

EAST MEETS WEST: THEATRE TRADITIONS UNIT

CHINESE OPERA

History	Performance	Technical
<p>One of the oldest forms with a version being traced back to the 3rd century AD.</p> <p>The first Chinese opera company was the Pear Garden during the Tang Dynasty (8th century)</p> <p>It is a mixture of music, song, dance, martial arts and acrobatics.</p> <p>There are hundreds of different styles of Chinese opera such as Beijing opera (or Peking opera), Cantonese opera, and Sichuan opera.</p>	<p>Highly stylized and symbolic performances.</p> <p>Characters are archetypes: the old man, the military, the leading lady, the juvenile male, the clown.</p> <p>Actors have strict rules to follow. They spend many years trying to copy the movements of a master. Some actors only play one part for their whole career.</p> <p>The acting is based on allusion: gestures, footwork, and other body movements express such actions as riding a horse, rowing a boat, or opening a door.</p> <p>Traditionally boys played the female parts.</p> <p>The singing is not melodic to the Western ear, nor is it meant to be.</p>	<p>Bare sets, few props.</p> <p>Costumes are extravagant, intricate, exaggerated, and specifically made to visualize each character. They are often passed down from actor to actor.</p> <p>Each character type wore specific costume pieces and colours to indicate character type, age, personality, and rank: For example, the Emperor characters wore yellow.</p> <p>Headdresses also indicated character – the more elaborate the headdress, the more important the character.</p> <p>Actors wore exaggerated makeup. Makeup colour had specific meaning to symbolize the character's role, emotion and fate.</p> <p>White = evil Red = bravery</p>

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CHINESE OPERA COLOUR CONNECTION

What do different colours indicate?

Yellow	The Emperor; the centre; earth
Red	Loyal Army Commanders; red is a positive colour; fire
Black	The Brave; integrity; sometimes a neutral character; water
Green	Elderly; in face makeup means impulsive; wood
Light Blue	Scholars; wood
White	In face makeup means evil; metal
Gold	Mystery; might indicate a ghost