

SHANGHAI NEW PERFORMING ARTS SPACE: TRANSFORMATION OF THEATRE DIRECTOR MODE

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Abstract

This paper deeply explores the Transformation of Director Mode in Shanghai's New Performing Arts Space, focusing on the integration of drama theme and commerciality, stage image and publicity and marketing, actor action and audience participation. Based on the relevant theories of Stanislavsky's System and Lehmann's post-dramatic theater, the research perspective is constructed and analyzed with typical cases. This paper expounds the Transformation of the director of New Performing Arts Space compared with the director of traditional theater, which is embodied in how the director integrates commercial elements into the theme reasonably and naturally to realize the organic combination of business and theme. How to build a publicity and marketing strategy by constructing a rich and diversified stage image; How to create a real and immersive drama space by strengthening the two-way interaction between actors and audiences. This Transformation of the Director Mode has promoted the expansion of the theater industry to a more commercial, innovative and interactive experiential direction, brought new vitality to the industry, and has positive significance for the long-term prosperity and cultural inheritance of the theater.

Key Words : New Performing Arts Space, Theatre, Director Mode, Stanislavsky's System, Lehmann, Post-theatre, Audience

Introduction

With the rise of New Performing Arts Space in Shanghai, the traditional theatre paradigm is being redefined, which has attracted wide attention in the field of Chinese drama. The New Performing Arts Space not only seeks a new breakthrough in the integration of commerciality and artistry, but also breaks through the traditional way of viewing, providing audiences with a more diversified, immersive and interactive drama experience. As a key element to promote the development of drama, the Director Mode. Also undergoing Transformation in this process. This paper will focus on the Transformation of the Director Mode in the New Performing Arts Space and its profound impact on theatrical creation and audience experience.

In order to make a better analysis, Stanislavsky's System and Lehmann's post-dramatic theatre theory will be used in this paper to construct a theoretical framework. Stanislavsky's System focuses on actors' role building and emotional expression, while the latter emphasizes the diversification of stage image and audience participation. These two theories will guarantee the scientificity and rationality of the research.

The research purpose of this paper is to deeply explore the Transformation process of the Director Mode in Shanghai's New Performing Arts Space, and explore the director's strategy and creation mode under the interaction of commerciality and artistry. This paper comprehensively analyzes the Transformation of Director Mode in the New Performing Arts Space by focusing on the integration of drama theme and commerciality, stage image and publicity and marketing, actor action and audience participation. At the same time, the author also conducted surveys and interviews with experts and front-line practitioners to provide empirical basis for the research. This research reveals that the creative power of directors stimulated by drama creation and commercial operation will provide important reference value and significance for the diversification and opening of Chinese drama.

Literature Review

The director plays a decisive role in the drama performance, he is not only the conductor on the stage, but also the inspiration guide of artistic creation. (Brian Tyson, 2019) The director influences the overall artistic effect of the performance by interpreting the script, guiding and shaping the actors, and comprehensively grasping the elements of stage art. The talent and innovation of the director are directly related to the depth and breadth of a drama work. (Lu Juan & Fan Jie, 2022) The importance of Director Mode is reflected in its profound impact on performance quality, audience experience and artistic innovation. An excellent director can not only have a profound interpretation of the script, but also build a stage image through a unique perspective and creativity to achieve a deep excavation of the theme of the drama. (Bonnie Marranca, 2018) Director Mode is also an engine to promote the development and innovation of dramatic art. Their exploration of drama space and performance relationship provides audiences with more diversified viewing methods and drama experience.

Director Mode has undergone multiple stages of Transformation in both the West and China. In the West, from the origins of ancient Greek drama, the peak of the Renaissance, to the impact of modernism and postmodernism, directors challenged tradition and pursued innovation. Naturalism, Expressionism, Brecht's System and Stanislavsky's System have injected new ideas and expressions into Director Mode. Globalization and cross-cultural communication have also promoted the diversity of Western Director Mode. (Worrall Nick, 2022) After the founding of New China, Chinese dramatic art went through the stage of socialist propaganda under the guidance of politics and ideology, but it also suffered a certain impact in the special period. (Song Fangyi, 2022) After the reform and opening up, Chinese drama ushered in a revival, and directors gradually absorbed foreign drama theories, promoting China's Director Mode to develop in a more diversified and open direction. Since the 21st century, China's directing theory has been gradually enriched, focusing on the combination of traditional culture and modern expression, injecting new ideas and vitality into drama art.

Stanislavski emphasizes how directors guide actors through emotional experience and character expression, focusing on delivering authentic performances through in-depth character

analysis and emotional memory. (Marshall Jonathan, 2022) Lehmann's post-dramatic theater theory talks about the current drama breaking the form of traditional drama, emphasizing non-linear narrative, integration of cross-media elements, and audience participation. (Elinor Fuchs, 2008) These two theories provide different levels of understanding of Director Mode, and provide theoretical support for discussing the Transformation of Director Mode in Shanghai's New Performing Arts Space.

Although there are abundant theories and researches on Director Mode at present, there are still relatively few researches on Director Mode in Shanghai's New Performing Arts Space. This new drama form shows a unique development track in the integration of commerciality and artistry. Through in-depth study of this phenomenon, this paper aims to fill the gap of existing research and provide a new research perspective and practical reference for the Director Mode in the field of Chinese drama.

Methodology

This paper adopts the method of qualitative research, mainly through literature, interviews and surveys, to deeply study the Transformation process of the Director Mode in Shanghai's New Performing Arts Space. The interviewees include experts, producers, directors, scriptwriters and actors in related fields. Their experiences and viewpoints provide the real creative situation of directors in the New Performing Arts Space for the study, and reveal the specific creative strategies of directors under the interaction of commerciality and artistry. In addition, literature review and performance content analysis also further sort out the actual characteristics and development trend of Director Mode by studying the actual plays, performances and publicity materials in the New Performing Arts Space. In order to provide theoretical support for the research, this paper adopts Stanislavsky's System and Lehmann's post-dramatic theatre theory as the theoretical research framework. Through the rational analysis of the data obtained, the Transformation of Director Mode in three aspects of the integration of drama theme and commerciality, stage image and publicity and marketing, actor action and audience participation is deeply analyzed. Finally, the empirical basis established by the research ensures that the research results are more reliable and practical guiding significance.

Results

1) The fusion of theatrical themes and commerciality



Figure 1 The author interviews Zhang Yu and Zhao Jie

(Photo provided by the author)

According to Lehmann's theory, the diversity and ambiguity of drama themes provide a rich creative space for commercial integration (Li Yinan, 2010). Luan Yitong believes that New Performing Arts Space emphasizes the search for differentiated content. Directors should understand the market, observe successful works, find the needs and preferences of the audience, and choose themes or forms that meet the market needs and have unique characteristics (Luan Yitong, interview). Zhang Yu believes that New Performing Arts Space is now presented in the form of immersive environmental drama, with more commercial elements added. Meanwhile, she also emphasizes that when balancing the relationship between content, commerce and experiment, creators should keep their original intention and should not pursue too many commercial elements (Zhang Yu, interview). In this context, the Transformation of theater directors becomes a crucial link. While traditional theater directors focus on storytelling and actors' performances, directors of New Performing Arts Space have achieved a profound "Transformation" on this basis: breaking through the relationship between audience and performance, strengthening audience participation and emphasizing interactive experience. Through case studies of APOLLONIA, Shear Madness Salon and Hello, I'm looking for Smith, we can more clearly see the Transformation of directors of New Performing Arts Space compared with traditional theater directors.



Figure 2 Poster of APOLLONIA
(<https://www.imusical.cn/focustage/>)

APOLLONIA presents two "drama plays" that emphasize different themes and emotions, highlighting the diversity of themes. The director of New Performing Arts Space integrates diverse themes into commercial performances organically through clever emotional guidance and scene switching. Compared with traditional theater directors, directors of New Performing Arts Space pay more attention to scene creation and emotional communication, so that the audience can be more deeply integrated into the dramatic atmosphere, thus realizing the Transformation of the traditional Director Mode.



Figure 3 Poster of Shear Madness Salon
(<https://www.douban.com/location/drama/35584291/>)

Shear Madness Salon focuses on mystery murders to highlight audience participation. The director of New Performing Arts Space breaks the tradition of the relationship between the audience and the performance, adding immersive scene experience, strengthening the audience's immersion in the atmosphere related to the theme, and making the audience become part of the case. Compared with traditional theater directors, directors of New Performing Arts Space pay more attention to interactivity, integrate the audience into the process of promoting the plot, and realize the Transformation of the Director Mode.



Figure 4 Poster of Hello, I'm looking for Smith
(<https://www.douban.com/location/drama/35470287/>)

Hello, I'm looking for Smith. The theme of being involved in a robbery emphasizes the interaction between the audience and the actors. Through precise scene design and interactive guidance, the director of New Performing Arts Space successfully skillfully integrates commercial elements into the theme to achieve deep interaction between the audience and the

theater. Compared with traditional theater directors, directors of New Performing Arts Space pay more attention to breaking the fourth wall, forming a more direct interactive relationship with the audience, and realizing the Transformation of the Director Mode.

In general, the directors of New Performing Arts Space has successfully realized the Transformation from the Director Mode of traditional theater by placing more emphasis on audience interaction, scene creation and emotional exchange, and breaking the tradition of the relationship between audience and performance. This Transformation has made theatre not only richer artistically, but also more commercially appealing.

2) Stage image and publicity marketing



Figure 5 The author interviewed Luan Yitong, Wu Sola
(Photo provided by the author)

Stanislavsky's System emphasized that directors should conduct in-depth analysis of characters when guiding actors to create stage images, and emphasized the transmission of real emotions and the expression of body language, which would help build more attractive character images for promotional activities. (Marshall Jonathan, 2022) And the creative process of the actors in order to create the emotions of the characters can also be used as a highlight of publicity to attract the audience. Promotion can focus on conveying the story behind the character and how the actor establishes the unique character texture of the play, thereby building the brand image of the play. (Danni Wu, 2022) Lehmann's Post-Dramatic Theatre analyses how directors pay attention to the use of non-linear structures and visual elements to construct a stage image, which also contributes to publicity and marketing, and highlights the charm of drama through visual appeal. Attract potential audiences by emphasizing the originality of visual elements in promotional materials. (Bonnie Marranca, 2018)

Therefore, I chose three works whose directors were relatively successful in constructing stage images and promoting marketing: *Light Keepers*, *Cosmic Strike Star* and *SHIRLEY VALENTINE*.



Figure 6 Stage image of Light Keepers
(<https://www.douban.com/location/drama/35442785/>)

In Light Keepers, the director takes the audience into an imaginative and childlike beach environment through the friendship story of the little lighthouse and the little fish. The director guides the actors to convey the emotion and courage of the story to the audience through body language and movement, creating a deeply resonant and appealing stage image. The director made clear this deep emotional expression in the early stage, thinking that the stage design should be imaginative, and lay a solid foundation for the publicity of the drama.

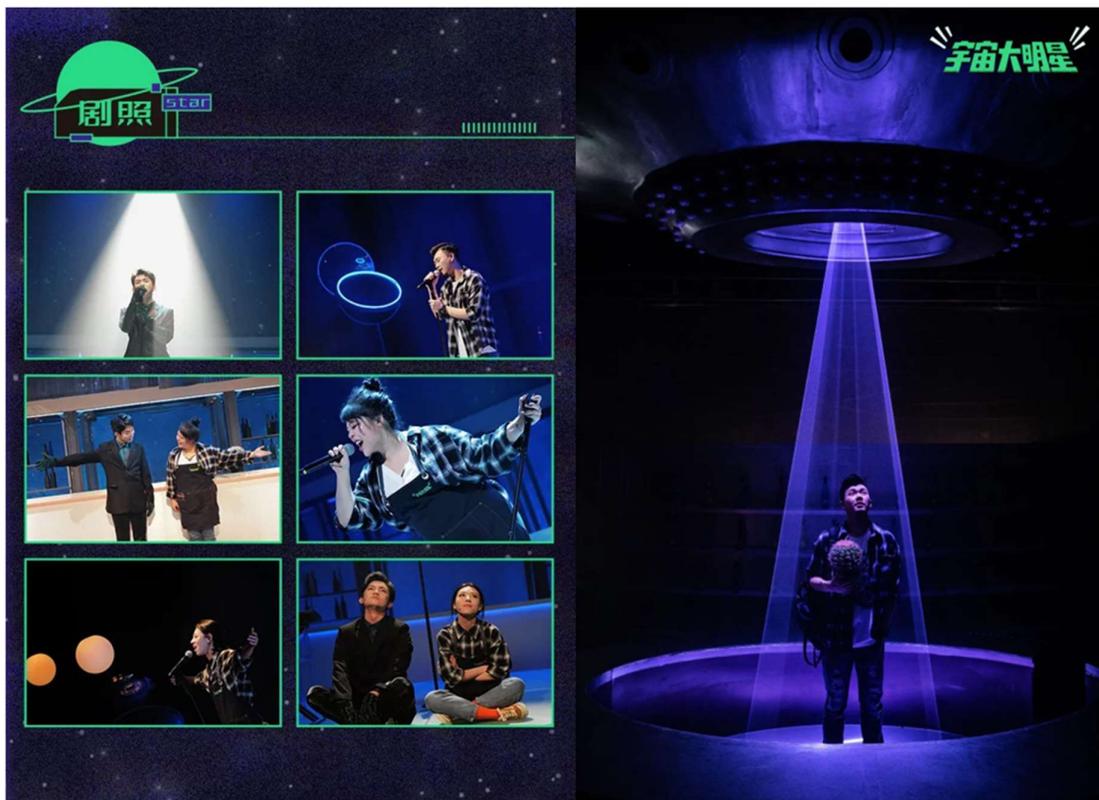


Figure 7 The stage image of Cosmic Strike Star
(<https://www.douban.com/location/drama/35457280/>)

In *Cosmic Strike Star*, the director built a real bar environment for the audience and asked the actors to interact with the audience and experience the musical path of singer-songwriter NoVA. This immersive form of performance provides sufficient material for promotional activities. Through the marketing of the drama, the audience can see that the play emphasizes the interactive experience between the audience and the actors, which attracts the curiosity of potential audiences and makes them have a strong interest in the drama.



Figure 8 The stage image of SHIRLEY VALENTINE
(https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/jhOvj_k_ooQHMaxsLbwrwzQ)

In *SHIRLEY VALENTINE*, the director values the intimacy of the performance environment. Although there is not much interaction between the actors and the audience, the audience is very close to the actors. By observing the details of the actors' performances, the audience can deepen their understanding of the characters' inner feelings. By creating near-real life scenes and stage images, the play successfully attracted the audience's emotional resonance, thus creating a deeply emotionally attractive image in the publicity.

Through the theoretical perspective of Stanislavsky's System and post-dramatic theater, we can see the elements behind these works, the director's success in stage image and publicity marketing. Through in-depth portrayal of the characters' emotions and innovative stage design, these plays successfully attracted the audience's interest, creating a unique and engaging stage image, and then achieving remarkable results in anti-missile propaganda.

Luan Yitong, as a drama producer, stressed that the brand image of the drama should be established, highlighting the highlights and characteristics of the drama to attract the audience. She believes that word of mouth is divided into meeting expectations and exceeding expectations, but at least give the audience an expectation, which is very key in publicity, because audience expectations often affect whether they are willing to watch a play. (Interview by Luan Yitong) Zhang Yu mentioned the composition and changes of audiences, emphasizing that young audiences have gradually become the main audience of the New Performing Arts Space. This implies that the content and image of the performance need to be more in line with the aesthetic and interest of young audiences. Considering the current box office downturn, Zhang Yu pointed out that part of the reason is that some shows are too commercial and homogenization is a serious problem. (Zhang Yu, interview) This reminds us that in publicity and marketing, excessive commercialization may lead to the audience's fatigue and boredom

of the work, so it is necessary to pay attention to the uniqueness and novelty of the work in publicity. Zhang Xiaolin stressed the importance of image creation for actors and directors, especially in commercial works, where image creation is directly related to audience acceptance and success of the work. (Interview with Zhang Xiaolin) Zhao Jie's perspective offers reflections on the coexistence of business and art. She believes that works should maintain true emotions, avoid drifting, find specific audience groups, emphasize the importance of personalized marketing and constantly explore new ways of expression. (Zhao Jie, interview) This provides a direction for the campaign, that is, to find a unique expression suitable for a specific audience group while conveying real emotions, so as to stand out in the market.

3) Actor's action and audience participation



Figure 9 The author interviewed Xu Jun and Zhang Xiaolin
(Photo provided by the author)

In an in-depth study of the organization of actors' actions and the participation of drama audiences, Stanislavsky's System emphasized that directors should guide actors to lead audiences to participate deeply through realistic and emotional expression. (Skinner Amy, 2021) Lehmann's post-dramatic theater theory emphasizes that directors should pay attention to non-traditional narrative structures and the interaction between actors and audiences, which highlights the practical emphasis of Director Mode in New Performing Arts Space drama. (Brian Tyson, 2019) Through the analysis of three successful works KING'S TABLE, Shear Madness Salon and Youth as a sacrifice, we can find that the director attaches great importance to the in-depth interaction between the audience and the actors. This also reflects the innovation of audience participation as emphasized by post-dramatic theatre theory. This not only makes Director Mode start to try new production and expression means, but also makes the director pay attention to how to create a more rich and immersive drama experience for the audience.



Figure 10 The stage image of KING'S TABLE
(<https://www.douban.com/location/drama/35840803/>)

In KING'S TABLE, the director succeeded in creating a Nordic stage full of mystery by emphasizing the actors' characterization and emotional expression. The director guides the actors to dig deep into the inner emotions and motivations of the characters to find content that is more likely to arouse the emotional resonance of the audience. On this basis, the emotional memory and action purpose of the characters can be clearly presented, which enhances the audience's sense of involvement in the plot. At the same time, the director also emphasized the application of diversified and non-linear narrative structure when constructing the stage image, so that the audience could get a more comprehensive experience when perceiving the environment and understanding the background of The Times. At the same time, the Director makes use of the dislocation and diversity of the story plot to make the audience feel great freedom in participation. This Director Mode, which is far away from the traditional linear narrative, makes the symbols and symbols in the play strengthen the audience's sensory experience, so that the actors' actions and the audience's feelings are no longer restricted by the traditional stage.



Figure 11 Actors interacting with the audience in Shear Madness Salon
(https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/nZziIUAmutngf_L7qt1BNg)

In Shear Madness Salon, the director succeeded in blending the emotional memory of the actors with the participation of the audience. The director pays attention to authenticity in the process of character expression, so that the actors can more easily empathize. The murder incident in the play involves the audience in the process of reasoning, and the interaction of the audience and the actions of the actors mutually assist each other. The development of the plot not only relies on the emotional expression of the actors, but also is deeply influenced by the audience's reasoning, which realizes the in-depth interaction between the audience and the plot. From the perspective of Director Mode, the success of this work lies in its unique director strategy, which involves the audience in the process of solving puzzles and strengthens the position of the audience in the story. The director skillfully breaks the one-way interaction mode between the audience and the actors in traditional performances and creates a more participatory and interactive dramatic experience.



Figure 12 Actors interacting with the audience in *Youth as a sacrifice*
 (https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_12533381)

In *Youth as a sacrifice*, from the perspective of Director Mode, the director used the expression of emotional memory and action purpose, and introduced the audience to the red cultural scene through the performance of the actors, thus achieving the effect of emotional resonance with the audience. The director's creation echoes Stanislavski's emphasis on actors expressing their true emotions, creating a more engaging theatrical experience. The Director Mode of the drama also echoes Lehmann's theory, especially in the presentation of immersive interactive red culture melodramas. Through the joint participation of the audience and actors, the director created an immersive party history learning experience, which is in line with the audience participation concept emphasized by post-drama theater. The director skillfully integrates the audience into the story, making it an active participant in the theatrical experience.

Zhang Yu pointed out that the main audience of New Performing Arts Space is still young audiences between 20 and 30 years old, which also shows that New Performing Arts Space pays more attention to the participation and experience of young audiences. He mentioned working with college students at the Opportunity Center to get them to emphasize audience participation when creating a platoon, and to form a closer relationship through interaction with the audience. (Interview with Zhang Yu) Zhang stressed the importance of the line of action, pointing out that actors need to be clear about the character's line of action and understand why they are doing certain actions. He believes that actors need to organically combine their inner emotions and external movements on stage to make it easier for the audience to empathize. This is crucial to the audience's participation and emotional investment in commercial works. (Zhang Xiaolin, Interview) Director Xu Jun mentioned that it is necessary to find the subtext of the character and prescribe the situation, guide the actors to dig the subtext, and ask the actors to accurately express the inner emotions and motivations of the characters. This kind of in-depth thinking and accurate guidance of the character's actions can enhance the audience's resonance for the character and improve the audience's sense of participation. (Interview by Xu Jun) Zhao Jie emphasizes that the New Performing Arts Space requires actors to interact more with the audience, and the audience is the customer of the actors when they buy tickets, so they need to think about how to let the audience not only gain the charm of the drama, but also obtain a special experience. Draw them back to the New Performing Arts Space. Of course, the director is also faced with challenges, the director needs to refine the interactive elements in the new space, emphasize the importance of interaction with the audience, and consider the

improvised interaction between the scene and the audience in the rehearsal. (Zhao Jie, Interview) Soora Ng discusses the changing way actors interact with audiences in New Performing Arts Space productions. It is pointed out that in the works of new space, the run-in and constant change between the actors and the audience are the key points, and the feedback of the audience is crucial to the adjustment of the actors. Refer to the work of the resident director to ensure the stability of the actors, including resets, to ensure the stable output of the entire project. (Interview by U Sora)

Conclusion

This paper deeply discusses the Transformation of Director Mode in Shanghai's New Performing Arts Space, and analyzes the practice and innovation in the integration of drama theme and commerciality, stage image and publicity and marketing, actor action and audience participation. This research has important academic value and practical significance.

First of all, in terms of the integration of drama theme and commerciality, the Director Mode of the New Performing Arts Space has undergone a remarkable Transformation compared with traditional theater directors. The director of New Performing Arts Space skillfully integrates commercial elements into the theme of the drama, focusing on the clever expression of diverse themes. Their sensitivity to the market enables them to choose themes or forms that meet the needs of the market and have their own characteristics, realizing the organic integration of commerciality and creativity. This unconventional Transformation makes the Director Mode of the New Performing Arts Space not only richer and more engaging at the expressive level of theatrical themes, but also more commercially attractive.

Secondly, in terms of stage image and publicity and marketing, the Director Mode of New Performing Arts Space pays more attention to the innovation of stage image and helps audiences establish perceptual cognition of stage image through carefully designed scenes, emotional guidance and immersive experience. At the same time, the director of New Performing Arts Space pays more attention to the strategy of commercialization, and precisely combines diverse themes with audience interaction and immersive experience to form unique selling points to enhance the market appeal of plays. In terms of publicity and marketing, the emphasis on the participation of the audience is an important part of the plot, and the setting of immersive environment and interactive experience makes the works more competitive in the market. The Transformation of the director of New Performing Arts Space in the building of stage image and publicity and marketing makes the drama not only richer in art, but also expands more possibilities for the publicity and marketing of works.

Finally, in terms of actors' actions and audience participation, traditional theaters pay attention to actors' performances on the stage, while directors of New Performing Arts Space put more emphasis on the in-depth interaction between actors and audiences. In terms of actors' actions, the director focuses on the directness of the characters' emotional expression and the guidance of the actors' action purpose to the audience, and creates a more authentic and resonant performance by tapping the inner emotions and motivations of the characters. At the same time, the New Performing Arts Space breaks the mode of passive acceptance by the audience in the traditional theater. In the creation and production of some plays, directors even use non-traditional narrative structure and immersive interactive scenes, so that the audience has greater freedom and sense of participation in the plot. This innovative Director Mode makes New

Performing Arts Space pay more attention to audience experience, strengthen the two-way interaction between audience and actors, and create a richer and more immersive drama space. To sum up, the Director Mode of New Performing Arts Space has undergone a significant Transformation compared with traditional theater. First of all, in terms of the integration of theatrical theme and commerciality, the director of New Performing Arts Space skillfully integrates commercial elements into the theme of the drama, enriching the expression of the theme of the drama and enhancing the market appeal. Secondly, in terms of stage image and publicity and marketing, the director pays attention to the innovation of stage image, combines with precise commercialization strategies, forms a unique selling point, improves the market competitiveness of the drama, makes the work not only richer in art, but also expands the possibility in publicity and marketing. Finally, in terms of actors' actions and audience participation, the director emphasizes the deep influence between actors and audiences, breaking the passive acceptance mode of traditional theater and creating more authentic and resonant performances. At the same time, the New Performing Arts Space also enhances the audience's sense of freedom and participation, making the new Performing arts space pay more attention to audience experience and strengthen two-way interaction. Create a more rich and immersive drama space. This Transformation of the Director Mode has promoted the development of the performing arts industry to a direction of more commercial thinking, more emphasis on innovation and more interactive experience, injected new vitality into the industry, and has positive significance for the long-term prosperity and cultural development of the industry.

Discussion

The above research makes an in-depth analysis of the Transformation of Director Mode in Shanghai's New Performing Arts Space, but there are some shortcomings. This mainly reflects the lack of in-depth analysis of audience feedback and the time limitation of the research itself. In order to have a deeper understanding of the Transformation of the Director Mode in the New Performing Arts Space and its impact on audience experience, the research can adopt various means to carry out in-depth analysis of audience feedback. First of all, through the design of questionnaires and interviews, the audience's views, expectations and feedback on Director Mode Transformation can be collected, and their feelings on actor interaction, stage image and theme commercial integration can be deeply understood. Second, analyzing comments on social media platforms can provide real-time, large-scale audience feedback, helping to reveal how Director Mode resonates on social media. Finally, a user experience case is constructed to present the actual experience of the audience in detail, which is conducive to in-depth analysis of the impact of Director Mode Transformation on the audience's emotion and cognition.

To overcome time limitations, research can adopt a range of strategies. First, a long-term follow-up study was designed, with data regularly updated in order to capture the latest development of the New Performing Arts Space Director Mode. Secondly, by comparing the Director Mode in different time periods, the research can reveal the historical trajectory and possible trend of Director Mode Transformation. Finally, keeping an eye on the industry, including new shows, changes in directing teams, and changes in industry policies, can help keep abreast of changes in the industry. Through these methods, research can ensure a

comprehensive understanding of the Transformation of the Director Mode and ensure the lasting academic and practical value of the research results.

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Main interviewees information

- Suola Wu, Screenwriter, Director, Actress (2023.12)
- Luan Yitong, famous Shanghai drama Producer (2023.12)
- Xu Jun, China National first-class Director, the title of excellent expert of the Ministry of Culture, Vice Chairman of Shanghai New Literary and Art Workers Federation, Vice President of Shanghai Performance Industry Association (2023.11)
- Zhao Jie, Chinese National Second-class Actor, Drama Producer, Director, Actor (2023.7)
- Zhang Xiaolin, Artistic Director of Shanghai Film Studio Actors' Troupe, National First-class Actor of China (2023.6)
- Zhang Yu, Researcher of Shanghai Arts Research Institute, Vice President of Shanghai Performance Industry Association, initiator and practitioner of Shanghai Small Theater Drama Construction (2023.5)