universities

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Abstract: As the core of modern realistic performance theory, the Stanislavski Performance System has promoted the development of performing arts education in Chinese universities since its introduction. However, rooted in Russian culture, it has adaptation mismatches with China's educational environment, such as conflicts between Western realistic logic and traditional Chinese theatrical aesthetics, and disconnection between theory and industry needs. Using methods like literature analysis and case studies, this study clarifies the necessity of localization from differences in culture, cognition, and educational goals, examines the current situation through cases of the Central Academy of Drama (CAD) and Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA), and finally proposes innovation paths in curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation systems. It provides references for the localization of foreign performance systems and facilitates the cultivation of performing arts talents in universities.

Keywords: Stanislavski Performance System; Chinese higher education; performing arts teaching; localization adaptation; innovation paths

1. Introduction

The Stanislavski Performance System was founded by Konstantin Stanislavski in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with “truthful performance” as its core. Introduced into China in the 1950s through Sino-Soviet cultural exchanges, it became the core teaching framework of institutions like CAD and STA [1]. Over the past seven decades, the system has cultivated a large number of performing arts talents. However, with the enhancement of China's cultural confidence and the diversification of the performing arts market, its cultural limitations have become prominent: its focus on individual psychological exploration conflicts with the “collective aesthetics” of traditional opera, and traditional stage-centered teaching is disconnected from the demand for versatile talents in the film, television, and internet industries. Therefore, exploring the system's adaptation to the Chinese context and teaching innovation has become an urgent task for performing arts education in universities.

2. Necessity of Localization

2.1 Cultural Context Differences

The Stanislavski System originates from Russian critical realism and emphasizes realism; traditional Chinese opera follows “symbolic aesthetics” and conveys meaning through stylized movements. In teaching, students trained in the Stanislavski method tend to overemphasize psychological realism when performing traditional opera, ignoring stylized beauty and resulting in “disconnection between Chinese and Western aesthetics” [2]. Localization needs to integrate the system's core principles (role analysis, emotional memory) with traditional Chinese theatrical aesthetics, enabling students to master both realistic skills and traditional expressive forms.

2.2 Student Cognitive Differences

The Stanislavski System requires actors to “explore personal experiences” to stimulate emotions [3]. However, influenced by collectivism, Chinese students are reluctant to share personal emotions publicly, and their limited life experience makes it difficult to understand complex Western roles. Without localization adjustments, this leads to rigid performances and reduced learning enthusiasm. Thus, it is necessary to select role materials close to Chinese students' lives and replace individual emotional sharing with group discussions.

2.3 Educational Goal Differences: Meeting the Needs of China's Performing Arts Industry

Stanislavski's original system was designed to train stage actors for classical Russian drama. In contrast, Chinese uni-

versity performing arts teaching has a more diverse goal: cultivating versatile talents who can adapt to stage drama, film, television, and even online content platforms (e.g., short videos, web dramas). The traditional teaching model, which focuses on long-term stage role training (e.g., spending months preparing for one play), cannot meet the industry's demand for "fast-paced, multi-scenario" performance capabilities—for example, film and television shooting requires actors to switch between emotional states quickly, while online content requires concise, vivid character portrayals.

Localization must therefore align with China's industry needs. This means adjusting the teaching focus from "pure stage realism" to "multi-format adaptive performance," ensuring that graduates can apply Stanislavski's core principles flexibly across different performance scenarios.

3. Current Status of Localization Adaptation

Through decades of exploration, Chinese leading performing arts colleges have made initial progress in localizing the Stanislavski System, but challenges remain.

3.1 Positive Achievements: Typical Cases of Adaptation

Two institutions stand out for their successful adaptations: the Central Academy of Drama (CAD) and the Shanghai Theatre Academy (STA).

CAD's "Cultural Integration" Model: It integrates traditional opera elements into teaching. For example, in the "Basic Performing Arts" course, students combine Stanislavski's "role action analysis" with Peking Opera's "body rhythm training." Its 2021 graduation play *The Story of a Small Town* was well-received.

STA's "Industry-Oriented" Model: It added a "Film and Television Performance Workshop" and launched a "real-scene project" with film companies in 2022, increasing graduates' employment rate in the film and television industry by 15% [4].

3.2 Existing Problems

Over-reliance on original Stanislavski textbooks with mostly Western cases, making it hard for students to apply theories to Chinese works;

Localization focuses on Peking Opera while ignoring regional theatrical elements (e.g., Sichuan Opera, Yue Opera), leading to single-dimensional performance skills;

Separation of theory and practice courses, resulting in students who "can recite theories but cannot apply them."

4. Innovation Paths for Localization

4.1 Curriculum Content Innovation

Develop localized textbooks (using cases like *White Deer Plain* and *The Legend of the White Snake*);

Add optional courses on regional theater to integrate regional skills with Stanislavski's psychological analysis;

Include film, television, and internet performance modules for scenario-specific training (drama, film/television, short videos).

4.2 Teaching Method Innovation

Promote Project-Based Learning (PBL) for performance creations themed on Chinese topics;

Conduct interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g., working with the Chinese literature department to interpret works, and the film/television department to teach on-camera performance);

Invite industry mentors to share practical experience.

4.3 Evaluation System Innovation: Establishing a Multi-Dimensional Assessment Framework

The traditional evaluation system, which focuses on final stage performances, cannot fully reflect students' mastery of localized skills. A new framework should include:

Process-Oriented Evaluation: Assess students' performance throughout the teaching process, including role analysis reports (to evaluate theoretical application), group discussion participation (to assess collaborative ability), and draft performances (to track progress). This accounts for 60% of the final grade.

Multi-Scenario Practical Assessment: Evaluate students in different performance scenarios:

Stage assessment: Performing a segment from a Chinese drama using localized skills;

Film/television assessment: Shooting a short scene to test adaptive performance;

Traditional opera assessment: Integrating opera elements into a realistic performance.

Industry and Peer Evaluation: Invite industry mentors to score students' practical works (accounting for 20% of the

grade) and organize student peer reviews (accounting for 20% of the grade). This ensures evaluations align with industry standards and reflect diverse perspectives.

5. Conclusion

The localization of the Stanislavski System is a long-term project, which does not abandon its core principles but adapts them to China's culture, student characteristics, and industry needs. Studies show localization resolves conflicts between Western theory and Chinese practice, and cases of CAD and STA prove it improves teaching quality and talent cultivation. However, this study only focuses on top institutions; future research can expand to local universities to explore differentiated strategies. Ultimately, the goal is to build a "Chinese-style performing arts teaching system" to support the cultural industry and the inheritance of traditional arts. Ultimately, the goal of promoting the localization of the Stanislavski System is to build a "Chinese-style performing arts teaching system" to support the development of the cultural industry and the inheritance of traditional arts. The construction of this system is not a simple copy or application of theories, but rather, on the basis of absorbing the essence of the Stanislavski System, it deeply integrates the spiritual core of Chinese traditional culture and the logic of artistic expression, enabling performing arts teaching to have both an international perspective and a rooted connection to Chinese soil. From a practical perspective, the achievement of this goal requires continuous exploration and repeated practice by performing arts educators. They must not only adhere to the essence of art education but also take into account the actual needs of industrial development, so that localized performing arts teaching can truly serve talent cultivation and deliver more high-quality forces to the cultural industry. At the same time, the inheritance of traditional arts cannot be separated from innovation. The localized Stanislavski System can inject new vitality into traditional arts, break down the barriers between tradition and modernity, and enable traditional arts to radiate new vitality in the new era, realizing the two-way empowerment of cultural inheritance and artistic innovation. In addition, building a Chinese-style performing arts teaching system is also conducive to enhancing the international influence of China's performing arts education, allowing Chinese performing arts to go global, convey the unique charm of Chinese culture, promote the exchange and integration of Chinese and foreign cultures and arts, and drive the diversified development of the global performing arts field.

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