

## 布袋戏 Hand Puppet Theater



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### 高薇雅 Alison Kao

82-440: Chinese Folk Performance Traditions 中国民间演艺传统

I found learning about Budaixi 布袋戏, or Hand Puppet Theater, to be very interesting because it is an art form that I was not very familiar with before this class, and the puppet masters display great skill in putting on their shows. Prior to this class, I had seen Budaixi puppets before, but I had never seen a performance or heard about the stories in the plays. After seeing videos and reading about Budaixi 布袋戏, I have learned a lot about the art.

The part that fascinated me the most was watching videos of the puppet masters manipulating the puppets. They made each motion look both lifelike and effortless. When I tried moving the puppets around in class, I found it very difficult to do anything but basic motions, so I was very impressed by the puppet masters' performances. They were able to not only enact complex fighting scenes, but also do tricks like throw things between puppets and blow smoke from the puppets. These must have been very hard to learn and taken a lot of time to perfect.

I was also impressed by the level of detail in the puppets. Each puppet, whether small or large, had a painted face and embroidered clothes. A lot of effort must have gone into making them look so beautiful. It must be very hard to sew such small and finely detailed clothing, especially for performances that require so many different puppets.

I also found it interesting how Budaixi 布袋戏 has changed and adapted over the years. This was not just a modern phenomenon because Budaixi 布袋戏 changed many years ago from having romantic stories and Nankuan 南管 music to having stories about kung-fu fighting accompanied by Beiguan music 北管. Now that Budaixi 布袋戏 must compete with modern entertainment, it has changed yet again, with larger and more complex puppets, as well as special effects, used for television performances. Some of the puppets are so large that I wonder if they are heavy or hard to manipulate. Even though Budaixi 布袋戏 has changed in modern times, I think it still retains a lot of the traditional character of the art.

I thought the case studies in class really helped me to learn about Budaixi 布袋戏. From watching a recording of a performance in Taiwan, I was able to see that the person in the puppet troupe who recites the voice lines also has a lot of interaction with the audience. I was also able to see the different people who come to watch Budaixi 布袋戏 shows and see the way that people dressed in black to

hide while manipulating the large puppets. When we read a transcript from a Budaixi 布袋戏 play in class, I learned about the kinds of plots featured in Budaixi 布袋戏. The plot involved a lot of action scenes and fighting and included a hero character.

I am glad that in recent years, Taiwan is focusing efforts on preserving and promoting Budaixi 布袋戏. I think it is a very unique art form and that it can appeal to people of all ages, and I am glad to see some younger people like the shop owner in one of the videos have so much passion for it. It is important to preserve Budaixi 布袋戏 for future generations because it is so unique and is a traditional art form that still holds people's interest in modern times. The next time I visit Taiwan, I will see if I can attend a Budaixi 布袋戏 performance and watch the puppet masters in person.

Budaixi 布袋戏 is a very interesting subject and I am glad we had the opportunity to learn about it through so many different mediums, including text, discussion, video, and handling puppets in the classroom. I found the experience very interesting overall and I think it has deepened my knowledge of this part of Taiwanese culture.