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## New Looks of an Old Stage

The evolution of Chinese theater exemplifies a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernization. In the early 20th century, progressive intellectuals advocated for reforms to traditional Chinese theater, drawing inspiration from selected Western models. The 1950s, following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, saw the introduction of the Western director's role in traditional Chinese operatic performances. This sparked debates over the preservation of traditional star-centric performances versus the adoption of Western ensemble systems and realist dramaturgy. This period marked a significant transition from the initial intrusion of Western ideas to their gradual integration into Chinese theatrical practices.

The introduction of the Western proscenium stage and realistic scenes in the 1920s set off a revolution that began transforming the virtually empty and symbolic space of traditional Chinese theater by the 1960s and 70s. This transformation enabled Chinese artists to create lifelike representations. Following the start of China's reform and opening-up, they experimented with the principle of *ut pictura theatrum* and ventured into intermedia realms at an accelerated pace. Contemporary examples suggest that the future of Chinese theater lies in the fusion of old and new, blending Chinese and Western elements to create forms that are both dynamic and evolving.

**Shen Lin** is one of the most influential scholars of modern Chinese theatre and an expert on Shakespeare in China. Formerly a professor at the Central Academy of Drama, he is now an invited professor at the China Art Academy. He was editor-in-chief of *Xiju*, China's leading theatre journal, for 11 years and has written numerous articles, books and translations of Western plays and librettos. He has been a visiting professor at many universities around the world, including the Free University of Berlin, the University of California, and the University of Victoria (Canada). In addition to his academic endeavours, Shen has also participated in the creation of influential theatre works such as *Che Guevara and Bootleg Faust* and serves as a jury member in several international theatre festivals.

**DATE:** Thursday, March 27, 2025

**TIME:** 16:45 -18:15

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