

Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company

上海京剧院

THE REVENGE OF
PRINCE ZI DAN

(HAMLET)

王子复仇记

(哈姆雷特)



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SHANGHAI JINGJU THEATRE COMPANY

The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan

after **William Shakespeare**

adapted from Zhu Sheng-Hao's translation of *Hamlet*

Producer Shan Yuejin

Director Shi Yukun

Writer Feng Gang

CAST

Prince Zi Dan Fu Xiru
Jiang Rong Guo Ruiyue
Yong Shu Chen Yu
Ying Li Zhao Huan
Ying Fu Zhu Heji
Yong Bo Geng Lu
YinZe Gu Dianju
Xia Houmu Liu Tao

MUSIC

Drum Liu Lei

Jing-Hu Zhou Xiaoming

Traditional Band Wang Hao, Mao Shiming,
Shen Meigao, Zou Shuangjie,
Ni Xiaochun, Xu Minxi,
Wang Jiaqing, Ye Fuguo, Liu Sheng

STAFF

Rehearsal Director Wang Guojian

Marketing Director YU Fengchun

Stage Manager Zhu Zhongyong

Stage Management Li Xiaoyang

Foreign Affairs Manager Chen Shanshan

Backstage Team Sun Hao, Wu Difei, Cheng Lin,
Yang Jianqiang, Zhu Jizhang,
Zhou Zhonggen, Chen Qingyi,
Wu Yue, Sun Hexian, Zhang Lihua

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this performance is prohibited.



Internationally renowned Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company transforms Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into one of China's most impressive forms of traditional art, setting the story in the fictitious ancient Chinese state of the Red City with *The Revenge of Prince Zi Dan*. Here, as in Shakespeare's classic, the prince becomes disillusioned after discovering his uncle has killed his father and seduced his mother.

Exquisitely blending Eastern and Western theatrical features, this production creates a dialogue between the great cultures of the Orient and the Occident. The stage presentation of this Peking Opera strictly follows the rules of Chinese dramatic aesthetics, known for its succinct yet meaningful depiction and resemblance, while further exploring the capacity of traditional performing skills.

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAY: A SYNOPSIS

Elsinore Castle, Denmark. A month ago, King Hamlet died, reportedly from a snakebite. His widow, Gertrude, has already married his brother, Claudius, who is now king.

ACT I

Elsinore's guards have been alarmed by a ghostly apparition. **Horatio**, friend of **Prince Hamlet**, witnesses the **ghost** and identifies it as Old Hamlet.

The wedding feast of **Claudius** and **Gertrude** is disrupted by Prince Hamlet, who criticizes the hasty marriage. Alone, he tells the audience of his despair at Gertrude's 'frailty' and 'incest.' Horatio tells Hamlet about the ghost. They agree to seek it again.

Ophelia, who is in love with Hamlet, bids farewell to her brother **Laertes**, who is leaving for Paris. He warns her to be wary of Hamlet. Their father **Polonius**, the king's counsellor, offers worldly advice to his departing son, then to his lovestruck daughter.

That night, Hamlet and Horatio encounter Old Hamlet's ghost, who reveals he was murdered by Claudius and urges vengeance. Hamlet swears his companions to secrecy and tells them he will feign madness.

ACT II

Ophelia tells Polonius that Hamlet is behaving erratically. Polonius interprets this as lovesickness.

Claudius and Gertrude enlist Hamlet's childhood friends **Rosencrantz** and **Guildenstern** to investigate the prince's 'transformation.' Polonius appears, insisting Hamlet is mad with love for Ophelia.

Hamlet encounters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern but reveals nothing beyond his melancholic mood. His interest is pricked when they mention a troupe of players.

Meeting the players, he is impressed by their passionate delivery. He commissions them to perform a drama.

Alone, Hamlet curses his own lack of passion, but says the play will 'catch the conscience of the king.'

ACT III

Claudius and Polonius instruct Ophelia to engage with Hamlet while they observe from a hiding place. Hamlet appears and tells the audience he longs to die but fears worse miseries in the afterlife. Ophelia approaches him, but he spurns her.

Hamlet briefs the players. As the court assembles for the play, he asks Horatio to watch Claudius. The play shows a king poisoned by his nephew. Claudius and Gertrude become nervous and eventually walk out. Polonius summons Hamlet to see his mother.

Claudius instructs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to accompany Hamlet to England. He then attempts to pray, revealing his guilt to the audience. Hamlet, hungry for vengeance, finds him but resolves not to kill him at prayer, as this will send him to Heaven.

Polonius hides in Gertrude's closet. Hamlet enters and scolds his mother. Hearing a noise, he stabs the hidden Polonius, killing him. He rebukes Gertrude furiously for transferring her affections to Claudius. Seeing the ghost again, he begs her to repent. Hamlet drags Polonius's body away.

ACT IV

Distraught, Gertrude tells Claudius that Hamlet has killed Polonius. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are sent to find Hamlet, who eventually reveals the whereabouts of the body. Claudius sends Hamlet to England, having secretly ordered his death.

Hamlet witnesses **Fortinbras**, Prince of Norway, waging war over a trivial territorial dispute. He contrasts this with his own inertia and renews his resolve.

Unhinged by the death of Polonius, Ophelia visits Gertrude and Claudius. Laertes has returned from Paris, seeking vengeance, and is horrified to see his sister's deranged state. Claudius and Laertes agree to collaborate.

Horatio and Claudius both receive word from Hamlet, who is back in Denmark. Claudius proposes to Laertes that he challenge Hamlet to a fencing match, using a sharpened blade, to avenge himself. Laertes resolves to poison the tip. Claudius decides to prepare a poisoned drink for Hamlet. Gertrude arrives with news that Ophelia has drowned.

ACT V

Two gravediggers chat irreverently about mortality. They are joined by Hamlet and Horatio. Hamlet speculates on the identities of the skulls turned up by the gravediggers. One belongs to Yorick, a jester whom Hamlet knew as a child.

Ophelia's funeral party arrives. On learning who is being buried, Hamlet identifies himself. Laertes assaults him, despite Hamlet's assertions of love for Ophelia.

Hamlet and Horatio are approached by Osrick, an effete servant, with the fencing challenge from Laertes. Despite warnings from Horatio, Hamlet accepts.

At the fencing match, Hamlet scores two strikes against Laertes. Gertrude toasts him, drinking from the poisoned cup. In the third round, the poisoned sword changes hands and both young men are wounded by it. Gertrude collapses, dying. Laertes, also dying, tells Hamlet the sword is poisoned. Hamlet uses it to kill Claudius.

Horatio attempts to drink from the poisoned cup but Hamlet begs him to stay alive and report what has happened. As Hamlet dies, Fortinbras arrives to assume control.

JINGJU: A CLASSICAL GENRE

History

In ancient China, drama and movement were very typically accompanied by music, whether in puppet shows, sung story-telling, acrobatics or dance. The earliest evidence of fully staged and costumed operatic performances is found in Song Dynasty (960-1279) records, and complete play scripts with musical directions have survived from the (Mongol) Yuan period (1271-1368). These operas developed into a widely variegated series of regional traditions, all of which drew on the same kinds of stories and sentiments but which customized them by using local dialects, melodies and instruments.

The pre-eminent traditional Chinese opera performers worked in purpose-built commercial theatres seating several thousand around a central stage, at the imperial court or in the private troupes of the wealthiest families. The next rank of opera singers toured the villages, temples, clan halls, markets and fairs of the rural hinterlands, often using China's network of canals and rivers. At temples, effigies of the gods were processed to places of honour facing a temporary stage in the temple yard. Ordinary folk could watch these performances for nothing.

Some such dramas were of the morally improving kind, memorializing the god whose festival it was; but others were distinctly earthy — it just depended on the (presumed) taste of the deity in question. At the clan halls, opera performances — not surprisingly — emphasized Confucian virtues like filial piety and female chastity. Meanwhile, market and fair performances were decidedly populist, with tales full of passionate romance, tragic love, murder and revenge. Their function was to draw in the widest number of spectators so that the variegated salesmen, professional gamblers, itinerant courtesans and others could extract a living in turn. Finally, many courtesans learnt some opera singing, all the better with which to charm their patrons.

Jingju (Beijing, sometimes Peking Opera) is a fairly recent addition to this context, with a history of about 220 years, being an amalgamation of older, regional genres newly synthesized and systematically developed to appeal to the capital city's most discerning audiences. For much of its early history, female performers were forbidden on stage (though they have long standing historically in Chinese Opera) and in the first half of the 20th century the foremost performers were men who impersonated women on stage, among them the remarkable musician Mei Lanfang (1894-1961).

Mei's influence is still to be heard today in the fluid melodic style and delicately graceful acting of many a tragic heroine, but there have been few if any prominent female impersonators in recent generations as legal restrictions were swept away and major social change ensued.

Today in China jingju retains respect as a key form of national heritage, and the impact of its elaborate acrobatic skills can be seen in many a martial arts film; but live opera has lost the massive popular appeal it held until the 1960s. Dramas have been shortened to fit an evening's entertainment, and many attempts have been made to update aspects of the performance style. Few changes had lasting impact, however, in part because the performative means of jingju (described below) are rather timeless in essence, and so resist updating. Nevertheless, jingju is now becoming a classical genre followed by a minority of enthusiasts rather than a rapidly evolving art with wide appeal in the Chinese population generally.

Elements of performance: tune families, role types and the four traditional skills

In constructing a role for a performance, singers like Mei Lanfang worked within three special attributes of jingju, and of the Chinese operatic tradition more widely. These are the use of tune families for melodic material (rather than a composer), reliance on a role-type system, and a focus on four key dramatic skills: singing, speaking, acting and fighting.

There are two large tune families in jingju, which together provide much of its melodic repertory. Each tune family provides a basic melodic skeleton that can be realized in performance in several dozen somewhat distinct metrical and modal forms. That is, there are faster versions for moments of high excitement, simpler versions for interactive dialogue, and slow, highly decorated forms in which the singer explores an emotional state. The traditional skeleton delineates which song syllable goes where, the duration of phrases and instrumental interludes, the rhythmic style and the overall melodic shape, all of which can vary by role type. An accustomed listener knows these tune families almost as well as the singer and the accompanists, and so is able to recognize their choices in fleshing out the melodic outline to make it fit the dramatic needs of the scene and the character in question. In this sense, jingju music is both familiar and newly made each time it is used.

Chinese opera is classified according to four major vocal role types: the male role sheng, female dan, painted-face role jing and the clown chou. There are many sub-categories within each type: for example, the dan designation includes such stereotypes as the zhengdan (serious or tragic heroine), wudan (military female), huadan (flirtatious maid), laodan (elderly female) and the caidan (comic female role). Each subcategory has its own style of costuming, make-up and movement, and its own rules for pronunciation, melodic range and the other features of musical performance. As such, a singer approaches a role with certain basics for costume, acting and singing already in place. This was a crucial ingredient historically, when many performances were semi-improvised before live audiences, the singer (and accompanists) relying upon the basis provided by the role type and the tune family even as they created something anew. Improvising like this demanded great skills of memorization and strong ensemble cohesion, but it had the great advantage of reducing unpaid rehearsal time as opposed to

performance from which an income could be derived. It also allowed the listener to compare, say, Mei Lanfang's zhengdan to that of Cheng Yanqiu (1904–58). Even as certain early 20th-century audience members avidly followed magazine accounts of the scandals linking actors and actresses to the rich and powerful, others met to argue the aesthetic merits that distinguished such performances and to emulate these traits in their own amateur performances.

Chinese theorists from the Yuan Dynasty onwards have also recognized four basic expressive means in opera performance: chang, nian, zuo and da (singing, speaking, acting and fighting). Chang and nian collectively embrace a range of different modes of voice production, from the most melismatic arias at one end of the spectrum through to onstage declamation in which the tonal properties of spoken Chinese are heightened and stretched out in an artistically appealing way. The relationship between zuo and da is similar: the former includes facial expressions, gestures and postures, and the latter extends these into choreographed fighting and acrobatic movements. Particularly striking for viewers new to Chinese Opera will be the use of simple staging and props. By holding a horse-whip, for instance, the actor shows us that he is riding a horse; by coordinating rocking movements several actors can complete a river crossing by boat. These examples hint at the challenges involved in updating jingju's settings: what we tend to enjoy is the way an actor summons up the image of a brave warhorse, champing at the bit, or perhaps the sparkling of romance as the heroine topples into the arms of a handsome stranger as a wave nearly overturns the ferry boat. Adding a horse or a boat to the performance just gives the actors that much less expressive work to do.

A drama need not have an equal combination of these four means: some are dominated by singing, and others by dramatic movement. Even within a single drama, the role types vary in how far they typically draw on these four components: painted-face role performers tend to be experts in fighting and so they sing comparatively less than the other role types (reasonably enough, it is hard to sing while engaged in high-speed acrobatics). When they do stop and sing, however, they use a marvellously distinctive, rough-throated timbre that brings to mind the passionate vocalization of folk genres like flamenco. In some cases, an influential jingju performer makes a new version of a story by altering the balance of role types and expressive elements in a drama, rather as if the next generation adjusted Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* to *Susanna's Wedding* and then the next again took the Countess's story as the main theme. As these examples suggest, transformations like this happen in Western opera too, though they are less common than the re-envisionings found in the Chinese tradition, and of course typically involve composing new music all over again.

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Originally commissioned for the Edinburgh International Festival
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ABOUT

A prominent art company in China, Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company was established in March 1955 under the name of Donghua Experimental Peking Opera Group and People Peking Opera Group as a facet of CPC Shanghai Ministry of Propaganda. The troupe was founded by the famous Peking Opera master Zhou Xinfang, who was also the first president of the company. Deemed one of the top ten Peking Opera troupes by the Chinese Ministry of Culture, the Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company has maintained its unique art style for more than half a century through the production of numerous dramatic works including *The Glorious Zhen Guan Years of the Tang Dynasty*, *The Spider Cave* and *The Lotus Lantern*.

Now, Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company not only follows the traditional spirit of Jingju, but also strives to combine modernity with tradition. Their goal is to continue further development of scripts and artists with the art form as well as to popularize Jingju and develop a larger performance market. Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company is the only art troupe in China that has three plays selected for the China National Arts Fund project.

With more than 300 staff, two performing groups and the Shanghai Tianchan Yifu Theatre, Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company has a full managing and operations team and is in the process of building a creative production and performance team. Touring abroad as well as at home, Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company spreads culture and friendship all over the world.



BIOGRAPHIES

Fu Xiru Zi Dan

Fu Xiru graduated from the Shanghai Opera College. His notable appearances include martial roles in *Fight With Chariots*, *Spy Fu Mountain at Night*, *Revenge of an Arrow* and *Tielong Mountain*, and Old Man roles in *The Story of Wu Peng*. He was named best actor at the China Drama Association's first Red Plum Festival in 2003.

Chen Yu Yong Shu

Chen Yu trained at the Shanghai Opera College. He specializes in *jing* (facial make-up) roles with the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe, mainly performing Jiazi Hualian (acting-focused) roles but also taking Tongchui Hualian (singing-focused) parts. His principal repertory includes *The Marriage of Zhong Kui's Sister* and *Fighting with Ma Chao*.

Guo Ruiyue Jiang Rong

Guo Ruiyue trained at the Dance School of the Shanghai Opera College, where her teachers included Mei Baojiu. She specializes in the Dan of Mei (Lan Fang) style of acting, occasionally taking roles in the Hua Shan style. Her notable repertory includes *Mu Guiying Marshal*, *Drunk Concubine* and *The King and his Concubine*. In 2001 she participated in the opening ceremony of the Hua Zong Literature Award, Malaysia.

Zhao Huan Yin Li

Zhao Huan graduated from the Theatre Dance Institute at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, specializing in the Dan of Cheng (Yan Qiu) style. Her repertory includes *The Embroidered Pouch* and *Snow in June*.

Zhu Heji Yin Fu

Zhu Heji trained at the Shanghai Theatre Academy and specializes in *chou* (clown) roles. In 2008, he toured France and China with the Asphodèles Company, France.

Gu Dianju Yin Ze

Gu Dianju trained with Xue Yongkang at the Theatre Dance Institute of the Shanghai Theatre Academy and now specializes in *wusheng* (martial arts) roles with the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe, most notably in *Fighting With Chariots*, *Tielong Mountain*, *Fighting With Ma Chao* and *Jiepai Pass*. He has also performed in Japan and France.

Geng Lu Yong Bo

Geng Lu studied at the Shanghai Opera College and the Shanghai Normal University School of Acting; her teachers included Tian Enrong, Ma Mingjun and Li Changchun. She specializes in *jing* (facial make-up) roles with the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe and her repertory includes, most notably, *Visiting Mountain Yin*, *Town Chi Sang* and *Meeting the Queen*.

Shi Yukun Director

Shi Yukun was born in Jiangsi in 1943 and since 1975 has been a leading director with the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe, which he joined as an actor in 1960. His numerous directing credits include the modern Peking Opera *Camel Xiang Zi*, which won many awards, including the gold medal in the Second Peking Opera Festival and an award from the China Drama Institute; new adaptations of *The Poem for Goddess Luo*, *Minister Liu Humpback* and *Three-Inch Feet*; and productions of Kunqu Opera and Yueju Opera. His productions are noted for accommodating contemporary theatrical styles within the formal traditions of Peking Opera.

Feng Gang Writer

The Director of the Shanghai Peking Opera Troupe, Feng Gang graduated from the Shanghai Opera College, where he studied opera literature. His play *The Choice* was named best play at the Shanghai Short Play Festival; his other Peking Operas include *Notre Dame*, adapted from Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*. His extensive work collecting and researching the history and theory of Peking Opera includes co-editing *The History of Shanghai Peking Opera*, and he is the literary editor of the new history of Peking Opera, *Xiao He and Han Xin*.



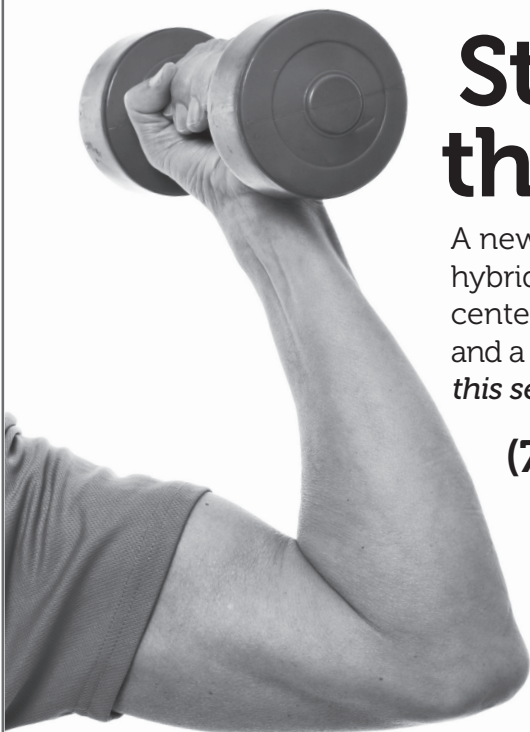
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