



RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Sinicization of Ballet: A Comparative Study of “Flag” and “Carmina Burana” Performances by Guangzhou Ballet

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**ABSTRACT**

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This paper explores the Sinicization of ballet by comparing two productions, Flag and Carmina Burana, presented by Guangzhou Ballet. Using a mix of primary (interviews with choreographers, dancers, and cultural consultants) and secondary research, including relevant literature reviews, the study investigates how these performances acquire "cultural flavor" by appropriating elements of Chinese culture within the Western ballet framework. Flag echoes more overtly patriotic and historical symbolism and is a rather bold illustration of what Sinicization might attempt, while Carmina Burana takes a slightly lighter step by integrating some traditional Chinese aesthetics or philosophies in an abstract manner. The analysis is centered around three main elements — choreography, music, costume design, and audience reception to display the different although combined ways of cultural fusion. These findings deepen a broader examination of the ongoing changes in Sinicization and demonstrate an evolving update on a global scale to ballet as it has been utilized for cultural exchange. It encourages a perspective that understands both performances as occurring in the articulation of Chinese identity on the national and international stages, exploring intercultural dialogue across performing arts.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of Ballet in China

Universal art forms can coexist with local traditions and beliefs, blending effectively with Western ballet. Since its founding in 1993, Guangzhou Ballet has steadily grown into a leading performing arts organization. However, its recent success, marked by style and passion, is still in its early stages (Guangzhou Opera House, 2019). Ballet, which was introduced to China in the early 20th century, has since become one of many cultural influences in the country's artistic scene. Guangzhou Ballet is known for its unique performances incorporating traditional Chinese culture, having produced over 20 major dance dramas and numerous smaller productions, many of which draw inspiration from classical ballets. The company has successfully integrated the Chinese language, characters, and Western opera, forming a distinctive art style. This approach highlights their success in blending Western ballet traditions with Chinese cultural elements. It shows how cultural adaptation can fit within a wider artistic framework. Ballet combines both classical and original works to maintain the artistic inheritance of ballet styles on an international level while promoting Chinese culture. This confluence allows cultural exchange and diversity. Guangzhou Ballet was formed in 1996 years ago and has risen to the top of Chinese ballet companies, famous for mixing traditional Western ballet styles with themes from its own culture. According to Vermander (2019), this is about the application

of Chinese aesthetics, philosophy, and content in the form of Western theatre. Such fusion is now the signature of Guangzhou Ballet, both with its work at home in China and abroad. In a work of extraordinary creativity, they have given new form to the ancient relationship between ballet and Chinese culture as no academic has ever done in the world art community. According to the author, this is an important contribution given that the history of Sinicization in ballet speaks both to issues of cultural transmission within China and cross-cultural dialogues among various branches of art both inside Chinese dance and beyond its borders. As much of this innovation comes from the forefront with Guangzhou Ballet, their unique style provides a model for how Chinese artistic idiosyncrasies can adapt and flourish within Western artistic frameworks. This study was motivated by the increasing global interest in how non-Western countries adapt and reinterpret Western art forms, reflecting broader themes of cultural identity, globalization, and artistic innovation. By focusing on *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*, two key productions, the study seeks to highlight the transformative potential of ballet as a medium for cultural exchange and creative dialogue.

### **Research Aim and Scope**

The following paper will examine the two performances, seeking to understand in-depth how these performances cater differently to the blending of Chinese cultural elements with Western ballet. This would help identify commonalities and contrasts in comparison. The study is confined to the two eponymous performances. The paper will be used to examine how the cultural forms are poised and adapted through analysis of choreography, thematic content, and aesthetic presentations, thus encouraging a broader understanding of the implications of using these cultural forms. This paper compares the two productions to demonstrate the transformation of Chinese ballet as it responds to Chinese cultural policies that shape China's global and national images.

### **Research Questions**

**Research Question 1:** How do *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* exemplify the Sinicization of ballet?

**Research Question 2:** What are the similarities and differences in the cultural integration methods used in each performance?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Sinicization of Western Art Forms**

The process of Sinicization has significantly impacted the evolution of various art forms in China, shaping how foreign influences are adapted to fit Chinese cultural values. This process has enabled Chinese audiences to connect more deeply with foreign-origin art forms by reshaping them to reflect local traditions and sensibilities, while still preserving key elements of the original works (Hau, 2012). Sinicizing ballet plays a significant role in representing Chinese culture and competing with Western artistic traditions. In performing arts, Sinicization fosters a dynamic exchange between tradition and modernity, facilitating cultural hybridity—which is important—and leading to creative productions that reflect the interconnected nature of the globalized world (EWK, 2018). This combination enriches ballet as an art form and simultaneously incorporates Chinese elements, helping to establish a unique identity for ballet. It goes beyond mere integration of various pieces; it serves as a bridge fostering intercultural understanding and goodwill.

Among contemporary art trends, few have influenced the visual language in China as profoundly as revolutionary themes, especially in the post-Mao period. These themes were crucial in the government's efforts to shape a unified national identity through cultural expression. Art was positioned as a strategic tool in shaping China's new official culture, blending traditional forms with modern revolutionary imagery to create narratives that supported state objectives (Yung-Wen, 2015). Revolutionary themes in Chinese art, much like in other countries, were used to construct and spread state propaganda, both domestically and internationally, incorporating elements from various cultural traditions. This is especially evident in the performing arts, including ballet. Through Sinicization, ballet in China has been redefined by merging

Western forms with Chinese concepts and revolutionary themes, making it more relatable to local audiences (Wood et al., 2022). The thing this adaptation does, however, is to nurture the medium and in that sense preserve its original essence while allowing it to grow, and adapt with changing views and a different cultural landscape.

The development of ballet in China serves as an example of how cross-cultural forms can enliven cultural spaces and act as a medium for cultural rejuvenation where such expressions are absent. This blend of Revolutionary themes in Chinese ballet helps to bridge the historicity and challenges faced in contemporality, as we see history read with modernist lenses thereby creating connections between the past (the origin of humanity) and a newer understanding based on a well-informed audience. Secondly, the Sinicization of ballet as an art concept reveals a new feature in cultural traditions—the capability to embody the transforming political and social contexts (without changing its meaning) while maintaining the core. The cultural and political weights of the project are explored through the literature on Sinicization, offering an indispensable framework to understand Chinese ballet as a site in which Sinicized aesthetics changed over time. It could be seen as an illustration of the changes wrought by the Sinicization process in which a Western art form, ballet, has been infused with Chinese culture and revolutionary fervor to render it more comprehensible and appealing to a Chinese audience. This literature was important for the current study as it set up an investigation of the way modern productions such as *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* also contribute to this process of cultural adaptation. This study expands our knowledge about the Sinicization of classical dance by showing that ballet in China no longer serves as a medium to deliver revolutionary messages with an imported form (Zhao); rather, it has developed into a modern cultural expression in this East Asian country. Much of the literature contends that interculturality is necessary for cultivating dialogue between Chinese culture and other cultures, and subsequently in maintaining the cultural identity of Chinese culture in a globalized world; however, this research takes it another step further by investigating how traditional culture merges with elements from Western countries within their art forms. Besides, the literature highlights how revolutionary themes have contributed to shaping national identity, supporting the study’s investigation into how ballet continues to reflect both China’s socio-political past and its modern realities.

### **Sinicized Ballet Performances**

Ballet Sinicization in China has undergone a significant transformation, epitomized by productions such as *The Red Detachment of Women*. This revolutionary ballet revived in 1964, demonstrated how Western ballet techniques could be adapted to represent Chinese revolutionary themes, marking the start of ballet’s evolution in China (Roberts, 2015). Guangzhou Ballet has been a key player in this modernization process, focusing not only on fusing Western ballet with Chinese aesthetics but also advancing the narrative and thematic depth of Chinese ballet. The blending of Western and Chinese forms. Ballet became a political and cultural organizing tool in service to the socialist narrative of the day (Roberts, 2015). A crescendo of state propaganda such as *The Red Detachment of Women* used music to trumpet socialist virtues, while recent works like *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* offer a timbral shift toward a more elevated cultural high ground that fits the modern Chinese identity. In addition, the company has also been successful at incorporating traditional Chinese arts—such as calligraphic gestures and Chinese musical characteristics—with classical ballet techniques, thus establishing a unique way of production that is marketed to appeal both domestically and abroad (Guangzhou Opera House, 2019). It has overthrown the revolutionary model by exploring an even wider range of Chinese aesthetics and elements through the new models using a global language and themes. This evolution symbolizes how Sinicized ballet has become a nuanced art form capable of displaying national pride while engaging globally. As Guangzhou Ballet continues to evolve and modernize, it plays an increasingly important role in keeping ballet relevant both internationally and within China’s shifting cultural landscape, positioning itself as a leader on the global art stage.

The literature on the Sinicization of ballet, particularly through works like *The Red Detachment of Women* offers a foundational understanding of how Western ballet techniques were adapted to align with Chinese revolutionary themes. As a result, turning ballet is both a political and cultural instrument. It is necessary to know this history in order to appreciate further the contemporary development of Chinese ballet as it

moves from being a propaganda arm of state power into more complex forms of cultural expression. This literature is relevant to the new study because it discusses how productions like *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* carry on this tradition of cultural adaptation, while also updating it to reflect contemporary Chinese identity and global interactions. These works add to a body of literature on the subject developed together as Sinicization, but each offers a new lens through which to understand ballet as part of an ongoing process of nation-building and international dialogue in our global age.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### Performance Analysis Framework

This article explores both *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*, two productions of the Guangzhou Ballet, in a frame analysis of performances. The elements of performance (choreography, thematic storytelling, music, costume design, and presentation) are all categorized within this framework. Through examining these three sites, the paper seeks to show how Sinicization in ballet is produced in each performance. Although somewhat esoteric, it enables us to investigate the way in which the two productions blend Western ballet techniques with traditional Chinese cultural symbols, beliefs, and aesthetics; making an otherwise unfair comparison fair.

#### Data Collection

This study was largely performed based on observational evaluation, and also expert interviews. This investigation analysis was covered by way of video material from *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*, additionally through secondary sources that included publicized commentary or released reports. In addition, ten participants (five from each performance; see Appendix) were interviewed using semi-structured guidelines. Interviews were also conducted with experts including choreographers, dancers, cultural consultants, and production designers to find out how well the infusion of Chinese cultural elements into the Western ballet was successful in captivating the audience. Questions were asked about how they interpreted the choreography if the integration of cultures was successful, and what details pleased them in general. Analysis of common themes across excerpts from the interviews revealed how participants perceived the two performances. This multi-methods approach provided both archival and subjective data to support the analysis of the Sinicization of ballet in these works.

### 4. ANALYSIS

#### 1) 4.1 Sinicization of Ballet in *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*

Through the interview records, key themes such as cultural symbolism, choreographic fusion, music, instrumentation, and audience reception highlight how *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* represent the Sinicization of ballet in distinct ways. *Flag* heavily incorporates national symbols and directly references Chinese cultural elements, making it more overt, while *Carmina Burana* takes a more nuanced approach, subtly blending Chinese aesthetics within a predominantly Western framework. This comparative analysis emphasizes the varying levels and methods of cultural assimilation present in both performances.

**Table: Comparative Thematic Analysis of *Flag* and *Carmina Burana***

Themes	<i>Flag</i>	<i>Carmina Burana</i>
<b>Cultural Symbolism</b>	Strong integration of patriotic elements and national symbols	A subtle infusion of Chinese aesthetics through movement and set
<b>Choreographic Fusion</b>	Balance of Western ballet technique with traditional Chinese gestures and movements	Fluid integration of Chinese philosophies of movement with Western ballet
<b>Music and Instrumentation</b>	Use of traditional Chinese instruments to enhance patriotic themes	Selective use of Chinese instruments to complement the original score

<b>Audience Reception and Impact</b>	Strong resonance with Chinese audiences due to national pride and symbolism	Balanced appeal to both Chinese and Western audiences through subtle cultural layering
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### Elaboration of Themes

#### Cultural Symbolism

*Flag* integrates patriotic symbolism into its narrative and choreography, presenting it as a clear expression of Sinicization. Warriors and symbols like the flag are central to both the emotional and visual framework of the performance. Respondent 1 (Choreographer) highlighted the cultural and political significance of these symbols, explaining how their inclusion adds depth and amplifies the impact on Chinese audiences. These symbols transcend decoration, embodying national pride and identity. Through ballet, historical events and figures are portrayed, offering a retelling of China's revolutionary past that is artistically captivating and deeply meaningful to local viewers. The choreography, design, and storytelling in *Flag* are rich in cultural and historical relevance, showcasing how ballet can serve as a medium for national expression and cultural preservation. *Carmina Burana*, in contrast, represents cultural symbolism with much more subtlety and nuance. While it is full of Chinese details, these are so intimately designed within the form and content that they are not overtly expressed. Respondent 3 remarked that the Sinicization in *Carmina Burana* allows Chinese audiences to see a gesture of their cultural identity through a Western form without fully altering it. It is less about nationalistic or historical references and more about philosophical integration—bringing Chinese ideas into the movement. This subtlety marks a different kind of cultural adaptation, one that extends to the broader creation of shared cultural experiences beyond just Chinese icons. The incorporation of these aspects explains that Sinicization exists at a variety of levels, ranging from a kind of nationalistic rudimental gestalt to more esoteric and philosophically rooted layovers that translate into aesthetic or spiritual vibrations.

#### Choreographic Fusion

The fusion of Western ballet and traditional Chinese gestures is a central feature of *Flag*. Respondent 2 (Dancer) argued that the classical ballet technique and Chinese martial arts and calligraphy base fused with a perfect continuity just as it is authentic culturally. Staged with Chinese dance forms employed intentionally within the structure of Western ballet choreography, this is stunning visually, but also a metaphor for the larger cultural mash-up unfolding. The martial arts-influenced moves especially, are more than just an accomplishment of technical excellence; they signify strength, control, and the continuation of history. It has helped *Flag* become identified as a dance piece that merges physicality with questions of identity, where dancing becomes the manifestation of struggle, survival, and nationalism. The combination of these aspects illustrates a sort of future for ballet: an art form that can grow and change with heritages from all over the world. By contrast, *Carmina Burana* delivers a more subtle form of dance fusion—Chinese movement philosophies that have been integrated into ballet without losing the fundamental structure of Western ballet. Respondent 5 (Artistic Director) emphasized that the calligraphy-inspired movements were carefully blended into the choreography, adding depth without overshadowing the Western form. This sophisticated blending of styles demonstrates how Sinicization can be applied on a symbolic and philosophical level rather than purely through overt physical gestures. The movements in *Carmina Burana* are of a nature that is harmonized with Chinese traditions, the concept of fluidity and control over natural emotions is clear throughout the whole performance. It is subtler than in *Flag*, but it makes the performance a much more thematically and philosophically rich experience. The performance aesthetic changes and echoes traditional Chinese movement philosophies, without compromising the integrity of the original structure.

#### Music and Instrumentation

The Sinicization of *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* is deeply influenced by the music and instrumentation used in each case. Traditional Chinese instruments are, of course, a glaring necessity to amplify the nationalistic zeal barely concealed by its balletic facade in *Flag*. Respondent 4 (Production Designer), also emphasized

how adding instruments like the pipa and erhu at poignant moments served not only to hammer home a message but also added an immersive element that deeply resonated with audiences, especially Chinese. The music in *Flag* plays as a natural progression of the performance's nationalistic dialogue, bridging the gaps between physical storytelling and audience response. The careful selection of traditional instruments ensures that the cultural and historical elements of the story are reflected not just in the choreography but also in the sonic landscape of the performance. The collaboration of these instruments enhances the emotional layers within the show, making sure that their audience can relate both viscerally and mentally. In *Carmina Burana*, the use of Chinese instruments is more selective and restrained, serving as an enhancement to the existing Western score rather than as a dominant element. Respondent 1 (Choreographer) noted that the instruments were integrated in a way that complemented the original composition without overpowering it. In a beautifully executed balance, the performance was subtly Sinicized, harmonizing two disparate musical traditions into one. In *Carmina Burana*, by contrast, the Chinese instruments are employed solely to create emotional highlights and enriched essence for the audience in an unobtrusive manner that does not burden or overwhelm the Western composition itself. This kind of musical integration shows a much more nuanced form of cultural fusion that can be found in culture and one based on complementing instead of dominating. The Chinese influence in the music of *Carmina Burana* thus does not define the work but rather enriches it emotionally and aesthetically, allowing both the Western and Eastern elements of art to exist without overshadowing each other.

### **Audience Reception and Impact**

According to Respondent 2 (Dancer), Chinese audiences have responded very well to *Flag* on account of its cultural familiarity and patriotic intentions. Revolutionary history and nationalist symbolism were used to ensure that the performance had an emotional impact in a deep way that went beyond merely the trappings of ballet. The connection underlines the power of Sinicization and how it may be used, not solely for local consumption but also to reinforce cultural identity in ballet. The choreography, music, and design of *Flag* collectively display how Sinicized ballet can deliver as a tool of cultural expression; they have made the sense of national pride and historical continuity possible. Combining narrative historical storytelling with artistic innovation, the cultural offering goes beyond simple entertainment and enhances wider cultural literacy; it is a terrifically good performance. On the other hand, *Carmina Burana* reaches a broader audience as Respondent 3 (Cultural Consultant) noted that particularly perfect in bridging Chinese and Western music into a co-generatively valued space for mutual appreciation. The subtle incorporation of Chinese elements appeals to both local and expat audiences. Chinese viewers may pick up on the flavor of Daoist thought and Confucian aesthetics, while Western audiences can appreciate the choreography and emotional nuance without needing to understand specific cultural references. This careful balance ensures that *Carmina Burana* remains accessible to all audiences, showcasing the genuine potential of Sinicized ballet as a cross-cultural medium. The performance's appeal to both Chinese and global audiences is proof that this subtle Sinicization enhances the Western form rather than overpowering it, making the fusion of cultures even more enriching.

## **2) 4.2 Comparative Analysis of the Cultural Integration Methods Used in Flag And Carmina Burana**

### **Cultural Themes and Storytelling**

In both *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*, we see the juxtaposition of cultural elements in these works that exemplify two paradigms of Sinicization through a direct fusion with Western art forms. *Flag*, in turn, employs a historical and patriotic theme, based on the Guangzhou Uprising of 1927. The performance centers on the story of a rebellion steeped in motifs of patriotism and martyrdom. This is essentially an in-your-face cultural clash that becomes instantly iconic, especially for those old enough to be familiar with the two great periods of the Chinese Revolution. The narrative draws heavily on Chinese history, which ensures that the cultural fusion is overt and accessible to a local audience. According to the *Global Times* (2023), this emphasis on Chinese history helps ground the performance in a distinct cultural and political

context, making it a compelling example of how Sinicization can be used to promote national identity and heritage through ballet. However, *Carmina Burana* is somewhat philosophical than explicitly historicizing and patriotic as it integrates some Chinese elements; however impact is much more quieter. As Xiao (2019) explains, the visual abstraction and emotional resonance of *Carmina Burana* contribute some Chinese aesthetics to this orientalized performance framework, but they never overburden it. Rather than echoing a kind of historical imagination, *Carmina Burana* is more intellectualized in introducing Chinese cultural elements through the use of philosophy on fate, life, and human emotions. This incorporation ensures a more thoughtful experience as it encourages viewers to consider the foundation of what is being performed. The cultural connection in *Carmina Burana* is not easy to pick up, as in *Flag*, however, it then provides an additional dimension for the audiences to explore the Western and Eastern spirits.

These two different modes of storytelling speak for the versatility of Sinicization. The cultural implementation of *Flag* is more immediate and emotionally resonant for local audiences because it is a historical and patriotic story; as a remake, you are still required to keep the original's timing where it can be justified. Even the slightly more abstract works, such as *Carmina Burana*, are discussed with some cultural specificity and rely on philosophical examination that makes broad appraisals harder for a mainstream audience. These distinct styles of storytelling help us appreciate that cross-cultural integration (and even exploitation) can be customized to suit a variety of narrative sensibilities and levels of audience discernment, depending on whether the story calls for evoking nationalistic fervor or something more nuanced and aesthetic.

### **Choreographic Fusion and Movement**

The choreographic melding in *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* is symbolic of how each work differentially interpolates Chinese movement traditions with classical ballet methodology. The *Flag* incorporates movements drawing from traditional Chinese calligraphy and martial arts, yet they are all stitched together to create a new choreographic language using Western ballet. The *Flag* choreography, meanwhile, is equally indicative of a narrative past through allegedly Chinese warrior-esque movements and a set of steps meant to encapsulate patriotic symbols (Global Times, 2023). This metaphoric theme of struggle, sacrifice, and determination also finds an echo in martial arts-related body mechanics. In the end, these sequences become more than just pepper seasonings; they amount to the very marrow of this melting pot and rejuvenate what was once a choreographic embodiment of the Chinese body and history. On the other hand, *Carmina Burana* features a more unforced choreographic style, blending tight, abstract movements drawn from both Chinese movement philosophy and Western ballet techniques. The stylized movement in *Carmina Burana* contrasts with its emotional depth, integrating broader philosophies and delicate elements of traditional Chinese calligraphy (Hochman, 2019). Though subtler than in *Flag*, these gestures add depth to the choreography, enhancing appreciation for the cultural fusion. The fusion in *Carmina Burana* focuses more on aesthetic and emotional resonance than on explicit cultural symbolism, maintaining its Western structure while seamlessly incorporating Chinese elements (Hochman, 2019). This harmonious blending of movement styles highlights the production's ability to unite Eastern and Western traditions. The result is a more thoughtful, contemplative expression of cultural fusion, deepening the emotional impact without overtly emphasizing cultural differences.

The differing approaches to choreographic fusion in *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* reflect their broader narrative strategies. In brief, choreography is the vehicle to tell a story of Chinese culture, and dance movements serve as flag-type symbols. *Carmina Burana*, however, is more minimalistic in its use of choreography to investigate ideas of a philosophical nature rather than those rooted in historical or national references. It seems to me that this is a great example of how the fusion of choreography can lead to a variety of different results and make the imagined world suddenly all too plausible.

### **Costume Design and Visual Aesthetics**

Costume design plays a significant role in the cultural integration of both *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*, with each performance adopting a different approach to blending Eastern and Western aesthetics. Yet, for his

costume design in *Flag*, Tim Yip opted to keep it simple and practical — with mobility being sought after by the dancers instead of pizzazz with a blend between Eastern and Western styles implied through the narrative (China News, 2021). *Flag* uses traditional Chinese motifs and colors to help underscore its historical and patriotic themes, which are also reflected aesthetically in the costumes. The uncomplicated attire not only enables the dancers to move freely but also makes it possible for them to execute the martial arts-inspired choreography that is pivotal to the storyline. A practical design choice that allows the costumes to go largely unnoticed, upgrading the visual impact of the piece rather than competing with or taking attention away from the symbolism native to each culture demonstrated in movement. *Carmina Burana* uses design features from a wider range, its style encompassing Western Chinese taste as a whole. Dramatic costumes and set designs support the emotional intensity of Carl Orff's music heightening the visual component in this production (Seibert, 2019). The review states that while the choreography remains in a classical ballet worldview, the design is what gives audiences a shining shimmering splendid but distinctly Chinese take with the locals' inspiration from their heritage. Its costumes look as tokenistic and full of visual impact, a mix of glorious theatrical creations next to minimal, abstract shapes calling forth an exotic mixed cultural blend (Seibert, 2019). It is an approach that mirrors the wider intention of the performance, to blend Eastern and Western stylistic sensibilities without leaning too hard on any one cultural signifier.

A contrast in the clothing on stage distinguishes a separate manner that they have for integrating culture. Costumes act as an extension of the action and narrative and wrap up storytelling in *Flag*. In *Carmina Burana*, however, the design of costumes serves to heighten both the aesthetic and emotional experience of musical performances, rather than being symbolic such as in traditional culture. It can easily show how forms of costume design can be a device in culture, that either backs up a narrative or creates a viewable and surreal piece.

### **Audience Reception and Emotional Impact**

The method of cultural integration adopted by *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* was successful, as can be judged by their emotional reception and audience success. The performance connects with Chinese audiences as they resonate deeply with the patriotic, national, and historical themes that draw on their cultural symbols and revolutionary history (Global Times, 2023). The overt cultural references, like Chinese warriors and national symbols, are powerful for local audiences, who deepen their engagement with the performance on both an artistic as well as cultural level. The emotion around *Flag* runs deep because it has a cultural cache— it is talked about patriotism and historical claims here. By contrast, the Chinese element introduced into *Carmina Burana* is so natural that its fusion with elements from Western society makes it able to combine art and culture more so than before; thus, it provides a sense of plurality in the same space (Tartarus Magazine, 2019). Secondly, *Carmina Burana* appeals to both Chinese and Western audiences by being a more balanced and aesthetically focused example of cultural fusion. The emotional impact of *Carmina Burana* is less tied to cultural symbolism and more focused on the emotional and philosophical themes of the performance (Tartarus Magazine, 2019). It is perhaps this wider net being cast by *Carmina Burana* which makes for a more global connection between the crossing of cultural shapes, and in that respect, an experience that crosses cultural barriers.

The differing audience reception of *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* highlights the impact of their distinct approaches to cultural integration. *Flag* prioritizes cultural resonance, with its emotional impact deeply rooted in the performance's connection to Chinese history and identity. *Carmina Burana*, on the other hand, fosters a broader, cross-cultural appeal through its restrained and artistic approach to cultural fusion. Both performances demonstrate the potential of Sinicization to engage audiences in different ways, whether through overt cultural symbolism or a more subtle and aesthetically driven fusion of Eastern and Western elements.

### 3) 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### Cross-Analysis of Primary and Secondary Findings

On the one hand, the juxtaposition of what has been identified through a primary data collection method (interviews), versus what is to be found in extant literature underlines different aspects as well as an added insight into the Sinicization of ballet. The majority of the data is gathered from interviews with choreographers, performers (dancers), and production designers shedding light on the experience lived in making *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*. The performances are an example of cultural fusion, blending innovation with tradition as many highlighted the incorporation of Chinese elements in choreography, costumes, and music. This frontline perspective offers an in-depth examination of the creative process of Sinicization, showing a significant concern for cultural authenticity and its effects on public reception. Earlier the participants repeatedly said that they went out of their way to make sure all their Chinese symbology and philosophies, resonated with local & international audiences. On the other hand, the secondary findings from the literature review offer a broader theoretical framework for understanding the Sinicization of ballet. They discuss the cultural and political significance of integrating Chinese elements into Western ballet, exploring how this fusion challenges traditional notions of cultural hegemony. The literature points to Sinicization as a mechanism for not only preserving but advancing Chinese cultural parentage amidst the pressures of globalization. For example, works such as *The Red Detachment of Women* are commonly framed in historical terms as important moments in the Sinicization canon, illustrating how ballet has a long lineage within China as a mode for articulating political and cultural norms. The literature also gives context and critique of the struggles to balance ballet with cultural preservation—we see this tension in performances like *Flag* or *Carmina Burana*. Given this, both point-ahead data and secondary sources corroborate the primary findings in terms of placing those performances into a broader narrative of cultural exchange. Taken together, these two sets of data, primary and secondary, offer a rounded portrait of the Sinicization of ballet. Even though the main findings provide concrete information regarding the artistic intentions and reception by the spectators, secondary literature contextualises these performances in a general cultural and complex historic environment. This combination of perspectives allows for a richer understanding of how *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* contribute to the ongoing development of Chinese ballet as a global art form.

#### Analysis of the Findings Based on the Literature Review

The findings from the interviews align with the key themes identified in the literature review, particularly regarding the role of ballet as a medium for expressing Chinese cultural identity. Ballet in China, as the literature shows, appears to have developed from its introduction in the 20th century into a lively hybrid art that has held onto elements of traditional Chinese culture while integrating modern Western notions. The case is embodied in *Flag* and *Carmina Burana*, both of which take quite different Sinicization approaches but have the same goal—to be resplendent examples of Chinese culture on an international stage. The literature indicates that integrating Chinese cultural elements into ballet is more than just aesthetic incorporation, but also an articulation of identity in the medium of an art form historically cast as Western. *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* are thus situated within a larger force in Chinese ballet that is very much interested in presenting a national culture to the world while speaking to a wider global audience.

The literature highlights the importance of audience reception in the Sinicization of ballet. As noted in both the interviews and the secondary sources, performances like *Flag* resonate strongly with Chinese audiences because of their direct references to national history and symbols, while *Carmina Burana* aims for a more universal appeal through its philosophical and abstract representation of Chinese culture. This audience difference is important because it helps to illustrate how these performances had much broader cultural relevance. Where *Flag* evokes national pride and cultural continuity, the more subdued abstraction of *Carmina Burana* speaks to the form's growing internationalization as an art form that attracts domestic interest as well as foreign admirers. The literature also addresses the difficulties that can arise with this balancing act, arguing that while cultural fusion and global engagement are necessary, they may lead to a

certain abstraction of emotionality or narrative depth in the performance, as seen in critiques of *Carmina Burana*. Such an analysis, which is theoretically rooted in the literature, explains why execution differs and, consequently, outcomes.

### Summary of Key Findings

The comparison of *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* in terms of Sinicization highlights notable similarities and differences in their approach. The two pieces strive to infuse Chinese culture into Western ballet, but in opposite directions—one from the East and the other from the West. *Flag* is big on historical and patriotic symbolism, with robust choreography, Chinese music, and visuals of red and yellow costumes, which come together in telling the story of the 1927 Guangzhou Uprising. The Sinicization of the show is in-your-face, with its cultural and political allegories aimed at a Chinese audience. The choice of martial arts-driven performance alongside Chinese instrumentation reinforces *Flag*'s link to both Chinese heritage and identity, thus crafting a familiar sense of cultural solidarity that can be particularly meaningful to local audiences. *Carmina Burana*, on the other hand, provides a touch of the Sinicization process with a soul-searching twist. It does not portray certain historical occasions or nationalistic issues but mixes the Chinese style (from aesthetics to philosophy) and the Western foundation without breaking both while telling its own stories from a choreographic and design point of view. With costumes that are rendered in uncommon Chinese symbols and inflected with calligraphic movements, it achieves a more abstract cultural blend that can play well both to an audience familiar with China and the West. This change emphasizes that Sinicization could be repurposed to achieve various artistic and cultural objectives. Yet while *Flag* touts culture and national pride, *Carmina Burana* hopes to provide a more fulsome appreciation of East-West cooperation.

Considering broadly, both sets of performances are pillars of building Chinese cultural identity, but they shape it differently. Drawing on Chinese elements, the *Flag* evokes a strong sense of national pride by commemorating Chinese revolutionary history and culture through bold integration. In contrast, *Carmina Burana* presents Chinese culture in a universal context, showing how Sinicization can create a more inclusive and broadly appealing form of ballet. Together, these performances showcase diverse methods of Sinicization and signal ballet's evolving role in representing Chinese identity both within and beyond its borders.

### Implications for Chinese Ballet

The study results are also highly relevant to the future development and evaluation of ballet in China. In doing so, they highlight not only the importance of cultural syncretism in maintaining and redefining a Chinese cultural identity. *Flag* and *Carmina Burana* have demonstrated how, through Sinicization, Chinese ballet can interact with global audiences. It may seem counterintuitive, but this dual approach is imperative if Chinese ballet is to remain relevant and avoid being swallowed by global homogenization. If Chinese performers and choreographers blend Chinese history, philosophy, and aesthetics into ballet, they can connect cultural identity with the universal language of a global art form. In short, the future of Chinese ballet will depend on balancing tradition with innovation. As *Flag* has shown, there is a strong demand for performances centered on Chinese history and culture, especially among domestic audiences. Yet *Carmina Burana* demonstrates the vitality of a more modest and cerebral mode of cultural synthesis that could speak to an international audience widely. Such a mix of being encouraged to adapt and appeal will ensure Chinese ballet its growth, and relevance while creating and securing audiences both domestic and foreign. The study also highlights the necessity of a deeper examination of Sinicization in other Western art forms. Ballet is one instance of how Chinese culture mixes with global art traditions, the success of *Flag* and other performances as well as *Carmina Burana* means there may be more space for this kind of approach in other performing arts contexts. Through further integrating culture integration and Sinicization, Chinese contemporary artists could create new expressions that unite their cultural heritage with the global art world.

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## APPENDIX

### Transcript: Flag Performance

#### Respondent 1 (Choreographer):

**Interviewer:** How do you perceive the integration of traditional Chinese elements into the choreography and narrative of "Flag"? In your opinion, does this blend contribute to the Sinicization of ballet and maintain the authenticity of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 1:** For the Sinicization of *Flag*, I think it's necessary to integrate some Chinese elements because they can make the story profound and national, which can bring a corresponding "flavor" effect to ballet. This is more than a mix, but a mindful mash-up of Chinese aesthetic and narrative elements targeted directly at the belly of hungry Chinese moviegoers. This hybridizing does not weaken the classical ballet vocabulary but enhances it while situating its performance within a Chinese cultural context.

**Interviewer:** What about the creative steps which took place for this Sinicization and what hurdles had to be surpassed to make sure that they were any successful cultural mix?

**Respondent 1:** The creative part is rich in his study of Chinese culture and tradition, making the Sinicization more authentic and respectful. The primary challenge: Blend ballet's technical vocabulary with Chinese culture's symbolic and philosophical depth. We meticulously juggled these ingredients to blend culture in a manner that seems natural and real, and where neither side dominates over the other.

**Interviewer:** In that, how does *Flag* resonate with both Chinese and Western audiences, and does it truly capture the idea of hybrid culture?

**Respondent 1:** Chinese audiences focus on the representation of cultural symbols and the historical narrative in *Flag*, which is central to Sinicization. Western audiences, on the contrary, value the original mix of Eastern and Western art. This method gives due respect to both cultures, fostering mutual understanding and respect so that an authentic, meaningful cultural fusion can be created.

**Interviewer:** What factors in *Flag* reflect the authenticity of bringing together Western ballet with Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 1:** I loved how traditional Chinese instruments were incorporated during key sequences, and everything really just melded together. It is a peak moment in the Sinicization of ballet, as both entities seem to merge harmoniously into one intense and cohesive performance.

#### Respondent 2 (Dancer):

**Interviewer:** How do you perceive the integration of traditional Chinese elements in "Flag" as part of the Sinicization process, and how does it contribute to authentic cultural fusion?

**Respondent 2:** As a dancer, I find that the integration of Chinese elements significantly enhances the performance. The Sinicization process makes the ballet more relatable and resonant for Chinese audiences while preserving the integrity of classical ballet. It's a delicate balance, but when done right, it truly merges the best of both worlds on stage.

**Interviewer:** What was the creative process like in achieving this Sinicization, and what challenges did you face in maintaining the authenticity of the fusion?

**Respondent 2:** Incorporating these elements required a deep understanding of both ballet and Chinese traditions. The biggest challenge was ensuring that each movement stayed true to both art forms, creating a seamless and authentic fusion. It was rewarding to see how these elements came together naturally and respectfully, enhancing the overall performance.

**Interviewer:** How do you think "Flag" resonates with Chinese versus Western audiences, and does this reflect an authentic cultural fusion?

**Respondent 2:** Chinese audiences deeply resonate with the familiar cultural elements, while Western audiences are intrigued by the unique blend. This shows that the performance successfully honors both

cultures, presenting them in a way that is both respectful and celebratory. It's an authentic representation of cultural fusion that resonates with everyone.

**Interviewer:** Can you point to specific moments in "Flag" that highlight the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural elements?

**Respondent 2:** The scene featuring ancient Chinese warriors perfectly captures the essence of this fusion. It's a moment where the choreography truly reflects the Sinicization of ballet, merging Western and Chinese elements into a cohesive and authentic performance.

**Respondent 3 (Cultural Consultant):**

**Interviewer:** How do you see the Sinicization of ballet in "Flag" contributing to the authenticity of cultural fusion within the performance?

**Respondent 3:** The Sinicization process in "Flag" greatly enhances the performance by balancing tradition with innovation. This blend revitalizes ballet, making it feel both familiar and new to audiences. The integration doesn't detract from the essence of ballet; instead, it enriches it with cultural depth and authenticity, offering a unique experience for all viewers.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe the creative efforts behind ensuring that the Sinicization in "Flag" remains authentic and effective?

**Respondent 3:** We collaborated closely with choreographers and dancers to ensure that the Chinese elements were authentically integrated into the ballet. The challenge was maintaining the purity and integrity of both art forms while creating something new and cohesive. This required a lot of collaboration and a deep understanding of both cultural contexts to achieve a truly authentic fusion.

**Interviewer:** How does "Flag" resonate with different audiences, and does it authentically represent the cultural fusion intended?

**Respondent 3:** The performance resonates strongly with Chinese audiences because it reflects their heritage and history, while Western audiences are drawn to the novelty and artistic innovation of cultural fusion. "Flag" is a successful representation of both cultures, demonstrating that they can coexist harmoniously and authentically on the same stage.

**Interviewer:** What specific elements in "Flag" do you believe best exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 3:** The incorporation of Chinese calligraphy-inspired movements in the dance sequences is particularly noteworthy. It beautifully captures the essence of both cultures, showcasing how Sinicization can create something entirely new yet deeply rooted in tradition.

**Respondent 4 (Production Designer):**

**Interviewer:** How does the Sinicization of ballet in "Flag" enhance the authenticity of the cultural fusion within the performance?

**Respondent 4:** The fusion through Sinicization enhances the essence of classical ballet in "Flag." Adding these cultural layers not only preserves the art form but also breathes new life into it. This process doesn't dilute the ballet; it strengthens its connection with the audience, making the fusion feel authentic and organic.

**Interviewer:** What was your approach in ensuring that the Sinicization of "Flag" was both authentic and effective?

**Respondent 4:** As a production designer, my focus was on naturally integrating Chinese motifs into the ballet's structure. The challenge was ensuring that these elements didn't feel out of place but rather enhanced the storytelling. We wanted the audience to feel that the Chinese elements were an organic part of the performance, reflecting a true and seamless cultural fusion.

**Interviewer:** How does the performance resonate with different audiences, and does it authentically represent the cultural fusion intended?

**Respondent 4:** Chinese audiences feel a strong connection to the cultural elements, while Western audiences appreciate the fresh perspective. I believe the fusion approach is respectful and honors both cultures authentically, making it a celebration of diversity that resonates with everyone.

**Interviewer:** What specific moments in "Flag" exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural elements?

**Respondent 4:** One of the best examples of authentic blending is the scene where dancers move in patterns resembling Chinese ink painting. It's a perfect marriage of Western ballet and Chinese cultural aesthetics, showcasing the power of Sinicization in creating an authentic and impactful performance.

**Respondent 5 (Artistic Director):**

**Interviewer:** How does the Sinicization process in "Flag" contribute to the authenticity of cultural fusion in the performance?

**Respondent 5:** The integration of Chinese elements through Sinicization definitely enhances the ballet, adding a unique cultural dimension that enriches the overall experience. This blend is a great example of how art can create meaningful dialogue between different cultures while maintaining authenticity.

**Interviewer:** How did you ensure that the Sinicization of "Flag" was authentic and respected both cultural traditions?

**Respondent 5:** The process was highly collaborative, involving cultural consultations and artistic experimentation. The biggest challenge was keeping the essence of both cultures intact while creating a cohesive performance. We aimed to ensure that the fusion was seamless and respectful of both traditions, achieving authentic cultural fusion.

**Interviewer:** How does the performance resonate with different audiences, and does it authentically represent the cultural fusion intended?

**Respondent 5:** The performance resonates deeply with Chinese audiences through cultural familiarity, and Western audiences appreciate the blend of traditions. I think the approach is both respectful and innovative, authentically representing the best of both worlds.

**Interviewer:** Can you highlight specific elements in "Flag" that exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 5:** The finale, where traditional Chinese dance motifs are seamlessly incorporated into a classical ballet structure, is a standout moment. It exemplifies the authentic blending of these cultural expressions and shows how Sinicization can create something truly unique and impactful.

### **Transcript: Carmina Burana Performance**

**Respondent 1 (Choreographer)**

**Interviewer:** How do you perceive the integration of traditional Chinese elements into the choreography and narrative of *Carmina Burana*? In your opinion, does this blend contribute to the Sinicization of ballet and maintain the authenticity of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 1:** The integration of traditional Chinese elements into *Carmina Burana* is quite subtle but significant. We've carefully infused Chinese philosophies of movement and symbolism into the choreography. I think this definitely contributes to the Sinicization of ballet by creating a bridge between Western and Chinese traditions, and it does so in a way that maintains the authenticity of both cultures.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe the creative process behind this Sinicization and the challenges faced in ensuring an authentic cultural fusion?

**Respondent 1:** The creative process involved deep collaboration between Chinese and Western artists. The biggest challenge was making sure that the essence of *Carmina Burana*—with its intense emotional and musical depth—was preserved while incorporating Chinese aesthetics. We worked hard to make the fusion feel natural and not forced, carefully selecting moments where traditional Chinese elements could enhance rather than compete with the original composition.

**Interviewer:** How does *Carmina Burana* resonate with both Chinese and Western audiences, and does this approach authentically represent the concept of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 1:** Chinese audiences seem to appreciate the familiar cultural references that have been subtly integrated, while Western audiences admire innovation and cultural layering. It's a unique experience for both, which I think speaks to the success of the cultural fusion. The blend feels authentic because it respects both traditions and invites the audience into a shared cultural dialogue.

**Interviewer:** What specific elements within *Carmina Burana* best exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 1:** One of the best examples is the use of Chinese instruments in the musical score at key points in the performance. It's a moment where the two cultures truly meet, as the music sets the tone for both Western ballet technique and Chinese expressive movement.

### **Respondent 2 (Dancer)**

**Interviewer:** How do you perceive the integration of traditional Chinese elements into the choreography and narrative of *Carmina Burana*? In your opinion, does this blend contribute to the Sinicization of ballet and maintain the authenticity of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 2:** As a dancer, the integration of Chinese elements into *Carmina Burana* felt very natural. We incorporated traditional Chinese gestures and movement styles, which complement the ballet's original structure without overshadowing it. This blend does contribute to the Sinicization of ballet, as it helps create a unique performance that feels genuine in its cultural fusion.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe the creative process behind this Sinicization and the challenges faced in ensuring an authentic cultural fusion?

**Respondent 2:** The creative process involved training in both Western ballet techniques and traditional Chinese movements. One of the main challenges was ensuring that both styles meshed together fluidly. We had to be conscious of maintaining the emotional intensity of *Carmina Burana* while also expressing Chinese aesthetics in a meaningful way.

**Interviewer:** How does *Carmina Burana* resonate with both Chinese and Western audiences, and does this approach authentically represent the concept of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 2:** Chinese audiences seem to connect with the subtle nods to their cultural heritage, while Western audiences are drawn to the beauty of the fusion itself. It resonates with both because it doesn't feel like one culture is overshadowing the other; instead, it's a dialogue between the two. This is a true representation of cultural fusion.

**Interviewer:** What specific elements within *Carmina Burana* best exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 2:** I'd say the duet sequence near the end, where we incorporate calligraphy-inspired movements into the classical ballet form. The gestures are fluid and precise, representing both the discipline of ballet and the grace of traditional Chinese art forms.

### **Respondent 3 (Cultural Consultant)**

**Interviewer:** How do you perceive the integration of traditional Chinese elements into the choreography and narrative of *Carmina Burana*? In your opinion, does this blend contribute to the Sinicization of ballet and maintain the authenticity of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 3:** The integration of Chinese elements is subtle yet effective. It contributes to the Sinicization of ballet by allowing a Chinese audience to see their cultural identity reflected in a Western form. The authenticity of the cultural fusion lies in how these elements are not forced but rather blend seamlessly into the existing framework of the ballet.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe the creative process behind this Sinicization and the challenges faced in ensuring an authentic cultural fusion?

**Respondent 3:** The creative process required a deep understanding of both Western ballet traditions and Chinese cultural symbols. One challenge was finding common ground between the two styles, ensuring that the integration was meaningful and not superficial. We aimed to respect the essence of both traditions while creating something entirely new.

**Interviewer:** How does *Carmina Burana* resonate with both Chinese and Western audiences, and does this approach authentically represent the concept of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 3:** It resonates strongly with both audiences because it invites them into an artistic space where two cultures coexist in harmony. Chinese audiences feel a sense of pride seeing their culture represented, while Western audiences are intrigued by the novelty of the fusion. The approach is definitely an authentic representation of cultural fusion, as it respects both traditions without diluting either.

**Interviewer:** What specific elements within *Carmina Burana* best exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 3:** The costume design is one of the most striking elements of this fusion. We used Chinese fabric patterns and styles but kept the Western ballet silhouette intact. It's a small yet powerful way of blending the two cultures authentically.

#### **Respondent 4 (Production Designer)**

**Interviewer:** How do you perceive the integration of traditional Chinese elements into the choreography and narrative of *Carmina Burana*? In your opinion, does this blend contribute to the Sinicization of ballet and maintain the authenticity of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 4:** The design elements, including the set and lighting, played a big role in enhancing the Sinicization process. We used traditional Chinese symbolism, like lanterns and silk backdrops, but kept the overall aesthetic aligned with the grandeur of *Carmina Burana*. This balance allowed for a genuine cultural fusion that felt authentic and powerful.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe the creative process behind this Sinicization and the challenges faced in ensuring an authentic cultural fusion?

**Respondent 4:** Our main challenge was ensuring that the visual elements didn't overshadow the choreography. We wanted the Chinese cultural symbols to support the narrative, not dominate it. The creative process involved a lot of collaboration between the set design, costume, and choreography teams to achieve this harmony.

**Interviewer:** How does *Carmina Burana* resonate with both Chinese and Western audiences, and does this approach authentically represent the concept of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 4:** The performance resonates well with both audiences because it's visually stunning while also being culturally layered. Western audiences appreciate the spectacle, while Chinese audiences feel a deeper connection to the traditional symbols we've woven into the design. This dual appeal is a clear sign of successful cultural fusion.

**Interviewer:** What specific elements within *Carmina Burana* best exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 4:** The lighting design during the climactic scenes, where we used traditional Chinese shadow techniques combined with the Western stage lighting approach, is a great example of this blending. It created a visually striking and culturally significant moment that elevated the entire performance.

**Respondent 5 (Artistic Director)**

**Interviewer:** How do you perceive the integration of traditional Chinese elements into the choreography and narrative of *Carmina Burana*? In your opinion, does this blend contribute to the Sinicization of ballet and maintain the authenticity of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 5:** The integration of Chinese elements was done with great care in *Carmina Burana*. We wanted to create a performance that respected the original Western form but also spoke to a Chinese audience. The Sinicization process here is more about subtle enhancements that allow the ballet to resonate on a deeper cultural level, without sacrificing authenticity.

**Interviewer:** Can you describe the creative process behind this Sinicization and the challenges faced in ensuring an authentic cultural fusion?

**Respondent 5:** The creative process was very collaborative. We worked closely with choreographers, musicians, and designers to ensure that the Chinese elements felt natural within the Western framework. One challenge was maintaining the emotional intensity of *Carmina Burana* while introducing Chinese aesthetics. It required a careful balance to make sure that neither tradition was diluted in the process.

**Interviewer:** How does *Carmina Burana* resonate with both Chinese and Western audiences, and does this approach authentically represent the concept of cultural fusion?

**Respondent 5:** The performance resonates strongly with both audiences. Western audiences enjoy the familiar emotional depth of *Carmina Burana*, while Chinese audiences appreciate the subtle infusion of their own culture. This approach authentically represents cultural fusion because it celebrates both traditions without compromising the integrity of either.

**Interviewer:** What specific elements within *Carmina Burana* best exemplify the authentic blending of Western ballet and Chinese cultural expression?

**Respondent 5:** I think the opening scene, where Chinese calligraphy is projected onto the stage while the dancers perform classical ballet, is the best example. It symbolizes the meeting of two cultures and sets the tone for the entire performance as an authentic fusion of East and West.