2004

The Little Theater movement in Taiwan after 1990 : current aesthetics and issues

Heng-Chia Lee
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Lee, Heng-Chia, "The Little Theater movement in Taiwan after 1990 : current aesthetics and issues" (2004). *Master's Theses*. 2530.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.hbhj-y5hm>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/2530

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

THE LITTLE THEATER MOVEMENT
IN TAIWAN AFTER 1990:
CURRENT AESTHETICS AND ISSUES

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Theatre Arts

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the degree

Master of Arts

by

Heng-Chia Lee

May 2004

UMI Number: 1420412

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI Microform 1420412

Copyright 2004 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

©2004

Heng-Chia Lee

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

APPROVED OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

Dr. Ethel Walker

Dr. David Kahn

Dr. Alison McKee

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

THE LITTLE THEATER MOVEMENT IN TAIWAN AFTER 1990: CURRENT AESTHETICS AND ISSUES

by Heng-Chia Lee

Unlike the Little Theater movement in the West that mainly focused on revolting against commercial and traditional theater styles and genres, the Taiwan Little Theater movement during 1978 to 1990 focused both on reforming theater styles and participating in social movements. Under government control, theater groups in Taiwan before 1978 became a tool of propaganda which could only produce “Anti-Communism and Anti Soviet Union” plays. The search for a new performance style led to the evolution of Taiwan’s Little Theater. From 1986 to 1990, Little Theater groups greatly reformed theater styles and started joining social movements that made “Little Theater” famous among the Taiwanese people. The most significant contributions of Taiwan’s Little Theater during this time were its creation of a popular platform that allowed people to question the social ideology and the introduction of many modern theater theories and new concepts to the theater of Taiwan. However, after the heat of the Little Theater Movement in the 1980s, Little Theater became socially and politically insignificant. The changes in society and Taiwan’s political structure no longer provide taboos and ideologies to defeat.

This thesis will examine current Taiwan’s Little Theater groups in order to explore the aesthetics and issues presented. Looking at the subject matters discussed can illustrate how Little Theater used plays to reveal the current status of the society and the people in Taiwan. Moreover, Taiwan is now in a period where tradition and modernism overlap. This research will examine how Little Theater artists can find their topics that can reveal this specific time. Examining Little Theater’s current status can help determine whether a new model is needed for the future.

Contents

I. Introduction

A. Statement.....	1
B. Literature Review.....	9

II. Taiwan's Little Theater Before 1990

A. The Emergence of Little Theater Groups.....	29
B. Little Theater From 1980 to 1986.....	30
C. Little Theater From 1986 to 1990.....	34

III. Taiwan's Little Theater 1990 to Present

A. Current Theater Groups Organized Before 1990.....	43
B. Current Groups Organized After 1990.....	50

IV. Conclusion.....

57

Bibliography

67

I. Introduction

A. Statement

Unlike the Little Theater movement in the West that mainly focused on revolting against commercial and traditional theater styles and genres, the Taiwan Little Theater movement during 1978 to 1990¹ focused both on reforming theater styles and participating in social movements (Chung, Little Theater Movement 3). From 1946 to 1949, Kuo Ming Tang (KMT), the democratic government, and the Communist Party burst into civil war in Mainland China. After the war, the defeated Kuo Ming Tang government fled to Taiwan. In order to regain political power and control dissenting views, KMT declared martial law. Under government control, theater became a tool of propaganda which could only produce “Anti-Communism and Anti Soviet Union” plays (14). Some theater practitioners such as Jin Shijie and Wu Jingji of the Lan-ling Theater Workshop² did not appreciate the official ideology that controlled drama styles, including propagandized drama on “Anti-Communism,” and Ibsenic realism (Zhang, “Little Theater Movement”). The search for a new performance style led to the evolution of Taiwan’s Little Theater.

Dramatists Wu Jingji and Li Ang, who had furthered their education in the United States around 1975, brought 1960s American theater performance styles and physical movement theories as well as Brecht’s Epic Theater theory to Lan-ling Theater

1 Scholar Chung Mingder divides Taiwan’s Little Theater into two generations: the first generation between 1978 to 1986, and the second between 1986 to 1990; however, dramatist Ma Sen points out that the movement from 1978 to 1990 should be one single generation. Scholars Hu Yaoheng and Jiao Tong do not point out an exact time divergence either. In this research, I will use Ma Sen’s opinion that Taiwan’s Little Theater movement has only one single generation from 1978 to 1990.

2 Many of the sources cited in this paper were originally written in Chinese. Unless cited from Chung Mingder and Craig Anthony Quintero’s dissertations, all translations are mine.

Workshop. This then became the first Little Theater group in Taiwan. The group greatly impacted those who were interested in theater (Chung, Little Theater Movement 27). During this time, the Little Theater movement focused more on the reform of theater styles. For instance, the drama style in this period fused traditional Chinese theater and Western theater styles. The social movement had not yet become part of the Little Theater movement. Rather, Little Theater took on a “middle-of-the-road” policy, neither conservative nor aggressive, which may have matched the mass population’s need at that time (33). However, the younger generation was not satisfied with the “middle-of-the-road” attitude. Their desire to use theater to explore social and political issues as well as to participate in social revolution led to a more radical movement.

From 1986 to 1990, Little Theater groups greatly reformed theater styles and started joining social movements that made “Little Theater” famous among the Taiwan people. Theater groups produced plays about homosexuality, deviants and also plays that criticized the government. People may have been watching a performance adapted from Eugene Ionesco’s The Lesson, but the story was clearly about the stifling education system in Taiwan. Another performance was adapted from Bertolt Brecht’s Mother Courage And Her Children, but the story was clearly about how the upper class of the society exploits the underclass. Some performances were adapted from novels or poetry, and some were from Western or Eastern theatrical masterpieces. Little Theater picked up topics about the anxiety of the younger generation, sexual identity, women’s rights, the paradox between communities, and the political oppression of dissidents. Taiwan’s Little Theater transferred from Modernism to Post-modernism. It was influenced by

Western avant-garde theater, such as Theater of Cruelty, Living Theater, Environmental Theater, Bread and Puppet Theater, and Poor Theater (Hu). Little Theater used anti-narrative and multi-focus techniques for experimentation (Zhang). In politics, Little Theater groups were eager to join social reforms and movements. They challenged or provoked political taboos³, traditional theater, and traditional culture (Jiao). Theater groups formed by university students produced dramas to protest the limitation on the freedom of speech by the government's autocracy. Other theater groups enacted dramas that criticized the government for dumping nuclear waste on Lanyu Island, an offshore Taiwan island. Dramas also criticized the high price of houses which made it almost impossible for young people to own their own homes. During this period, Little Theater groups enthusiastically joined all kinds of social events. These soon evolved into real "movements" due to the participation of the Little Theater groups in these revolutionary activities.

The most significant contributions of Taiwan's Little Theater during this time were its creation of a popular platform that allowed people to question the social ideology and the introduction of many modern theater theories and new concepts to the theater of Taiwan. Yan Hongya (Hong-Hong), founder and director of the Stalker Theater Group, praised Taiwan's Little Theater as the pioneer for Taiwan's modern theater. He said, "During the Little Theater Movement, many theaters sprouted, uniting with advocates of political revolution and social movement, which advanced the build-ups of commercial

³ Chung Mingder researched Taiwan's society was controlled by Martial Law during 1948 to 1987 that "politics had been a taboo for artists." The government forces many restriction on Taiwan's theater, including censorship of scripts, ban of "Communist" publications, and restriction of public gatherings and meetings (Chung, Little Theater Movement 228-229).

theaters. In the 1990s the political pursuit faded. Taiwan's little theaters returned to the basic aesthetic exploration. Today, Taiwan's little theaters have become one spectacle among Taiwan modern culture" (Yan 30).

However, after the Little Theater Movement in the 1980s, Little Theater became socially and politically insignificant. In 1990, Taiwanese theater practitioner and theoretician Wang Moling declared that Taiwan's Little Theater Movement was dead (City Theater and the Body 28). Wang's idea was further strengthened by scholars. They pointed out that the decadence of Little Theater was caused both by aesthetics and social aspects. Literary critic Jiao Tong indicated that the lifting of martial law in 1987 influenced Little Theater's aggressive content and format. However, it also deconstructed Little Theater's resistance characteristics. The subverting force that Little Theater has now may not be the same as before. Another reason for the slow decline of Little Theater was that after the earlier movement, most theater styles had already been explored. In addition, the changes in society and Taiwan's political structure no longer provided taboos and ideologies to defeat, and there were no aggressive issues for Little Theater practitioners to protest (Jiao, "Little Theater").

However, this pessimistic view of the current status of Taiwan's Little Theater is not completely true. According to the Council of Culture Affairs, Taiwan government's highest cultural institute, Taiwan now has over 40 Little Theater groups, and new groups are still emerging. The "dead" theory has no evidence to support it. The purpose of this study is to examine the current status of Taiwan's Little Theater, to look at topics that

Little Theater groups have recently explored, to see what styles and techniques they employ, and to investigate the role of social issues in their productions.

This thesis will look at topics that Taiwan's Little Theater groups explore in their plays in order to see whether or not they still focus on social issues. Looking at the subject matters discussed can illustrate how Little Theater use plays to reveal the current status of the society and the people in Taiwan. In addition, Taiwan is now in a period where tradition and modernism overlaps. This thesis examines the current topics that Little Theater artists choose to use. Examining Little Theater's current status can help determine whether a new model is needed for the future.

Little Theater movement reforming Taiwan's modern theater and its engaging in political movements are certainly a special phenomenon. Little Theater groups in Taiwan also contributed to developing the professional theater directors, actors, and designers who are now core members of Taiwan theaters. Since there was no systematic research done after the 1980s movement, it is time to examine what Taiwan's Little Theater accomplished in the past and examine the current status in order to look into Little Theater's future.

Chapter I discusses how Taiwan's Little Theater movement rose in 1980 and why it became significant not only to Taiwan's theater but also to society. Finding discovers scholars' opinions about the decline of Taiwan's Little Theater movement after 1990 and examine the current status in order to determine whether or not the movement truly regressed. Moreover, the thesis provides past studies and research done on Taiwan's Little Theater movement. The second chapter will be a historical review focusing on the

movement before 1990. Chapter III presents my research on the current status of Taiwan's Little Theater from 1990 to the present. This chapter examines the topics the theater uses, the issues it explores as well as the styles and techniques it employs. It also offers the conclusions from interviews with theater artists and scholars about their opinions of the current Little Theater in Taiwan and what they believe can be done in order to predict future trends. The final chapter summarizes the current activities of Taiwan's Little Theater and what theater groups can do in the future.

A historical research approach has been used to examine Taiwan's Little Theater from 1980 to 2003. This research examines resources including drama reviews, scholarly articles, dissertations, news and printed materials on the history of Taiwan's Little Theater in order to provide a clear idea of how Little Theater groups developed their aesthetics and political ideas.

The researcher interviewed nine artists of Taiwan's major Little Theater groups and one theater scholar. The researcher also accessed the National Central Library in Taipei. The library has various newspapers, Taiwan's performing arts periodicals, including *Performing Arts Review*, *Chu Shuo Hsi Yen (Drama Talk)*, *Fiction and Drama*, and some previous theses written on the topic. Newspapers such as *China Times*, *United Daily News*, and *Liberty Times* have famous literary supplements which are important resources of Taiwan's performance reviews. The researcher also accessed the Performing Arts Library in National Chiang Kai Shek Cultural Center, which is located in Taipei, Taiwan. The Performing Arts Library has an outstanding reputation for its comprehensive collection of Taiwan's Little Theater reviews, scholarly articles, publishing, audio-visual

materials, performance clips, and program leaflets. These collections were very helpful to my research.

Interviews took place in Taipei, Taiwan from March 20 to 31, 2004, and the content of the interviews were taped. The researcher interviewed the following founders of Taiwan's Little Theater groups that were central to Taiwan's Little Theater Movement after 1986: Chen Meimao, the founder and director of Taiwan Walker Theater which is the former Huan-Xu Theater; Li Huanxiong, the founder and director of Theater Group of Creative Society, who is also the founder and director of the Left Bank Theater; Li Liheng, the advisor of U Theater which has shifted its aggressive political movement to focus on exploiting actors' physical movement; Zhan Huiling, the founder and director of the Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, and Wang Weilian, an actor and senior member of the Critical Point Theater Phenomenon.

Besides interviews with those founders who participated in the Little Theater movement between 1986 to 1990, the researcher also interviewed artists of major Little Theater groups who are famous for experimental theater after the movement, including Wei Yingjuan, the founder and director of Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group; Wang Jiaming, a director of Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group; Yan Hongya, the founder and director of Stalker Theater Group, and Liao Juncheng (Baboo), the founder and director of Spring Wind Art Theater which is praised for its creativity and has become the most important Little Theater group in South Taiwan.

The researcher interviewed scholar Chung Mingder, Chairman of the Theater Department in Taipei National University of the Arts and author of The Little Theater

Movement of Taiwan 1980-89: In Search of Alternative Aesthetics and Politics. These artists and theater experts are either theater practitioners or have been dedicated to theater education for a long time. Their opinions are professional and reliable as research materials.

The Little Theater movement has produced one of the most exciting phenomena ever to appear on the cultural scene in Taiwan. The purpose of this research is to provide readers with a general understanding of the phenomenon and to provide an overview of the Little Theater in Taiwan. This is not a reference work on Taiwan's Little Theater; rather, the researcher has sought to provide some useful insights and a broad overview of this significant and exciting cultural phenomenon.

This study departs from previous Taiwan's Little Theater studies in that it examines current trends and anticipates the future. Previous studies focused on the Little Theater movement before 1990. There is no systematic research on the current status. This study is important because it attempts to establish a benchmark for future studies in this area. It provides insight not only into the aesthetics and social aspects of Taiwan's Little Theater, but it also examines what directions Little Theater may take in the future.

B. Literature Review

The Rise of Taiwan's Little Theater

The term "Little Theater" first appeared in Taiwan in the 1960s. Theater scholar Li Mangui was impressed by Western little theater styles and theories so she promoted a "little theater movement" for Taiwan. In this period, little theater meant "playing drama in little theater which contains serious topics." It differed from the meaning of Little Theater Movement in the 1980s (Hu, "Little Theater"). In 1984, dramatist Ma Sen used the term "Little Theater" to refer to some of the experimental theater groups such as Fang-yuan Theater, Xiao-wu Theater, and Notebook Theater. The term "Little Theater" then became popular among theatergoers (Ma, "Little Theater" 21).

According to Chung Mingder, a theater practitioner and the Chairman of Taipei National University of the Arts, there were four factors that stimulated the rise of Taiwan's Little Theater:

(1) The decline of Spoken Drama, (2) The influence of American, European, and Japanese avant-garde theaters, (3) The accelerating pace of Taiwan's modernization in the late 1970s, and, (4) The coming of age of the post-war baby boom generation. (Chung, Little Theater Movement 14)

Chung detailed the background of why Taiwan's Little Theater rose. After World War II, the Kuo Ming Tang (KMT), the democratic government, and the Communist Party in China burst into civil war. The defeated KMT government fled to Taiwan and declared martial law in order to regain political power and control dissent. Under the government's control, theater became a tool of propaganda which could only produce "Anti-Communism and Anti-Soviet Union" plays (14). The search for a new performance style led to the first evolution of "Little Theater."

Ma Sen did not mention any political reason for the rise of Taiwan's Little Theater. Rather he believed Taiwan's Little Theater started because theater practitioners were attracted to Western modern theater. He said the Little Theater Movement in Taiwan was an imitation and experimentation of Western theater theories:

From the 1980s, the Little Theater Movement broke away from our traditional dramas, and imitated every step of the Western modern theater. We can find images from the Theater of Cruelty, Living Theater, Environmental Theater, Poor Theater, New-formalism Theater, alternative theater, and the so-called "Postmodern Theater" in our Little Theater Movement. (Ma, Drama 245)

From his research, he concluded that Taiwan's Little Theater consisted of scholars who studied in Western countries such as the United States or England. First, scholars launched magazines such as Modern Literature, Europe, and Theater, to introduce Western modern literature, movie, and theater theories to Taiwan. In 1978, Wu Jingji introduced "La Mama Methods" to Geng-xin Experimental Theater (the later Lan-ling Theater Workshop), which made artists pay attention to "Experimental Drama." Afterwards, Liu Jingmin, Ma Dingni, and Chung Mingder introduced the practices of Poor Theater, Environmental Theater, Postmodern Theater, and Political Theater to the Taipei Theater Community (Ma 224). The new theories motivated people to think differently. From the 1960s to 1970s, theater practitioners studied the experience and tried to create new dramas. The first event of Taiwan's Little Theater movement was the Experimental Theater Festival in 1980 (Ma, Taiwan's Little Theater 20).

Taiwan's Little Theater not only meant use of a small performance space, but it also meant exploring new theater styles and participating in social movements. Chung stated that Taiwan's Little Theater had eight characteristics:

1) Performed in some spaces with less than 300 seats. 2) Produced budgets normally less than \$1,500. 3) Employed Playwrights, directors, actors, and designers who not well known 4) Held performances that seldom became news. 5) Entertained audiences who are mostly the educated younger generation. 6) Had theater groups that were formed by people with the same interests and who are amateurs. 7) Theater groups are likely to perform experimental or avant-garde dramas. 8) They are critical of the government and even profess anti-governments ideologies. (Chung, Little Theater Movement 11)

Literary critic Jiao Tong indicated that the Little Theater appearing in the 1980s was full of experimental and avant-garde spirit. Theater critic Zhang Wencheng defined Taiwan's Little Theater as containing elements of avant-garde theater, experimental theater, and alternative theater ("Little Theater Movement"). Chen Meimao, director of Taiwan's famous Little Theater group Taiwan Walker Theater, went further by saying that Taiwan's Little Theater "is not just a type of theater genre" ("A Revolution"). He said it "represents all kinds of radical theater, resulting from the lifting of martial law in 1985, whether the performance topic is about politics, feminism, homosexuality, all were performed in Little Theater." Li Liheng, the advisor of U Theater and a theater professor at the Taipei National University of the Arts indicated that despite the small performance space, Taiwan's Little Theater had characteristics of cultural, social, or political opposition movements (Li, Theater 165). In other words, "Little Theater" in Taiwan meant that dramatists could apply new theater theory or try out their aesthetics. It also illustrated the relationship between theater and social issues. Little Theater in Taiwan was a laboratory for both aesthetic reform and social movement.

Although most scholars agreed that the most prominent reform of Taiwan's theater style started from Lan-ling theater workshop and the Experimental Theater Festival, theater scholars differ in their opinions on when Taiwan's Little Theater movement

started to diverge. Chung Mingder researched that it was not until 1987 that theatergoers started to refer to “Little Theater” as a “Movement”. He further divided Taiwan’s “Little Theater” movement into two generations. The first generation movement was between 1978-1986 and was characterized by the introduction of new theatrical theories as aesthetic reform. The second generation movement appeared between 1986-1992 and was characterized by radical revolution both on aesthetics and social issues (Chung 20). Ma Sen also divided Taiwan’s Little Theater movement into two generations, but he indicated the first generation was in the 1980s and included avant-garde theater groups such as Huan-xu, Left Bank, U Theater, and Critical Point Phenomenon, and theater groups whose performances were more popular. Later those groups became commercial theaters, such as Performance Workshop, Pingfeng Performance Troup, and Godot Theater. The second generation was in the 1990s. Ma Sen observed that in this period, because the country became democratic, Little Theater lost the issues it fought against. Some Little Theater groups produced dramas with the intent to astonish audiences and express their dissatisfaction with the society as well as with the stifling education system. Some began to pay attention to minorities and produced dramas to reflect social problems such as women’s rights, the discrimination against homosexuality, and public welfares (Ma, “Taiwan Little Theater” 20). On the other hand, scholar Hu Yaoheng indicated that Taiwan’s Little Theater only had one generation from 1980 until now. He viewed Little Theater as just part of the development of Taiwan’s theater or a transition from amateur to professional theater (“Little Theater Movement”).

Dramatist Ji Weiran disagreed with Ma and Chung's opinion that Taiwan's Little Theater started from Lan-ling Theater Workshop. He opposed Ma Sen's move to put Lan-ling and Little Theater groups such as Huan-xu, Left Bank, and Critical Point Phenomenon in the same generation. He also disagreed on the opinion that the theater styles of Little Theater in the late 1980s were inherited from Lan-ling. He did agree, however, that Lan-ling made some contributions to the reform of theater styles, content, and techniques. Unlike the "Little Theater" movement in the late 1980s that aggressively touched on political and social taboos which were not accepted by the middle class, Lan-ling never touched on any political issues (Ji, "Little Theater in History" 98). He indicated that Lan-ling's revolution focused more on aesthetics, styles, and experimentation, and Little Theater in the late 1980s focused more on aggressive and alternative reform both on aesthetics and politics. He claimed that if the meaning of "Little Theater" was "anti-tradition", "anti-bourgeoisie", "anti-mainstream culture", and "anti-capitalism", then Taiwan's Little Theater movement actually emerged in the years before the lifting of martial law. Ji argued that Ma and Chung provided an incomplete history of Taiwan's Little Theater movement because they only saw the change of theater styles in the early 1980s Little Theater reform. Taiwan Little Theater started not only because of the desire to reform theater styles, but also because people wanted to change the political situation. He hypothesized that Taiwan's Little Theater movement could have started because of political dissidents, folk literature, or the Formosa Incident⁴ (Ji, "Taiwan's Little Theater," 99). Theater scholars' opinions about the origin of Taiwan's

⁴ In 1979, the dissidents in Kaohsiung calling for "Taiwan independence," they took to the streets. This was a shock to Taiwan society, which previously had been tame and stable.

Little Theater are varied, however, Lan-ling was still the only Little Theater group recognized by theater practitioners.

Exploring New Theater Styles and Social Issues From 1980 to 1986

Although not recognized by every theater scholar as the first Little Theater group, Lan-ling Theater Workshop was still praised as a significant theater group in Taiwan's Little Theater history. It reformed traditional theater styles in the early 1980s and introduced Western theater theories to Taiwan that caused many artists to start paying attention to Taiwan's theater. Theater theorist Craig Anthony Quintero described how director Jin Shijie of Lan-ling Theater Workshop invited Wu Jingji, a psychologist and an artist in residence at the La Mama in New York, to teach warm-up exercises and theater games that he had learned in New York to Lan-ling's artists (Quintero 28). Wu's training method taught actors to be open-minded to every kind of performance art, to discover the creativity of one's own, and it also taught "collective improvisation⁵," the major training method Lan-ling used to create a new play (Chung 33). Lan-ling's first two productions: Burden and He Zhu's New Match were significant to the reform of Taiwanese/Chinese spoken drama. Chung described the Burden as "the first non-verbal play in Taipei which used only performers' sound and body movement...the first play which was staged through group improvisation without a formal script...the first play consciously presented in a non-proscenium space" (Chung 40). Chung mentioned He

5 Collective improvisation also called collective creation or group improvisation. The TKI website defined improvisation as "spontaneous invention and development of drama from within a role." The TutorGig Encyclopedia defined that "Improvisation is the act of making something up as you go along."

Zhu's New Match many times in his book and praised it as the starting point of the Little Theater Movement (23). It was a farce created by Lan-ling's artists using the "collective improvisation" method. The story combined both modern Western and traditional Chinese drama (53). Quintero said that Lan-ling's performance did not ask for political reform or intend to challenge the government, but that it only "changed the presentational mode" (Quintero 88). The "collective improvisation" method that Lan-ling used to create plays was also employed by Lai Sheng-chuan, the director and founder of The Performance Workshop. He believed collective improvisation was the way to transform "individual concerns into collective concerns, and performers can find an outlet to "voice their otherwise suppressed thoughts and feelings" (Lai 33). At the same time, the improvisatory rehearsal techniques enabled the workshop to follow the rapidly changing times because actors naturally joined social and political events they observed or experienced with the stories and feelings they shared with the group (Lai 34). Lai's contribution to Taiwan's theater was that "The creative group technique used by the Performance Workshop provided the next generation of theater artists with an empowering creative technique" (Quintero 100).

While Burden and He Zhu's New Match were shown at the First Experimental Theater Festival in Taipei in 1980, there were other theater groups that also provided experimental performances. Chung praised those groups in the first Experimental Theater Festival saying that their plays were original and their styles were innovative:

First, all five productions were newly created by Taipei theater artists; there were neither productions of foreign plays nor old spoken drama plays. The Experimental Theater Festival was determined to create a new theater in Taipei "here and now." Second, none of the five productions used realistic

stage convention—known as “one act, one scenery”—of spoken drama. (Little Theater Movement 72-73)

The First Experimental Theater Festival was successful and popular enough to result in five more festivals. Some of the participating theater groups such as Lan-ling, Fan-yuan Theater, and Xiao-wu Theater became crucial in the 1980s Little Theater movement (78). Chung commented that Fan-yuan Theater used collective improvisation to create dramas with the dramatic structure finalized during the rehearsal period (82). Xiao-wu Theater applied film techniques to theater which became their feature (83). Chung stressed that the six experimental theater festivals played an important role in Taiwanese/Chinese theater history. They helped materialize Taiwan’s Little Theater and stimulated contemporary theater artists to fuse traditional Chinese and Western theater styles in order to “create a unique, contemporary Taiwanese theater arts” (87).

A More Radical Revolution

In contrast to the movement in the early 1980s, the movement after 1986 appeared radical on politics and aesthetics. Chung described it as “beyond the Experimental Theater’s mainstream aesthetics and politics as accepted by audiences, universities, and the government. They left behind the script-dominated theater, joined social movements, and rejected the Great China ideology” (131). In addition, Chung further described the theater styles during this period:

Theater artists rejected the proscenium stage and the “bourgeois theater structure,” breaking up the visible or invisible line between the performer and spectator. They were devoted to examining the cultural construction of the performer’s self in

order to develop a theater art that belonged to this time and this place of Taiwan. Using the anti-narrative structure of Theater of Images⁶ to replace the narrative, literary tradition of spoken drama and experimental drama, avant-garde theater artists questioned the dominance of plot and character. They deconstructed the close relationship between the representational system of theater performance and the ideological state apparatus, attempting to liberate the suppressed local discourses of Taiwan. (137)

Chung Mingder suggested that Little Theater in this period contained three waves—Environmental Theater, Postmodern Theater, and Political Theater (139). The three waves were formed around 1986. From 1986 to 1990, postmodernism theory and congressional elections made Postmodern Theater and Political Theater popular among Little Theater groups, and theater groups used Environmental Theater to awaken people to housing, pollution, and other social problems. Chung's research provided an overview of the theater styles and techniques that Little Theater groups explored during this period.

First, Chung mentioned that some theater groups were using postmodern theater theory to create their plays. He indicated that Left Bank Theater's The Intruders and The Sun Is still Shining, Cream & Ritual Theater's The Rape of Madonna, and The Contemporary Taipei Theater Laboratory's In Search of ... which all featured the "anti-narrative structure, emphasized the physical language of mise-en-scene, and brought the impact of the whole performance close to what Fredric Jameson called 'the schizophrenic symptoms'" (164). Ma Sen used Huan-xu Theater and Left Bank Theater as examples as two theater groups whose styles were anti-text, had anti-narrative structure, and

⁶ The term indicates director Robert Wilson's theatre style which focuses on stage design, light, movement and non-verbal communication between people. ("Tadeusz Kantor Festival: Memory/Loss-Installation by Robert Wilson." 25 Feb. 2004 <http://www.krakow2000.pl/2000_wydarzenia_a/december_memory.htm>).

reduced dialogues substituted with physical movement, voice, and image (Ma, Drama: The Art of Dream 63). Chung elaborated upon Huan-xu's contribution to the Little Theater Movement saying it created an "innovation in theater language which mainly centers on anti-narrative structure and non-representational mise-en-scene, involving the performer's presence, audience participation, and the relationship between theater aesthetics and Taiwan's political changes" (Chung, Little Theater Movement 155). Contrary to Chung's opinion, theater practitioner Craig Anthony Quintero concluded that Taiwan's Postmodern Theater groups ignored the original cultural and literary contexts. Furthermore, their performances were anti-narrative, anti-plot, anti-text, and anti-representational (Quintero 159).

Besides examining the techniques and theories Little Theater employed during this period, Chung also looked at the topics they chose. He said political and social changes in Taiwan made theater groups choose topics that reflected the political and social status. Chung indicated that Left Bank's The Sun Is Still Shining had a socialistic message and the theater "wanted their new performance style to become a tool for changing social consciousness, not just a postmodern theater commodity" (Chung, Little Theater Movement 172). Chung also pointed out that Little Theater started to use environmental theater to convey its political ideas. The political engagement of Taiwan's Little Theater Movement led theater groups to perform in the streets and adapt techniques from Environmental Theater. Chung wrote, "First is experimentation with performance art or conceptual art as exemplified by Luo-ho Concept's street performances...Second is the paratheatrical activities that used Poor Theater actor training as its starting point...Third

is the experimentation that used Schechner's theory and Bread and Puppet Theater's practices as foundation" (190). He asserted that after 1989, environmental theater groups raised the wave of political theater (190). Modern theater techniques such as collective improvisation, collage structure, ritual, Bread and Puppet Theater's big puppets, and environmental Theater techniques were popular among political theater groups (256). Quintero used Luo-ho Concept Theater Group as an example to point out the attempt to break up the traditional concepts of theater space in which "They moved the performance from the stage into the audience and disrupted theater's hierarchical one-way power dynamics privileging the director as the artistic creator and the audience as passive receivers" (Quintero 101). He further states that Luo-ho used Environmental Theater theory for its push for the democratization of public spaces. The public performances increasingly shifted from neutral actions to overtly political acts (103). Moreover, he also indicated its participation in the theater aesthetics revolution by changing the concept of "space":

As Little Theater companies started challenging the traditional spatial dynamics of theater productions in the mid-1980s, they also launched an aggressive attack on other dominant theater conventions-dramatic texts, characters and plots. (107)

Quintero asserted that in the early 1980s, accompanied with the political opposition against KMT's political and cultural control, Taiwanese theater artists "openly challenged the manner in which propagandistic anti-Communist Social Realist dramas systematically marginalized the Taiwanese populace and their personal narratives by presenting a decidedly Nationalist version of social 'reality'" (58). He described that when social issues such as political freedom, environmental pollution, national identity,

and ethnic rights appeared as political hot topics, “actors became activists, and activists became actors, moving their performances from theater buildings onto the streets” to express their point of views on social issues. He observed that those activists-actors “paraded down the streets carrying large Bread and Puppet style puppets.” He then summarized that the theater types those Little Theater artists used were “Experimental Theater, Little Theater, Postmodern Theater, Avant-garde Theater, Activist Theater, Political Theater, and Environmental Theater” (58).

In 1988, theater practitioners Wang Mo-lin and Zhou Yi-chang produced Expel the Evil from Lan-yu Island to protest against the government’s construction of a nuclear waste storage dump on a beautiful offshore island of Taiwan (Chung, Little Theater Movement 238). Chung asserted Wang and Chou’s theater performance made Little Theater move “like a ‘political avant-garde brigade’ away from its aesthetic casings and become a ‘war machine’ of the social movements” (242). Following Expel the Evil From Lan-yu Island, most of the Little Theater groups participated in social movements or protests. In March 1989, Taiwan Green Organization launched a “Save the Forest” campaign to fight against the government’s policy of allowing businesses to exploit forests and eventually destroy them. In March 1989, 425 Environmental Theater, which was influenced by the Bread and Puppet Theater, produced Meng-mu 3000 to express its disappointment with the living environment in Taipei. They used “huge puppets and masked players to bring an accessible, friendly theater into small communities and to express and reaffirm the immediate concerns of the local people” (252). They also joined Zero Degree, U Theater, Left Bank, Huan-xu and other theater groups to plan the

“Camping on Zhong-xiao East Road” event. They camped and slept in the most famous commercial district in Taipei in order to protest the high rent and price of houses in Taipei that made it difficult for citizens to rent or buy their homes (253). Besides protesting about environmental problems, theater groups also tried to break the nationalistic and traditional Chinese ideology. Anti-Ghost Theater composed Totem and Taboo to fight the political taboo—the patriarchal totem of president Chiang Kai-shek (257). U Theater produced Retry Wei Jing-sheng to mourn the victims of 228 Event, the conflict between the Taiwanese and Chinese after World War II (262). Critical Point Theater Phenomenon’s Ge Gong Song De criticized the government’s political oppression towards native Taiwanese (264). Quintero also observed that Critical Point Theater Phenomenon’s Mao Shi attacked the dominated Chinese cultural ideology and Confucius as a cultural figurehead. Anti-Ghost Theater’s Sacrifice of Luo Wen-jia attacked the dead president Chiang Kai-shek and the mythology that he created in order to control the country (Quintero 109). Little Theater then changed its target to social issues such as Expel the Evil from Lan-yu Island attacking environmental pollution, Retry Wei Jing-sheng criticizing the cultural suppression and the violation of human rights in Taiwan, and 520 protesting the military and police’s brutal suppression of farmers protesting in the 520 Incident.⁷ Some issues trace back to Taiwan’s history of political suppression by the KMT government and theater was used as a tool to protest against the government (110).

7 On May 20, 1988, the authorities put down the demonstration of the Farmers’ Union in Taipei.

Chung Mingder criticized that around the late 1980s when there was political heat, Little Theater gradually became a tool for political propaganda and stopped exploring theater styles and techniques. Chung said that Little Theater in the late 1980s “was nothing more than a type of ‘concept’”, which was viewed negatively by both audiences and scholars as “amateur, rough, and self-righteous” (Little Theater Movement 269).

After the overwhelming heat of postmodern theater, environmental theater, and political theater, some theater groups calmed down and went back to examine the essential elements of theater. In 1987, Contemporary Taipei Theater Laboratory produced In Search of... which focused on exploring the spirit of modern Taiwan people. Chung Minder indicated the play was an active process of “creating a contemporary Taipei culture by means of avant-garde theater” (Chung, “Collages of National Consciousness,” 38). At the same time, Zero Degree Theater Company and U Theater tried to explore “Taiwan actors’ bodies” by using physical movement training methods adopted from traditional Taiwanese and Chinese religion, folk art and martial arts (Doran, “U-nique” 66). Moreover, Zero Degree Theater used Chinese martial arts such as tai-chi-chuan and qigong as training methods, and U Theater participated in religious rituals and studied religious dancing with Taiwanese master folk artists (Chen 29). They were thus engaged in “cultural field research” and reclaimed the dying folk arts.

The Decline of Taiwan’s Little Theater After 1990

In Craig Anthony Quintero’s dissertation, Performing Culture/Cultural Performances: the Little Theater Movement in Taiwan, he analyzed the decline of

Taiwan's Little Theater in 1990. He indicated the fundamental problem is "what initially attracted much of the general populace to the Little Theater Movement was not its avant-garde experimentation...but its ideological anti-Nationalist stance" (61). Theater practitioners used "theater as a vehicle to break down ethnic divisions, reclaim suppressed traditional practices and construct a national identity that transgresses the binary oppositions that have historically divided the nation" (61). When the oppressions from government's control no longer existed, not only did Little Theater lose its topics, audiences also lost their interest in watching Little Theater performances.

In 1990, theater practitioner and theoretician Wang Moling declared that Taiwan's Little Theater Movement was dead (City Theater and the Body 28). In response to Wang's assertion, Chung Mingder stressed that Taiwan's Little Theater in the late 1980s had explored all the styles and techniques of contemporary theater. It also faced obstacles in social movements because martial law was lifted in 1987, and afterwards, the social and political taboos have no longer existed (The Taiwanese Avant-Garde 177). However, he still confirmed that although the political movement aspect of Little Theater ended, Little Theater was still alive. He argued that those people who said Little Theater was dead because they viewed Little Theater as "political" or "radical" activities, neglected the other functions and achievements of Little Theater in education and other professional performance (176). Chung believed that Taiwan's Little Theater would have an optimistic future because more and more theater departments developed in universities, and there were more artists and professionals dedicated to theater performances or theater education. In addition, official cultural affairs departments also

provided public theaters and subsidies for Little Theater groups. Furthermore, the interaction between Taiwan and Euro-American theaters had no restrictions. Theater practitioners could research any theater theory or technique they preferred without fear of censorship (178).

Dramatist Ji Weiran pointed out that in the early 1990s, Taiwan's Little Theater did not aggressively criticize political and social issues as it did in the past. Because the political taboos no longer existed and cultural activities were popular among people, Little Theater movement became insignificant (Ji, "Between Explore and Evade," 45). He further developed that each theater movement was a revolt against the previous tradition. Lan-ling revolted against the spoken drama tradition that began in the 1960s. However, in 1990, it was difficult for Little Theater to find an "enemy" since the middle-class was not threatened by Little Theater's radical movements. Ji was afraid Taiwan's modern society had no taboo to violate so Little Theater could not develop its "shock value" (Ji, "Little Theater in History" 99). He also pointed out that some Little Theater groups were amateurs because their artists were just producing plays to "have fun," which may cause their productions to be of low quality (99).

Chung pointed out the central issues of contemporary Little Theater Movement. First, he believed that theater, as a social institution, could not avoid interacting with society. It had to pay attention to the social changes and examine society's cultural and political issues in order to explore problems inside politics and culture. Second, some theater groups focused on tracking down to ancient arts. However, Chung was afraid that instead of inheriting ancient performance arts, they might try to "transplant"

Broadway scripts in order to find contemporary issues for modern Taiwan. Third, Chung stressed that theater scholars had to pay attention to Taiwan's Little Theater theory. He said that Taiwan's Little Theater had experimented with Poor Theater and Environmental Theater for a decade, but there was no academic research focused on this topic (183-185). However, he emphasized that in the future, the theater movement in Taiwan may not be cultivating soil as in the 1980s movement. Chung stressed that Little Theater "may expect to grow steadily, but a revolutionary movement seems not only unrealistic, but undesirable." He emphasized that the Little Theater movement had ended; instead, it must shift into "hard working, law abiding, and steady development" (Little Theater Movement 305). Finally, Chung indicated that the previous two movements had succeeded in adapting Western theater forms and techniques for its own use, but failed at absorbing the "content of form" and the ideas that gave rise to these techniques (301). He further explained that this failed adaptation of Western theater forms and techniques would "run the risk that our own true needs might never be realized;" therefore, "the failure to locate our true needs by looking into our past will not only stall our own cultural creations, but may also deepen our dependence on Western products." Chung then hypothesized that this would be the trigger if the third movement should appear (302).

In short, when the topics of ethnic, political suppression, and the divided nation that formed the Little Theater movement became insignificant, Chung claimed that the only possible way for Taiwan's Little Theater's to survive in the future was to create a contemporary performing art that "is not Eastern and is also not Western; but at the same

time is traditional and modern” (268). Quintero’s theory further strengthened Chung Mingder’s idea that the possible future of Taiwan’s Little Theater consisted of breaking the ethnic and national limitations while developing Taiwan’s own theater language to represent contemporary Taiwan culture and politics.

Catherine Diamond, a scholar of South-East Contemporary Theater, criticized the “collective improvisation” method that was commonly used among Little Theater groups. She stressed the anti-text tendency which Taiwan’s Little Theater favored from the 1980s could do harm to both playwrights and directors. She said that the using of collective improvisation might generate some good ideas, but it would make playwrights not important in theater, hence they would lose the passion of creating dramas (Diamond 8). Diamond suggested that theater groups needed to develop or adapt Western training methods, such as Stanislavsky⁸ training method for actors, in order to make long-term development (7). She emphasized that it costs time to explore actor’s potential and director’s technique. If there were no government art institutions paying salary to actors, directors, and designers in order to let them work without worrying about income, Taiwan’s theater would not have long-term development (10). In addition, literary critic Jiao Tong indicated that Little Theater has to change its style in order to discover new issues.

To conclude the previous research, the 1980s was a transition for Taiwan’s Little Theater in that it transited from spoken drama to experimental theater and aggressively participated in social and political movements. To explore theater styles, Little Theater

⁸ Developed by the Russian actor, director, and producer Konstantin Stanislavsky. The method asks actor to look into himself to find a personal basis for the emotions required in a scene (Urban Ephemera, 2000).

groups emancipated aesthetics from traditional spoken drama and created their own performance styles by using collage and collective improvisation techniques. Their performances were anti-narrative, anti-text, anti-plot, rejecting proscenium stage, and non-representational mise-en-scene. Theater of the Cruelty, Poor Theater, Bread and Puppet Theater, Theater of the Absurd, and Environmental Theater were their favorite theater styles and theories. To explore social issues, Little Theater adapted techniques of Western Environmental Theater and moved their stages to the street and participated in fighting against political oppression and social injustice.

Theater practitioner Wang Molin and scholar Ji Wei argued that Little Theater was not as aggressive as before. They believed that since social and political taboos no longer existed, Little Theater lost its enemy. Scholar Craig Anthony Quintero and Chung Mingder suggested that Little Theater had to track down to the origin of the culture, care about the modern issues, and study from Western theater at the same time in order to explore new theater styles and topics which could represent Taiwan people's feeling, situation, and life. Catherine Diamond suggested that theater groups should try to adapt Western scripts in order to broaden their visions, as well as to learn training methods from masters in order to provide group members systematic training.

However, the previous studies did not examine the topics and styles of current Little Theater. There is no systematic research about Taiwan's current major theater groups such as Shakespeare's Sisters, Taiwan Walker, Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, and Spring Wind. Most of the research was commentary provided by scholars and it lacked the opinions of theater artists.

This study will focus on examining the current status of Taiwan's Little Theater including the examination of topics, styles, and the issues explored. Since most of the current major theater groups were participants of the movement in the 1980s, next chapter will review the movement before 1990 in order to provide a background before examining the styles and topics those current groups explore.

II. Taiwan's Little Theater Before 1990

A. The Emergence of Little Theater Groups

Since theater scholar Li Mengui advocated the “Little Theater Movement” in Taiwan in 1960, theater performances became popular among theatergoers. However, performances in the 1960s still focused on “spoken drama.” The theater style was realism, and the topics educated young people to “love your country, your family, and people” and were also “anti-communism” (Taiwan Provincial Endowment Center, 2002). Theater groups such as China Spoken Drama Appreciation and Performance Association and China Theater Arts Center were mainly subsidiaries of the military, schools, and the government culture department. There were no private Little Theater groups established. Those subsidiary groups were different from traditional Chinese theater, but neither of them tried to do dramas that were unrealistic, nor did they want to protest the government's authority (Taiwan Provincial Endowment Center, 2002). Taiwan's theater was insignificant until Lan-ling Theater Workshop was formed. Lan-ling Theater Workshop was established in 1980, and afterwards, Little Theater groups began to emerge one by one. From 1980 to 1984, scholar Yao Yiwei launched five “Experimentation Theater Festivals,” which stimulated the emerging of Little Theater groups. Theater scholar Ma Sen wrote in 1984 that “Besides theater associations formed by college students and Lan-ling, there were at least three amateur theater groups: Fan-yuan, Xiao-wu, and Teaspoon” (Ma, “Taiwan Little Theater” 25). Although Little Theater groups in the early 1980s brought “theater heat” to theatergoers, it was not until 1985 that the most important experimental theater groups started to emerge.

According to statistics from the Taipei Theater Association in 1989, there were 34 Little Theater groups in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan (Hu, “Taiwan’s Little Theater Movement”). The most prominent theater groups were Huan-xu Theater, Left Bank Theater, Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, U Theater, Zero Degree Theater, 425 Environmental Theater, and Anti-UO Theater. These theater groups were open to all kinds of topics, theater styles, and techniques, and they were eager to join social movements in order to protest political repression and social injustice. In contrast, theater groups in the early 1980s were more conservative when exploring theater styles and topics, and they did not touch political topics.

B. Little Theater From 1980 to 1986

In 1980, Lang-ling Theater Workshop performed Burden and He Zhu’s New Match in The First Experimental Theater Festival. Burden was a non-verbal play that was presented by performers’ sound and body movements. In addition, it was created by group improvisation and presented in a non-proscenium space. The story was about the bitter love of a young couple.⁹ He Zhu’s New Match was a farce, and the style was a combination of Western modern theater technique and Peking opera. The story was about a call girl, He Zhu, who tried to cheat a millionaire couple into thinking that she was their lost daughter (Chung, Little Theater Movement 48). Theater scholar Chung Mingder wrote that when “Burden and He Zhu first were shown in the First Experimental Theater Festival, audiences were so excited that they applauded and laughed for the

⁹ The researcher is not able to get scripts of the plays that have been mentioned in this research; instead, scholars’ articles and theater reviews will be used when analyzing plays of any theater group.

whole night” (Chung, The Taiwanese Avant-garde 80). These two plays used theater styles and techniques that never appeared in Taiwan’s theater, and the two appropriately represented people’s lives in Taipei city in the early 1980s. This is why it was popular among theatergoers. Lan-ling Theater Workshop provided contributions to Taiwan’s theater. First, Lan-ling’s use of a non-verbal performance style made great progress on Taiwan’s theater. Second, director Jin Shijie and group members created the scripts of Burden and He Zhu through the “collective improvisation” method. This method emphasized that every performer had to participate in creating the script and the whole performance (87). They were not puppets controlled by the director. The “collective improvisation” training and rehearsal method then became the tradition for later theater groups.

Lai Sheng-chuan, the director and founder of The Performance Workshop, a leading commercial theater in Taiwan, used the “collective improvisation” method for creating most of his plays. The Performance Workshop was established in 1986 in Taipei. It’s premiere work, The Night We Became Xiangsheng Comedians¹⁰, that was developed through collaborative improvisation, became a milestone in the development of recent theater in Taiwan for its fusion of tradition and modernity, its innovative creativity, and its powerful performance (Chung 99). The later works of the workshop, such as Variation on Bach, The Circle Story, and The Island and the Other Shore were also developed through group improvisation skills (Chung, Little Theater Movement 104).

10 Xiangsheng is a traditional Chinese stand-up comedy, usually performed by two performers, although it can also be performed by one or more than two performers. The performance depends on the performer who impersonates and describes various kinds of characters and situations (Hou Bao-lin 1982).

Moreover, later theater groups were all adopting this method for rehearsals and creating performance texts (105). Third, group members such as Li Guoxiou and Liu Jingmin later became famous in Taiwan's theater. Li Guoxiou was the director and founder of one of the leading commercial theater groups, Ping-Fong Acting Troup. In 1986, the group was established in Taipei. Its performances cover drama forms such as comedy, tragedy, and also the forms of traditional Chinese opera. They explore social issues like human relationships, historical exploration, the subject of veterans, international political situations concerning mainland China and Taiwan. Li Guoxiou insists that all the plays of Ping-Fong should be original, and the group should be professional, which means it has its own performers, designers, and administration officers as well as systematic management that always lack in other theater groups (125). Liu Jingmin was the director and founder of U Theater, which played a pivotal role in the 1980s' Little Theater movement and still continues as one of the leading theaters in Taiwan (61). The next section of this chapter and also the next chapter will discuss U Theater in more detail.

The Experimental Theater Festival was the first "Little Theater" festival in Taiwan. Afterwards, the festival was held each year from 1980 to 1984, which encouraged many college students and theater practitioners to form theater groups and create plays. During this time, Fangyuan Theater and Xiaowu Theater were two famous Little Theater groups. Fangyuan Theater was founded by Chen Lingling in 1982 in Taipei, whose approach was similar to that of Lanling Theater Workshop. It adopted the collective improvisation technique to create its plays. The production Eight Immortals' Performance combines traditional Chinese theater and contemporary life (79). Xiaowu

Theater did more experimentation on theater space and style. It was founded in 1982 by Cai Mingliang, Wang Youhui, Liu Mei, and Zhang Guoxiang in Taipei. Since their majors were theater and film, they tried to use the techniques of film into theater (Chung, Little Theater Movement 83). In Scenery, Xiaowu used a stage that was in a long, narrow, rectangular shape resembling a train car. The audience was supposed to sit on both sides in order to resemble passengers as well as the scenery so that “The audience even becomes a part of the performance” (Huang Wulan, 1984). The style, that combined film and theater representation skills, became one of Xiaowu’s characteristics. Chung Mingder pointed out that Xiaowu’s theater space experimentation in Scenery was a prototype of Taiwan’s environmental theater (84).

Lan-ling Theater, Fanyuan Theater, and Xiaowu Theater experimented a great deal with theater space, language, styles and techniques that innovate Taiwan’s theater. Before, audiences could only watch traditional dramas or spoken dramas limited by the government’s ideology. Now they could watch modern theater performances with new theater styles and topics. However, the most prominent revolution appeared around 1986. The theater groups around this time were different from Lan-ling and other theater groups in the early 1980s because they were more conservative and they did not touch political topics or criticize social issues. However, Little Theater groups around 1986 such as Left Bank, Huan-xu, Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, U Theater selected more radical topics. They were also more enthusiastic about theater style experimentations. The next section will introduce those theater groups that appeared from 1986 to 1990.

C. Little Theater From 1986 to 1990

Left Bank was formed by Li Huanxiong and Yei Zhizhong in 1985 in Taipei. Li and Yei were members of a theater club in Tamkang University which was called Tamkang Literary Society. They would gather together with club members to read poems and literature, and watch movies. Since they were interested in the arts and concerned about the political and social changes in Taiwan, they decided to form a theater group in order to use theater to express their ideas about the politics (Chung, Little Theater Movement 166). In October 1986, Left Bank Theater performed The Intruders at the New Aspect Theater in Taipei. The Intruders combined three parts: Maurice Maeterlinck's The Intruder, Capote and His Eloise, Li Huanxiong's adaptation of Truman Capote's novel In Cold Blood, and the director Li Huanxiong's narrative. Li used three "intruders": Death intrudes into an old noble family, a young girl intrudes into writer Capote's life, and the director intrudes into the performance to imply that Taiwan was dominated by the Netherlands, Japan, and Kuo Ming Tan (KMT), the democratic party defeated by the Communist Party that fled to Taiwan after WWII (167). Although Taiwan was governed by KMT after WWII, the people of Taiwan thought KMT was not real "Taiwanese" and did not have the right to rule Taiwanese people. Left Bank's performances challenged the authority of KMT by implying it was an intruder to the Taiwan people. Left Bank's second production, The Sun Is Still Shining performed in 1987, again challenged the government's authority. The story was about the repressed memory of Taiwan's history brought by Japan's dominance before WWII and KMT's

political power after WWII. Most of Left Bank's performances adhered to political or historical topics. In 1988, Left Bank Theater launched its "Discover the Unknown Taiwan History" series (179). It was the first time that a Little Theater group used a series of performances to explore the people and issues that were omitted from Taiwan's history by the government's censorship. This series was produced after 1990 and became a valuable project of Left Bank Theater.

In 1987, the Taiwanese government lifted martial law. Censorship no longer existed. Little Theater groups were eager to use theater to express their political ideas. Starting from 1988, Little Theater groups participated in social movements in order to fight against government administration and repression toward dissidents. Chung described the phenomenon of Taiwan's theater around 1988 as going "beyond the Experimental Theater's mainstream aesthetics and politics as accepted by audiences, universities, and the government. They left behind the script-dominated theater, joined social movements, and rejected the Great China ideology"¹¹ (131). Besides Left Bank, Huan-xu Theater was also aggressive in experimenting with theater styles and participating in social movements.

Huan-xu Theater was formed by Li Yongping and Xu Naiwei in 1986 in Taipei. They transferred their love of Western avant-grade movies and music videos to the stage (156). Huan-xu's early performances focused more on the experimentation of theater styles. The first and second productions, The Everlasting Curse I and The Everlasting Curse II, were originated from Chinese mythology. The Everlasting Curse I

¹¹ The government party, KMT, believes that their defeat by Communist Party and exile to Taiwan is temporary. KMT thinks one day they will fight back and regain political power in mainland China.

experimented with lighting effects and imaginative stage design. In The Everlasting Curse II, director Xu Naiwei tried to fragment the narrative and experiment with mise-en-scène¹² (150). In 1987, Huan-xu performed Running Toward the Sunset and The Wolf Appears. The story explored crime, environment pollution problems, and the tense feeling of living in metropolitan areas. It was also an experimentation of mise-en-scène, body movement, language, and stage design (156). Unlike Left Bank, Huan-xu's performances focused more on people's anxiety in modern society than challenging political taboos. However, The Wind of Violence commented on the crack down on dissidents in the 228 Event¹³ (264). Moreover, when politics became a hot topic among Little Theater groups, both Huan-xu and Left Bank joined the fight against government's policies.

In 1989, theater practitioner Zhou Yichang and six theater groups-- Zero Degree, U Theater, Left Bank, Huan-xu, Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, and View Point Theater launched a campaign to save the forests of Taiwan. Theater groups carried big puppets in a parade and performed in the streets. The idea of puppets originated from Peter Schuman's Bread and Puppet Theater. The uncommon size and shape of the puppets drew people's attention and alerted them to the problem of forest destruction. Chung Mingder observed that this campaign was "a successful coalition of Little Theater companies and social movement groups promoting a common cause" (251).

12 I am not able to find documentation of this production. I used scholar Chung Mingder's theater review as information.

13 228 Event was a political riot of Taiwanese people against government's authority and the subsequent crack down by the government on February 28, 1947.

Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, one of the participating groups in the campaign, was the first theater to explore issues of homosexuality, although homosexuality was not the only topic the theater group cared about. It also cared about political repressions and the cultural ideology controlled by the older generation. Formed by Tian Qiyuan in 1988, Critical Point's first play Mao Shi (Mao's Corpse) was a play that challenged the political doctrine¹⁴ and traditional Confucian Chinese culture that had dominated Taiwan for decades by saying that a governor and his student, in ancient times, were a homosexual couple. Since the governor represented the Confucian education system, the metaphor challenged both political and cultural taboos. Scholar Chung Mingder described how the director, Tian Qiyuan, experimented with a new topic, anti-narrative structure, as well as used poetic language in the Mao Shi (246). In Chung's theater review, he wrote:

The performer's restless energy, bordering on fanaticism and desperation--as if they were pursued by some evil power or in fear of persecution--overwhelmed the audience and created pandemonium. The energy along with the resulting chaos was an exact reflection of Taiwan's accelerating social revolution of the time. (Little Theater Movement 247)

A later performance of Critical Point, Socialism in the Capitalized Nude, also brought up the issue of homosexuality to challenge government and social taboos. Its Ge Gong Song De—The 300 Years of Taiwan History presented in 1989 challenged the most tabooed event in Taiwan history—the 228 Event—and retold Taiwan's history from

14 The Three Principles of the People was established by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic of China. The principles are doctrines employed by the government for political administrations. Together with Confucian culture, these were the only principles people were allowed to follow during the time of martial law (1948 to 1987).

an oppressed native Taiwanese' point of view. Critical Point's political awareness led them to join social movements in 1989.

Besides joining the "Save the Forest" campaign, Critical Point also joined 425 Environmental Theater, Zero Degree, U Theater, Huan-xu, and Left Bank to participate in the Camping on Zhong-xiao East Road event. They camped and slept in the most famous commercial district in Taipei in order to publicize the high rent and housing problems that made it unaffordable for citizens. The camp-in had the air of a carnival. Tens of thousands of people were attracted by the friendly communal atmosphere of the peaceful demonstration of music and drama. The morning after, the government quickly responded and promised to take appropriate action (United Daily News 1989).

The Luo-ho Concept Theater Group was founded in 1984 by Lin Guirong. The group was inspired by the Environmental Theater theory in its attempt to break up the traditional concepts of theater space and push for the democratization of public spaces. The original purpose of the performances was to perform poetic dramas or to read poetry as a performance (Chung, Little Theater Movement 192). However, the director and founder Lin Guirong realized that usual performances used concepts that were not powerful enough to awaken people's awareness of social issues and their environment. Luo-ho decided to make street performances that could "participating in people's everyday life, to perform, to express one's own concept, and to influence other people" (192). In 1985, members of Luo-ho produced Intersection, a street performance, in front of the Taipei Train Station. They walked with mechanical gestures, wandered in slow motion, counted the number of tiles on sidewalk, or pointed at people with their

fingers (193). At that time, public gathering in public space was still forbidden. Their action brought a great deal of attention from citizens, the media, and policemen. Performers were arrested for interrupting traffic. In July 1986, the group launched another street performance. The Intersection was also part of this performance. The performance was again interrupted by police. According to Chung Mingder's observation, he thought the group's intention to "walk out on bourgeois theater structure" seemed unsuccessful (194). However, it was the first theater group to challenge the government's restriction on public space and to experiment with environmental theater. Luo-ho's effort led other theater groups toward environmental theater experimentation and broke public space taboo. In 1988, Theater practitioners Wang Mo-lin and Zhou Yi-chang produced Expel the Evil from Lan-yu Island to protest the government's construction of a nuclear waste storage dump on a beautiful offshore island of Taiwan. According to Chung Mingder's observation, there were about one hundred people, including residents of Lan-yu Island, tourists, anti-nuclear activists, and Little Theater workers participating in this environmental theater. All the participants paraded, beat prop drums, or raised big puppets. The protest ended with speeches in front of the nuclear-waste dump and submitting a petition to the official (239). Due to Wang and Chou's theater performance, Little Theater "moved like a 'political avant-garde brigade' away from its aesthetic casings and became a 'war machine' of the social movements" (242). Following Expel the Evil From Lan-yu Island, most of the named Little Theater groups participated in social events and movements.

U Theater was another group that focused on environmental theater experimentation. The founder and director, Liu Jingmin, was a student of Jerzy Grotowski. She produced Medea on the Mountain staged on a mountain in Taipei County in 1987. The performance was actually a Grotowski Technique workshop.¹⁵ The director chose an outdoor performance space to familiarize members with the environment in which they lived. Since the performance was a peaceful training workshop, it was held at night and gathered people at a public space that challenged the government's martial law. Medea reformed theater style by using Grotowski's training method to inspire members' awareness of body movements and space (200). Although U Theater produced Retry Wei Jing-sheng in 1989 to express their sorrow for the victims of the 228 Event, the civil war between Taiwanese and Chinese immigrants after World War II, and to criticize the cultural suppression and the violation of human rights in Taiwan. The main focus of U Theater was to explore theater styles, cultural origin, and the bodies of the performers (209). In 1990, U Theater built an outdoor theater on the mountain for use as a training and performance space. It was the first theater group that used Grotowski's training method and focused on tracing the origin of Taiwan culture. U Theater intended to explore topics that could represent Taiwan culture and ancient philosophy (211).

Besides Zou Yichang's Save The Forest campaign, in the same year, 425 Environmental Theater also launched Meng-mu 3000, a street theater to protest the government's housing policy which made it nearly impossible for young people to buy a

15 Jerzy Grotowski reduced the theater to some basic elements: the actors and an audience. His aim was for the actor to make a "total gift of himself" to the audience. He believed that actors had to have powerful physical discipline. Those who saw the performances were impressed by the actors' "strength, control, and concentration as they attempted to give physical form to intense states of mind." ("Tradition and Technique." The History and Science of Acting. < <http://www.linksnorth.com/acting/tradition.html>>).

house and forced them to pay high rent. Most of the theater groups during this time were focused both on the experimentation of style and political topics. However, some theaters were formed for protesting against political taboos. Anti-Ghost Theater produced Totem and Taboo to fight the patriarchal totem of the president Chiang Kai-shek. Another production Sacrifice of Luo Wen-jia attacked the dead president Chiang Kai-shek and the mythology he created in order to control the country. Zero Degree and Huan-xu's 520 protested the military and police brutality in suppressing protesting peasants in the 520 Incident.

The 1980s was a period of transition for Taiwan's Little Theater, which changed from spoken drama to experimental theater and became Avant-grade Theater. Meanwhile, Little Theater groups emancipated theater aesthetics from traditional spoken drama and created their own theater aesthetics. It used collage, group improvisation and collective creation techniques to create performances that were anti-narrative, anti-text, anti-plot that rejected proscenium stage, and non-representational mise-en-scène. Theater practitioners studied Theater of the Cruelty, Poor Theater, Bread and Puppet Theater, Theater of the Absurd, and Environmental Theater and employed those theater theories and techniques to their productions. Not satisfied with the reform of styles, Taiwan's Little Theater moved its stage to the street. It participated in fighting against political oppression and social injustice.

In the 1990s, although theater practitioners and scholars all agreed that Taiwan's Little Theater was facing decline, there were still many theater groups left and many new theater groups were emerging. For instance, some new theater styles such as

Postmodern Theater, Theater of Images, Community Theater, Legislative Theater, and Labor's Theater were appearing in Taiwan. Earlier, Little Theater groups were formed in Taipei, but gradually, more and more local theaters in other counties were founded that represented the lives of local people. Many theater artists were still active after 1990. They kept producing new plays every year. Their productions are significant in contemporary Taiwan's Little Theater. Next chapter will introduce their productions after 1990. It will also examine what theater techniques they use and what aesthetics they explore, as well as what issues they currently focus on.

III. Taiwan's Little Theater 1990 to Present

A. Current Theater Groups Organized Before 1990

The lifting of martial law in 1987 and the reelection of the parliamentary bodies in 1990 marked the beginning of democracy in Taiwan. Since the "Provisionary regulations for the period of suppression of the [Communist] rebellion"¹⁶ lifted in 1991, and the National Assembly was reelected for the first time since 1948, political taboos were no longer as significant in Taiwan (Rubinstein 34). Democracy impacted Little Theater since some groups were originally founded for social movements such as Anti UO Theater and Anti-Ghost Theater. Most of the groups chose topics according to political or social issues, such as Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, U Theater, Left Bank, and 425 Environmental Theater. Their intention was to use drama to reveal societal problems. These theaters cared about political suppression and social issues such as environment pollution and stifled education. Accompanying democracy was the lifting of limitations on issuing newspapers and electronic media. Those forms of media were more effective tools for criticizing political and social issues than theater. Because of this, Anti UO, Anti-Ghost, and 425 Environmental Theater disbanded in 1990 (Chung, Little Theater Movement 274). Before participating in social movements, many theater groups focused on exploring theater styles. After the movement in the late 1980s, they came back to theater style experimentation. For example, U Theater shifted its focus from politics to folk art and religious culture (Li Liheng). Critical Point also stopped producing performances about politics. Instead, it focused on homosexuality and

¹⁶ Announced in 1947, the law agreed the unlimited right of the president to issue emergency decrees. ("A Brief History of Taiwan." <<http://www.taiwan-info.de/html/english/TWPAPERe.htm>>).

minority issues (Wang Weilian). Huan-xu disbanded in 1992 due to bad management. Left Bank Theater kept exploring topics about suppression in the years of martial law and Taiwan history (Chung, The Taiwanese Avant-garde 156). After 1990, there were more theater groups emerging. The first part of this chapter will discuss three current theater groups organized before 1990: Left Bank Theater, U Theater, and Critical Point Theater Phenomenon. It will also introduce four theater groups organized after 1990: Taiwan Walker Theater, Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group, Stalker Theater Group, and Spring Wind Art Theater. These theater groups will be discussed because they are significant to theater style experimentation and the exploration of new topics. This chapter will examine the topics and styles of the current theater groups organized before and after 1990, provide interview results with founders of the above-mentioned groups as with theater scholar Chung Mingder to show their opinions about the current status of Taiwan's Little Theater and what they believe can be done in the future.

Left Bank Theater

One of the senior Little Theater groups in Taiwan, Left Bank Theater has continuously produced plays after 1990. In the previous movement, Left Bank expressed an extremely unique quality with its repressed and introspective theater styles, strong literary language, and active social participation. After the movement, the group still questions, and even criticizes, the authorities (Li Huanxong). Left Bank produces one work each year to show how contemporary intellectuals are concerned about Taiwan's history. Therefore, the first ten years of the group's creative process displays a

clear and complete development. I Want to Eat My Shoe and The Burglars touch upon the individual's inner search for life. The Intruder and The Sun Is Still Shining discuss the middle class and the extreme social changes. At the end of the 1980s, the group was devoted to the search of the contemporary history of Taiwan, and further emphasized the historical incidents and people through the performance. "Facing Taiwan's History" series was the beginning of the process. The Maze series was the first phase of the "Facing Taiwan's History" series started in the summer of 1988. After the first work of the Maze series, An Island Without An Axis, they finished a story about anarchism in the twenties, and Farewell to the Sea, a trilogy telling the stories of well-known victims from Hua-lien in the 228 Incident. The work Lai-ho (1994) was produced in memory of the father of Taiwan's modern literature, Lai-ho, at his one-hundredth-birthday anniversary (TPEC, "Little Theater Will Never Stop.").

After 1990, Li Huanxiong began to write plays about Taiwan's history and every phenomenon of modern life. The new directors of Left Bank also produced plays about gender issues. However, one of the directors thinks Left Bank has a "burden" because people will keep talking about how alternative it was in the previous movement. He says the young generation may be more alternative than this generation. It is better to leave Left Bank's past behind and look into the future. After the summer of 1994, Left Bank entered a new stage. Senior members either quit the stage or went on temporary leave. In order to enjoy more creative freedom, Li Huanxiong worked with Wei Yingjuan, Ji Weiran and other theater practitioners and co-founded the Creative Society. In Creative Society, directors or playwrights can experiment with styles other than the

styles being explored by their own groups. The core members of the Left Bank, Chan Pinxiou, Chan Weicheng, and Liu Xouyao led the group to explore new issues of feminism and eroticism. They also focused on body training. The start of the body exploration and training program was in 1995. At the end of the training program, director Liu Xouyao presented Angels in America in Taipei and Chan Pinxiou presented Maze—The Holy Land by using the technique of the training program (Left Bank Website). New directors explored new topics even after the founding of the group 18 years ago. In 2001, director Chan Mingxiou presented Murde(h)er Scene, an adaptation of the film Boys Don't Cry which explores discrimination against homosexuals.¹⁷ Director Jian Fuqin presented The Mutation Plan, the first production of the New Age series. The scientific play talks about the changes in life in the 21st century. It is mixed with a variety of new media such as director Wu Junhui's film clips, artist Lin Junting's technology installation, and musician Dino's industrial music (Liao 66-67). Left Bank started with theater style experimentation, explored political topics and social movements, explored the history of Taiwan, and went back to explore theater styles, body movements, gender issues, and modern people's lives.

U Theater

After U Theater presented Retry Wei Jinsheng, a play that mourned the victims in the 228 Event in February 28, 1947, it stopped producing plays related to political or social issues. Instead, U Theater launched the "Plan of Tracing Back" to try to explore

¹⁷ Left Bank Website. 1 Jan. 2004. < <http://www.wmw.com.tw/rivegauche/>>.

Chinese body was.¹⁸ After the Little Theater movement, U Theater focused on actor training and explored traditional Chinese folk arts. Director Liu Jingmin believed that strict training and practice were basic training programs for U's actors in order to "forget their own bodies," and then to get back their "Chinese bodies." The Zhong Kuei's Death, a play adapted from traditional Chinese folktale about a legend "ghost hunter", performed in 1989, was the first play using the "Plan of Tracing Back" method. The clothing design of the Taiwanese Puppet Theater and the funeral music were two basic elements in this play. After Zhong Kuei, Liu found that the performers still could not understand the concept of a "Chinese body" because the Chinese and the Taiwanese were different. The "Chinese body" was different from the "Taiwanese body" in that the former focused on "forgetting the body" while the latter was real and simple. The actors of U Theater switched to explore the Taiwanese body through studying Taiwan's traditional crafts, folk arts, and religious rituals. They began with the study of various traditional Taiwanese folk and performance arts like cheku (drumming parades), stilt walking, peikuan (traditional music), pa-chia-chiang (ceremonial striding), and others.

In 1993, Huang Zhiwen, a member of U Theater who had just returned from a spiritual retreat in India, took up the post of percussion supervisor. From this time forward, U Theater's performers began taking lessons in meditation and relaxation. It was also at this time that the group created U Theater's "Sacred Drumming" based on traditional lion dance drumming. Subsequently, the U Sacred Drum Practice Center was established

18 The theory of "Chinese body" is indicated by Liu Jingmin in her "The Plan of Tracing Back" method. She thinks Chinese students are influenced by Western theater theories and training methods to the extent that they gradually lose their "Chinese body." Through the studying of Chinese philosophy, martial arts, and strict training, they will rediscover their "Chinese body." (Lin Mingliang, "Another Space: Contemporary Legend Theater and U Theater." <<http://140.113.96.115/b1/J-28/art4.htm>>).

with the aim of combining performance arts with age-old drumming techniques. The following year, U Theater visited India to begin a project of “self-discovery.” In 1996, U Theater made an epic journey through Taiwan’s mountains on foot walking and performing at local temples. During this time they performed U Theater Sacred Drum - Walking the Heights of Taiwan in different towns and townships. After performing Walking the Heights of Taiwan, members of U Theater went back to its theater on the mountain. After six months of working with the soil, flowers, insects, and birds on the mountain, the group presented Our Days of Growing Flowers (1997) in their mountainside theater (Lin Mingliang). The group continues to explore actors’ bodies and traditional Taiwan culture, attempting to employ physical methods and theory from both Oriental and Western theater. U Theater’s performances are very popular in Taiwan. It is also very welcome by other countries and is invited to the Avignon Dramatic Art Festival, Biennale de la Danse de Lyon, and some theater festivals in Spain, Italy, German, Korea, and Singapore. However, scholar Liao Jinyi criticizes that U Theater for creating “Asian illusion” to please Western audiences (Liao, “Re-read”).

Critical Point Theater Phenomenon

After using theater to challenge social taboos on homosexuality, political taboos of authority, and cultural taboos of traditional Chinese Confucian doctrines, Critical Point Theater Phenomenon (CPTP) still produced many plays after 1990. Led by artistic director Tien Qiyuan, CPTP has generated about eighty original works. It was the first theater group to show concern about the homosexual minority in society. The White

Serpent (July, 1993) adapted from a popular Chinese legend, was the most famous play of CPTF. The story talked about the love between a human being and serpent as well as the power struggle between a god and a goblin. However, director Tien Qiyuan changed the heterosexual love story to a homosexual one. All the characters in this play were played by male actors in order to challenge the audiences' stereotypes on the so called "love story." The Homosexuality Time (September, 1994) showed the emotional struggles between homosexual lovers. In September 1995, inspired by Roland Barthes' Fragments D'un Discours Amoureux, Tian Qiyuan produced Marly Marleen. Played by two actresses, the play talked about the subtle emotional relationship between two women. The play Marly Marleen was invited to perform in The First Hong Kong International Feminism Theater Festival. In this performance, the play was combined with another story, Jony Jonathan, using two male characters to play Marly Marleen. This production used actors of the opposite sex to play the same story in order to break sexual distinctions.¹⁹

Using stories of Western classic plays and changing the background to Taiwan contemporary society was one of Critical Point's focuses. In 2004, young director Wang Weilian produced Bertolt Brecht's Mother Courage And Her Children. The director changed the story to Taiwan's contemporary political status. The story is about the benefit exchange between politician and citizen, between politician and politician, and between citizen and citizen. Wang Weilian says that for a dramatist, any issue can be a topic. He prefers to interpret Shakespeare and Anton Chekhov's plays and fit them

19 Ada. "Theater Review: Marly Marleen+Jony Jonathan." Elmbook.
<<http://www.elmbook.com/penfarm.asp#m>>.

into Taiwan's social context. Other adaptations include director Wang Yijie's Proclamation At Night (December, 2002) adapted from German novelist Agota Christof's novel Hier. This Is Not a Small Piece, by script writer/director Mao Ya-feng, is a collage of four plays by English playwright Harold Pinter. The director used different ways to express episodes of Pinter's Silence, Slight Ache, That Night and Betrayal (Zhan Huiling).

From 1990 to the present, Critical Point shifted its focus from political issues to gender issues. It became more concerned with relationships between homosexuals, with feminism, people's struggles in modern society, and social problems.

B. Current Groups Organized After 1990

Taiwan Walker Theater

Taiwan Walker was established in 1992 in Taipei by Chen Meimao and Yang Changyan, members of the disbanded Huan-xu Theater, a core group of the 1980s Little Theater movement. Taiwan Walker Theater stated that they would not follow the trend of doing performances that please audiences. Taiwan Walker Theater focused on criticizing Taiwan's cultural phenomenon. Early plays such as Love Is A Wonderful Shit (December, 1992), Mary Scooter 1993 (May, 1993), and Who Will Give Me A Shit (December, 1993) focus on using local circus techniques to perform comedies. After 1994, Taiwan Walker changed its style to a mixture of wandering singers, radio shows, and similar types of early Taiwan folk entertainment style. Ji Weiran says that Taiwan Walker uses "parody" to criticize media culture (Ji 48). The introduction on their

website says, “The plays are never boring; they are always comedy. It creates a mood for the audience to be soaked in. We like audiences to feel the exotic but native mood. Everything goes on absurdly, but with a heart of humanity inside” (Yang, Taiwan Walker Website). Yang Changyan says, “We will always go on search for the new element, and challenge every topic.” In her works Love Is A Wonderful Shit, she described an old-fashion love triangle between a gay and a lesbian. Taiwan Walker leaves the Western academic teachings behind and reverts back to a native way of doing theater. Art director Chen Meimao says “We do adopt interesting elements from others, east and west, old and new. But once in our hand, it’s sure to be a Walker. There is no telling what’s the reality in our play, but people always find the real feeling in heart” (Chen, Taiwan Walker Website). Taiwan Walker’s focus is to observe people’s lives and local culture to create a new and interesting native theater. In 1995, Taiwan Walker Theater established Taiwan Walker Café Theater in Taipei, which was a combination of coffee shop and performance space. Until The Café Theater closed in 1997, it was an important performance space for Little Theater groups. There were many little theater festivals such as “The Fourth Class Superstar Festival” and “Taiwan Gay/Lesbian Arts Festival” held in the Café Theater.

Shakespeare’s Wild Sisters Group

Established in 1995, the Shakespeare’s Wild Sisters Group (SWSG) owes its name to the fictional character in Virginia Woolf’s novel A Room of One’s Own. The group focuses on exploring gender and minority issues. Wei Ying-chuan, the founder and

director-in-resident, received her MA degree from the Educational Theater Department of New York University. Not limiting itself to specific issues or conventional aesthetics, everything can inspire SWSG to create its works (SWSG Website). Most of the Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group's members started their partnership of staging theatrical productions in their college years. They were members of the Drama Club of National Taiwan University (NTU). These partnerships continued strongly after their graduation and led to the birth of the SWSG in 1995 with its debut production A Boring Life. This was written and directed by its chief creative artist Wei Ying-chuan. Wang Chia-ming, a core member of the SWSG, directed Ebola: A Pure Rational Critique of the Ethics of Virus in December of 2000 in Taipei and enriched the Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group's creativity with a new perspective. Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group's performances focused on stage design, costume design, body movement, and non-verbal communication between performers. It explored subjects such as homosexuality, people's lives in modern society, feminism and minorities. Wei Yingjuan says that SWSG's style is more about directors' personal aesthetics. Concerning topics, she says she will continue to deal with feminism and minority topics.

Stalker Theater Group

Stalker Theater Group was established in 1994. Ping Yan is the art director, and Yan Hongya (Hong Hong) is responsible for the overall planning and execution of the performances. Stalker aims to recruit theater artists who have received professional training including experienced designers, and artists in the dance and music fields

(Stalker Theater Website < <http://www.cca.gov.tw/test/proj1/frame.htm>>). Its productions include the staging of classical plays interpreted in an experimental style and new scripts by Taiwan's playwrights. They note Bertolt Brecht saying, "Classics should be interpreted creatively and actively." Stalker's way to interpret classics creatively and actively is to switch the backgrounds of Western classical plays to Taiwan's contemporary society. The debut, Three Revenges and One Trail—The Birth of Democracy, is an adaptation of Aeschylus' Oresteia. The play criticizes the social movements around 1996 in Taiwan that those movements disturbing people's daily lives without resulting in any useful policies. In June 1995, Yan Hongya adapted Eugene Ionesco's The Lesson and switched the setting to Taiwan. It accused the stifling educational system of killing students' creativity and imagination. In October 2003, Stalker staged Memories From Afar in the CKS Cultural Center's "New Idea" series that selected a wide spectrum of performances by groups from different generations. Memories From Afar combined Harold Pinter's Celebration and Caryl Churchill's Far Away -- two plays with contemporary themes. The two plays were written in the same year (2000) and both deal with the theme of war. Celebration presents a war that turns two people from lovers to strangers, while Far Away presents the endless conflicts around the world and people's increasing tolerance of inhumanity. The two plays, one written by a male and the other by a female, provided different point of views. Audiences may compare their differences when the two are placed together. Director Yan Hongya replaced the old English pop songs in Celebration with Chinese pop ballads in order to show that the themes of two plays can also work in Taiwan. He says Stalker

Theater Group will continue to interpret Western theater classics or literature masterpieces and relate those works to Taiwan's modern society. However, it also welcomes and encourages young dramatists to write creative plays (Yan Hongya).

Spring Wind Art Theater

Most of the theater groups are in northern Taiwan, especially in Taipei. Spring Wind Art Theater started as a community theater that focused on planning performance and art festivals in southern Taiwan. It was founded in 1987 in Kaoshung by Chen Ziyang with the name Spring Wind Art Workshop. Later in 1996, the name changed to Spring Wind Culture Basic Level. It is now called Spring Wind Art Theater. Not just a festival planner, Spring Wind also has many young directors who produce many original plays each year. The topics of Spring Wind emphasize the local people and society. The director Liao Juncheng (Baboo) says the goal of Spring Wind is to explore issues about Kaoshong citizens' lives. In 2002, it presented Wind Blows Pier 13 using theater to talk about the history of Pier 13 in Kaoshong City, the metropolitan area in southern Taiwan. It was set the day before a typhoon in order to use wind and rain to metaphorically depict the unpredictable future of human life. Another style of Spring Wind is to present common problems in usual life. Director Baboo's For Borges puts together a collage of the signs and images in Jorge Luis Borges' novels to create a play. The stage is set as a maze to show the complicated time, place, culture, and relationships between people. The story attempts to reveal modern people's anxieties due to the difficulty of finding their own positions in history.

Besides the aforementioned Little Theater groups that emerged after 1990, there are also some newly founded groups that are highly creative and can present Taiwan's characteristics. Golden Bough was established by Wang Rongyu in Taipei. It fuses the different ideas of modern and traditional theater arts and creates plays that show concern for local people and nature. Liu Chun Chun Theater (Willow Spring) founded by Zheng Zhizhong, a former member of Critical Point Theater Phenomenon, focuses on exploring interactions between people. Tai Shun Street Chorus was formed by two art major students Yang Shufen and Su Huiyu. Their performances focus on multimedia installations and visual effects. Riverbed Theater focuses on Theater of Images. The group was formed by Anthony Craig Quintero, a Northwestern University theater major who loved Taiwan's Little Theater culture. The Next Wave Theater Troupe is made up of graduates from the National Taiwan University of Arts. Founded in 2003, the group's two productions Romeo and Juliet and As Ants Nibble, Lady Macbeth Rhapsody characterized the group's focus: revamping Shakespeare, making the Elizabethan playwright's masterpiece time travel to present day Taipei (Taipei Times Archive).

Moreover, there are several Little Theater groups that have specific functions, such as Mission Troupe and Modern Form Theater. Established in Taipei, Mission Troupe started community teaching activities in different towns and counties in Taiwan based on the theme of the theater workshop. Modern Form Theater (in Chinese, it means "the top fascination") was formed in Tainan City in southern Taiwan and is Taiwan's only group formed by elders. The group shows the different point of views of people of different ages.

Little Theater groups after 1990 were more concerned about gender issues, traditional arts, local developments, and modern people's lives. Compared to the movement before 1990, the topics are more varied and designs such as stage, light, clothes are more valued. The multimedia techniques were common in performances after 1990. In order to provide in-depth research about the current status of Taiwan's Little Theater and the future development, next chapter will examine the opinions of theater experts. They have criticized Taiwan Little Theater's current status and have analyzed future developments.

IV. Conclusion

The Little Theater movement first appeared in Taiwan in 1980 and was well known by the Taiwanese people at the end of the 1980s. While only three Little Theater groups were registered in 1985, twelve were registered in 1988 alone, and current estimates indicate between twenty and forty active, established Little Theater groups. In the two decades since the movement began, Little Theater's actors and directors have experimented a great deal with theater styles and actively participated in social movements, trying to use theater to reveal the time and place in which they lived.

The spirit of Taiwan's Little Theater is revolt. Lan-ling revolted against the deadly fixed style of traditional Chinese drama, and the theater movement from 1986 to 1989 revolted against the suppression of local voice and the manipulation of national sources by political monopoly. In 1990, the democratic political environment and a variety of information resources caused Little Theater to lose its enemies—the autocratic government. Theater groups lost focus on exploring styles and issues in the early 1990s. Theater groups had to come back and ask themselves: What is theater?

In the late 1980s, Little Theater was well known by the Taiwanese people and scholars because of the alternative theater styles and its participation in social movements. Participating in social movements or challenging political taboos were the most prominent characteristics of Taiwan's Little Theater. However, artists all agree that using theater to criticize political issues is currently unnecessary. Li Huanxiong emphasizes that Left Bank joined social movements in the 1980s because martial law, patriarchy, and a conservative society limited freedom. Little Theater performance was

a channel for people to express their ideas. Now, people find other way to express dissent so using theater to do so is not as effective. Wei Yingjuan agrees that she would rather discuss how people behave toward each other in her plays than discuss politics. Wang Weilian says he focuses on exploring social injustice. He believes criticizing social injustice is still important in Little Theater plays. Taiwan Walker Theater cares about social issues such as the status of prostitutes and the native Taiwanese. However, art director Chen Meimao emphasizes that they will try to prevent becoming a political theater. He thinks that the many call-in shows on television make it unnecessary to talk about politics over and over again in theater. Li Liheng agrees the previous function, the instant response to political and social issues, is substituted by call-in shows. Little Theater has to change focus and concentrate on exploring styles, art, and techniques.

Afterwards, Little Theater groups began to explore new issues and new styles. They explored topics about people's lives in contemporary Taiwan. Stalker Theater Group explored Western classics trying to adapt stories and relate them to Taiwan's social background. Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group and Critical Point Theater Phenomenon concentrated on feminism, homosexuality, and minority issues. For theater styles, Golden Bough Theater turned to emphasizing traditional skills, Assignment Theater employed the techniques of the People's theater, and Taiwan Walker Theater focused on criticizing social issues. Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group, Left Bank focused on developing particular aesthetics, U Theater explored cultural characteristics, Waterbed and Tai Shun Street Chorus experimented with techniques of multimedia or cross-discipline arts, and Spring Wind Theater used the theory of Theater

of Images to create plays. Their experimentation included the build-up of social and sexual issues with the dialogue with Western modern art trends as well as actor training methods.

Since “collective improvisation” was common among Little Theater groups in the 1980s, scripts seemed not as important for theater groups. However, most artists agree that compared to the previous movement, they now pay more attention to publishing scripts. Li Huanxiong says script was not an important element in Left Bank’s previous productions. Now, he plans to spend a great deal of time on writing the script, but he will keep it flexible and make some changes depending on performers’ representations during rehearsal. Wang Weilian also thinks the script is important. In 2003, in order to highlight playwriting, Critical Point held a script festival, inviting thirty-three playwrights to present their new scripts. Yan Hongya says scripts are important for Stalker Theater and most of their plays are based on scripts, especially the Western classics. Only a few of Stalker’s plays are created in rehearsal. Wang Jiamin thinks Chinese scripts have not developed well although Little Theater has now started to pay attention to them. Chen Meimao thinks some good Little Theater scripts should be kept just in case other theater groups want to stage them. However, Wei Yingjuan insists on having scripts finished during rehearsal. She adjusts scripts depending on how well performers can do in order to allow them to perform their best. Liao Juncheng prefers to use Theater of Images style to present his ideas. Language is not important in his plays.

This study systematically examined research about Little Theater after the 1980s movement. It looked at topics that Taiwan's Little Theater groups explored in their plays in order to focus on new directions for the theater. It also examined how Little Theater groups used topics to reveal the current status of the society and the people in Taiwan. Moreover, Taiwan is now in a period where tradition and modernism overlap. This study examined how Little Theater artists could find their positions when dealing with topics and creative plays at this specific time. Examining Little Theater's current status as well as interviewing theater experts and artists helped determine whether something new was needed for the future.

Taiwan's Little Theater is accepted by young people, mostly students. In a lot of the theaters spaces theater groups perform in, everyone is sitting on the floor elbow-to-elbow, knee-to-knee. It is much more intimate between performers and audience because the audience is closer, therefore making it easier for performers to communicate with the audience. Theater artists' and audiences' enthusiasm is the motivation that encourages theater groups to explore more topics and styles. Chung Mingder says Little Theater has to understand the younger generation's needs. He observes that young people around twenty to thirty years old care about love and entertainment, and they are full of creativity. He says that if the topics Little Theater groups choose are what young people like, then they will go to theater to watch performances.

Facing the emerging younger generation, artists all claim they will keep their styles. They will not change their styles to accommodate what the young generation wants. Hong-hong and Li Huanxiong both believe the young generation will create its own

theater styles if they are not satisfied with what Little Theater has now. Wei Yingjuan says more and more young people do not like serious topics so they may stop watching performances, but her group focuses specifically on intellectuals, not the mass market, so she is not threatened. Chung Mingder stresses that people have seen many stunning performances so they will not be repelled only if the performance is not creative. The young generation has many other ways to express itself such as writing poems, filming, and painting. Those art forms compete with theater. Little Theater groups have to think about what will attract audiences. Li Huanxiong indicates that Tai Shun Street Chorus is a good example of a young generation theater group. Its artists focus on body movements and installation arts, and they do not care about scripts. Their style is distinct, and they know what they want. Liao Juncheng thinks it is important to understand how to attract the younger generation.

However, Li Huanxiong thinks new theater groups will not last long because they are surrounded by speedy electronic media, and new theater groups desire instant response and success. Although theater communicates face-to-face with audiences, it cannot be faster than the Internet. A theater group has to spend at least ten years experimenting in order to have its own style. The young generation does not have patience to wait for it. If they form groups and produce plays, it is just because they want to have fun.

Yan Hongya thinks a new Little Theater movement is not necessary in the future. Instead, he believes steady development of styles and aesthetics is better for theater groups. Wei Yingjuan observes that if there is a next movement, it will focus on international city culture exchanges. She says the first phase of the movement will

focus on fighting against government structure, and the second phase will focus on examining theater styles. In a hypothetical third phase, theater groups will have to interact with other countries' theater groups and directors. Wang Weilian thinks Taiwan's Little Theater changes frequently, but he cannot determine whether or not a movement will happen in the future because he cannot see that the current groups have the focus necessary for a movement. Li Huanxiong also thinks there will not be a future movement because he cannot see any motivation in this generation. He observes that Little Theater is currently not active. He says if a future movement happens, it will happen in the next generation. Chen Meimao has the same opinion as Wang and Li's and says that there is no spontaneity in the current status. If there is a next phase movement, it will be triggered by a very special issue, but he cannot see anything special at the moment. Liao Juncheng thinks that if there is a next movement, it will happen because an artist will develop a new theater style.

Wei Yingjuan suggests that Taiwan's Little Theater cannot avoid influences from Western theater. The most important thing is to explore each group's particular style in order to stand out in the cultural globalization trend that makes different cultures look similar. Wang Jiamin thinks the most important thing for Taiwan's Little Theater currently is to explore theater spaces, performance arts, techniques, and aesthetics. He also emphasizes that Taiwan has to connect to the world, especially those countries in which the people speak Chinese such as China, Singapore, and Malaysia. In order to discuss the problem of how to develop Taiwan's Little theater, we have to consider the possible developments in those countries.

Wang Weilian also agrees that Taiwan Little Theater's development cannot ignore interaction with Mainland China. Because of political issues, in the previous theater movement, theater groups were eager to disconnect the cultural relationship between Mainland China and Taiwan. However, Wang believes the current theater groups can get rich resources from China such as the traditional and modern plays, mythologies, folk theaters, ritual, and traditional acting techniques such as Peiking opera, Kunqu, and other theaters.

On the other hand, Wang says that promotion is also important for current theater groups. Yan Hongya agrees with Wang's point of view that Taiwan's Little Theater groups is unique, and they deserve more audiences. They should do more publicity in order to allow people to be more aware of them. Li Huanxiong says that all the theater styles that theater groups employ needed thirty to fifty years in order to reach maturity. Although Taiwan's Little Theater absorbs theater theories and techniques faster than other countries, it also passes by quicker. Chan Meimao suggests that theater groups should produce plays about Taiwan's people and develop topics that deal with the problems in Taiwan. Li Liheng thinks that if Taiwan's Little Theater groups want to perform in other countries, the artists as well as the techniques such as lighting, stage design, and costume design are essential, but current theater groups lack the latter elements. Taiwan's Little Theater has to interact with the audience. He thinks that the system of Taiwan's Little Theater has not developed well. New plays are not highly anticipated by audiences. Li Liheng suggests that theater groups should know that they are one of a variety of entertainment. Their competitors are film, television, live

concerts, and baseball. Liao Juncheng also agrees that since the new generation can access any media and get a variety of information, current theater groups face more difficult challenges.

Theater artists all believe Taiwan's Little Theater will keep developing. They think Little Theater provides a variety of angles for people to see things. Artists are dedicated to explore new topics and new issues. They believe once Taiwan society starts to change again in political and cultural realms, Little Theater will create something to respond to the emerging new topics and new issues.

The performance environment is currently better developed than it was in the 1980s. There are more and more theaters being established. In Taipei, there are many professional theaters including the Experimental Theater of CKS Cultural Center, the Guling Street Avant-garde Theater, and Crown Theater. Outside Taipei, there are many local theaters and community theaters. Besides the establishing of theaters, there are a great deal of theater festivals and academic conferences held each year. Asia Pacific Little Theater Festival, Guling Street Avant-garde Theater Festival, The Wave Art Festival, Little Theater New Wave, and Pingfeng Theater Festival are held yearly to encourage Little Theater groups to create new productions full of experimentation spirit as well as to allow Theater groups to study each other.

Constance D'Arcy Mackay in The Little Theater in the United States says "Without the impetus of the Little Theater, there probably would have been no Gordon Craig, no Stanislavski, no Reinhardt" (Mackay 4). After Mackay's research was published in 1917, more names should be added to the list including Eugene Ionesco,

Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, Antoine Artaud, and Grotowski. Theater theories such as Artaud's Theater of the Cruelty, Brecht's Epic Theater, Grotowski's Poor Theater, and Richard Schechner's Environmental Theater come from Little Theater which then greatly impacted modern theater worldwide. Those outstanding theater artists and playwrights influenced Taiwan's Little Theater. However, Taiwan's Little Theater leaders wonder when our artists and playwrights will influence the world's theater on styles and topics. Li Huanxiong and Wei Yingjuan emphasize that the most important thing for Taiwan's Little Theater is to develop styles that can represent Taiwan and Taiwan Little Theater's characteristics. Since 1945, when KMT was defeated by the Communist Party and established temporary government in Taiwan, even after five decades of separation, Taiwanese people were not certain whether they belonged to China or whether they were independent. This confusion has always been the result of political disputes, and the topic of Taiwan Little Theater's plays. On the other hand, Taiwanese people are quick to study the cultures of other countries, and the people are able to create modern Taiwan culture which is a combination of Western and Eastern cultures. Taiwan has many different traditional cultures that include Chinese culture, Taiwanese culture, and native Taiwanese culture. Those traditional cultures are rich resources for Little Theater groups that provide history, stories, ritual, and performance techniques for theater artists when they create their performances. The political and cultural phenomena make Taiwan and Taiwan's Little Theater unique in the world.

This research provides an overview of the current Little Theater development in Taiwan. However, there are some areas have not been discussed. Taiwan's Little

Theater groups have to interact with other countries' theater groups. However, those theater groups worldwide have the potential to become Taiwan groups' competitors. Moreover, theater groups have to compete with other Chinese speaking countries such as China, Singapore, and maybe Malaysia. They also have to compete with the theater groups from other Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, or India. In the future, research about the comparison of Little Theater in Asian countries is needed. Research about the development of acting and actors' training methods in Taiwan's Little Theater groups is also lacking. Research is also needed in the future systematically analyzing Taiwan's theater environment, examining how theater groups promote their plays and how they can capture their audiences. Since Wei Yingjuan thinks the government's support is important for current Little Theater groups, the culture department's subsidiary and long-term culture plans is also an important research topic.

Taiwan's Little Theater is a special phenomenon. This research is a current status examination of topics, styles, and development of Taiwan's Little Theater. Hopefully, it will be a useful resource for those who are interested in the Little Theater in Taiwan.

Bibliography

- Ada. "Theater Review: Marly Marleen+Jony Jonathan." Elmbook.
<<http://www.elmbook.com/penfarm.asp#m>>.
- Cai, Zhur. "Six Little Theaters Save the Forest." Trans. Chung Mingder. China Times, March 13, 1989.
- , "Theaters are Politicalized." Trans. Chung Mingder. China Times, July 26, 1989.
- Chang, Biyu. "Playing for identity: Cultural Policy and Taiwan's Little Theater." Trans. Chung Mingder. London Taiwan Seminar, 2001.
- Chen, Meimao. "The Era of Capital and Politics: The Coming of Theater Supermarket." <<http://walker.cyberstage.com.tw/artc108.htm>>.
- , "A Revolution Without Shadow: The Position of Little Theater in Opposition Movement." <<http://walker.cyberstage.com.tw/artc108.htm>>.
- , Personal interview. Taipei, 30 March 2004.
- , Taiwan Walker Website. <<http://www.taiwanwalker.com/>>.
- Chung, Mingder. "Retry Little Theater and Contemporary Taipei Culture." Trans. Chung Mingder. Liberty Times, August 7, Literary Supplement, 1989.
- , "Waiting for the Artistic Director." Trans. Chung Mingder. Chinatimes, July 31 and August 1, Literary Supplement, 1989.
- , The Little Theater Movement of Taiwan (1980-89) : In Search of Alternative Aesthetics and Politics. Dissertation. New York University, 1992.
- , "Collages of National Consciousness." The Drama Review 38.2 (1994):38-47.
- , Lectures on Modern Theater: From Realism to Postmodernism. Taipei: Bookman Books, 1995.
- , Personal interview. Taipei, 29 March 2004.
- , The Taiwanese Avant-Garde: In Search of Total Art and Contemporary Taipei Culture. Taipei: Bookman Books, 1996.
- Diamond, Catherine. "Introduction." Madmen and Fools: Taiwan Theater 1988-98. Trans. Lu Jianzhong. Taipei: Bookman Books, 2000:7-11.

- Hou, Baolin, et al. Tracing the Origin of Xiansheng. Beijing: People's Literature Publisher, 1982.
- Hu, Yaoheng. "Taiwan's Little Theater Movement, 1960-2000." <http://ceiba.cc.ntu.edu.tw/drama-1/paper-2.htm>.
- Huang, Wulan. "The New Step of the Xiao-wu Theater." United Daily News, June 24, 1984.
- Independence Morning News. "Theaters Became Superficial in 1990." Trans. Chung Mingder. Special Literary Supplement on Taiwan's Little Theater, March 5 and 6, 1991.
- Jameson, Fredric R. Postmodernism and Literary Theories. Trans. Tang Xiao-Bin. Taipei: Ho-Zhi Publishing, 1989.
- , Postmodernism, or , The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.
- Ji, Weiran. "Between Exploration and Evade: Some Characteristics of Contemporary Taiwan's Little Theater." Chung Wai Literary Monthly v31 n6, 1992, 41-58.
- Jiao, Tong. "Little Theater." Taiwan Literature's Street Movement. Taipei: Chinatimes, 1998.
- Lai, Shengchuan. "Specifying the Universal." The Drama Review 38.2 (1994): 33-38.
- Lai, Tingheng. "Not Hot Anymore, Little Theater Now Just A Bubble." Chinatimes, July 28, 1999.
- Left Bank Website. 2 Jan. 2004 < <http://www.cca.gov.tw/test/Rive-Gauche/Introduction/Introduction.htm>>.
- Li, Huanxiong. Personal Interview. Taipei, 25 March 2004.
- Li, Liheng. "A Decade of Theater Experimentation." Performance Arts v.52, 1997, 69-71.
- Li, Liheng. Personal interview. Taipei, 25 March 2004.
- , Theater. Taipei: Commonwealth Publishing, 2000.

- Liao, Jinyi. "Re-reading A Disappeared Experimental Theater Era and U Theater." Liao Jinyi's Column.
<<http://mypaper.pchome.com.tw/news/rosewhite/3/4290994/20031101212415/>>.
- Liao, Juncheng. "To Mutate In Order to Survive: Left Bank Theater's The Mutation Plan." Performance Arts, 2003, 66-67.
- Liao, Juncheng. Personal interview. Taipei, 22 March 2004.
- Lin, Heyi. "Important Drama Events in Taiwan: 1983-87." Trans. Chung Mingder ZhongWai Literature Monthly, v16, n5, October 1987.
- Lin, Mingliang. "Another Space: Contemporary Legend Theater and U Theater." <<http://140.113.96.115/b1/J-28/art4.htm>>.
- Liu, Xinyi and Chen Qiuping. "Taiwan Walker Café Theater: An Alternately Secure Space." Trans. Chung Mingder. Taiwan Modern Theater Theses Conference, 1997.
- Ma, Sen. Drama: The Art of Dream. Taipei: Rye Field Publishing, 2000.
- , Contemporary Drama. Taipei: Chinatimes Publisher, 1991.
- , "Taiwan Little Theater Movement Since the 1980s." Chung Wai Literary Monthly v31 n6, 1992, 17-25.
- Quintero, Craig Anthony. Performing Culture/Cultural Performances: The Little Theater Movement in Taiwan. Dissertation. Northwestern University, 2000.
- Rubinstein, Murray A., ed. Taiwan: A New History. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999.
- Said, Edward W. "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community." The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. Ed. Hal Foster. Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983.
- , "Orientalism Reconsidered." Literature, Politics, and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-84. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Shakespeare's Wild Sisters Group Website. 13 Jan. 2004.
<<http://wildsisters.microtheatre.org.tw/>>.
- Shutter, Robert G. Taiwan: Entering the 21st Century. New York: University Press of American, 1988.

Singleton, Kate. "Taiwan Experiments with Experimental Theater." The Asian Wall Street Journal, March 9-10, 1984.

"Actors Have a Method to Their Madness." Urban Ephemera. June 22, 2000 <<http://www.urbanephemera.com/work/britannica/method.htm>>.

Taiwan Provincial Endowment of Culture. "Contemporary Taiwan Theater" <<http://www.tpec.org.tw/air-art/learn/learn020901.htm>>.

---, "Little Theater Will Never Stop." <http://www.tpec.org.tw/air-art/data/data.asp?sno=313&chapter_id=A>.

---, "Little Theater in Taiwan." <http://www.tpec.org.tw/air-art/data/data.asp?sno=312&chapter_id=A>.

---, "From Spoken Drama to Performance Arts." <<http://www.tpec.org.tw/air-art/learn/learn020831.htm>>.

Wang, Jiaming. Personal interview. Taipei, 27 March 2004.

Wang, Junjie. "The Structure and De-structure of Taiwan Experimental Theater." Trans. Chung Mingder. Long Shot, 1988.

Wang, Molin. City Theater and the Body. Trans. Chung Mingder. Taipei: Rice Country Publishers, 1990.

Wang, Weilian. Personal interview. Taipei, 24 March 2004.

Wang, Yaling. "Little Theaters Disbanded." Trans. Chung Mingder. Independence Evening News, January 12, 1990.

---, "Little Theaters Reopened the 228 Case." Trans. Chung Mingder. Independence Morning News, February 28, 1990.

Wei, Yingjuan. Personal interview. 23 March 2004.

Wu, Wencui. "Grotowski's Actor Training in Taiwan—U Theater's The Plan of Tracing Back." Trans. Chung Mingder. Taiwan Modern Theater Theses Conference, 1997.

Xie, Jinrong. "A Battlefield Without Major Issue, A Rebellion Desires Cameras." Trans. Chung Mingder. The Journalist, n.500. 94.

Yan, Hongya. "Keep On Playing: The Vision for Taiwan Little Theaters." Crossing The Dream of Asia. Ed. Liu Shouyao. Taipei: Dance Forum, 2003.

Yan, Hongya. Personal interview. Taipei, 26 March 2004.

Zhang, Biyu. "The Interaction Between Little Theater and Social Movement." Trans. Chung Mingder. United Daily News, March 13, 1989.

---, "Theater Arts are Integrated into Community Lives." Trans. Chung Mingder. United Daily News, March 30, 1989.

Zhan, Huiling. Personal interview. Taipei, 26 March 2004.

Zhang, Wencheng. "Little Theater Movement in Taiwan."
<<http://vm.nthu.edu.tw/arts/shows/theater/littletheatertaiwan.htm>>.

Zhao, Yafen. "Theater Artists Made a Breakthrough in the 1980s." Trans. Chung Mingder. China Times, December 29, 1989.