AN ABSTRACT

Cantonese opera is one of the four major operatic genres in Singapore. However, very little research has been carried out in this field. My research work attempts to study the history of Cantonese opera in Singapore through interviews with former opera performers and musicians. This method was used because it provides first-hand information on the topic and because there is too little written literature about Cantonese opera in Singapore.

The information obtained was then incorporated into chapters on the organization of opera troupes; the two contexts of performance, namely the commercial context as in theaters and amusement parks, the religious context as in temples; and lastly, important opera performers and troupes.

In the study, the unique social and geographical environment of Singapore and how these elements had influenced the development of Cantonese opera in Singapore were taken into consideration.

The results show that Singapore is a very important place in the history of Cantonese opera. Many opera troupes and performers have came to Singapore from China and Hongkong since the late 19th century. The main reason is that Cantonese opera is very popular here but more importantly, Singapore is seen as the stepping board to performing in other parts of South East Asia. This is indicated by the fact that after the establishment of the professional opera performer's association, the Part Woh Woi Koon in Guangzhou, their first branch was set up right here in Singapore.