

## Artistic Value and Confucius Culture in Kong Dexin's Dance Drama 'Confucius'

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### ABSTRACT

This research article explores the artistic value of Chinese dance drama director Kong Dexin, with a particular focus on her outstanding dance drama 'Confucius.' The dance drama 'Confucius' is created by Kong Dexin and premiered in Beijing in 2013. The purpose of the research is to examine the artistic value and cultural significance of Kong Dexin's artistic work in the field of dance drama. The objectives include analyzing the narrative structure, choreography and cultural themes of 'Confucius' employed by Kong Dexin in the dance drama 'Confucius.' To achieve these aims, an interview was conducted with director Kong Dexin and relevant data was obtained. Primary and secondary sources were consulted, and a comprehensive analysis of Kong Dexin's dance drama work 'Confucius' was carried as well, combining relevant historical background and text analysis to gather relevant information and insights. The research findings reveal the depth and richness of Kong Dexin's work, demonstrating her superb skills in directing dance drama and her ability to present the culture of the ancient Chinese figure 'Confucius.' The thematic exploration of Confucius' cultural ideas of 'benevolence', 'ritual' and education has strongly resonated with audiences in different parts of the world. In conclusion, Kong Dexin's dance drama 'Confucius' is an outstanding Chinese dance drama work that combines an engaging narrative with profound insights into dance body movements. The analysis of this masterpiece contributes to a deeper understanding of the influence of Kong Dexin as a dance drama director and highlights the lasting significance of her work in the Chinese field of dance drama works.

**Contribution/Originality:** This paper's primary contribution is finding that the dance drama 'Confucius' directed by Kong Dexin is a true masterpiece of Chinese dance drama through the analysis of narrative, choreography and Confucius cultural themes in the dance drama 'Confucius.'

## 1. Introduction

Drama, as a form of performing art, utilizes various elements from real life—such as language, movement, posture, and facial expressions—to convey its content. Performers create dramatic effects through visual and linguistic means (Betti, 2015). Although dance drama is a type of drama, it differs from traditional drama in that dance dramas communicate information primarily through the body movements of the actors (Langer & Teng, 1983). Wang (2007) argues that dance drama is a comprehensive form of stage performance art that integrates four artistic elements: drama, music, dance, and stage design. Bruce (1965) also states that dance drama is a significant form of art that resonates with young audiences, offering accessibility and enjoyment, and it effectively conveys movement, rhythm, and phrasing through a dramatic expression. This art form encompasses not only the components of drama but also incorporates musical melodies and rhythms, alongside the design of stage aesthetics, with dance movements being the most prominent feature. This distinction gives dance drama a unique artistic characteristic.

Artistic value emerges as a domain where beliefs, ideologies, and histories intersect with artistic practices, events, and materiality, emphasizing both constructed and performative dimensions (Kompatsiaris & Chrysagis, 2020). The Dance dramas have the potential to shape characters by reflecting the unity of internal and external elements, as well as the surrounding context. Through profound aesthetic contemplation and performance, they attain significant artistic and aesthetic effects (Suriga, 2024). Dance drama is an art form that uses dance to convey narrative, with its artistic value manifested in both the narrative and the dance elements. Furthermore, the most crucial aspect of dance drama as an art form is its expression of the underlying culture. Culture encompasses a collection of symbolic tools and creations that define human activity and its significance, expressed through mediums such as music, literature, art, architecture, theater, cinema, and lifestyle (Abdumajidovna, 2021). In dance drama, the culture expressed internally is a significant element that plays a crucial role.

Kong Dexin is a renowned director of dance dramas in China, she has created artistic works such as the dance dramas 'Confucius,' 'Guan Gong,' and 'Zhaojun's Departure to the Frontier' (Zhang, 2020). In 2013, she received the Outstanding Young Director Award, highlighting her significant position in the field of dance drama (China National Opera and Dance Drama Theater Company, 2014). Her representative work, *Confucius*, is an outstanding achievement in Chinese dance drama. The production comprises six scenes and narrates the story of Confucius' travels across various states, delving into the complexities of society during China's Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (Kong, 2020). Through its captivating narrative, exquisite dance performances, and profound exploration of Confucian cultural themes, Kong Dexin's *Confucius* was awarded the Excellent Performance Award by the Ministry of Culture of China in October 2013 (China National Opera and Dance Drama Theatre Company, 2013). Kong Dexin's profound insights into Confucian culture and history provide the audience with a valuable opportunity to experience Confucian thought within the theatrical setting. Through meticulous attention to historical accuracy, she has designed magnificent stage scenes that create an immersive experience, transporting the audience to the era of Confucius. The dance drama *Confucius* not only presents a compelling narrative but also features exquisite dance performances that embody the essence of traditional Chinese dance and reflect Confucius' inner thoughts (Zhang, 2021).

The dance drama *Confucius* showcases Kong Dexin's talent for storytelling and her profound understanding of Confucian thought. The narrative follows Confucius and his disciples as they travel through various states, vividly depicting their hardships and complex life dynamics while revealing the tumultuous nature of ancient Chinese society. The production deeply explores Confucius' concepts of "ren" (benevolence), "li" (ritual propriety), and his educational philosophy, illustrating his envisioned future through the dramatic storyline (Su, 2019). Since its premiere, the dance drama *Confucius* has received widespread acclaim. Audiences have praised Kong Dexin's exceptional craftsmanship in dance drama creation, and this production has had a profound impact on the landscape of Chinese dance drama. Ludder (2017) praises the dance performances in the drama as exceptionally splendid, highlighting the high level of technical skill displayed. Additionally, the production utilized beautiful traditional Chinese music, and the stage lighting created an atmosphere that perfectly complemented the performances. Each segment of the dance showcased elegance, providing a profound aesthetic experience for viewers. Mandell (2017) provides a similar evaluation, noting that the visual effects of the stage were outstanding, effectively depicting scenes from ancient China, while the performers' dance exhibited remarkable elegance.

The dance drama *Confucius*, created by Kong Dexin in 2013, resonated strongly with audiences and received the Excellent Dance Drama Award from the Ministry of Culture of China for its outstanding performances. In the following years, dance drama *Confucius* was performed in countries such as Australia, Japan, the United States, and Russia, allowing audiences from diverse national and cultural backgrounds to appreciate its remarkable presentation and the cultural legacy of Confucius (Zhu, 2020). Thus, Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* rightfully stands as a masterpiece of Chinese dance drama. With her unparalleled directorial skills and profound understanding of Confucian thought, Kong has crafted an engaging narrative that offers valuable insights into ancient Chinese society and Confucian culture. The enduring impact of this artistic work, along with the acclaim and recognition it has received from audiences, attests to its significant contribution to Chinese dance drama. As audiences engage more deeply with Confucius, they will resonate with Confucian ideals. This paper provides a critical interpretation of Kong Dexin's *Confucius*, a true masterpiece of Chinese dance drama.

## 1.1 Research Objectives

This article primarily explores the artistic value of the Chinese dance drama *Confucius*, directed by Kong Dexin. The research objectives are threefold. The first objective is to analyze the narrative structure of the dance drama *Confucius*. The second objective is to examine the choreography of the dance drama *Confucius*. The third objective is to investigate the Confucius cultural themes represented in the dance drama *Confucius*. Through the above three objectives, this study aims to explore the artistic value of the dance drama *Confucius* directed by Kong Dexin.

## 2. Literature Review

This section provides a literature review that explores the significance of Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* as a masterpiece of Chinese dance drama. The dance drama *Confucius* features six stage scenes: Prelude 'Inquiry,' 'The Chaotic Time,' 'Out of Food,' 'Great Harmony,' 'Mourning for Benevolence,' and Epilogue 'Happiness.' Comprising six stage scenes, *Confucius* narrates the story of Confucius' travels across various states. This

research critically examines the narrative structure, choreography, and themes related to Confucian culture in Kong's work, emphasizing its contributions to Chinese dance drama.

In a dance drama, dance is a crucial means of presenting character images, conveying the attitudes expressed by the characters within the storyline, and showcasing their artistic representations (Wu & Hu, 2015). According to the theoretical analysis of dance dramas by Wu and Hu (2015), they argue that a dance drama is a performance based on dance, excelling in lyricism. Its core lies in expressing the character's inner thoughts and emotions through dance movements, thus embodying the character's image, which directly impacts the success of the work. Therefore, when analyzing and evaluating dance dramas, the expression of characters' ideological and cultural aspects serves as an important reference factor for assessing the work's quality. Wu and Hu (2015) emphasize that the integration of dance and drama shapes the characters' images within the dance drama, giving it a strong artistic vitality. Dance and drama are the two essential elements of a dance drama. Choreography in dance dramas entails the creation or arrangement of movement and the selection of dramatic structures to effectively organize and present the performance to the audience (Bhavana, 2022). And narrative refers to the way a story is structured and conveyed, encompassing both the plot and the experiential aspects that define and shape its core (De Lucas, 2024). Consequently, choreography and narrative are the two central factors in analyzing and evaluating the quality of a dance drama, and they constitute a key step in assessing its artistic merit. The quality of a dance drama is closely related to narrative, choreography, and the expression of characters' ideological and cultural content. Researching these three elements is vital for measuring the artistic value and significance of a dance drama.

Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* is widely regarded as one of the representatives of Chinese dance drama, showcasing the experiences of the ancient figure Confucius as he traveled across various states. Kong's masterful storytelling and profound exploration of Confucian thought elevate this work to the status of a masterpiece. This section aims to delve into the significance of the drama within the context of Chinese dance theater, examining its historical Confucian cultural background, narrative expression, and choreography. Understanding Confucius' history and culture is essential for fully grasping the impact of *Confucius*. Kong vividly portrays Confucius' journeys, highlighting the emotions and thoughts that defined his life.

The dance drama depicts Confucius' experiences traveling across various states, successfully shaping the character of 'Confucius.' The historical figure of Confucius is regarded as one of China's great statesmen, philosophers, and educators (Zhang, 2010). Throughout his life, he introduced numerous ideas, including 'ren' (benevolence) and 'li' (ritual propriety), which have significantly influenced the course of Chinese history and made substantial contributions to Chinese civilization and even to world civilization (Jia, 2007). *Confucius* explores a range of Confucian ideas that resonate with global audiences through a series of narratives. One prominent concept is 'ren' (benevolence), which is illustrated through Confucius' relationships with other characters in the drama. Kong Dexin depicts the tension between Confucius' ideals and the social realities of ancient China. Another significant theme is the portrayal of Confucius' vision of a harmonious world and his hopes for the future development of society (Zhang, 2021).

At the level of choreography, choreography, as a multidirectional process, challenges the conventional choreographer-dancer dynamic by redistributing control and enabling shared authorship among all performers, thereby fostering an open work (Walter, 2017).

The choreographer plays a crucial role in fostering participation and shared responsibility among the dramatic actors, emphasizing the process of exploring the body rather than solely focusing on the endless development of technical virtuosity (Jonīte, 2022). Kong Dexin makes a significant contribution to the remarkable performances of *Confucius* through her innovative dance designs. Her work in dance drama demonstrates a richness, as she deeply explores dance movements and incorporates various Chinese dance types and styles. Utilizing elements of classical Chinese dance in her choreography, she crafts movements that are well-structured and diverse in expression, providing audiences with an immersive experience (Zhang, 2020).

The dance drama *Confucius* has not only had a significant impact on Chinese dance drama but has also received acclaim from audiences in countries such as the United States and Russia in terms of its influence and recognition. Since its premiere in 2013, *Confucius* has toured the United States, Japan, Australia, Italy, Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, and other countries, allowing the world to gain a deeper understanding of the form and essence of Chinese dance drama. It has become a cultural bridge between China and the world and is internationally recognized as a masterpiece of Chinese dance drama (Zhu, 2020).

Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* is an outstanding achievement in Chinese dance drama. Through its meticulous portrayal of Confucius' travels across various states, the production has garnered unanimous acclaim from scholars and audiences alike for its exquisite narrative techniques and choreography. It has become an important window for understanding Confucian culture in China and provides audiences with a means to appreciate classical Chinese dance. *Confucius* highlights the transformative power of dance drama in promoting Confucian culture and articulating artistic beauty.

### 3. Research Methods

This paper aims to explore the artistic value of Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* and its contributions to Chinese dance drama. The methodology includes a thorough analysis of the recorded performances of *Confucius*, research on the relevant cultural background, interviews with director Kong Dexin, and critical interpretations of her work. Additionally, the study will reference pertinent secondary sources, such as academic articles and review essays, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the artistic value of *Confucius* and its standing within Chinese dance drama.

This study provides a brief overview of Kong Dexin's contributions to dance drama and the significance of her work *Confucius*. The objective of this research is to explore the artistic value of *Confucius* and its contributions to Chinese dance drama. Additionally, the study includes a comprehensive review of the existing literature regarding Kong Dexin and her dance drama *Confucius*. This research has consulted a substantial amount of secondary sources, such as academic articles and review essays, in addition to interviewing director Kong Dexin. During the face-to-face interview with Director Kong Dexin, the focus is placed on discussing the narrative, choreography, and the prominent Confucian cultural themes in the dance drama *Confucius*. The primary data collected is processed and refined to extract crucial information, enabling a more thorough analysis and exploration of the narrative structure, choreography, and Confucian cultural themes in the dance drama *Confucius*. The aim is to gain a thorough understanding of the topic.

This study encompasses the six stage scenes of the dance drama *Confucius*, examining selected content with a focus on the narrative techniques and choreography of the



production. Additionally, it analyzes specific scenes or themes that exemplify Kong Dexin's artistic talent, highlighting their relevance to Confucian culture. At the level of cultural background research, this study investigates the historical context of Confucius. It further explores how these factors influence the narrative of the dance drama and contribute to its significance within Chinese dance drama.

This research conducted a critical interpretation of the main stage scenes, considering various dance drama theories and methodologies to explore the deeper meanings and subtexts within *Confucius*. This analysis examines how these elements contribute to the overall artistic impact of the drama, showcasing how the director highlights Confucian thought. Additionally, we analyzed the choreography within the dance drama to explore its relationship with the narrative and discuss the significance of choreography in *Confucius*.

This study seeks to elucidate the important role that the dance drama *Confucius* plays in disseminating Confucian culture, further emphasizing its unique qualities and contributions while evaluating its position within Chinese dance drama. The findings highlight the artistic value of *Confucius* and its significant contributions to Chinese dance drama. This research reflects on Kong Dexin's influence as an outstanding director and discusses the lasting significance of her dance drama works.

#### 4. Findings

Kong Dexin's works, particularly her dance drama *Confucius*, have received widespread acclaim for their excellence and profound exploration of Confucius' life. This paper aims to analyze the significance and artistic value of Kong Dexin's *Confucius* within the realm of Chinese dance drama. The definition of artistic value can be in terms of evolving functions of central art forms (Stecker, 2019). In the artistic form of dance drama, its core evolving functions are narrative, choreography, and the expression of cultural ideas. By examining the narrative techniques, choreography, and cultural background of Confucius, the aim is to highlight its contributions as a masterpiece of Chinese dance drama.

##### 4.1. Narrative

The definition of narrative is 'as the representation of a real or fictitious event or series of events by language, and more specifically by written language' (Genette & Levinas, 1976, p. 1). Narrative helps individuals understand the emotional significance of events, facilitating familiarity with and coordination within the social world. It represents an appropriate emotional and motivational response to a particular aspect of the social world, and this coordination aids in the understanding of the social world (Prescott-Couch, 2024). Dance drama frequently utilizes a narrative structure that integrates movement and textual elements to form a unified story (Dickinson, 2014). The structural analysis of dance storytelling emphasizes the role of stage art and dancer performances in establishing temporal and spatial contexts, with dancers serving as first-person narrators through their physical expressions (Kim & Baek, 2012).

The dance drama *Confucius* features six stage scenes: Prelude 'Inquiry,' 'The Chaotic Time,' 'Out of Food,' 'Great Harmony,' 'Mourning for Benevolence,' and Epilogue 'Happiness.' Dance drama *Confucius* depicts the travels of Confucius during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, representing an exploration of his spiritual

world. Confucius traveled to various states to advise rulers in the hope that they would adopt his governance principles. In the storytelling on stage, Kong Dexin artistically processes Confucius' experiences, showcasing this narrative. In an interview, Kong (personal communication, June 19, 2024) indicates that the difficulties Confucius faced in different states were similar, as various rulers often rejected his advice. Based on this observation, she condensed Confucius' experiences into a narrative scene where he advises the rulers, illustrating the challenges he encountered in the courts. As shown in [Figure 1](#), the depiction presents Confucius attempting to persuade Monarch to implement his governance ideas, yet ultimately ending in failure.

Figure 1: Scene: Confucius is advising the Monarch in the court



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* ([Kong, 2022](#))

Due to the continuous conflicts in ancient society at that time, both the political and economic systems were in a state of chaos. The courtier at the court had long been scheming to usurp power, and Confucius' admonitions had a detrimental effect on his plans. Consequently, the Courtier began to rebel against the Monarch and seize his authority. Simultaneously, they initiated a campaign to hunt down Confucius and his disciples. As shown in [Figure 2](#), the Courtier was dissatisfied with Confucius' actions and attempted to arrest him; however, with the assistance of his disciples, Confucius narrowly escaped this peril.

To preserve his life, Confucius continued to flee. Along the way, he encountered common people who had become displaced due to the turmoil of war. Deeply saddened by their plight, Confucius sought to enlighten them, encouraging them to face life's difficulties with resilience. Simultaneously, he and his disciples faced the hardship of hunger. In this dire situation, Confucius played the guqin, immersing himself in the vision of his ideal society, the 'Great Unity.' Ultimately, the turbulence of the real world interrupted his reflections, and Confucius recognized the advancing age and chose to dedicate himself to educating his disciples. He hoped they would disseminate his ideas to fulfill his aspirations. As shown in [Figure 3](#), after traveling through various states, Confucius devoted himself to teaching his disciples, achieving significant success.

Figure 2: Scene: The Courtier wants to arrest Confucius



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

Figure 3: Scene: The Confucius and his disciples



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

On stage, Kong deftly choreographs the events that unfold during Confucius' travels, emphasizing the social challenges he faced and expressing his hopes for societal development. Through the narrative and complex character relationships, Confucius serves as a window into understanding Confucius' life, allowing audiences to explore this crucial period in his journey.

#### 4.2. Choreography

In dance studies, the definition of choreography is to organize movement in space and time (Monni, 2024). Choreography in dance dramas entails the creation or arrangement



of movement and the selection of dramatic structures to effectively organize and present the performance to the audience (Bhavana, 2022). Choreography plays a crucial role in dance by conveying emotions and moods through gestures that cannot be articulated through words (Zhang, 2022). Choreography reveals the organizational nature of people's perceptual habits, emphasizing their control over reality and the critical stance that guides these practices (Noland, 2021). Choreography integrates the complex relationships between movement, perception, social structures, and philosophical ideas, and is closely connected to perception, co-creation, historical culture, and social influences. Analyzing the choreography of dance works from different performance forms allows for an understanding of the underlying intentions embedded in the dance performances, providing a basis for an objective analysis of the choreography in dance art works.

In the stage performance of the dance drama, the numerous character portrayals created by Kong Dexin are regarded as one of the primary strengths of *Confucius*, particularly reflected in the dance performances of the characters. Kong Dexin demonstrates considerable attention to detail in the choreography, incorporating an understanding of the personalities of the stage characters. In conveying the narrative, she meticulously choreographs unique bodily movements for each character, using these movements to express the storyline and thereby shaping distinct personality traits. In the choreography for the protagonist, Confucius, the dancer's movements are expansive, showcasing exceptional technical skill. Additionally, the performance cleverly integrates dance props; for example, as illustrated in Figure 4, Confucius performs a sword dance, utilizing an ancient Chinese bronze sword as a prop, which highlights the dancer's remarkable artistic presentation.

Figure 4: Scene: The sword dance of Confucius



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

Similarly, as shown in the Figure 5, the drum, as a percussion instrument, is also used as a prop in dance performances, demonstrating China's rich artistic history and showcasing the dancers' exceptional performing skills. As shown in Figure 6, the dance performance of the concubine on stage features graceful movements and elegant poses,

reflecting the comfort of the ancient aristocracy and the elegance of women, as well as the nobility of court life.

Figure 5: Scene: The Drum dance of performers



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

Figure 6: Scene: The concubine is dancing in the court



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

The key elements of choreography include the structure, and movement of dance, which are essential for creating a dance work. In choreography, Director Kong Dexin (personal communication, June 19, 2024) emphasizes that the creation of artistic works should be

free, with no fixed approach in the design of physical movements. The focus is instead placed on the performance aspect, ensuring that the state conveyed through the dancers' physical expressions feels comfortable to the audience. In the choreography of the female ensemble, the dancers' movements are synchronized and fluid, enhancing the storytelling of the dance drama. [Figure 7](#) illustrates the scene of ancient Chinese women gathering wild vegetables, expressing a sense of contentment and prosperity in the lives of the people, which aligns with Confucius' aspirations for social development. In the choreography of the male ensemble, the dancers exhibit larger movements and a powerful presence. As depicted in [Figure 8](#), the scene showcases Confucius discussing knowledge with scholars, highlighting his erudition and the collective pursuit of knowledge and progress.

Figure 7: Scene: The Chinese women gather the wild vegetables



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* ([Kong, 2022](#))

Figure 8: Scene: The Confucius and the scholars



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* ([Kong, 2022](#))



In summary, through elegant bodily movements and exceptional Chinese dance techniques, the audience can experience the characters' joy, sorrow, and anger. The characters in the dance drama *Confucius* continuously evolve within the narrative, and their interactions with the character of Confucius serve to highlight the expression of his philosophical ideas.

#### 4.3. 'Confucius' Culture Theme

Regarding the theme of Confucian culture, Kong Dexin is able to integrate Confucian ideas into the dramatic narrative, which is a unique manifestation of her artistic mastery in the dance drama. Kong Dexin (personal communication, June 19, 2024) also notes that the dance drama *Confucius* synthesizes her reflections on Confucian thoughts and her understanding of traditional Chinese culture. The key principles of Confucian culture are 'ren' (benevolence), 'yi' (justice), 'li' (rite) and 'yue' (music) (Yushun, 2016). But this performance mainly explores Confucius' concepts of 'ren' (benevolence), 'li' (ritual propriety), and educational philosophy, drawing on the relationships between characters to illustrate these cultural themes. As shown in Figure 9, in the context of continuous social strife in ancient China, the common people lived in suffering and struggle. Witnessing these scenes, Confucius felt immense sorrow and subsequently encouraged the populace to maintain hope for life, expressing his love for the people. The concept of 'ren' is thus embodied in the relationship between Confucius and the common people.

Figure 9: Scene: The Confucius show love for the common people



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

Similarly, in the portrayal of Confucius' concept of 'li' (ritual propriety), the relationships between characters are also drawn upon. As illustrated in Figure 10, Confucius encounters a favored concubine during his advisory efforts. As a member of the court, the concubine belongs to the aristocratic class of society, and when Confucius shows his respects to her, he performs a formal gesture, demonstrating the class etiquette that reflects his understanding of propriety. This interaction exemplifies Confucius' adherence to the principle of 'li.'



Figure 10: Scene: The Confucius show the ritual propriety to Concubine



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

Confucius made significant contributions to education, advocating for the principle of 'you jiao wu lei' (education without distinction), asserting that everyone has the right to education and breaking the monopoly of the aristocracy over educational opportunities. As illustrated in Figure 11, Confucius leads many disciples in the pursuit of knowledge, fostering a harmonious learning atmosphere that highlights his role as a teacher and embodies his educational philosophy.

Figure 11: Scene: The Confucius is teaching his disciples



Source: From the video of dance drama *Confucius* (Kong, 2022)

In summary, this dance drama delves into Confucius' experiences traveling through various states, showcasing the complex relationships between Confucius and other characters. Through these relationships, the audience gains a profound understanding of the essence of Confucian culture. These themes enhance the appeal of the dance drama as a significant work of Chinese dance dramas.

Kong Dexin demonstrates exceptional skill in the narrative of the dance drama *Confucius*, showcasing her outstanding directorial talent. Her work is both lyrical and moving, incorporating numerous elements of classical Chinese dance, which transports the audience to the era of Confucius and immerses them in his emotions and thoughts. The author skillfully designs the dance drama, creating a rich and visually stunning stage performance. In *Confucius*, Kong Dexin enhances the depth and complexity of the story's expression, reflecting Confucius' cultural philosophy and allowing the audience to experience the allure of Confucian culture through the performance.

## 5. Discussion

This study deeply explores the significance and appeal of Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* within the realm of Chinese dance drama. It examines the acclaim and perspectives of critics, supporting the assertion that *Confucius* is indeed a masterpiece of Chinese dance drama. The drama has garnered recognition for its captivating narrative, exquisite choreography, and profound expression of Confucian culture. Kong Dexin's ability to integrate Confucius' experiences during his travels with traditional Chinese dance elevates this work to a position of substantial significance within the field of dance drama. By exploring the complexities of Confucius' humanity through his journeys, she encourages audiences to reflect on and appreciate the allure of Confucian culture presented in the performance. Furthermore, *Confucius* has transcended China and is being performed in countries such as the United States, Russia, and Australia, allowing a broader international audience to witness this remarkable presentation. Therefore, the dance drama *Confucius* is regarded as a masterpiece not only within the Chinese dance drama community but also on the global stage.

Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* has left an indelible mark on the field of Chinese dance drama. It is not only praised for depicting Confucius' journeys across various states but has also transcended national cultural boundaries, becoming an essential work within the realm of dance theater. [Qin \(2016\)](#) states, "*Since its premiere in Beijing in 2013, the 90-minute show has become something of a cultural calling card for China as the country seeks to bolster its efforts to project soft power abroad*" (p. 1). This aptly reflects the cultural influence and artistic value that Kong Dexin's *Confucius* embodies.

The dance drama *Confucius* is renowned for its complex narrative structure and vivid characterization of Confucius. Critics have expressed admiration for Kong Dexin's ability to create a rich and colorful stage narrative. As [Zhang \(2021\)](#) notes, "*The six segments (dance drama Confucius) provide a detailed and concentrated summary of this historical period of Confucius' travels. Throughout the development of this history, we can observe the causes, processes, and outcomes of events, with numerous climaxes, well-developed character portrayals, and distinctly crafted conflicts*" (p. 35). Thus, the dance drama *Confucius* serves as a true testament to Kong Dexin's capability in creating narrative complexity and shaping character portrayals.

The exquisite choreography of the dance drama *Confucius* resonates with audiences from various countries. Kong Dexin's exploration of solo, duet, and ensemble dance forms has contributed significantly to the drama's status as a masterpiece of Chinese dance drama. As Yang (2020) states, "*The rich body language of dance and the meanings of different musical pieces present the historical sage Confucius through uniquely innovative artistic methods*" (p. 136).

The dance drama *Confucius* has made significant contributions to the promotion of Confucian culture. Confucian culture has long held an important place in traditional Chinese culture, and through its narrative and the relationships between Confucius and various characters, the drama expresses Confucius' concepts of 'ren' (benevolence), 'li' (ritual propriety), and educational philosophy. The in-depth exploration of Confucius' culture further solidifies the drama's position within Chinese dance drama. As Yu (2016) states, "*In the multi-layered and diverse languages that dance seeks to present, and under the cultural demands for innovation that dance must face, it (Confucius) strives to excel in its craftsmanship and beauty. This is a significant new work in the history of contemporary dance drama*" (p. 221). This clearly indicates that Kong Dexin has made a substantial contribution to the field of Chinese dance drama.

Furthermore, the performances of *Confucius* in various countries allow more audiences to appreciate the captivating dance performances and the allure of Confucian culture. These international tours have generated a greater response globally. As Tao (2019) states, "*The dance drama Confucius not only provides Chinese audiences with cultural and artistic excellence but also aims to present outstanding Chinese culture in a more accessible artistic form to the world, effectively telling China's story*" (p. 135).

Kong Dexin's *Confucius* is a masterpiece of Chinese dance drama. Its exploration of Confucius' experiences during his travels showcases the director's exceptional narrative skills, while the brilliant dance performances allow audiences to appreciate the charm of traditional Chinese dance. Most importantly, the presentation of Confucian thought elevates the quality of the work, making it a true masterpiece. This production has received acclaim from critics and recognition from international audiences. Kong Dexin's unique perspective in deeply exploring the cultural allure of Confucius has established *Confucius* as a significant work, continuing to enrich the landscape of Chinese dance drama.

## 6. Conclusion

Kong Dexin's dance drama *Confucius* is an indisputable masterpiece of Chinese dance theater, captivating countless audiences with its exquisite narrative techniques, choreography, and exemplary representation of Confucian culture. In the narrative of the dance drama, Kong Dexin vividly unfolds the story based on Confucius' experiences in ancient Chinese history, depicting his travels across various states during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. Through the relationships Confucius forms with various characters, the work showcases his attitudes and aspirations for a better future. This production deeply reveals Confucius' inner world and highlights his personal charisma. The enduring influence of Confucius lies in his ability to transcend cultural boundaries, resonating with audiences worldwide. In the choreography, Kong Dexin draws on traditional Chinese classical dance and incorporates relevant dance props, which enhances the technical skill of the performance. This allows the audience to immerse themselves in the era of Confucius' life, leaving a lasting impression through

vivid performances and emotional expression. Furthermore, Kong Dexin's exploration of themes such as 'ren' (benevolence), 'li' (ritual propriety), and educational philosophy offers profound insights for the audience. The subtle relationships between Confucius and other characters vividly recreate his cultural ideals and ultimately convey his inner spiritual world. Kong Dexin's narrative skill perfectly integrates Confucius' experiences with the art of dance theater, creating a culturally rich work of art that invites the audience to delve deeper into Confucian culture. In conclusion, Kong Dexin's dance drama Confucius represents an outstanding achievement in Chinese dance theater, showcasing her exceptional narrative ability and choreography. The exploration of various themes related to Confucius' thoughts makes it a masterpiece that will continue to engage generations of audiences in the exploration of Confucian culture.

### **Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate**

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA. All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this study

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