



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Spellbinding Masterpiece: Die Legende der weißen Schlange

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Few existing theatrical experiences can transport an audience so completely into a world of myth, magic, and tradition as the Zhejiang Wu Opera Research Institute's breathtaking production of Die Legende der weißen Schlange. This stunning Wu-Oper masterfully blends poetic lyricism, dazzling martial artistry, and deeply resonant storytelling into an unforgettable spectacle.

As one of the great treasures of Chinese traditional theater, Wu-Oper holds a revered place in cultural history, and this production showcases its full splendor, captivating European audiences with its sheer beauty and technical brilliance. At its heart, Die Legende der weißen Schlange is a deeply moving tale of love, sacrifice, and the struggle against societal expectations. The timeless legend of Bai Suzhen, the white snake spirit who falls in love with the mortal scholar Xu Xian, is not just a fantastical romance—it is a meditation on freedom, loyalty, and fate. This production, while steeped in tradition, feels strikingly immediate, its themes resonating with contemporary audiences as powerfully as they have for centuries.

The Zhejiang Wu Opera Research Institute has crafted a production that honors the ancient origins of this legend while infusing it with a dynamic, cinematic quality that makes every moment feel alive. The pacing is impeccable, balancing moments of delicate introspection with breathtaking action sequences. The opera unfolds like a dream, with every movement, gesture, and note drawing the audience deeper into its spellbinding world. The performers in this production demonstrate not only technical mastery but also extraordinary emotional depth. Leading the cast is Chen Lili as Bai Suzhen, whose luminous presence and expressive voice make her portrayal utterly mesmerizing.

She embodies the character's duality—both divine and deeply human—with a grace that is almost otherworldly. Her aria-like passages soar with poignancy, each note imbued with longing and love.

Lou Sheng's Xu Xian is the perfect counterpart to Bai Suzhen. His portrayal of the naive yet kind-hearted scholar is infused with warmth and sincerity. The chemistry between the two leads is palpable, making their love story all the more moving. Xu Xian's emotional journey—from wonder to despair to devotion—unfolds with a quiet, heartbreaking beauty that lingers in the mind long after the final curtain.

Yang Xiayun delivers an electrifying performance as Xiaoqing, the green snake spirit and Bai Suzhen's loyal companion. Her role demands a combination of fierce athleticism and delicate expressivity, and she

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executes both with breathtaking precision. Her Schwerttanz (sword dance) is one of the highlights of the evening, a hypnotic fusion of classical opera stylization and martial arts prowess. Every movement is precise, every flourish a testament to her formidable skill.

Li Xuanyu's portrayal of the antagonist, the monk Fahai, is equally compelling. With his commanding stage presence and rich vocal delivery, he brings an air of solemnity and quiet menace to the role.

Rather than portraying Fahai as a one-dimensional villain, he infuses the character with a sense of duty and conviction, making the conflict between divine law and personal love feel all the more tragic. One of the defining characteristics of Wu-Oper is its seamless integration of literature, music, and martial arts, and this production exemplifies this balance to perfection. The action sequences, particularly the famous Diebstahl der Unsterblichkeitskräuter (The Theft of the Immortality Herbs), are a masterclass in choreography. The combination of aerial acrobatics, intricate combat sequences, and fluid stage movement creates an electrifying display of theatrical athleticism.

Perhaps the most astonishing sequence is Xu Xian's Dreizehn Stürze (Thirteen Falls), an emotionally charged moment where the character's inner turmoil is translated into a physically grueling performance. The sheer stamina and discipline required for this scene are remarkable, and Lou Sheng executes it with heartbreaking intensity.

Another mesmerizing highlight is Xiaoqing's Schwerttanz. Her ability to fuse traditional Chinese opera movement with high-speed, razor-sharp swordplay is nothing short of breathtaking. Her performance embodies the very essence of Wu-Oper—power and elegance intertwined in perfect harmony.

Beyond its virtuosic performances, Die Legende der weißen Schlange is a visual marvel. The production's use of rich, detailed costumes transports audiences into an ethereal world of gods, spirits, and mortals. Each costume is a masterpiece of traditional Chinese craftsmanship, with flowing silks, intricate embroidery, and striking color contrasts that symbolize each character's essence.

The set design, while evocative of classic opera staging, incorporates modern theatrical techniques to enhance the storytelling. The interplay of mist, cascading silk backdrops, and carefully controlled lighting effects creates an atmosphere of shifting realities—one moment rooted in earthly tradition, the next immersed in celestial wonder.

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