

Course Form for PKU Summer School International 2025

Course Title	Title in English: Arts of Chinese Traditional Performance
	Title in Chinese: 中国传统表演艺术
Teacher	Peter Xinya Zhang 张新亚
First day of classes	July 14, 2025
Last day of classes	July 25, 2025
Course Credit	3 credits
Course Description	
Objective:	
There are many forms of Chinese traditional performance. The styles vary significantly because of the various cultural background and dialect. In this course, a selection of Chinese performing art forms, such as Peking opera and other Chinese traditional operas, Quyi, Chinese folk songs, Chinese traditional music, Chinese dance, are introduced. They represent the philosophy and aesthetics of Chinese people. These Chinese art forms are also compared with western styles. Their cultural background and technical background (e.g., linguistic and acoustical aspects) are discussed.	
Pre-requisites / Target audience	
Students who are interested in performing arts, both oriental and western, and their cultural and technical background, as well as Chinese language.	
Proceeding of the Course	
The course will be delivered through lectures, video presentations, in-class demonstrations and discussions, and watching recommended performance shows online, etc. Students will prepare presentations on Chinese performing art, to be given at the end of the semester. Students' participation is required.	
Assignments (essay or other forms)	
Two essays, one presentation and one final written report	
Evaluation Details	
Class participation: 20% Homework/essay: 30% Presentation: 25% Final written report: 25%	

Text Books and Reading Materials	
Reading materials to be distributed in class.	
Academic Integrity (If necessary)	
Participation in this class commits the students and instructor to abide by a general norm of equal opportunity and academic integrity. It implies permission from students to submit their written work to services that check for plagiarism (such as Turnitin.com). It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism. Violations of the norm of academic integrity will be firmly dealt with in this class.	
CLASS SCHEDULE (Depending on the schedule of the field trip/performance shows, the exact schedule and contents are subject to adjustment)	
Day 1: <i>Introduction to Chinese traditional performance and overview of this course</i>	Date: 7/14/2025
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) An overall introduction to Chinese traditional performance, such as Chinese traditional opera, Chinese vocal and instrumental music, Chinese dance, is provided. Selective video clips are played. Overview of the course, including the syllabus and schedule, is given. The schedule of the field trip is determined.	
【Questions】 How many Chinese traditional operas are there? What is the main difference between Chinese traditional operas and western opera? What is the main difference between Chinese traditional music and western music? What are the special characteristics of Chinese dance? What is the special timbres of Chinese vocal and instrumental music? What do you like and dislike about Chinese traditional performance?	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Selective video clips are played in class.	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Review of the lecture and viewing online resources of Chinese traditional performances are encouraged.	
Day 2: <i>Peking opera</i>	Date: 7/15/2025
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) History of Peking opera is reviewed. Various forms of performing styles (schools) of Peking opera are introduced, and compared with those of the western opera. The characteristics of	

Peking opera, e.g., the costumes, stage setup, timbre, are discussed. Selective video clips are played and demonstrations are given.	
【Questions】 How long is the history of Peking opera? How many roles are there in Peking opera? What is the timbre of each role? How many forms of performance are there in Peking opera? Name some of the names of the greatest actors/actresses. What are their performing styles? What are the characteristics of the costumes in Peking opera? What do you like and dislike about Peking opera?	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Selective video clips are played in class.	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Review of the lecture and viewing online resources of Peking opera performances are encouraged.	
Day 3: <i>Chinese traditional operas</i>	Date: 7/16/2025
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Various Chinese traditional operas are introduced, and compared with Peking opera and western opera. The cultural and linguistic background of each region is discussed. Selective video clips are played and demonstrations are given.	
【Questions】 How many Chinese traditional operas are there? Can you name some of the Chinese traditional operas? How long is the history of some of the Chinese traditional operas? What are the special characteristics of these operas? What do you like and dislike about each Chinese tradition opera?	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Selective video clips are played in class.	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Essay on Chinese traditional operas. Students can discuss some aspects of these operas. The main topics to be included is given in class. Review of the lecture and viewing online resources of Chinese traditional opera performances are encouraged.	
Day 4: <i>Pitch and melody, loudness and dynamics, timbre, and temperament</i>	Date: 7/17/2025

<p>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</p> <p>Human perception of pitch, loudness and timbre is discussed. Concepts of melody, chord progression and temperament are then introduced. These concepts are important in understanding the musical aspects of the Chinese traditional performances.</p>	
<p>【Questions】</p> <p>What is the main structure of the human auditory system?</p> <p>What are the concepts of pitch, loudness and timbre, and how to measure them?</p> <p>What is required in order to perceive melody?</p> <p>What is chord progression?</p> <p>Can you name some of the important temperaments?</p>	
<p>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</p> <p>Audio and video clips are played in class, accompanying the lecture.</p>	
<p>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</p> <p>Review of the lecture is encouraged.</p>	
Day 5: <i>Chinese traditional instrumental music</i>	Date: 7/18/2025
<p>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</p> <p>Chinese traditional musical instruments are introduced and compared with western musical instruments. The characteristics of Peking opera, e.g., the timbres, temperaments, and performing styles, are discussed. Selective video and audio clips are played.</p>	
<p>【Questions】</p> <p>What are the main string, wind and percussion instruments in Chinese traditional music performance?</p> <p>What are the main differences in timbre, pitch and performing style between these Chinese musical instruments and the classical western musical instruments?</p> <p>What is the main difference in melody and chord progress between Chinese traditional music and classical western music?</p> <p>What do you like and dislike about Chinese tradition instrumental music?</p>	
<p>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</p> <p>Selective video and audio clips are played in class.</p>	
<p>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</p> <p>Review of the lecture and viewing online resources of Chinese traditional instrumental music performances are encouraged.</p>	

Day 6: <i>Chinese classical and folk dances</i>	Date: 7/21/2025
<p>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</p> <p>Unique style of the Chinese classical dance is introduced. Five main styles of Chinese folk dances are introduced. These Chinese dance styles are compared with western dances, such as ballet and modern dance. Selective video clips are played.</p>	
<p>【Questions】</p> <p>What are the main differences between Chinese and western dances?</p> <p>What are the differences in techniques between Chinese and western dances?</p> <p>What are the five main styles in Chinese folk dances and their special styles and techniques?</p>	
<p>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</p> <p>Review of the lecture and viewing online resources of Chinese classical and folk dances are encouraged.</p>	
<p>【Assignments for this session (if any)】</p> <p>Essay on Chinese dance. Students can discuss some aspects of them. The main topics to be included are given in class.</p>	
Day 7: <i>Speech science and linguistic aspects, singing voice, spatial hearing and virtual reality, acoustical requirements of various performing spaces</i>	Date: 7/22/2025
<p>【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.)</p> <p>Vowels and consonants are discussed in various languages. Accents in Chinese dialects are compared. Technical requirements in singing voice in opera performance is discussed. Topics in spatial hearing and architectural acoustics are introduced. Audio and video clips are played and demonstrations are given.</p>	
<p>【Questions】</p> <p>What are vowels and consonants and their acoustical characteristics?</p> <p>What are the main characteristics of the vowels and consonants in mandarin Chinese, compared with western languages?</p> <p>What are the five tones in mandarin Chinese?</p> <p>When you listen to a Chinese speech, what are its main acoustical characteristics?</p>	
<p>【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】</p> <p>Audio and video clips are played in class.</p>	

【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Review of the lecture is encouraged.	
Day 8: <i>Quyi and Chinese folk songs</i>	Date: 7/23/2025
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Quyi includes a large variety of performing arts in storytelling, many of which includes singing. Similar to Chinese traditional operas, each region has its own Quyi styles, which is strongly connected with its dialect. Some Quyi styles are introduced. Selective video clips are played and demonstrations are given.	
【Questions】 What is the main difference between Quyi and Chinese traditional operas? Do all Quyi styles include singing? What do you like and dislike about the Quyi styles introduced in class, such as Jingyundagu?	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Selective audio and video clips are played in class.	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Review of the lecture and viewing online resources of Quyi and Chinese folk song performances are encouraged.	
Day 9: <i>Current development of Chinese traditional performance</i>	Date: 7/24/2025
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Modern plays and pieces of Chinese traditional operas and Chinese music are introduced, and their history is discussed. In particular, the so-called “modeled plays” are introduced. Other music works combining Chinese and western styles are introduced. Selective video clips are played. The main topics to be included in the student presentations and the final written reports are given, and the requirements are discussed.	
【Questions】 What are the “modeled plays”? What was the political background when these “modeled plays” were developed? What was the main developments of these “modeled plays”? How did they combine the styles of Chinese traditional performance and western performance? What do you like and dislike about these “modeled plays” and the other music works introduced in class?	

【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】 Selective video clips are played in class.	
【Assignments for this session (if any)】 Review of the lecture and viewing online resources of the “modeled plays” are encouraged.	
Day 10: <i>Student presentations</i>	Date: 7/25/2025
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Each student gives a presentation on selective topics on Chinese traditional performance, followed by Q and A. A PowerPoint presentation is recommended.	
【Questions】 Which style of the Chinese traditional performance do you like most? What is the main difference between such performance style and the corresponding western performance style? What have you learned about Chinese culture from this performance style? Do you think you may use some of the knowledge learned in this course for your future career practice?	
【Readings, Websites or Video Clips】	
Field Trips (Optional): <i>Performance show—Peking opera at Liyuan Theatre</i>	Flexible Date
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Students go to Peking opera show at Liyuan Theatre. The performance shows are in the evening and the time is different from the regular meeting hours. Students are responsible for the cost of show tickets and transportation (e.g., taxi or public transportation).	
Field Trips (Optional): <i>Performance—Chinese traditional instrumental music</i>	Flexible Date
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Students go to concert of Chinese traditional orchestra. The meeting time might be different from the regular meeting hours. Students are responsible for the cost of show tickets and transportation (e.g., taxi or public transportation).	

Field Trips (Optional): <i>Performance show—Chinese dance</i>	Flexible Date
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Students go to performance of Chinese dances. The meeting time might be different from the regular meeting hours. Students are responsible for the cost of show tickets and transportation (e.g., taxi or public transportation).	
Field Trips (Optional): <i>Visit to professional performing art groups</i>	Flexible Date
【Description of the Session】 (purpose, requirements, class and presentations scheduling, etc.) Students visit professional performing art groups. The meeting time might be different from the regular meeting hours. Students are responsible for the cost of show tickets and transportation (e.g., taxi or public transportation).	