ABSTRACT

Kun Ju (昆剧) is one of ancient Chinese operas which has experienced more than 600 years. It has been mostly favored by scholars who have been educated based on the culture of poetry and other forms of Classical Chinese literature. Thus, Kun Ju has developed a unique form of theatrical performance which is closely related to the scholars’ emotions and tastes.

The purpose of this honours thesis is to study the theatrical form of Kun Ju through the complete case study of Butterfly Dream, which is put up by Shanghai Kun Ju Theatre (Troupe) on the contemporary stage. The play is adapted from its historical version back to Qing dynasty. Not only the text but also other aspects of the production have presented the tradition form of Kun Ju. The study will firstly give an all-around looking on the whole production. Secondly, it provides an analysis on the theatrical characteristics and producing process. Followed by a comparative analysis with other two versions of The Peony Pavilion, it shows the value of traditional theatrical form that Butterfly Dream represents and the enlightenment of adapting tradition on the contemporary stage of Kun Ju.

The study shows that the simplicity of stage setting of Kun Ju is in sync with its actor-oriented nature, which is closely related to scholars’ emotions and tastes. Therefore, the producing process of Butterfly Dream on a
contemporary stage is highly independent from other material and financial resources.