

UDC 316.7

DOI: 10.34670/AR.2022.97.82.035

A preliminary study on the activities of the Children's Troupe during the Second Sino-Japanese War

Gong Yonghong

Master,
Associate Professor at the College of Music,
Chongqing Normal University,
401331, 12 Tianchen rd, Chongqing, People's Republic of China;
e-mail: 1550121913@qq.com

The project source: phased results of the Chongqing Social Science Planning Project, "Research on the Southern Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Cultural Work—Centering on Music in the Rear Area" (Project No. 2020BYKZ04).

Abstract

The Children's Troupe is a children's anti-Japanese propaganda group that was born and grew up with the support of the Communist Party during the Chinese Anti-Japanese War. The purpose of this study is to reveal the glorious combat history and far-reaching significance of the Children's Troupe. The novelty of the article is that it comprehensively traces the glorious history and battle footprints of the Children's Troupe, especially sorts out the foreign exchanges of the Children's Troupe. The article takes the growth and activity track of the Children's Troupe as a clue, that is, it was founded in the smoke of gunpowder in Shanghai, withdrew with the fall of Shanghai, grew up in the war in Wuhan, and was forced to move with the fall of Wuhan. Finally, it moved to Chongqing, China's wartime capital, where it actively carried out national salvation music activities and anti-Japanese propaganda until the end of its journey. The Children's Troupe also supported the front line against Japan through fund-raising and other ways, and actively sought sympathy and support from the world's anti-fascist forces, making positive contributions to the victory of the War of Resistance. As a literary and artistic group in a special period, the Children's Troupe also promoted the development of children's dramas.

For citation

Gong Y. (2022) A preliminary study on the activities of the Children's Troupe during the Second Sino-Japanese War. *Kul'tura i tsivilizatsiya* [Culture and Civilization], 12 (5A), pp. 447-459. DOI: 10.34670/AR.2022.97.82.035

Keywords

Children's Troupe, children's drama, Sino-Japanese War, anti-Japanese propaganda, international exchange.

Introduction

The Children's Troupe is a children's anti-Japanese propaganda group that was born and grew up with the support of the Communist Party during the Anti-Japanese War. From its establishment on September 3, 1937 to its dissolution in September 1942, the Children's Troupe has completed its extraordinary five years of fighting. In the past five years, the Children's Troupe has traveled over 57 counties and cities in Jiangsu, Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Guangxi, Hunan, Guizhou, Sichuan and other provinces. It has traveled more than 8,000 km and performed more than 500 times. A total of 450,000 people from all walks of life have seen the performances of the Children's Troupe, making unique contributions to the national war of resistance against Japan and having a far-reaching impact.

Shanghai to Wuhan

In 1937, before the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, Wu Xinjia (a member of the Communist Party of China, aged 19 at that time), a teacher of Shanghai Linqing Junior High School, organized some primary and secondary students in this school and nearby schools, set up a children's singing team, rehearsed songs frequently, and participated in the anti-Japanese and national salvation activities. On August 13, the Japanese army attacked Shanghai. All day long, the students became homeless and schoolless. They were forced to take refuge in the Empaia Theatre refugee shelter in the west of Shanghai. In the shelter, the children also spontaneously organized to teach the children in need to sing and read, and went to the hospital to comfort the wounded. What they did aroused the concern of the underground party organizations in Shanghai. In late August, the underground party organization of the Shanghai National Disaster Education Society decided to form a children's propaganda group based on the students of the former Yangshupu Linqing School to absorb some children in need. On September 3, sponsored by Wu Xinjia, Xu Liming, Fu Chengmo, Xi Lide, Guo Baoxiang and others, 22 children from the singing team of Linqing School set up the first anti-Japanese and national salvation group for children in Shanghai, the Children's Troupe, in the shelter of Empaia Theatre in French Concession. The oldest member was only 16 years old, and the youngest was only 8 years old. At the founding meeting of the Children's Troupe, the Declaration of the Children's Troupe, the Convention on the Children's Troupe, and the Group Song of the Children's Troupe (Figure 1) were adopted [The Children's Troupe Featurette..., 1938].

The members of the Children's Troupe have no foundation in singing and acting, and there are many difficulties in rehearsal and performance. Shanghai Cultural Salvation Association sent people to the Children's Troupe for business guidance. Children cherished opportunities and studied hard. Under the guidance of the association, the Children's Troupe rehearsed the street drama *Put Down Your Whip*, the children's dramas *Rendan Beard* and *Catch the Traitor*, and rehearsed songs and sang *Who Says We Are Young*, *New Lotus Fall*, *March of the Volunteers*, *March of Salvation*, *New Phoenix Song*, *Put Down Your Whip* and so on. Since then, Shanghai's streets, alleys, shelters, hospitals, factories, schools, etc., have been full of the Children's Troupe. The children sang, acted, gave speeches, and served refugees and wounded soldiers, and carried out anti-Japanese and life-saving propaganda among the general public. In October 1937, the Children's Troupe moved to Shanghai Masi South Road First International Refugee Shelter, where it organized 17 children's groups and established the Shanghai Anti-Japanese Children's Group Weekly Symposium [Fu, 2018].

On November 12, 1937, when Shanghai was occupied, the Children's Troupe still insisted on promoting and mobilizing the masses to defend Shanghai. In order to prevent the children from being

harmful by the enemy, the members of the Children's Troupe left Shanghai in five batches from November 18 to 23 under the careful arrangement of the Shanghai Cultural Salvation Association and the underground party organization of the Communist Party of China to go to Nantong Tiansheng Port on the north bank of the Yangtze River. So far, the Children's Troupe, which has just been established for two months, has performed more than 40 times. In the past two months, they rehearsed five plays, one two-man act, one opera, two plays, and created three plays. They learned dozens of new songs after the *August 13*, and took on the singing work of more than 600 children in several aspects [Ding, 2021, 58-59]. They often broadcast, posted slogans and performed to raise money. They also invited 17 children's groups and organized the Shanghai Children's Week Symposium to discuss issues and assign work. Parting is very difficult and painful for children and parents. Qiang Ming, a member of the League, later recalled that there was chaos everywhere, and parents tried everything to prevent their children from leaving Shanghai. The children fought against each other and turned their sorrow of parting and anger of losing their homeland into strength. They held their last radio performance and fund-raising activity on the International Radio. The children sang, "We will contribute our full strength to the liberation of the Chinese nation... We are leaving Shanghai and our relatives, but we are a group of poor children. Please give us some help!" People from all walks of life were moved to sing: "Workers, peasants and soldiers, learning from business, come together to save the nation..." The parents who didn't let their children leave sent their children back to the troupe with tears in their eyes [Qiang, 1989, 53-56].

Bb 調 2/4 孩子劇團團歌 新稼詞 映艇曲

活潑輕快

>> 1 1 0 | 1 1.7 | 1 . 5 | 1 2 | 3 0 | 3 3 0 |
 嚶嚶 看我們 一羣 小光 棍 嚶嚶

3 3 . 1 | 2 . 1 | 2 3 | 2 0 | 5 5 | 1.7 6 | 5 4 |
 看我們 一羣 小主人 我們 生長在 苦難

3 0 | 2 2 | 2 3 4 3 | 2 5 | 1 — | 1.5 3 5 | 6 5 0 |
 裏 我們 生長在 砲火 下 不怕沒有 先生

1.5 2 1 | 3 2 0 | 2 2 | 3 2 1 2 | 5, 6 | 7 6 7, 2 | 1 — | 1 0 |
 不去留戀 爹娘 憑着 我們自己 努力 學習 努力 幹

5.5 5 | 6 5 5 | 1.1 1 | 2.1 1 | 5 5 | 1 1.7 | 1 2 | 3 — |
 孩子們 站起來 孩子們 站起來 在這 抗戰的, 大時代

2 2 2 | 3.1 1 | 2 3 | 1 — : |
 創造出 我們的 新世界

Figure 1 - The Group Song of the Children's Troupe

The Children's Troupe, after withdrawing from Shanghai in batches, converged in Nantong. They stayed in Nantong County for 4 days and performed 9 times. On November 28, 111 divisions of the local garrison (Northeast Army) invited them to perform for the officers and soldiers in Nantong Grand Theater, which excited the officers and soldiers. After watching the performance, the teacher instructed the soldiers to revenge for their brothers and sisters and fight to the end. On December 2, the Children's Troupe left Nantong. At this time, the Japanese army should have attacked Jiangyin on the south bank of the Yangtze River, and the Yangtze River has been blocked. The Children's Troupe arrived in Yangzhou on December 3 by taking a two wooden boat, going west through the South Canal, passing through Baipu, Rugao, Taixian, Hai'an, Taizhou and Shaobo. On the wooden boat, they held a three-

month commemorative meeting for the founding of the regiment, and comprehensively summarized the work in Shanghai.

Faced with the threat of war and cold, the ships were also requisitioned by the anti-Japanese forces. The Children's Troupe had to throw away some performance props, valuable books and even cold blankets, and walked forward. They had to rush to Wuhan, the command center of the anti-Japanese war. Due to the canal blocking the westward journey with or without ships, according to the current situation, the troupe negotiated to change the route to the north, from Yangzhou to Huaiyin, Xuzhou, Zhengzhou, and then to Wuhan. On December 11, the children started their journey northward by hiking lightly. The children suffered from hunger and cold along the way, but they had no complaints and regrets. They helped each other when meeting refugees on the road; when meeting soldiers heading for the front, they lined up to sing national salvation songs to boost morale.

On December 30, 1937, the Children's Troupe arrived in Zhengzhou. Since January 4, 1938, the Children's Troupe has performed in Longhai Auditorium and other places, including *Catch the Traitor*, *Rendan Beard* and *Help Our Guerrillas*. The media spoke highly of the opening performance of the Children's Troupe: "The rhythm is so neat, the voice is so vivid, and the lyrics are so solemn and stirring, which makes people cry."¹ The Wartime Education reported that "the public performance in Zhengzhou attracted 4000 viewers, which means that more than 20 young soldiers made meaningful propaganda to 4000 people."² On January 10, 1938, the Children's Troupe arrived in Wuhan.

Wuhan to Guiyang

After the fall of Shanghai, Wuhan became the wartime capital of China and the center of the Anti-Japanese War. On January 30, the Office of the Eighth Route Army of the Communist Party of China in Wuhan received the Children's Troupe and held a special welcome meeting. Zhou Enlai, Ye Jianying, Wang Ming, Bogu, Ye Ting, Deng Yingchao and other leaders of the Eighth Route Army Office of the Communist Party of China warmly received the children and encouraged the Children's Troupe. With the efforts of Zhou Enlai and Guo Moruo, the Children's Troupe joined the Political Department of the Military and Political Commission of the National Government in March 1938³ and was directly managed by the Third Office. At that time, Xian Xinghai, who was in charge of music in three halls and six offices, composed the chorus *On the Taihang Mountain*, and personally tutored and rehearsed with the Smart Children's Troupe. The Third Hall arranges teachers to teach children about drama, music, current affairs and cultural lessons, and arranges special personnel to take charge of the life of the Children's Troupe. During this period, the Children's Troupe participated in the activities organized by Santing to commemorate the first anniversary of the War of Resistance against Japan. The Children's Troupe invited Xin'an Travel Group, the Anti-Japanese Children's Reading Club, the 7th of July Children's Theater Group and other anti-Japanese children's groups to set up the Wuhan Children's Weekly Symposium and participate in the Wuhan Children's Group's Joint Open Air

¹ *Daily in the array* (1938), 8th Jan.

² *Wartime education* (1938), Vol. II.

³ In 1938, during the second Kuomintang Communist cooperation, the Political Department of the Military and Political Commission of the National Government was established in Wuhan. At the beginning of the establishment of the Political Department, Zhou Enlai (deputy director of the Political Department), as well as progressive people under the leadership of the Communist Party, participated in the establishment of the Political Department. The Department consists of Subdepartments I, II, III, General Affairs Office, Secretariat and Design Committee. The Third Office is composed of progressive people under the leadership of the Communist Party. The head of the subdepartment is Guo Moruo.

Thousand People Cantata Singing Conference. On January 26, Feng Yuxiang, Vice Chairman of the Military Commission of the National Government, and others received the Children's Troupe and gave them care and help.

On March 13, 1938, the Anti-Japanese War Daily published the Wuhan Anti-Aggression Publicity Week Children's Day Conference—A Letter to the Children by the Children's Troupe. On April 4, the Children's Troupe held a performance to celebrate Children's Day⁴. During their stay in Wuhan, the Children's Troupe often went to the refugee shelters for publicity, including the streets, teahouses, ferries, and rural areas. Everywhere, no matter how noisy, as long as the children sing a few songs first, the scene will soon calm down, and then the children will start to make speeches and propaganda.

The performance of the Children's Troupe in Wuhan was warmly welcomed. According to the Xinhua Daily, from July 31 to August 2, 1938, the Children's Troupe was staged in the open air for three days at the Ruanjia Terrace in Zongguan, Qiaokou. The audience was more than 2000 every day... On August 1, there was an additional performance in the morning and evening, and all the workers and staff were very excited. In addition to the towels given to the members temporarily, they shouted "Long live the Children's Troupe" [Li, Hu, Li, 1985].

In August 1938, the Japanese aggressors attacked Wuhan. The Children's Troupe moved to Hengshan County, Hunan Province on August 15. The children insisted on studying for three hours every morning, and in the afternoon, they went to the wounded hospital to give a performance of condolence, and went to the streets to publicize. During their stay in Hengshan, the Children's Troupe published children's weekly magazines in the Popular Daily and the Qingbai Daily respectively, while teaching the faculty members singing and filming. In late October, the Children's Troupe arrived in Changsha along the Xiangjiang River by wooden boat and stayed in the Primary School Attached to Hunan First Normal School to help rescue and transport the injured soldiers, held a performance of condolence for the injured soldiers, and wrote family letters on behalf of the soldiers. In order to support the performance and publicity work of the Children's Troupe along the way, the Political Department sent a letter to the Changsha Garrison Headquarters, "In order to calm people's minds and uphold the belief that the whole country will win the long-term war of resistance, I have decided to send all teams directly under this department—anti-enemy propaganda pairs, anti-enemy drama teams, and the Children's Troupe to various intersections and tea houses and restaurants on the outskirts of the city on the 27th of this month to give brief speeches and convey the government's policy..."⁵ As the Japanese army was about to occupy Yueyang and Changsha, Zhou Enlai and Guo Moruo urgently summoned Wu Xinjia, the head of the Children's Troupe on November 9, and instructed the troupe to immediately move to Guilin. Late that night, the Children's Troupe began to move. On November 15, the Children's Troupe arrived in Guilin, Guangxi, when Japanese planes bombed. The children gave a publicity performance in the cave. In a bombing by enemy planes, the three regiments caught a traitor with joint efforts. On November 16, the Children's Troupe had a discussion with some school representatives; from November 18 to 20, the Children's Troupe performed three consecutive performances in the provincial government auditorium. On December 12, the Children's Troupe and the Southwest Tour Group jointly launched and organized various children's groups and some primary schools to hold the

⁴ In 1931, the National Government adopted the proposal of the Chinese Kindness and Kindness Association and designated April 4 as the Children's Day. In 1949, the Government Affairs Council of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China issued a general order to abolish the old Children's Day and make June 1 Chinese Children's Day, consistent with International Children's Day.

⁵ The Third Office of the Ministry of Political Affairs GHZSCZ No. 1067.

Guilin Children's Anti-Bombing Singing Conference and the torch parade in the public stadium. More than 3000 children participated in the activities. On December 15, the founding meeting of Tao Xingzhi Life Education Society was held. Wu Xinjia of the Children's Troupe, was elected as the executive director, and 11 other members became members of the Life Education Society. On December 19, the Children's Troupe, the Second Drama Group and Xin'an Travel Group were invited to perform such plays as *Escape from Death* and *Defeat Them Back to Home*. On December 27, all walks of life in Guangxi held a preparatory meeting for New Year's Day, and the Children's Troupe performed *Children's Blood*. In addition, the Children's Troupe, together with other literary and artistic groups and schools, also held open-air public performances. On December 28, the Children's Troupe left Guilin and arrived in Guiyang on December 31. The Children's Troupe immediately rehearsed in Guiyang, performed in the streets, squares and theaters for many times, and broadcast on the radio. On January 6, 1939, the Children's Troupe left Guiyang for Chongqing, the wartime capital.

The fight in Chongqing

On January 8, 1939, the Children's Troupe arrived in Chongqing. Subsequently, the Children's Troupe was warmly welcomed by some children's literary and art publicity teams, primary schools, media and newspapers in Chongqing. From January 25 to 27, the Children's Troupe performed for the first time in Chongqing, and Xinhua Daily wrote a special article to support and encourage it⁶. On January 28, the Children's Troupe commemorated the seventh anniversary of the 28th of January; two open letters were published to children and frontline lecturers across the country⁷. On February 5, the Children's Troupe and the Chinese Film Studio Choir jointly held an open-air concert in Central Park. From February 19 to 20 (the first and second days of the first lunar month), the Children's Troupe continuously participated in the Chongqing Children's Group Joint Singing Conference, with 500 children participating and more than 5000 audience each. During this period, the League members were divided into two groups, and went to Geleshan No. 1 Nursing Home and Luzhou No. 7 Children's Nursing Home to help the children in need rehearse plays, teach songs and carry out anti-Japanese propaganda. From the end of March to the end of August, the Children's Troupe, centered in Chongqing, was divided into two teams to carry out anti-Japanese propaganda work along the Yangtze River, Jialing River and Minjiang River counties.

A team of 24 people, led by Lin Litian, the team leader, successively went to Changshou to perform and publicize in Fuling, Fengdu, Zhongxian, Wanxian and Yunyang. Everywhere they went, the children helped the wounded soldiers write letters, sew clothes, cut nails, etc., and wrote letters of condolence to the soldiers at the front. They were very popular. For example, in Longevity, the Children's Theater mobilized pupils to donate more than 30 yuan, wrote more than 800 letters of comfort, participated in the Children's War of Resistance Speech Contest, and won the first place in Group A, B and C, and participated in the concert of *Escape from Death* and *Catch the Traitor*. In Fuling, they convened various schools to hold symposiums to raise money for children's shelters, held drama performances to raise more than 100 yuan for children's shelters, and participated in the Fuling Children's Open air Singing Conference. The children visited 121 rear hospitals and the eighth rest center to pay tribute to the wounded soldiers and perform 8 public performances. In Fengdu, they participated in the Children's Anti Enemy Speech Contest, the Children's Open Air Singing Conference and the Torch Parade, went to the 120 rear hospital to pay tribute to the wounded soldiers, and held a

⁶ Xinhua daily (1939), 25th Jan.

⁷ Xinhua daily (1939), 25th Jan.

public performance with schools and troupes. In Zhongxian County, the Children's Troupe participated in the Children's Singing Conference to sing more than 30 songs about the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, and expressed condolences to the wounded soldiers in 102 rear hospitals. In Wanxian County, they performed condolence performances in 131 rear hospitals, the 10th Army Hospital and the 4th Retreat Home, and taught people to sing songs about the war of resistance in Wanzhou Daily, East Sichuan Daily and East Sichuan Evening News. In Yunyang, they helped the Children's Propaganda Group to shoot plays, practice singing and learn dancing. The children went to the 21st Army Hospital to pay tribute to the wounded soldiers, performed a public performance with the Children's Propaganda Group to comfort the soldiers, participated in a public performance to commemorate the second anniversary of the National War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression on July 7 for three days, and went to the Sixth Supplementary Group to teach officers and soldiers to sing songs of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression.

Under the leadership of Wu Xinjia, the second team, 28 people, successively carried out work in Luxian County, Hejiang, Jiangjin and Jiang'an. Every time they go to a county, they will participate in drama performances, singing activities, organizing donations, and comforting the wounded. Among them, the activity in Jiangjin lasted the longest (from May 28 to July 23), and the work carried out was very representative. Jiangjin is 60 miles away from the main city of Chongqing, and there are many Jiangjin students studying in Chongqing. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance against Japan, Qi Luyu (1902-1974), a Communist Party member from Jiangjin, launched the Chongqing National Salvation Association, in which Zhao Mingyi (1907-1999), one of the pioneers of the Chinese drama movement, participated. In the activities of the Anti-Japanese Cultural United Front of the Chongqing National Salvation Association, drama became a powerful tool for the propaganda of the national salvation movement. In April 1938, the national salvation propaganda team of the students in Chongqing was reorganized into the Youth Troupe, which became an earlier and eye-catching performance team of the student national salvation movement in Chongqing. At the beginning of 1939, the Children's Troupe came to Chongqing from Wuhan. It was said that there was the Children's Troupe in Chongqing, so they went to see and exchange ideas. After seven times of communication, the Children's Troupe and the youth troupe developed a deep friendship. In October 1939, the Children's Troupe came to Jiangjin again.

In August, the two teams returned to Chongqing for rest. On January 9, 1940, the Children's Troupe was again divided into two teams, which went to northern and western Sichuan for anti-Japanese propaganda, and the other part stayed in Chongqing headquarters for propaganda. It was not until the end of August that the first and second teams completed their tour and returned to Chongqing. The children left behind in the headquarters founded the monthly Anti-Japanese Children magazine, which has been published for seven issues. Later, due to financial difficulties, they merged with the Monthly Children magazine to publish six issues.

In response to the call of the aircrafts-donation campaign, in November 1940, the Children's Troupe and more than 20 units in Chongqing, including children's groups and primary schools, studied and discussed the establishment of the children's donation preparatory meeting, and decided to launch 100 donation planes through performances, charity sales and other ways. Children's groups in Hunan, Guilin, Zhejiang and other places responded one after another. Since then, the Children's Troupe has been making every effort to fly the China Children as soon as possible. For example, the Xinhua Daily published a performance advertisement, "the Children's Troupe, raise children aircraft and perform regularly in Chongqing", saying that "the Children's Troupe of the Ministry of Political Affairs, which raises money for the aircrafts-donation campaign of the Children, is scheduled to perform six acts of anti-Japanese children's drama *Paradise March* at Cathay Pacific Grand Theatre from 27 to 29 this month..."



Figure 2. The Children's Troupe performing the six-act children's drama *March to Paradise* at the Cathay Pacific Grand Theatre in Chongqing in March 19418

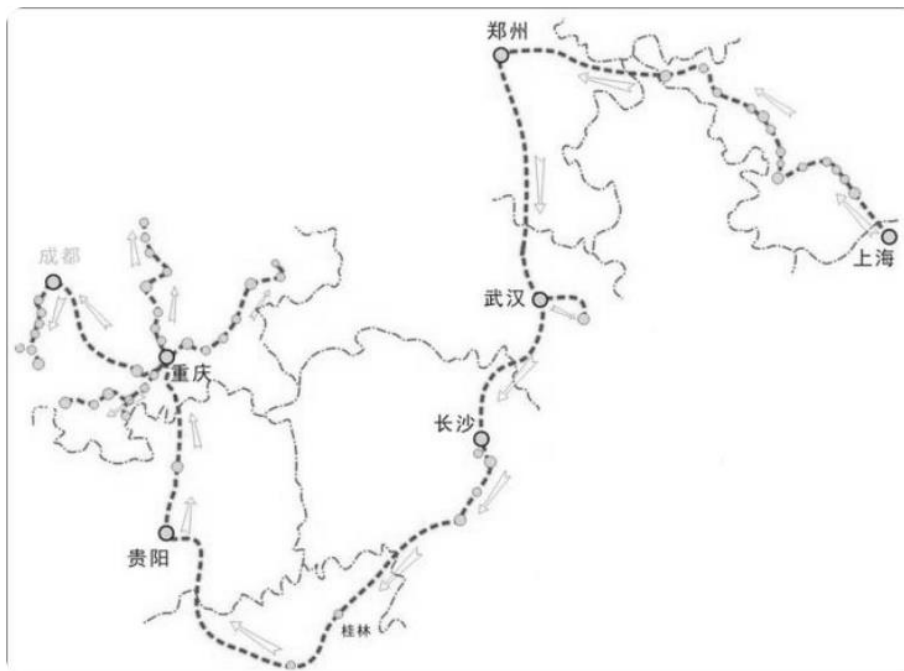


Figure 3. The Children's Troupe activity route map (September 1937 to September 1942)

International exchange

The Children's Troupe focused on foreign exchanges and contacts. Through foreign exchanges, it publicized the determination of the Chinese people to resist Japan and save the nation from extinction, and strived for sympathy and support from the world's anti-fascist forces.

Since 1938, the Children's Troupe has opened up external liaison work, communicating with children in more than a dozen countries, such as the Soviet Union, the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore. During their stay in Wuhan, the deeds of the Children's Troupe were widely

8 Xia J. (2017) Precious old photos tell the centennial history of Chinese drama. *Chongqing daily*, 25th Nov.

publicized by the media and attracted the attention of foreign media. Newspapers in many countries published reports of the Children's Troupe. Children's groups and children from the world's anti-fascist countries sent more than 200 letters to express their concern and support for the Children's Troupe, including letters from the troupe, letters signed by the whole class, personal letters, etc. In order to win international sympathy, Guo Moruo instructed the troupe to send two members to communicate with foreign children. According to the Xinhua Daily on June 12, 1938, a delegation of the World Federation of Students visited China and held a delegation meeting of the World Federation of Students in Wuhan. More than 800 children of all kinds of teams from Wuhan participated in the meeting. Fu Chengmo, the person in charge of the Children's Troupe, led the audience to salute, reported the significance of the meeting, and described the process of Japanese invaders killing Chinese children and plundering them for enslavement education. During the meeting, members of the Children's Troupe presented 12 pictures of the Anti-Japanese War to the delegation. Then, the Children's Troupe and other children's teams attending the meeting performed singing, drama and other programs.

The war also involved the children of China and the world's anti-fascist countries in the torrent of saving the nation from subjugation and striving for survival. "Children have become a heavy and unique landscape in the music salvation and the music exchange between China and foreign countries. They act as ambassadors of music culture with their childish singing voice" [Gong, 2020].

According to the Xinhua Daily on December 28, 1940, the Women's Committee of the Sino Soviet Cultural Association invited the Children's Troupe to hold a music broadcast to the Soviet Union on international radio. The last program was to sing the Soviet popular song *Friends of China*. Li Dequan, the wife of Feng Yuxiang, said to Soviet broadcast with emotion: "These are all homeless children who have fled from the gunfire in the battlefield. They are homeless and homeless. They are learning while wandering, and have also developed an iron will. Although they are childish, their strong voice sings out anger and gratitude, and they eulogize for justice..." [Li, Hu, Li, 1985]. On the same day, the Children's Troupe also participated in the children's music evening held in the China Film Studio, and international friends were invited to watch. On April 6, 1941, Soviet children broadcast music to China to celebrate the Chinese Children's Day. Children in anti-fascist countries often talked about the pain of war and patriotism with each other in the form of music broadcasting, and gained spiritual support and comfort from their peers in other countries. On January 5, 1945, the Children's Home of the Sino-Soviet Cultural Association held a children's fellowship. The story and performance of the Children's Troupe were spread abroad, and received sympathy and support from many international friends. Some foreign children's groups wrote letters one after another. The Children's Troupe arranged special personnel to answer letters one by one. Some overseas Chinese also took the initiative to care about the Children's Troupe. For example, when Lu Cui, the actor, was attending the International Women's Peace Conference in France, she was very moved to read the story of the Children's Troupe from overseas newspapers, so she wrote a letter to the Children's Troupe and donated 400 francs to the Children's Troupe⁹.

Historical contribution

From Shanghai to Wuhan, from Wuhan to Chongqing, every step of the Children's Troupe is a legend. In the Anti-Japanese War upsurge of the whole nation, the Children's Troupe and other

⁹ *The War of Resistance* (1938), 83.

children's groups who publicized the Anti-Japanese War made unique contributions to the Anti-Japanese War and national salvation.

The fighting spirit of the Anti-Japanese War

When the Children's Troupe was born, except for its head Wu Xinjia, who was 19 years old, all the other members were only 8 years old to 16 years old. At a young age, they began to undertake the mission of resisting Japan and saving the nation from extinction, which was highly praised by all walks of life, but also greatly encouraged the people. According to Xu Hanru, a member of the Children's Troupe, "In the performance of condoning the wounded soldiers, we moved the program to the bed of the wounded... The soldiers watched our performance... Some people secretly wiped their tears. A soldier said, 'Thank you for your condolences, little friends. When we have healed the wound, we will return to the front, fight the Japanese devils and revenge for you!'" [Xu, 1959]. According to daily reports at that time, when the Children's Troupe finished its performance, an old woman said sincerely, "Children all understand that China can't die!" The children's righteous deeds have stimulated the adult's sense of responsibility. Mrs. Li Dequan, Feng Yuxiang's wife, pointed out at the Children's Day of the Anti-Aggression Publicity Week that "because the adults did not make the country well and put it on track, you have been displaced so painfully! You should have a father and a mother... We should take on the task of your father and mother!"¹⁰ Some media pointed out, "The children have already got up, adult people, if you don't get up again, can you not feel ashamed?"¹¹ The performance and publicity of the Children's Troupe awakened the paralyzed soul to a certain extent. On May 5, 1938, the Children's Troupe performed in the rain in the countryside of Wuhan. The farmers were so engrossed in the show that they couldn't bear to let the children go after the performance. There were thunderous slogans such as "Down with the Japanese Bandits" and "The People of the Country Unite". In other performances, when the children entered, the scene was still noisy, but when the performance ended, the whole audience was silent. The children's anti-Japanese enthusiasm encourages adults to believe in victory. After watching the performance and publicity of the Children's Troupe, many adults said, "China, with such a strong future generation, cannot be conquered."

The development of children's drama

The fairy tale drama that emerged in the 1920s has been widely spread. However, since the Anti-Japanese War, this kind of fairy tale drama seems to be out of tune with the atmosphere of the times. "Instead, various street plays performed by children and small plays that directly reflect anti-Japanese themes and social life" [Fu, Peng, 2018]. The Children's Troupe had a high frequency, wide scope and great influence, which has driven the theoretical research of children's drama in China to a large extent. Among the dozens of plays rehearsed or performed by the Children's Troupe, there are more than ten single act or multi act plays including *Help Our Guerrillas*, *On the Line of Fire*, *Catch the Traitors*, *Wanderers*, *Put Down Your Whip*, and *Children's Blood* created by Chen Mo, as well as *The Flowers of Tangdi* and *Qu Yuan* created by Guo Moruo. Shi Linghe specially created a six act children's play *Paradise March* for the Children's Troupe, which reflected the Anti-Japanese War; Xu Xingzhi created one-act children's plays, such as *Rendan Beard* and *The Last Lesson*. Some have become reserved plays that must be performed by the Children's Troupe. These works were welcomed by children and even people from all walks of life because of the performance of the Children's Troupe, and also left a deep imprint in the history of Chinese drama because of the promotion of the Children's Troupe. It can be

¹⁰ *Young pioneer* (1938), 4.

¹¹ *Daily in the array* (1938), 6th Jan.

said that the Children's Troupe has written a glorious page for the history of Chinese anti-Japanese drama.

Educational significance

On September 29, 1937, the Jiuwang Daily published the Open Letter of the Children's Troupe, which said, "We don't have a fixed place to do business, a fixed place to arrange plays, a good new script, or a fixed director. On the contrary, we get a lot of cold eyes and dark stabs..." [The open letter..., 1996]. The Children's Troupe had no fixed residence, no fixed place for rehearsal, living conditions and performance conditions were very difficult. But the children worked hard to learn singing, acting, speech and other businesses. The Children's Troupe took the lead in rehearsing and performing the *Yellow River Cantata* in Chongqing, but there was no formal band at that time. The children played the harmonica, flute, gong, drum, gasoline barrel, etc. Adults used cans and snake skins to make their own erhu to accompany children. The Children's Troupe devoted three hours a day to learning cultural knowledge. At that time, the educator Tao Xingzhi's theory of "life education" had already had extensive influence. The Children's Troupe fully practiced Tao Xingzhi's concept of "life education". On December 15, 1938, the Life Education Society led by Tao Xingzhi was established, and Wu Xinjia, the head of the Children's Troupe, was elected the director. According to the list recorded in the Selected Works of Life Education, at least 30 people from the Children's Troupe participated in the Life Education Society. The Children's Troupe was very popular everywhere. The children followed the example of the Children's Troupe and were eager to be a member of it. Due to the limited funds and other reasons, the Children's Troupe cannot be expanded indefinitely. However, the staff of the troupe had also grown from the initial 20 to more than 70. After the Children's Troupe was forced to disband, some of its members passed the examinations of the school to continue their studies, and some of them continued to participate in the revolutionary cause. Some became outstanding musicians, dramatists, educators, film workers, social scientists, etc., and some died bravely in the subsequent war of resistance [Wang, 2018]. The work of the Children's Troupe not only inspired the social enthusiasm for the War of Resistance, relieved parents' worries about engaging in the War of Resistance and relieved the pressure of social relief, but also made the society realize the importance of children's abilities and the effectiveness of children's self-management and self-education. The precious spiritual wealth left by the Children's Troupe has been continuously excavated and endowed with the connotation of a new era.

Conclusion

From Shanghai to Wuhan, and from Wuhan to Chongqing, the Children's Troupe is writing a legend every step. Born in blood and fire, and growing up in struggle, the Children's Troupe has gone deep into the streets and alleys of cities and the fields of rural areas, extensively carried out anti-Japanese and national salvation literature and art performances, publicity services and foreign exchanges, and made unique contributions to the fight against Japan and national salvation. The precious spiritual wealth left by the Children's Troupe has been continuously excavated and endowed with the connotation of the times.

References

1. Ding W. (2021) *The Children's Troupe—in the era of war*. China Photography Press.
2. Fu D. (2018) The chronicle of children's drama during the Anti-Japanese War. *Journal of Chongqing Radio and TV University*, 10, pp. 20-25.

3. Fu D., Peng S. (2018) An exploration of the Children's Troupe and the theory of children drama in Chongqing during the war against Japanese aggression. *Journal of Wuyi University*, 20 (1), pp. 37-41.
4. Gong Y. (2020) Chinese musical and cultural foreign exchanges in Chongqing, the capital during the Anti-Japanese War. *Journal of Chongqing Normal University*, 2.
5. Li B., Hu W., Li F. (1985) *Collection of music materials during the Anti-Japanese War*. Chongqing.
6. Qiang M. (1989) Goodbye, Shanghai! In: *Children, stand up—memoirs of the Children's Theatre Troupe*. Shanghai.
7. The Children's Troupe Featurette. The Children's Troupe Song (1938). *Hankou education in war*, 2 (2).
8. The open letter of the Children's Troupe (1996). In: *In the age of warfare*. Beijing, pp. 63-64.
9. Wang Y. (2018) *A study of the children's theatrical troupe*. Southwest University.
10. Xu H. (1959) We sang the songs of the War of Resistance against Japan—the singing activities of the Children's Troupe during the War of Resistance against Japan. *People's music*, 1, pp. 29-31.

Предварительное исследование деятельности «Детской группы» в Китае во время японо-китайской войны

Гун Юнхун

Магистр,
доцент Музыкального колледжа,
Чунцинский педагогический университет,
401331, Китайская Народная Республика, Чунцин, ул. Тяньчэнь, 12;
e-mail: 1550121913@qq.com

Аннотация

«Детская группа» – детская антияпонская пропагандистская группа, которая появилась при поддержке Коммунистической партии во время Китайской антияпонской войны. Целью данного исследования является раскрытие славной боевой истории и большого значения «Детской группы». Новизна исследования заключается во всестороннем изучении славной истории и боевых заслуг «Детской группы», особое внимание уделяется ее международным связям. Статья воссоздает историю становления «Детской группы», которая родилась «в пороховом дыму» в Шанхае, отступила вместе с падением Шанхая, возросла во время военных действий в Ухане и с падением Уханя была вынуждена отступать. Наконец, она переехала в Чунцин, столицу Китая военного времени, где до конца своего пути активно вела музыкальную деятельность национального освободительного движения и антияпонскую пропаганду. «Детская группа» также поддерживала борьбу против Японии путем сбора средств, обрела известность и поддержку у мирового антифашистского движения, внося позитивный вклад в победу. «Детская группа» как литературно-художественный коллектив также способствовала развитию детской драматургии.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

Гун Ю. А preliminary study on the activities of the Children's Troupe during the Second Sino-Japanese War // Культура и цивилизация. 2022. Том 12. № 5А. С. 447-459. DOI: 10.34670/AR.2022.97.82.035

Ключевые слова

«Детская группа», детская драматургия, японо-китайская война, антияпонская пропаганда, международный обмен.

Библиография

1. Ding W. The Children's Troupe – in the era of war. China Photography Press, 2021.
2. Fu D. The chronicle of children's drama during the Anti-Japanese War // Journal of Chongqing Radio and TV University. 2018. No. 10. P. 20-25.
3. Fu D., Peng S. An exploration of the Children's Troupe and the theory of children drama in Chongqing during the war against Japanese aggression // Journal of Wuyi University. 2018. Vol. 20. No. 1. P. 37-41.
4. Gong Y. Chinese musical and cultural foreign exchanges in Chongqing, the capital during the Anti-Japanese War // Journal of Chongqing Normal University. 2020. No. 2.
5. Li B., Hu W., Li F. Collection of music materials during the Anti-Japanese War. Chongqing, 1985.
6. Qiang M. Goodbye, Shanghai! // Children, stand up – memoirs of the Children's Theatre Troupe. Shanghai, 1989.
7. The Children's Troupe Featurette. The Children's Troupe Song // Hankou education in war. 1938. Vol. 2. No. 2.
8. The open letter of the Children's Troupe // In the age of warfare. Beijing, 1996. P. 63-64.
9. Wang Y. A study of the children's theatrical troupe. Southwest University, 2018.
10. Xu H. We sang the songs of the War of Resistance against Japan—the singing activities of the Children's Troupe during the War of Resistance against Japan // People's music. 1959. No. 1. P. 29-31.