

# Nation’s arts scene given fresh life

As Chinese stories begin to emerge on global stage, artists mull expanding vision to comprise all humanity

By YANG YANG  
yangyangs@chinadaily.com.cn

Last month, the six-day national conference of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the China Writers Association closed in Beijing. Held every five years, the conference brings influential artistic elites together.

Addressing the opening ceremony on Dec 14, President Xi Jinping raised five expectations for writers and artists, calling on them to represent the “splendid picture of China in the new era on the journey to national rejuvenation”, to “serve the people and depict the epics created by the people”, to “creatively explore art boundaries”, to “present a reliable, admirable and respectable image of China to the world through good stories”, and to “realize the value of their life in the pursuit of both artistic ideals and moral goodness”.

Tie Ning, president of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the China Writers Association, addressed the closing ceremony, saying that the delegates had spent days discussing Xi’s speech, feeling that it had “pointed toward a bright prospect for the development of literature and art in China in a new era, and provided fundamental principles”.

“We are lucky to live in such a great new era, with millions of promising things emerging, thousands of torrents of time racing, and many competitors contending. This is also a golden time for literature and art to prosper, for such a great time needs new epics created by writers and artists capable of matching its brilliance,” she said.

After more than 20 years of development, online literature has become culturally significant in China. Beginning with fantasy, romance and martial arts, it has now turned its attention to real life.

“An increasing number of online authors have started writing about real life and have created many excellent works reflecting our times and daily lives that resonate with readers,” said online author Yang Yan, who writes under the pen name Wuqingying.

“These works — reflecting the trends of our time, the dream of rejuvenating our nation, life and the innovation of science and technology, together with the genre of science fiction and topics like traditional Chinese culture and a ‘community with a shared future for mankind’ — have injected vitality into online literature, improving its development,” she said.

Creativity and innovation are also breathing new life into traditional Chinese opera.

Since 2015, Black Box Theater performances in Shanghai have attracted large audiences, and it has become fashionable to go to Shanghai to watch performances in the winter.

Artists are using Peking Opera to tell the story of *The Death of a Government Clerk* by Anton Chekhov,



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Shanxi Clapper Opera to tell the Greek tragedy of Oedipus, and natural voices to sing Kunqu Opera.

Gu Haohao, president of the Shanghai Center of Chinese Operas, said that one of the best things about the Black Box Theater is that artists have the courage to keep exploring the boundaries of art.

After the final rehearsals for the Kunqu Opera *Bai Luo Shan* (*The White Shirt*) in December, Gao Jun, the show’s vocal and music designer said that two middle-aged cleaners came up to him smiling and said: “It’s great! We were able to understand the opera.”

“As President Xi said at the national conference of the CFLAC and the CWA, artists should creatively explore boundaries. I will continue to work hard to make opera music more vibrant and influential,” he said.

In recent years, Chinese sci-fi has blossomed as more people have started writing in the genre. Works like Liu Cixin’s *The Three-Body Problem* have been translated into different languages and become New York Times best-sellers, and the movie based on his book, *The Wandering Earth*, set a milestone for Chinese sci-fi movies in terms of industrial standards.

The genre is still dominated by writers in the United States, followed by Japan and Europe. In the past, Chinese sci-fi could not compare with Japanese or European sci-fi, but in recent years, the gap has been narrowing, Liu said in an interview with China Art News at the conference.

“Now, Chinese sci-fi exerts a profound influence on trends around the world. But we should also be aware that we still lack really influen-

tial writers and works, and original works that are worth adapting,” he said.

“If Chinese science fiction is to get a better foothold in the international market, we need to stand at a higher point, have a broader vision and get rid of individual narrow mindedness, but still hold firmly to the idea of a ‘community with a shared future for mankind’ to describe the future of the human race and explore our ultimate destiny. That is the vision sci-fi writers should have,” he said.

Last year, the criminal or immoral behavior of some actors, singers and artists let down many who liked them and alarmed literary and artistic circles, reminding them of the importance of pursuing moral goodness as well as artistic ideals.

Pu Cunxin, actor and president of

the China Theater Association, started his career as an actor in 1977. Since 1991, he has played the role of Li Bai, the great poet of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), on stage.

“I’ve been playing Li Bai for the last 30 years. He has shaped me, accompanying me on my journey,” Pu said during an interview with China Art New at the conference.

“As I grow older, I better understand the role and who Li Bai was; he represents spiritual freedom. Playing him is also about how to be a person — that is, how to be morally good, innocent and pure. At the same time, as an actor, audience recognition raises my confidence. Audiences choose to come to the theater because they trust us and have certain expectations of us, so we must work hard to serve audiences, and to serve the people,” he said.

## 14th Five-Year Plan outlines stronger online copyright protection

By YANG YANG

The National Copyright Administration of China recently published the 14th Five-Year Plan for Copyright Protection, outlining 26 key tasks in six areas: the copyright law system; the administrative protection system; the need to crack down on infringement and piracy; the social services framework; international cooperation and exchange; and the development of related sectors.

According to the plan, more than 5 million copyrights will have been registered by 2025, and the contribution of the copyright industry to GDP will have grown to 7.5 percent.

Network-related industries will become one of the major battlefields for copyright protection, and information technologies such as big data, AI

and blockchain will have to be developed to enhance the protection of traditional culture and the knowledge industry.

Through the use of new technological and supervision methods, intractable problems can be dealt with more effectively, and the rapid response mechanism to online infringement and piracy can be improved.

Among network industries, one of the most affected is online literature.

A white paper on copyright protection for online literature in China released in April by Analysys, a digital consultancy, showed that the market size of China’s core digital entertainment sectors stood at 683.5 billion yuan (\$107.2 billion) in 2020.

Although online literature only accounted for 28.8 billion yuan, sectors lower down the chain, including

anime, film, TV, video games, music and other derivatives, totaled 253.1 billion yuan in 2020, online literary works and their IP contributed more than 40 percent to China’s overall digital entertainment market.

However, the booming online literature industry is threatened by infringement and piracy. Analysys’s paper showed losses of over 6 billion yuan through piracy, up 6.9 percent compared with 2019, and underlying the rising importance of copyright protection.

The paper attributed the increased loss mainly to the development of new technologies, the increasingly complex means through which information is spread, and different forms of piracy along the entire industrial chain. By December 2020, cumulative active monthly users on major piracy

platforms stood at 7.27 million. On average, active users spent 19 hours reading on the platforms each month.

At a forum on copyright protection for online literature at the 5th China Online Literature+ Conference in Beijing last October, Zhang Lianying, deputy chief judge of the Beijing Internet Court, said that the infringement and piracy of online literature has changed in three respects: from copy-and-paste to providing all related links, including pirated links, on a Web page; from catering to computer users to mobile phone users; and from text to multimedia.

Compared with audio or video files or online games, the smaller file size of electronic literary works makes copying and pasting convenient, said Zhang Yuanzhou, general manager of the intellectual property department

at digital literature company COL.

“Also, many pirated works are created by different individual writers, making it difficult for them to protect their rights,” he said.

During a case heard at the Beijing Intellectual Property Court in 2020, one novel was found to have plagiarized more than 110,000 words from sixteen other books, including entire passages and phrases and 21 complete scenes.

Zhang added that the infringement industry has matured, with pirates setting up servers overseas, and using tools like Optical Character Recognition and crawlers to collect specific information from major online literature websites like those of COL, China Literature and iReader.

“They can build a piracy website within minutes,” he said.

### Policy Digest

#### Campaign aims to improve workplaces

Chinese authorities will launch a special campaign to improve workplace conditions in an effort to reduce the risk of occupational diseases — particularly pneumoconiosis, a broad class of lung diseases — and protect the health of workers, the National Health Commission said in a notice issued on Dec 31.

The three-phase campaign aims to significantly improve conditions at companies, which are obligated to improve control over dust, toxic substances and noise levels by the end of 2025.

The campaign is necessary to meet targets set in a recently published guideline on improving occupational disease prevention and treatment in China during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25).

Between January and August, the commission, working together with local health authorities, will determine the list of companies to be involved in the campaign and formulate individual plans for every region.

The second phase of the campaign will last from September until June 2025. During this period, companies will be required to carry out feasibility plans to improve workplace conditions for occupations subject to excessive risk of occupational disease, prioritizing the use of technical measures to reduce the risk.

After the plans are implemented, professional reports made by qualified organizations concerning the risk of occupational diseases will be required. Local health authorities will also supervise company improvements in a coordinated manner.

The two authorities will assess the results of the campaign between July and December 2025.

Over the course of 2020, 17,064 new cases of occupational disease were reported across the country, 14,408 of which were either pneumoconiosis or other respiratory diseases, according to statistics issued by the commission in July.

#### Universities tighten lab safety standards

Teachers and students at Chinese colleges and universities must receive training in laboratory safety, practical skills and procedures and pass exams before being allowed to use such facilities as China tightens university lab safety management.

A notice issued by the Ministry of Education on Dec 31 rolled out a series of measures aimed at strengthening the prevention of lab hazards to stop accidents and protect students and teachers.

Noting that safety is a red line that cannot be crossed, the notice requires the establishment of a lab security management system that specifically defines the responsibilities of all parties. While every university should set up a leading group for the management of lab safety, lab heads will be responsible for regular safety management, such as removing hidden risks and protecting individuals.

Colleges and universities are required to employ sufficient full-time safety management personnel for their laboratories, and annual budgets must include the necessary funds for these arrangements.

The ministry said that it will supervise and offer guidance to colleges and universities that fail to carry out the measures. Those responsible for accidents or incidents due to violations of the law or regulations will be held accountable.

In October, a lab explosion at a university in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, killed two people and injured nine.