

## *Original Paper*

# From “A Tapestry of a Legendary Land” to the Creation of Cultural Heritage Theater

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### **Abstract**

*The dance-poetry drama A Tapestry of a Legendary Land takes the renowned Song Dynasty painting A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains as its central creative element. By employing dance as an artistic form, it vividly showcases the unique connotations and cultural values inherent in cultural relics, achieving a deep integration of static artifacts with dynamic art. This paper focuses on A Tapestry of a Legendary Land to systematically analyze the transformation pathways of cultural relic elements in theatrical creation, exploring how dance can express their imagery, historical significance, narrative, and vitality. The findings demonstrate that this dance work brings cultural relics to life through figurative transformation, poetic contextualization, and a cross-temporal narrative approach. This not only enhances its cultural dissemination and impact but also provides innovative insights into the creation of cultural heritage theater. By thoroughly interpreting A Tapestry of a Legendary Land, the paper aims to offer new perspectives for contemporary dance creation and the dissemination of cultural heritage, facilitating the revitalization and development of traditional culture on the modern stage.*

### **Keywords**

*cultural heritage theatre, dance-poetry drama, A Tapestry of a Legendary Land, A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*

### **1. Introduction**

In recent years, with the implementation of China’s strategy to become a culturally strong nation, there has been increasing emphasis on the innovative transformation and dissemination of traditional culture. Cultural relics, as important vestiges of human history and culture, embody deep historical and cultural values. However, a critical challenge lies in how to “bring these static relics to life”, allowing them to

be integrated into the contemporary cultural context and serve as vital conduits for cultural transmission. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly underscored the importance of revitalizing cultural relics, a concept that has sparked widespread attention and practice within the field of artistic creation. Against this backdrop, the dance-poetry drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* emerged, centered on the famous Song Dynasty painting *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* by young artist Wang Ximeng. The production uses the medium of stage art to vividly depict the natural scenery and cultural connotations embodied in this ancient artwork, garnering extensive acclaim and attention. *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* is not merely an artistic reproduction of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* but a cross-temporal cultural dialogue. Through dance movements, body language, stage design, and situational interpretation, the drama successfully transforms the static imagery of the artifact into a dynamic form with contemporary resonance and artistic tension. Characters such as the Scroll Unroller, Wang Ximeng, and the Silk Weaver vividly portray the rich historical culture and humanistic sentiments behind the painting. As a groundbreaking dance work, *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* has not only innovated artistic expression but also led the way in integrating cultural relics with contemporary art, providing a powerful model for the creative transformation and dissemination of traditional culture. This study, focusing on the fusion of cultural relics and dance, takes *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* as a case study to explore the pathways of transforming relic elements into stage creations and analyze how dance breathes new life into the cultural connotations of these relics, bridging history and the present. Through an in-depth analysis of the creative background of *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, the refinement and transformation of relic elements, and the artistic expression and cultural significance of the work on stage, this paper seeks to provide new pathways for contemporary dance creation while offering practical insights for revitalizing cultural relics (Sanskar et al., 2022).

## **2. Analysis of Cultural Relic Elements in Cultural Heritage Theater Creation**

The creation of cultural heritage theater involves merging historical artifacts with stage art, using innovative artistic methods to bring material cultural heritage to life on the modern stage, thereby achieving the “revitalization” of traditional culture. In the dance-poetry drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, the Song Dynasty masterpiece *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* serves as the primary creative element. The production transforms the essence of this ancient painting into a dynamic stage performance, imbuing it with new vitality. This paper will provide a detailed analysis of the primary cultural relic elements, illustrating their unique expressions and cultural significance in theatrical creation (Li, 2022).

### *2.1 Analysis of Primary Cultural Relic Elements*

A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains is a masterpiece in the history of Chinese landscape painting, created by young Song Dynasty artist Wang Ximeng and currently housed in the Palace Museum. This long scroll painting, characterized by its vivid blue-and-green landscape, depicts undulating mountains, winding rivers, and vast landscapes, embodying the Song people's idealized vision of nature and poetic aspirations. The painting not only showcases exquisite natural scenes but also reflects the artist's personal emotions and the cultural characteristics of the era, making it a comprehensive representation of Chinese aesthetics, cultural spirit, and artistic skill. In *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, this painting is central to the creative process, with its essence translated into artistic dance forms, transforming a static artwork into a vibrant cultural scene on stage. In the drama, *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* is not merely a visual element but serves as the soul of the entire production. The stage design emphasizes the blue-and-green motif by extracting and constructing spatial imagery, turning this unique artistic symbol into a recurring visual theme throughout the performance. The vibrant green mountains are not merely a visual depiction but also symbolize the ancient Chinese pursuit of harmony with nature and the integration of human and natural worlds. Through dance expressions, this cultural symbol is given new interpretations, resonating with audiences both visually and emotionally. *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* also uses character portrayal to reveal the creative story and cultural transmission behind *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*. The historical figure Wang Ximeng appears as a central character, depicted as a young and talented artist deeply committed to his craft. Through precise dance movements, expressions, and scene changes, the drama portrays Wang Ximeng's creative journey and emotional investment, making him a vivid and relatable figure. The Scroll Unroller, representing modern cultural preservationists, serves as a bridge between ancient and contemporary times. His fascination with the artistic beauty of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* symbolizes modern reverence for historical culture and a commitment to its transmission. Through his perspective, the stage connects past and present, allowing audiences to experience a cross-temporal cultural dialogue. The stage design of the drama, integrating visual, auditory, and physical language, transforms *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* from a flat, static scroll into a three-dimensional, dynamic representation. The dancers' movements convey both the tranquility and harmony of the depicted landscapes and the emotions and spiritual journeys of historical figures. For example, the choreographers designed scenes such as "Unrolling the Scroll", "Carving Stamps", "Singing Silk", "Seeking Stones", and "Practicing Brushwork", showcasing the meticulous artistry and cultural context of the painting's creation process. The depiction of the Silk Weaver through dance symbolizes the craftsmanship and transmission of traditional Chinese labor, with this character drawing inspiration from another Southern Song painting, *Silkworm Weaving Illustration*, further enriching the connection with the drama's theme. Overall, *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* successfully brings the cultural relic

A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains from the museum space into the cultural context of the modern stage. Through dance, it vividly recreates the painting's landscapes and cultural sentiments, enabling audiences to appreciate the spiritual and aesthetic pursuits of Song Dynasty culture through artistic performances. This innovative transformation offers a new pathway for integrating cultural relics with contemporary art and underscores the immense potential of cultural heritage theater creation. By presenting relic elements on stage, the drama achieves not only artistic breakthroughs but also embodies cultural confidence and national spirit (Saman, Pizzi, & Hajihassani, 2022).

### *2.2 Analysis of Common Features of Cultural Relic Elements*

In the process of transforming cultural relic elements for theater, several common features often emerge, forming the foundation for bringing these elements to life on stage. In the dance-poetry drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, these elements—imagery, historical significance, narrative depth, and vitality—are vividly showcased, transforming traditional relics from static cultural artifacts into dynamic artistic expressions. First, the imagery of relic elements is manifest in their visual presentation and integration with dance movements. By centering on *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, the drama brings the depicted landscapes and figures to life on stage through artistic performance. The blue-green landscape imagery is more than a visual representation; through the dancers' movements, costumes, and scenic arrangement, it becomes a fusion of form and meaning, allowing audiences to not only see but also feel the painting's essence and spirit through artistic expression. Secondly, the historical significance of cultural relics is a crucial feature. As a representative painting from the Song Dynasty, *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* reflects not only artistic excellence but also the unique cultural context and social aesthetics of its era. Through stage representation, the drama magnifies these historical traits, depicting the painting's cultural atmosphere and historical background. The *Scroll Unroller*, as a character bridging past and present, introduces audiences to the creative process from a modern perspective, building a cross-temporal cultural bridge that deepens the understanding of historical depth and cultural heritage. Furthermore, the narrative depth of cultural relics is another significant dimension of theatrical creation. *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* uses storytelling to portray Wang Ximeng's creative journey and emotional struggles, transforming the painting from a static cultural relic into a vivid, emotionally resonant artwork. Through the performers' acting and stage narrative, the audience gains insight into the craftsmanship and historical narratives embedded within the painting. This narrative depth not only enriches the drama's artistic layers but also brings cultural relics closer to the audience, shifting their perception from distant artifacts to personal experiences. Finally, the vitality of cultural relics is fully realized in *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*. Through the performance, *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* transcends its static state, becoming a vibrant cultural symbol. By crafting the blue-green landscape imagery and shaping character interactions, the drama imbues the relic with new contemporary energy and cultural significance. The interactions

between the Scroll Unroller and Wang Ximeng symbolize the continuity and rejuvenation of culture, emphasizing that relics belong not only to the past but also to the present and future. The audience experiences the living pulse of cultural relics on stage, fostering a deep emotional resonance and ensuring that traditional culture remains dynamic and relevant in modern times (Liu et al., 2023).

### **3. Transformation Methods of Cultural Relic Elements in A Tapestry of a Legendary Land**

In the dance-poetry drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, various artistic approaches are employed to transform cultural relic elements from static to dynamic, vividly expressing their cultural connotations through the language of the stage. By employing figurative transformation, contextualization, and emotional integration, this drama successfully reinterprets traditional culture into a compelling modern artistic form.

#### *3.1 Figurative Transformation*

Figurative transformation is one of the most direct and essential methods of transformation employed in *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*. Through stage performances, static scenes from *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* are transformed into vivid visual imagery, allowing the audience to “step into” the painting and experience the cultural heritage and its timeless legacy. Specifically, figurative transformation is expressed through character portrayal, dance movements, and stage visual effects. First, the portrayal of the central character, Wang Ximeng, exemplifies figurative transformation in *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*. Through the dancer’s movements, expressions, and costumes, Wang Ximeng—a talented and diligent young painter—is vividly recreated. His character on stage not only embodies the process of creating the painting but also serves as a symbol of dialogue between traditional art and contemporary culture. Wang Ximeng’s stage presence, expressed through precise gestures and subtle expressions, showcases his dedication and passion during the creation of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*. This meticulous portrayal allows the audience to “see” the craftsmanship and effort behind the artwork, deepening their appreciation of cultural heritage. Secondly, figurative transformation is also reflected in the design of the Scroll Unroller character. As a symbol of modern cultural preservationists, the Scroll Unroller bridges the past and present, serving both as a guardian and a transmitter of cultural heritage. Through the perspective of the Scroll Unroller, the audience is guided through the creation process of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, experiencing scenes such as “Unrolling the Scroll”, “Carving Stamps”, “Singing Silk”, “Seeking Stones”, “Practicing Brushwork”, and “Tempering Ink.” This character design links the static representation of cultural relics to the emotional experience of modern audiences, creating a cultural dialogue that transcends time. On stage, the dance drama brings the blue-and-green mountain imagery in *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* to life through body movements and coordinated formations. Dancers use their bodies to simulate the shapes of mountains and rivers, presenting the depth and beauty of the

painting's landscapes. For example, in the "Blue and Green" scene, dancers' movements and formations evoke undulating mountains and mist-covered peaks, immersing the audience in the breathtaking scenery of the rivers and mountains. The dancers' actions are not merely dance expressions but three-dimensional representations of the painting's imagery, bringing static visuals to life on stage. The creative use of stage visual effects is another aspect of figurative transformation. Stage design incorporates elements such as colors, lighting, and props to create a rich "blue-and-green" atmosphere, reflecting the colors and artistic essence of the painting. For example, the blue-and-green tones in the dance drama become a recurring visual motif throughout the performance, symbolizing the vitality of nature and the continuity of cultural heritage. Every aspect of stage design aims to bring the painting's essence and cultural meaning to life, allowing the audience to deeply appreciate the artistic charm and cultural richness of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*. In summary, figurative transformation is the most fundamental and essential step in transforming cultural relics in *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*. Through character portrayal, body movement re-enactment, and stage visual presentation, the drama transforms static artworks into dynamic artistic expressions, imbuing them with new vitality and cultural significance. This figurative presentation not only enhances the audience's visual experience but also offers a rich form of expression and innovative approach for cultural heritage theater creation (Liu et al., 2021).

### *3.2 Poetic Contextualization*

Poetic contextualization is a key method in *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* for transforming cultural relics, creating a specific atmosphere and emotional realm that elevates the cultural meaning and aesthetic value of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* to the core of artistic expression. This contextualization not only imbues the stage with visual and emotional appeal but also blends classical cultural essence with modern artistic expression, offering the audience a profound experience and resonance with historical culture. In the dance drama, poetic contextualization is first seen in the emphasis on the "blue and green" color motif (Jordi, Hueto, & Subirana, 2020). The blue-and-green landscape is a defining feature of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, representing the ancient understanding of nature's harmony. Through a series of dance scenes, the blue-green tones are used as a central visual element throughout the performance, showcasing the lively yet tranquil beauty of mountains and rivers. By coordinating body movements with stage settings, the dancers transform the imagery of mountains, rivers, and greenery into vibrant dance language, immersing the audience in the serene and majestic landscape of ancient China. This use of imagery transcends a mere visual depiction of colors, offering a delicate interpretation of cultural meaning and a profound emotional connection. Moreover, poetic contextualization is realized through immersive stage design and performance techniques that integrate natural scenery with human sentiments. Scenes such as "Unrolling the Scroll", "Carving Stamps", "Singing Silk", and "Seeking Stones" not only highlight the creative process but

also reflect the spirit of ancient craftsmanship and cultural pursuit. In these scenes, every movement of the dancers is synchronized with the music and stage setting, creating an atmosphere of dialogue between nature, culture, and history. For instance, the “Singing Silk” scene portrays the intricate process of silk-making, using refined movements to convey respect for cultural heritage and history. Through such immersive storytelling, the dance drama not only recreates ancient craftsmanship but also allows the audience to emotionally connect with the relics and experience the depth of historical culture. The drama also deepens poetic contextualization through the use of stage space and transitions. Circular rotating stages and curtain projections create a multi-dimensional space for the performance of *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*. Each stage transition further interprets the blue-and-green landscape imagery. The dancers’ movements on the rotating stage depict the undulating mountains and flowing rivers, bringing the spatial layers of the painting to life on stage. This use of space transcends the two-dimensional constraints of the artwork, transforming the stage into a touchable cultural realm. Poetic contextualization is also evident in emotional expression. In *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, dancers use intricate body language, varied poses, and expressions to convey reverence and love for nature, culture, and history. The “Blue and Green Dance” sequence, characterized by graceful, solemn, and dynamic movements, embodies the serenity and strength of blue-and-green landscapes (Ravi et al., 2022). Every gaze and gesture from the dancers resonates with the cultural essence, creating a heartfelt tribute to historical culture. This deep emotional resonance transcends surface-level representation, connecting with the audience’s inner emotions. Overall, poetic contextualization is a key technique in *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* for deeply integrating cultural relics with stage art. By blending color symbolism, immersive storytelling, spatial transformation, and emotional expression, the drama breathes new artistic life into *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, serving as a bridge between history and modernity and between culture and audiences. This approach offers valuable inspiration and innovation for cultural heritage theater, revitalizing traditional culture on the modern stage (Francesca et al., 2021).

#### **4. Challenges and Advantages of Cultural Heritage Theater Creation**

Cultural heritage theater creation is a unique form of expression that blends historical artifacts with stage art, bringing the cultural significance and historical value of relics into the modern audience’s view by imbuing them with new vitality. However, this form of creation also faces several challenges in practice. First, a key issue for creators is how to achieve artistic innovation while remaining faithful to historical authenticity. Cultural relics are static cultural artifacts, bearing specific historical contexts and cultural meanings that cannot be altered. Transforming them into stage performances requires preserving their historical value while ensuring they resonate emotionally and artistically with audiences. For example, in the dance-poetry drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, the creators

needed to transform the static painting *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* into a dynamic stage performance through the dancers' body language and stage design, integrating the imagery of blue-green landscapes and historical culture into modern artistic expression. This process demands a delicate balance between form and content, avoiding either detachment from historical context or excessive rigidity that fails to engage the audience. Another challenge in cultural heritage theater creation lies in the integration of technology and artistic expression. Modern stage art relies on technologies such as lighting, sound effects, and projection to create ambiance and convey artistic intention. Creators must thoughtfully integrate these technologies with cultural elements, ensuring they enhance rather than overshadow the artifacts' cultural essence. Over-reliance on technology may diminish the cultural significance of the relics, while insufficient use of technology can limit their expressive potential. In *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, the creative team skillfully used rotating stages, projections, and other techniques to convey the spatial and visual aesthetics of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, giving its static imagery dynamic extensions on stage. This blend of technology and artistry demands creators possess keen artistic insight and mastery of technical expertise to achieve a seamless fusion of relics and stage art. Despite these challenges, cultural heritage theater creation offers significant advantages. Its greatest strength lies in its ability to present traditional culture in a more captivating and impactful manner, bridging the gap between history and the present. By transforming relics into stage performances, audiences can appreciate the beauty of cultural relics visually and sensorially while experiencing their profound historical and humanistic value through emotional resonance and cultural recognition. In *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land*, dance and stage performances incorporate *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains* into a modern cultural context, sparking audiences' interest and empathy for traditional culture. This innovative form of expression frees relics from static museum displays, making them "come alive" in the audience's perception and memory. Moreover, cultural heritage theater creation drives cultural innovation by merging relics with modern artistic forms. This approach allows creators not only to preserve traditional culture but also to enrich contemporary cultural expressions through innovative interpretations. For example, *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* uses modern dance language to reinterpret a traditional painting, enabling audiences to appreciate the essence of ancient art and experience the unique charm of modern artistry. Such creative endeavors broaden the channels for cultural dissemination and inspire new artistic directions. In conclusion, cultural heritage theater creation seeks a balance between preserving historical cultural connotations and meeting the aesthetic demands of modern audiences. While it faces challenges, it also brims with opportunities and creativity. Through its unique forms of expression and cultural depth, it paves new paths for the integration of relics and modern art, becoming an important medium for promoting innovative development of traditional culture. As technology and artistic methods continue to evolve, cultural heritage theater creation will play an increasingly vital role in



cultural transmission and artistic innovation, bringing audiences more profound and enriching cultural experiences (Enzo, Valbusa, & Buscema, 2021).

### **5. Future Prospects for Cultural Heritage Theater Creation**

Cultural heritage theater creation, as a unique form of combining historical culture with modern art, demonstrates strong cultural appeal and communicative power. In the future, as society's demand for the transmission and innovation of traditional culture grows, the prospects for cultural heritage theater creation will become even broader. First, the rapid advancement of technology offers creators more means and possibilities for expression. The application of technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help recreate historical scenes and cultural imagery more vividly, allowing audiences to immerse themselves in the cultural stories and historical emotions embodied by relics. By blending technology and art, cultural heritage theater creation will become more multidimensional and immersive, broadening the audience's perception and emotional resonance. At the same time, the future development of cultural heritage theater must emphasize exploring diverse forms of expression. Each cultural relic carries unique cultural and historical contexts, requiring adaptable and flexible modes of expression. A Tapestry of a Legendary Land, for instance, combines dance, music, stage design, and other artistic forms to showcase the artistic essence and cultural connotations of A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains. This multidimensional approach enhances the work's cultural appeal, enabling audiences to appreciate and understand the historical value and contemporary significance of relics from multiple perspectives. In the future, more diverse artistic forms—such as theater, film, and cross-disciplinary performances—can be integrated with cultural relics to further enrich their artistic presentation and amplify their cultural impact. Cultural heritage theater creation must also focus on fostering deeper interaction and cultural resonance with audiences. Modern audiences increasingly seek not just visual enjoyment but emotional connection and cultural identity. Cultural heritage theater should enhance the emotional bond between audiences and relics through more interactive and participatory expressions. For example, audience-participatory performances and interactive exhibitions can deepen their understanding and appreciation of the cultural meanings of relics, fostering deeper cultural transmission and resonance. Such engagement and interactivity will help bring cultural heritage from the past into contemporary reality, leaving an indelible impression on audiences. Additionally, the future of cultural heritage theater creation requires greater international collaboration and exchange, telling Chinese stories and promoting the country's rich cultural heritage worldwide. Collaborating with international artistic groups and introducing diverse cultural perspectives can showcase the depth of relics' cultural significance while fostering cross-cultural exchange and understanding. In a globalized cultural context, cultural heritage theater serves not only as a window for presenting traditional culture but also as a

platform for enhancing cultural understanding and exchange. Through continuous innovation and development, it is poised to connect cultures and exhibit cultural confidence, bringing forth unique artistic charm with an Eastern flair. In conclusion, the future of cultural heritage theater creation is full of opportunities and challenges. By integrating technology and art, exploring diverse forms of expression, fostering deep audience engagement, and expanding international cultural exchange, cultural heritage theater will continue to thrive, offering new possibilities for the transmission and innovation of traditional culture. It is not only a modern expression of cultural heritage but also an artistic bridge linking history and the future, promoting the transmission and development of China's rich cultural heritage in the new era (Zhang et al., 2021).

## 6. Conclusion

Cultural heritage theater creation, with its unique artistic expressions, transforms static historical relics into vibrant stage art, offering new paths for the transmission and modern expression of traditional culture. Taking the dance-poetry drama *A Tapestry of a Legendary Land* as an example, the creators achieved emotional resonance and cultural communication with modern audiences through figurative transformation and poetic contextualization of *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, revitalizing the ancient masterpiece on stage. Through meticulous dance performances and stage presentations, the production not only faithfully reproduces the painting's aesthetic atmosphere but also profoundly interprets the spirit of cultural transmission and innovation. Although cultural heritage theater creation faces challenges such as balancing history with modernity and achieving artistic innovation while remaining faithful to cultural heritage, it demonstrates unique communicative and cultural appeal through the integration of technology and art, diverse forms of expression, and enhanced audience interaction. As a platform for showcasing traditional culture, it also promotes cultural exchange and strengthens cultural confidence. In the future, ongoing technological innovation and artistic exploration will continue to open new avenues for cultural heritage preservation and dissemination, ensuring that traditional culture shines even more brightly on the stage of the new era, making greater contributions to the preservation and development of China's cultural heritage.

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