

Chinese
Opera
The Actor's Craft

表演者的技藝

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with Peter Lovrick



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Preface	ix
Chapter 1 How Chinese Theatre Solves Theatrical Problems	1
Chapter 2 Using Stage Movement	5
<i>Mime</i>	5
<i>Acrobatics</i>	16
<i>Poses</i>	23
<i>Special Moves</i>	30
<i>Playing the Dwarf</i>	34
Chapter 3 Using Props	39
<i>Horsewhip</i>	39
<i>Fan</i>	51
<i>Handkerchief</i>	59
<i>Ribbon</i>	65
<i>Table and Chair</i>	69
<i>Cloud Whisk</i>	75
<i>Paddle and Boat Pole</i>	80
<i>Flag</i>	84
<i>Cloud</i>	89
Chapter 4 Using Weapons and Skills for Stage Fighting	93
<i>Spear</i>	93
<i>Mace</i>	101
<i>Quarterstaff</i>	105
<i>Polearm</i>	107
<i>Sword</i>	110
<i>Sabre</i>	113
<i>Bow and Arrow</i>	115
<i>Special Weapons</i>	118
<i>Preparing for Battle</i>	122
Chapter 5 Using Costumes	131
<i>Pheasant Tails</i>	131
<i>Headgear</i>	138
<i>Hair</i>	141
<i>Beards</i>	148
<i>Water Sleeves</i>	154
<i>Outer Robe</i>	161
<i>Big Belt</i>	167
Chapter 6 Using Special Skills	171
<i>Face Changing</i>	171
<i>Fire Breathing</i>	177
<i>Opening the Eye of Wisdom</i>	182
<i>Balancing the Oil Lamp</i>	185
<i>Ladder Skills</i>	188
A Final Word—from the Photographer and the Writer	191
Glossary	193
Appendix I: English Guide to the Photographs	195
Appendix II: Chinese Guide to the Photographs	203
References	211
Index	213

How Chinese Theatre Solves Theatrical Problems

A FIRST VISIT to the Chinese opera can be mystifying, if not overwhelming. Audiences used to realistic theatre are lost. Their usual frame of reference is gone. Instead, high-pitched falsettos, clanging gongs, stylized movement, and unrecognizable props thread through the play in an often glorious, but frequently confusing, way. Audiences new to the Chinese opera hearing the explosive cries of approval “*Hao!*” from seasoned opera goers wonder just what they are missing. They realize then that watching a Chinese opera requires more than just knowing the story, which they can easily get from reading a plot synopsis or following subtitles in translation. The difficulty is not simply the language. After all, fans of Western opera are not necessarily fluent in Italian, French or German, but enjoy such operas nonetheless because they are also familiar with the theatrical conventions. There is another language in Chinese opera, the language of the stage. It is a stage technique made up of movement, costumes, face painting, and props, all of which convey meaning. These are not translated into subtitles over the stage or in the programme. New audiences need to learn this language. Familiarity with Chinese stage technique is the key to appreciating Chinese opera.

This stage language is the Chinese opera’s response to particular theatrical problems. What does the actor do when the play calls for him to ride a hundred miles on horseback? How can a boat ride down the river be accomplished? And how, in heaven’s name, does the cast show two mighty clashing armies? Various theatrical traditions have devised their own solutions to these and other problems. The ancient Greeks and the Japanese Noh theatre use masks to convey personae. Realist and naturalist Western theatres use detailed scenery and curtains to hide scene changes and thus take the spectator from one place to another. The Elizabethan and traditional Chinese theatres use little scenery, depending instead on suggestive props and elaborate costumes.

Over several centuries, Chinese opera has developed a series of stage conventions that has become familiar to regular theatre goers. They know when they see the oily white-faced actor that they have a villain before them. When they see the actor walk in a circle they know that he or she has made a journey. Knowing the conventions of this stage language means the new audience is no longer excluded from the rich theatrical experience of Chinese opera. The centre of all these conventions is the actor. Traditional Chinese opera has focused its attention upon the actor rather than the lighting, scenery, or even the director. The audience already knows the stories well. They come not to see what happens, but rather how highly trained actors present that familiar story in their singing and their mastery of stage technique. In other words, the real pleasure in store for a new audience to the Chinese opera is savouring how the actors unfold the story through their mastery of stagecraft.

Chinese opera is a broad term that needs some defining. The term “opera” is misleading for Westerners to whom opera means full orchestration and characters that sing throughout. In China, opera is more akin to a Western operetta or musical. It is a mixture of singing and speaking, prose and poetry, and even dance and acrobatics. Even with such knowledge, Chinese opera can be hard to pin down because it is a generic term for well over 360 different styles of opera that differ greatly in music styles and dialects. Taiwanese, Cantonese, Sichuan and Peking operas are connected to places. They use the language and musical forms of the localities. So what, then, makes these vastly different performance arts recognizable as Chinese opera? The answer lies in the stage conventions, which are largely, although not completely, shared. These different opera styles have generally approached theatrical problems in similar ways.

This general approach can be traced back well over a millennia. One of the great artistic achievements of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) was the Yuan *zaju*. This was the opera that Marco Polo would have seen. These highly polished dramas in four acts moved from prose to singing, and they had clearly established role types like the clown, the villain, the female and the male roles. Yuan *zaju* also depended upon the actor to set the scene rather than on scenery. The scripts continue to be celebrated as masterful pieces of literature exploring themes as varied as social justice and marriage.

Following the short-lived Mongol Yuan dynasty, the Han Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644) saw the growth of what has come to be seen as the classical drama of China, *chuanqi*. This highly refined drama included many acts, exquisite poetry, dance and mime. It adopted a southern musical style polished by the sixteenth century musician Wei Liangfu in the city of Kunshan—and thus became known as Kunqu opera. That music with its characteristic flute, unlike the music of the earlier Yuan *zaju*, has survived, and the Kunqu continues to be performed today.

The beauty of Kunqu accounted for both its rise and demise. It became too erudite and subtle to hold much of an appeal for audiences beyond the scholar class. In its place, popular local opera using folk tunes and regional dialects became popular all over China. These operas were shorter and more accessible. They presented a wide range of stories with ghosts, heroes, beauties and emperors. The local flavour of each of these opera styles makes them distinct from each other. They also shared a common heritage of role types, face painting, and mime, among other stage conventions.

All of these threads came together in a marvellous way in China's last dynasty, the Qing (1644–1911). China's longest lived emperor, Qianlong, celebrated his eightieth birthday in 1790. Part of the celebrations included famous opera troupes from different provinces like Anhui and Sichuan coming to Peking to perform. The result of this mix of opera styles was the growth of something new—something that was later to be called the Peking opera. It brought together musical and performance styles from other traditions into an opera that took on a life of its own. In it, one sees the four basic role types of the

painted face, the clown, women and men. It traditionally uses a plain stage with only a table and two chairs representing a room in a house. Yet the audience knows that the same chair placed on top of the table can make it a mountain or that the table can become in another scene an altar in a temple.

One of the great Peking opera performers of the twentieth century, Mei Lanfang (1894–1961) was instrumental in introducing the conventions of Chinese opera technique to the West. He was one of the four greatest performers of the female role. His vocal qualities and exquisite movement were a sensation in his tours to Japan, the USSR and the USA in the 1920s and 1930s. The Chinese solution to theatrical problems, and Mei Lanfang's skills in particular, impressed the great German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), who developed the *verfremdungseffekt* or alienation device of the epic theatre, which became a major force in Western drama. In Peking opera, Brecht saw a stage technique that described a story rather than one that tried to recreate it realistically on the stage. He saw an approach to theatre that broke the imaginary fourth wall of Western theatre and could speak directly to the audience. He saw how small props or gestures were used in that theatre to suggest location or event. He called this *alienation* because the technique both called attention to the fact that the audience was watching a play and evoked what the dramatist wanted it to experience. Constantin Stansislavski, Lee Strasberg, Charlie Chaplin and other great forces in Western performance arts were also enthralled with what they saw on Mei Lanfang's Western tours.

The Chinese opera has not been static in modern times, thus saving it from becoming a museum piece to be admired, but without life or vigour for modern audiences. Mei Lanfang was involved with reformation of Peking opera throughout the 1950s, experimenting with changes in costume, scenery and performance style. New types of Chinese opera, like the all-female Yue opera from Zhejiang Province, developed and came into their own. Opera was updated and applied to propaganda in the Model Revolutionary Opera style of the 1960s in China. The Contemporary Legend Theatre Company of Taiwan has been integrating Peking opera technique with Western theatre practice since the 1980s, adapting Greek dramas, Shakespearean plays, and even theatre of the absurd pieces to the Chinese opera stage. In all of this experimentation, whether it be the revolutionary opera of the 1960s or the experimentation of groups like The Contemporary Legend Theatre, there is a common thread. The approach to theatrical problems has been to solve them in non-realistic ways, relying on a conventional language of performance technique recognizable to the audience. It suggests rather than completely presents. The suggestion is enough to evoke the entire reality.

When an audience new to Chinese opera invests the time to learn some of these conventions, it is rewarded with an ability to appreciate a rare and wonderful theatrical tradition that has developed through the centuries and offers the world a unique approach to drama.

Using Stage Movement

Mime

RELYING ON MIME, or pure stage movement, to indicate physical realities is one of the primary solutions that Chinese opera developed for theatrical problems. The Chinese opera blends mime into performance. It is a tool that actors use along with singing, manipulating costume, and handling props to express a reality rather than recreate it as is the practice in Western naturalist theatre. This approach means that Chinese opera does not need to develop extensive sets or use a wide range of realistic props. In fact, operas can be performed in an empty space with little more than a table and two chairs, and often without even these. Mime creates the buildings and props called for by the story. It can also suggest long journeys without the need to change scenery in order to indicate a new location. Mime in Chinese opera is a stage language with which the seasoned audience becomes familiar. It telegraphs what an audience needs to know to keep the story moving and keeps the focus on the actor.



One common use of mime is to open and close doors and windows. In the story of *Dong Sheng and Li Shi*, the couple sings, “Let us bolt the door and close the window shutters,” and they proceed to shut up their imaginary house on a completely bare stage (see Photo 2.02). Even without this line, the audience recognizes a standardized movement for closing windows and doors, and pulling a bolt across to lock them.

Mime is used in Chinese opera for a great many other activities drawn from daily life. *Picking Up the Jade Bracelet*, for example, makes extensive use of mime to further the story line. At the beginning of the opera, the young country maiden, Sun Yujiao, chases after the chickens using mime. Then, she feeds them in her front yard. The actress accomplishes this by scooping up her apron to hold the imaginary chicken feed. She mimes scattering the feed, using her body and eye movements to indicate a large flock of chickens in front of her (see Photo 2.03).

Later, the country maiden, alone at home, decides to while away the time by working on her embroidery. She deftly presents the act of embroidering through a series of precise mime movements all

Photo 2.02 *Dong Sheng and Li Shi*,
Liyuan Opera



instantly recognizable to the audience. Sun Yujiao pulls and twists the thread after choosing the right colour. Then, she bites the thread, attaches it to her needle and begins her task. This series of moves is magical to watch as it invokes the reality of needlework (see Photo 2.04).

Another young woman in a different opera, Pan Jinlian, has eyes for her handsome young brother-in-law, Wu Song, and decides to tempt him by making buns. No props of any kind are used for this marvellous sequence. Wearing her apron, she proceeds to mix the flour and knead the dough (see Photo 2.05).

Aside from daily activities like closing windows, sewing and cooking, mime can also be used to indicate a journey. If a character needs to travel a great distance in the opera, there is no need to close the curtain and change the scenery. One way to express the idea of a journey is a mime move called “circling the stage” (see Photo 2.06). The actor simply moves in a large clockwise or anti-clockwise circle on the stage. When the circle is completed, the audience knows that we are now in a different location. Sometimes, particularly in a long chase, characters will exit the stage to the audience’s right and

Photo 2.04 *Picking Up the Jade Bracelet*, Ping Opera



re-emerge on the stage at the audience's left indicating that they have crossed a great distance. Characters will also mime travelling by night through careful footwork, and by indicating how alert they are as they take each step. This move is called the "side step".

The female warrior, Mu Guiying, has learned a secret pathway to escape an enemy's ambush in a valley. Following the instructions of an old man who collects herbs in the valley, she makes her way out on the narrow, winding pathway. The performer walks in a counter-clockwise circle to demonstrate her journey (see Photo 2.07).

Mime can also present a journey in a carrying chair. The clever and vivacious maid, Spring Grass, has used her wit to get an official to let her ride in his carrying chair while he walks. Four chair bearers mime holding up the poles and walk in unison with a distinctive swaying gait that denotes porters or chair bearers. Although Spring Grass stands and walks in the middle of the four bearers, the audience understands that she is in fact sitting in the chair supported by them and enjoying the ride (see Photo 2.08).

Photo 2.06 *The Magic Lotus Lantern*, Cantonese Opera



Photo 2.10 *Lin Chong's Night Flight*, Hebei Clapper Opera

Mime can also indicate a fantastic journey as in *Wreaking Havoc in the Eastern Sea*. In this opera, the turtle magistrate swims through the water with his turtle troops. The actors mime swimming under the sea in a turtle fashion (see Photo 2.09).

Another type of mimed travel is the “side walk”. Typically used for night journeys or reconnaissance, the “side walk” indicates that the character is in difficult or unknown terrain off the main road. The character is simply dressed, sometimes carries a weapon or other prop, and moves adroitly so as not to be observed. He must depend heavily on careful listening as he moves through the darkness unsure of what dangers lurk around the corners or behind the trees. His eyes convey the sense of constant alertness. The character sometimes sings an aria as he goes, and thus this mime is also called “singing side walk”. The “singing side walk” is used in *Lin Chong's Night Flight*. The hero Lin Chong, falsely accused, sentenced, and now in danger of his life, must make his escape at night on Liang Mountain. He mimes his way through the treacherous mountain passes, jumping across a stream while singing an aria (see Photo 2.10).

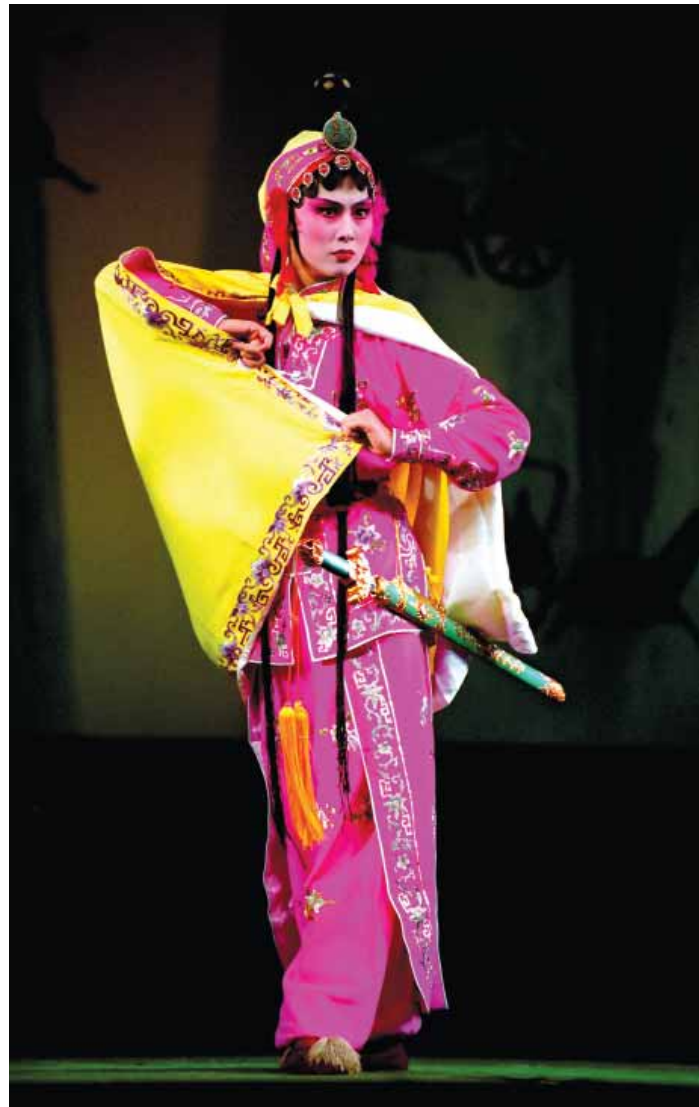


Photo 2.12 *The Prime Minister of Wei*, Shao Opera

The warrior He Tianbao also mimes a journey through dangerous mountain terrain at night in *Cleaning Out the Bandit's Lair*. Having been sent to scout out the mountain base of local outlaws, He Tianbao must make his way in the darkness over difficult terrain. Listening carefully, he demonstrates that he is on alert as he moves deftly through the darkness. His left fist faces the earth like a hammer, while his right hand is opened to the sky. He balances in readiness on one leg. His eyes are fixed, bright and determined (see Photo 2.11).

The young maiden Yue Yan also takes a night journey. She leads her father, the commander of the Wei forces, into the darkness. Falsely accused of treachery, he has been expelled from the camp. She keeps vigilant, leading the way through the wilderness (see photo 2.12).

Mime opens up endless possibilities in Chinese opera. It expands the story line by relying upon the skills of actors executing familiar moves that invoke, rather than recreate, reality.

Acrobatics

FOR MANY WESTERNERS, acrobatics and Chinese opera are synonymous. A trip to Chinese opera carries the expectation of dazzling displays of tumbling and breath-taking flips across the stage. A Western audience can be excused for thinking that Chinese opera is primarily physical because touring companies from China coming to the West often choose to highlight acrobatic operas, or a series of acrobatic scenes. The concern is that the music, singing styles and language of Chinese opera are inaccessible to Westerners. It takes some time after all to familiarize oneself with the conventions of traditional opera. Consequently, troupes will often choose what is easily understood, or at least most appreciated. Chinese acrobatics is universally admired and so seems the right choice for a performance in the West.



Photo 2.13 *Zhao Yun Hides the Baby Prince, Cantonese Opera*



Photo 2.14 *Escape from the Golden Mountain Temple*, Cantonese Opera

Certainly, physical skills are an important ingredient of Chinese opera, which incorporates the whole range of performance art from dance to singing, from mime to acrobatics. Acrobatics cross role types. Clowns, painted face characters, warriors, female roles and male roles all have opportunities to display their prowess in different operas. This kind of skill in Chinese opera is called *tanzigong*, or “carpet work”, because tumbling and flips are done on a generally bare stage covered only with the performance carpet.

The back flip is a staple of the acrobat on the Chinese opera stage. One spectacular use of the back flip is the opera scene *Escape from the Golden Mountain Temple*, part of *The Legend of the White Snake* story. The young man, Xu Xian, has unwittingly married White Snake, a snake spirit who has incarnated as a beautiful maiden. The Buddhist abbot, Fahai, declaring this an abomination, imprisons Xu Xian in the Golden Mountain Temple to protect him from White Snake. Xu Xian, however, escapes and makes a specular entrance onto the stage in a move called “backward battering the tiger”. Without touching the floor with his hands, the actor springs headlong backwards across the stage, flipping himself over and landing on his feet; he thus demonstrates his distress during a perilous escape (see Photo 2.14).



Some operas have a number of such acrobatic displays, one after the other. *The Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane* is one such opera. The luohan, or arhats, are ascended beings who have achieved Buddhist enlightenment. They are called on to capture the Golden Crane which normally sits before the Buddha, but has fled to take the place of the Golden Eagle Prince in a marriage to a beautiful princess. The Golden Crane in his flight executes a “cloud flip”. Normally done from atop several stacked tables, it is also executed from a realistic mountain in more modern productions. The actor leads with his legs, throwing them out over his head as he tumbles from a great height to land on his feet on the stage below (see Photo 2.15).

The luohan discover that the Golden Crane is not easily captured. One of them is struck to the ground and rolls across the stage in a “tiger roll” while the Golden Crane leaps through the air over him (see Photo 2.16).

Photo 2.15 *The Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane*, Cantonese Opera



Photo 2.16 *The Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane*, Cantonese Opera

The action becomes tense as each of the luohan attacks the Golden Crane in an attempt to catch the wayward bird. They flip and somersault across the stage one after another, but the Golden Crane avoids them all (see Photo 2.17).

Acrobatics are commonly used in a class of Chinese operas called *wuxi* or military opera. The opera *Phoenix Terrace Fortress* is one example. The insurgent Guo Yanwei leads his forces against the court in the Northern Han dynasty (951–979). To get there, he must fight his way through the Phoenix Terrace Fortress, which is protected by the general Murong Yanchao, a formidable fighter. But the general has taken ill and cannot come out to battle. To save the dynasty, his wife, Zhang Xiuying, dons armour and heads out to fight the invaders. The battle is spectacular as she shows that she herself is an able warrior. She fends off the enemy fighters who execute the *gaomao*, or high somersault, over her head. The acrobatic soldier jumps and flies directly above her, hits the ground rolling, stands up and runs off all in one smooth and electrifyingly executed move (see Photo 2.18).



Photo 2.19 *Wu Song*, Cantonese Opera

Acrobatics on the Chinese stage are elegant, and appreciated for the ease in which the actor incorporates them into the action of the play. In the opera *Wu Song* the cuckolded husband, Wu Dalang, somersaults backwards on the stage after a strikingly beautiful kick from the evil Ximen Qing. That actor kicks his leg high while maintaining a perfectly straight posture. Wu Dalang is knocked back, and Ximen Qing quickly brings his leg back (see Photo 2.19).

Yet another striking acrobatic pose is executed by the young man's role in the opera *The Haunting of Zhang Sanlang*. The maiden Yan Xijiao has come back from the grave looking for her lover; she is determined to bring him with her to the underworld so that they can be together again there. As she pursues him, Zhang Sanlang is stunned and collapses. In a move called the "stiff corpse fall", his body stiffens like a board and he falls back perfectly straight until he hits the ground, indicating that he is either stunned or dead. The fall is both beautiful and terrifying to watch (see Photo 2.20).

Physical displays like these are high points in Chinese opera just as much as beautiful singing is. They are further demonstrations of the actor's craft which lies at the centre of Chinese theatre.

Poses

CHINESE OPERA ACTING is larger than life with exaggerated gestures, costumes and stylized props. The stylized pose, or *liangxiang*, is an important feature of Chinese performing arts. It brings in an element of sculpture, suspending the moment in time for the admiration of the audience. Actors will in the midst of the opera strike momentary poses that elegantly express the event or the feeling of the moment. They also often strike a pose upon entering the stage or just before leaving it.



Photo 2.21 *Burning the Camps*,
Hebei Clapper Opera



“Mountain shoulders” is a basic pose in Chinese opera that indicates determination, readiness to fight, and military prowess. In the case of the warrior role shown below, one hand, clenched in a hammer fist, rests on the waist, while the other arm, palm extended outwards, rises to extend in a semi-circle from the shoulder (see Photo 2.22). Different roles, however, require different positions for “mountain shoulders”, depending on the age and function of the character.

In a Peking opera, the old general Zhao Yun holds his armour in a typical military pose, demonstrating spirit, discipline and severity. He listens soberly to the judgement on the commander who lost a strategic location by disregarding careful advice and through reckless pride. The commander must now pay with his life (see Photo 2.23).

In *The Battle of Baqiu*, General Zhou Yu fights against many warriors of the Three Kingdom's great general Liu Bei. He is unable to defeat his enemies and flees for his life. Finally, he must face the legendary warrior Zhang Fei, but Zhou Yu's horse stumbles. Zhang Fei raises his left leg high, pressing the advantage with his spear as Zhou Yu sinks to the stage, stretching out his legs in a split. In a remarkable stage move, the actor then jumps to his feet from the stage floor as the horse regains its balance (see Photo 2.24).

Photo 2.22 *Women Warriors of the Yang Family*, Cantonese Opera



Some poses indicate superior martial skills. Qin Ying fished in the imperial pool at Golden Water Bridge and killed a palace official in a dispute. As punishment he is to be sent off to war, leading the troops. Qin Ying demonstrates his prowess by striking a pose called “pedalling heaven” or “leg twist”. He raises his leg straight upward, pulling it behind his arm while grabbing the back of his foot so that the sole faces directly upward (see Photo 2.25).

Another similar pose makes a dramatic impression in the opera *Twice-Locked Mountain*. The formidable warrior maiden Liu Jinding engages in combat with the young, handsome general, Gao Junbao. After a fierce battle, she takes up the “board leg pose”. Standing straight on her right leg, she lifts her left leg high, grabbing the back of her foot with her right hand bringing it to her ear. Her determined gaze is fixed in front of her. Her left hand holds firmly onto her polearm. Used in combat and in choreographed spear play, this pose is dramatic, suggesting both courage and high fighting skills (see Photo 2.26).

Actors will often strike poses in the middle of much action. One such case is the fighting match between the warrior Meng Liang and the housemaid Yang Paifeng. Meng Liang has come to the famous

Photo 2.25 *The Cosmic Belt*, Ping Opera



Yang mansion to raise troops against an enemy. The servant girl is determined to prove that she is just as good—in fact better—than any of the male warriors. The sceptical and dismissive Meng Liang puts her to the test and finds that she is indeed unbeatable. In the middle of the fight, accompanied by drums and gongs, the actors freeze in a pose. Yang Paifeng looks on with determination at the frankly stupefied Meng Liang (see Photo 2.27).

The great general Guan Yu, later deified as Guan Gong, flourishes his great polearm in battle, accompanied by great drumming and clanging of gongs. He swings it behind him against his back, the powerful blade facing upward, and strikes a momentary pose that wins the admiration of the audience (see Photo 2.28).

Lu Wenlong has defeated general after general including the powerful Yue Yun. In a moment of self-satisfaction and bravado, he takes the pose “back crossed double spears” (see Photo 2.29). This pose is used by both male and female warriors to demonstrate their agility and skill with weapons.

Photo 2.27 *Meng Liang Raises Troops*, Gan Opera



Special Moves

ACTORS ALSO MAKE use of special dramatic moves as they tell the story of the opera. These moves are a stylized lifting up of the opera's action to the realm of poetic movement. These moves are named for what they evoke in a similar way to how kungfu or tai-chi moves are named. The moves can be used in different situations.

One of these moves is aptly named “exploring the sea”. The actor bends forward over the stage while sweeping both arms out and raising the left leg high. Looking straight down as if searching the depths of the sea, the actor strikes a dramatic pose. The young maiden Lian Jinfeng uses this pose when she dives into the sea and discovers a giant oyster. She is determined to get the precious pearl within it as she wants to repay a debt of kindness and knows that this pearl will make the perfect gift. After a fierce

Photo 2.30 *The Romance of the Iron Bow*, Longjiang Opera



Photo 2.31 *Lian Jinfeng*,
Cantonese Opera

battle with various sea creatures, she assumes the pose directly above the oyster, her sword extended, ready for the final strike. The oyster lies defenceless beneath her (see Photo 2.31).

In *The Haunting of Zhang Sanlang*, mentioned earlier, Zhang Sanlang uses the same move when he discovers the ghost of the beautiful Yan Xijiao. She falls straight-backed to the floor in a rigid pose known as “board waist” while Zhang Sanlang holds a lantern over her, taking up the “exploring the sea” position. Rather than looking into the water like Lian Jinfeng, he looks down upon the ghost, carefully inspecting her to see if she indeed is the same beauty that he had known in life (see Photo 2.32).

The great general Gao Chong in the famous opera *Tilting the War Carts* heroically fights against the enemy who in a desperate attempt to stop his advance sends war cart after war cart down the mountain to crush him. The general tilts each cart over with his spear, but in the process exhausts himself and his horse, so that both die on the mountain slope. The actor depicts the moment of exhaustion in a special move called “shooting the wild goose”. Bending backwards so that his body is parallel to the stage, he

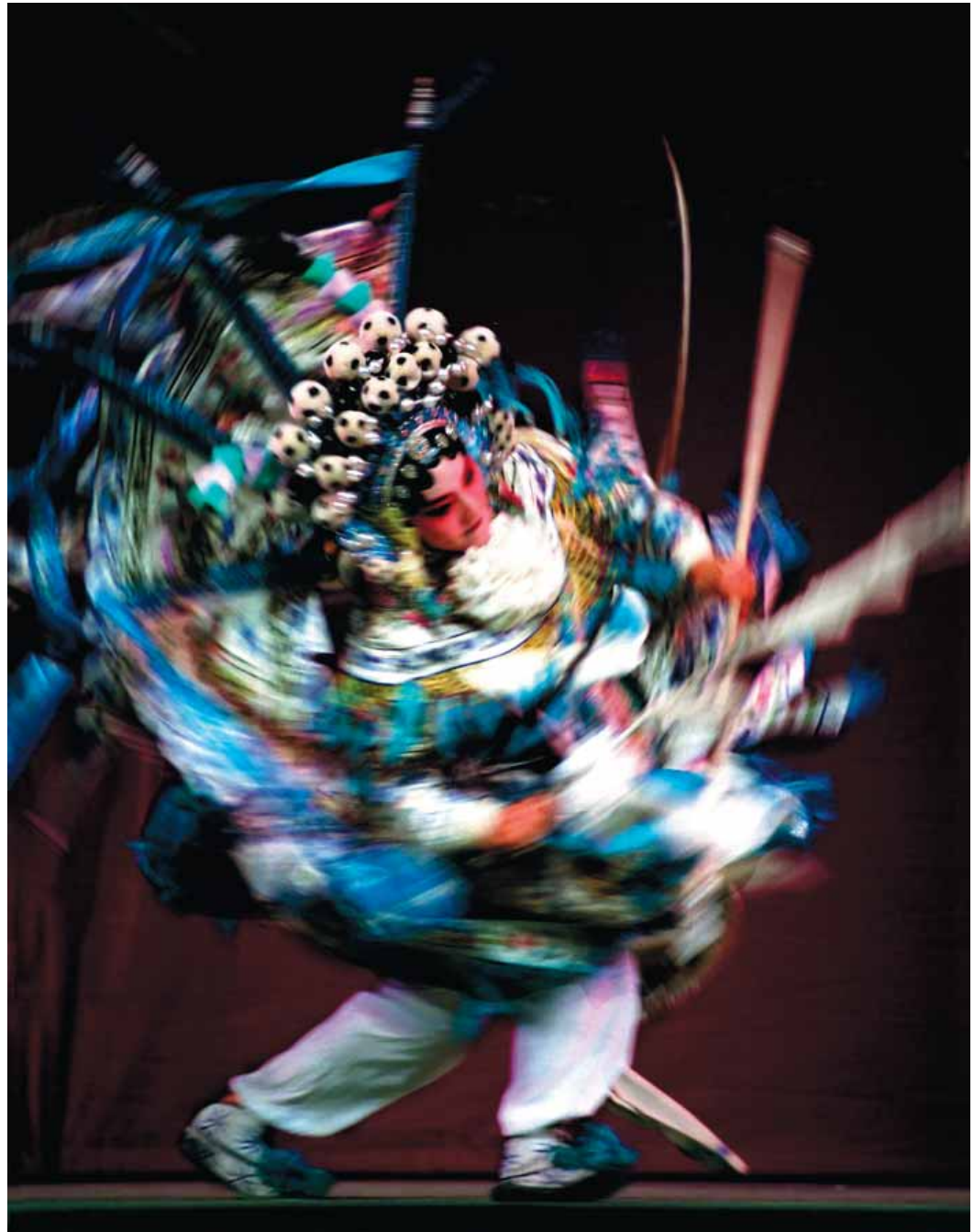


Photo 2.34 *Selecting a Horse for War*, Gan Opera

stretches out his arms and circles his left leg high into the air (see Photo 2.33). In a military play, this action indicates a horse driven beyond its limits, or sliding down a slope.

The female warrior, Mu Guiying, uses a special move to mount her horse. She has assumed the role of commander of the army after her husband, the general, is killed in battle. Determined to defeat the enemy invading the Song dynasty (960–1279), Mu Guiying chooses the fiercest horse in the stable. She mounts the horse in a spectacular spin, demonstrating both the spirit of the horse and her own superior horsemanship (see Photo 2.34).



When Xue Dingshan sees a ferocious tiger, he immediately grabs his bow and arrow while elegantly suspending his spear on his leg as he prepares to shoot (see Photo 2.35).

Poses and special moves such as these are features of Chinese opera that, like stylized singing, costumes and props, heighten the artistry of the story telling.

Photo 2.35 *Xue Dingshan Thrice Angers Fan Lihua*, Cantonese Opera

Playing the Dwarf

PAINTED FACE CHARACTERS in Chinese opera use thick-soled boots as a way to make themselves larger than life. Sometimes, though, they are actually smaller. Various operas call for the actors to perform the role of a dwarf. Rather than use a child or a small adult, Chinese opera traditionally expresses the idea of being small through the stage skill of the actor. This technique is called “playing the dwarf”. The actor squats low, raises his heels and walks on his toes to convey the effect of being very short.



Photo 2.36 *The Story of the Red Plum*, Cantonese Opera

The classic novel *The Legend of the Water Margin*, sometimes known as *All Men Are Brothers*, has provided source material for many operas. It concerns a band of Song dynasty outlaws, comparable to Sherwood Forest's Robin Hood and his merry men. One of these outlaws, Wang Ying, leads a raid on Hu village. Wang Ying's nickname is "Short-legged Tiger" because he is both a dwarf and a fierce fighter. Crouched low, preparing to walk on his toes, he adjusts his armour, one of a series of stage actions called *qiba* that denote preparing for war (see Photo 2.37).

Not only do actors "play the dwarf" as human warriors, but they play it also for magical and spiritual beings as well. In *Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane*, mentioned earlier, the errant Golden Crane, who is bent on mischief in the mortal world, suddenly finds himself attacked by a tall luohan on one side, and a dwarf luohan on the other. Both luohan are trying to bring the crane back to their world. To perform the short luohan, the actor not only has to "play the dwarf", but demonstrate fighting skills at the same time (see Photo 2.38).



Photo 2.39 *Kneading the Dough*,
Cantonese Opera

“Playing the dwarf” is used for roles other than the painted face or the magical being. In the opera named after the famous hero Wu Song, the beautiful but ruthless Pan Jinlian finds herself in an arranged marriage that she detests. Her mistress, jealous of Pan Jinlian’s beauty, has married her off to Wu Song’s brother, Wu Dalang. As handsome, tall, and vigorous as Wu Song is, his brother is the opposite. He was born an ugly dwarf. The actor who plays Wu Dalang crouches and walks on his toes while Pan Jinlian plans her freedom (see Photo 2.39).

The general principle in Chinese opera is to suggest rather than realistically represent. That suggestion is the work of the actors, who must develop skills beyond singing, delivering lines or performing a role. They also employ a wide range of physical skills like “playing the dwarf”. Actors who play the dwarf must be prepared to take the position for considerable period of times demonstrating not only their skills, but their stamina.

From the Photographer

THE BEST CHINESE opera troupes of various genres from across the country with top-grade actors and actresses visited Hong Kong between 1985 and 1993. This event has great historical significance and became a major part of my life's work. Looking back at it, I believe a performance series like that will probably never happen again. I was fortunate enough to record these operas with my camera, and am pleased to share these images with the reader of this book.

It has been thirty years since I first started taking pictures of the Chinese opera in performance. As an ordinary member of the audience, I took shot after shot using a hand-held camera without flash or tripod so as not to disturb the ongoing performance. My collection of opera photos grew exponentially over those three decades. Most of the images taken before 1993 were with analogue negative film; thus, the colour has faded over time. Some of the film was not well processed and the photos have been lost. I was alarmed at the prospect of losing these invaluable records of opera performances. Thanks to modern technology, I have been able to convert the analogue images to digital images, thus preventing further deterioration. I did the conversion myself—because I only trust myself—but this conversion took me ten years to complete.

I must thank Peter Lovrick, co-author of this book, for his enduring support and patience. Without him this book, as well as our first book, *Chinese Opera: Images and Stories*, would not have come to light. I still owe much gratitude to Kwan Lihuen, who was the first to encourage me to publish my Chinese opera images. My special thanks go to Yuen Siu-fai, Shen Zu'an, He Saifei and Annie Chow Ka-yee for their expert advice all through the project. I also wish to thank my very good friends Cheng Pui-kan, Tang Wai-lam and Lum Tin-wan for their valuable opinions. Last, but not least, I extend my thanks to Cheng Kwok-ho for his Chinese calligraphy on the cover of this book.

From the Writer

THE DIRECTOR COULD not contain himself in rehearsals as he explained this or that aspect of Chinese performing art to an amateur actor. "Chinese opera is wonderful!" he exclaimed. It is. The sense of wonder grows when that new, powerful, evocative language becomes part of our vocabulary. Suddenly, we are no longer missing something, but peering into a rich experience carefully polished through centuries of practice. We see an actor waving a whip and know he is dashing into battle; a woman biting the tresses of her hair and know that she has set her heart as solid as a rock; an official rushing onto the stage without his hat, his hair hanging down, and know that he is in distress; a general climbing upon a chair set on a table, and know that he is atop the mountain, surveying the battleground. These

conventions suggest rather than realistically represent. They open the imagination rather than present all that there is so that the audience becomes an active participant in this whole amazing enterprise called the Chinese theatre. It is worth spending time to learn this language. The rewards are endless. Chinese drama brings together the Chinese heart and soul, history and philosophy, music and literature, religion and story-telling, all that is valued and despised by the culture into one package. It is surely one of the best avenues into understanding China's past and what has formed its present. It is surely an intoxicating experience on its own merits.

It is no secret, however, that Chinese opera has fallen onto hard times. Things are not what they were. Once a common feature in towns and villages, teahouses and temples, outdoor and indoor theatres, the opera is less and less attended. It has had to compete first with film and television, then with the internet and digital communication that favours the quick and the fast. It is not an art form for the impatient. Many young people have been cut off for one reason or another from the language of the stage which is the subject of this book. That means that an actor communicates in a performance language that is no longer commonly understood. The delicate movement of an actor's fingers manipulating water sleeves has a hard time competing with special effects in 3D. People are less and less familiar with the old stories.

Chinese opera will, however, make its comeback—probably repackaged, rethought, and represented, but it *will* make its comeback. Several signs of that are already evident. We rediscover the treasures from the past periodically. Sometimes, sufficient time needs to pass to be able to see them afresh so that they are not frozen artefacts that belong to a classical age and have no relevance today. Throughout its history, Chinese opera has connected with the contemporary even if its stories referred to history or legend. That connection will happen again as a new audience becomes acquainted with the language of the stage, its plots, its artistry and the skills of the actors. That might take bold experiments, or might simply emerge as a new trend. New audiences, too, will say, "Chinese opera is wonderful!" Until that time, we have resources like the truly amazing collection of photos of Siu Wang-Ngai. Captured in performance, the images in his photographs are an alphabet of Chinese opera stage language. Beautiful on their own, they also connect us to something else beautiful—the living art of the Chinese opera.

Photo	Opera Type	Opera/Scene Title	Troupe	Character	Performer	Year
1.01	Peking	<i>Women Warriors of the Yang Family</i>	Hubei Provincial Peking Opera Troupe	Mu Guiying, Lady She, etc.	Li Chunfang, Zhen Jingxian, etc.	1987
2.01	Cantonese	<i>A Comedy of Eight Errors</i>	Hong Kong Youth Cantonese Opera Troupe	Spring Orchid	Cheng Wing-mui	2008
2.02	Liyuan	<i>Dong Sheng and Li Shi</i>	Fujian Liyuan Opera Experimental Troupe	Dong Sheng, Li Shi	Gong Wanli, Zeng Jingping	2005
2.03	Cantonese	<i>Picking Up the Jade Bracelet</i>	Hong Kong Tuen Mun Cantonese Opera Experimental Troupe	Sun Yujiao	Chan Sau-hing	1981
2.04	Ping	<i>Picking Up the Jade Bracelet</i>	Hebei Shijiazhuang Youth Ping Opera Troupe	Sun Yujiao	Liu Fengzhi	1991
2.05	Sichuan	<i>Pan Jinlian Tempts Her Brother-In-Law</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Pan Jinlian	Chen Qiaoru	1991
2.06	Cantonese	<i>The Magic Lotus Lantern</i>	Hong Kong Tuen Mun Cantonese Opera Experimental Troupe	Lingzhi	Hui Chow-hung	1988
2.07	Cantonese	<i>Women Warriors of the Yang Family</i>	Hong Kong Tung Sing Opera Troupe	Yang Wenguang, Mu Guiying, etc.	Yu Tung-sing, Yu Ling-lung, etc.	2011
2.08	Cantonese	<i>Spring Grass Rushes to Court</i>	Hong Kong Tuen Mun Cantonese Opera Experimental Troupe	Spring Grass	Hui Chow-hung	1985
2.09	Hebei Clapper	<i>Wreaking Havoc in the Eastern Sea</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Turtle Magistrate	Li Lishui	1991
2.10	Hebei Clapper	<i>Lin Chong's Night Flight</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Lin Chong	Pei Yanling	1992
2.11	Peking	<i>Cleaning Out the Bandit's Lair</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	He Tianbao	Xi Zhonglu	1992
2.12	Shao	<i>The Prime Minister of Wei</i>	Zhejiang Shaoxing Opera Troupe	Yue Yan	Sun Xiaoyan	1991
2.13	Cantonese	<i>Zhao Yun Hides the Baby Prince</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhao Yun	Lu Wenbin (Ma Yilong)	2006
2.14	Cantonese	<i>Escape from the Golden Mountain Temple</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Xu Xian	Li Zhanping (Sima Xiang)	2006
2.15	Cantonese	<i>The Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane</i>	Zhanjiang Cantonese Opera Troupe	Golden Crane	Liang Zhaoming	2005
2.16	Cantonese	<i>The Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane</i>	Zhanjiang Cantonese Opera Troupe	Golden Crane	Liang Zhaoming	2005
2.17	Cantonese	<i>The Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane</i>	Zhanjiang Cantonese Opera Troupe	Golden Crane, Luohans	Liang Zhaoming (others unknown)	2005
2.18	Cantonese	<i>Phoenix Terrace Fortress</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Xiuying	Zeng Xiaomin	2006
2.19	Cantonese	<i>Wu Song</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Ximen Qing, Wu Dalang	Wen Ruqing, Chen Wencong	2006
2.20	Cantonese	<i>The Haunting of Zhang Sanlang</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Sanlang, Yan Xijiao	Huang Chunqiang, Liang Xiaoying	2006
2.21	Hebei Clapper	<i>Burning the Camps</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Guan Xing	Pei Yanling	1991
2.22	Cantonese	<i>Women Warriors of the Yang Family</i>	Hong Kong Tuen Mun Cantonese Opera Experimental Troupe	Zhang Biao	Chan Bik-ying (Man Kim-fei)	1983
2.23	Peking	<i>The Execution of the Commander</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Zhao Yun	Fang Zhigang	1990
2.24	Cantonese	<i>The Battle of Baqiu</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhou Yu, Zhang Fei	Peng Qinghua, Li Yongbin	2006
2.25	Ping	<i>The Cosmic Belt</i>	Hebei Shijiazhuang Youth Ping Opera Troupe	Qin Ying	Zhao Xincheng	1991
2.26	Longjiang	<i>Twice-Locked Mountain</i>	Heilongjiang Longjiang Opera Experimental Troupe	Liu Jinding	Bai Shuxian	1991
2.27	Gan	<i>Meng Liang Raises Troops</i>	Jiangxi Provincial Gan Opera Troupe	Yang Paifeng, Meng Liang	Tu Linghui, Li Weide	1992
2.28	Hui	<i>Cao Cao, Guan Yu and Diaochan</i>	Anhui Provincial Hui Opera Troupe	Guan Yu	Zhang Qixiang	1991
2.29	Hebei Clapper	<i>Lu Wenlong and His Double Spears</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Lu Wenlong	Pei Xiaoling	1991

Photo	Opera Type	Opera/Scene Title	Troupe	Character	Performer	Year
2.30	Longjiang	<i>The Romance of the Iron Bow</i>	Heilongjiang Longjiang Opera Experimental Troupe	Kuang Zhong, Chen Xiuying	Zhou Jingkui, Dou Chunfeng	1991
2.31	Cantonese	<i>Lian Jinfeng</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Lian Jinfeng, Oyster Spirit	Yan Jinfeng, Chen Xiaoxian	2006
2.32	Cantonese	<i>The Haunting of Zhang Sanlang</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Sanlang, Yan Xijiao	Huang Chunqiang, Liang Xiaoying	2006
2.33	Peking	<i>Tilting the War Carts</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Gao Chong	Chen Qingguang	1987
2.34	Gan	<i>Selecting a Horse for War</i>	Jiangxi Provincial Gan Opera Troupe	Mu Guiying	Chen Li	1992
2.35	Cantonese	<i>Xue Dingshan Thrice Angers Fan Lihua</i>	Foshan Youth Cantonese Opera Troupe	Xue Dingshan	Yuen Siu-fai	1997
2.36	Cantonese	<i>The Legend of the Red Plum</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	God of Earth	Liang Hengxian	2006
2.37	Peking	<i>Raid on Hu Village</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Wang Ying	Shi Xiaoliang	1990
2.38	Cantonese	<i>The Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane</i>	Zhanjiang Cantonese Opera Troupe	Golden Crane	Liang Zhaoming	2005
2.39	Cantonese	<i>Kneading the Dough</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Wu Dalang, Pan Jinlian	Chen Yuncong, Cen Fengping	2006
3.01	Gan	<i>Selecting a Horse for War</i>	Jiangxi Provincial Gan Opera Troupe	Mu Guiying	Chen Li	1992
3.02	Cantonese	<i>Qin Qiong Observes the Troops</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Qin Qiong, Luo Cheng	Yan Yuntao, Chen Jiading	2006
3.03	Cantonese	<i>Qin Qiong Observes the Troops</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Qin Qiong	Yan Yuntao	2006
3.04	Peking	<i>Green Stone Mountain</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Guan Yu	Wang Qingyuan	1992
3.05	Cantonese	<i>Phoenix Terrace Fortress</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Xiuying	Zeng Xiaomin	2006
3.06	Cantonese	<i>Phoenix Terrace Fortress</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Xiuying	Zeng Xiaomin	2006
3.07	Cantonese	<i>Blocking the Horse</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yang Bajie	Zhu Hongxing	2006
3.08	Cantonese	<i>Blocking the Horse</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yang Bajie	Zhu Hongxing	2006
3.09	Cantonese	<i>Blocking the Horse</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yang Bajie	Zhu Hongxing	2006
3.10	Cantonese	<i>Blocking the Horse</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yang Bajie, Jiao Guangpu	Zhu Hongxing, Wu Guowen	2006
3.11	Peking	<i>Cao Cao and Yang Xiu</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	Yang Xiu, Cao Cao	Yan Xingpeng, Shang Changrong	1992
3.12	Sichuan	<i>Wang Zhaojun Leaves Her Homeland</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Wang Zhaojun	Liu Ping	1991
3.13	Sichuan	<i>Wang Zhaojun Leaves Her Homeland</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Wang Zhaojun	Liu Ping	1991
3.14	Peking	<i>Cleaning Out the Bandit's Lair</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	He Tianbao	Xi Zhonglu	1992
3.15	Cantonese	<i>The Battle of Baqiu</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhou Yu	Peng Qinghua	2006
3.16	Peking	<i>Wreaking Havoc in Heaven</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Sun Wukong	Shi Xiaoliang	1990
3.17	Ping	<i>The Flower Matchmaker</i>	Hebei Shijiazhuang Youth Ping Opera Troupe	Jia Junying, Zhang Wuke	Zhao Lihua, Li Xiurong	1991
3.18	Huangmei	<i>A Spring Stroll</i>	Anqing Huangmei Opera Theatre	Zhao Cuihua	Wu Yaling	1993
3.19	Yue	<i>The Eighteen Crossings</i>	Shanghai Yue Opera Theatre	Liang Shanbo, Zhu Yingtai	Zhang Ruihong, Chen Ying	1991
3.20	Yue	<i>The Eighteen Crossings</i>	Zhejiang Little Flowers Yue Opera Troupe	Liang Shanbo	Fang Xuewen	1986
3.21	Yue	<i>The Romance of the West Chamber</i>	Zhejiang Little Flowers Yue Opera Troupe	Cui Yingying	Tao Huimin	1991
3.22	Peking	<i>The Intoxicated Concubine</i>	Liaoning Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Yang Yuhuan	Liu Yajun	1986
3.23	Peking	<i>Selling Water</i>	Liaoning Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Mei Ying	Guan Bo	1986

Photo	Opera Type	Opera/Scene Title	Troupe	Character	Performer	Year
3.24	Cantonese	<i>Wu Song's Tavern Fight</i>	Hong Kong Tuen Mun Cantonese Opera Experimental Troupe	Sun Erniang	Luk Mei-kum	1981
3.25	Peking	<i>Zhang Fei Honours the Sage Magistrate</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	Zhang Fei	Shang Changrong	1992
3.26	Lü	<i>The Sisters Switch Marriages</i>	Shandong Lü Opera Troupe	Zhang Sumei	Gao Jing	1990
3.27	Lü	<i>Borrowing at New Year</i>	Shandong Lü Opera Troupe	Aijie	Wang Yuanyuan	1990
3.28	Huangmei	<i>A Spring Stroll</i>	Anqing Huangmei Opera Theatre	Zhao Cuihua	Wu Yaling	1993
3.29	Cantonese	<i>Choosing Qiuxiang</i>	Hong Kong Yuen Long Cantonese Opera Troupe	Qiuxiang	Chan Sau-hing	1988
3.30	Huangmei	<i>The Joyous Return</i>	Anqing Huangmei Opera Theatre	Cui Hua, Cui Xiuying	Huang Zongyi, Li Qiong	1993
3.31	Cantonese	<i>Hanging a Painting</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Chun Lan, Ye Hanyan	Zhong Yan, Wu Kunru	2006
3.32	Hui	<i>Crossing Wits</i>	Anhui Provincial Hui Opera Troupe	White Peony	Li Xiaohong	1991
3.33	Longjiang	<i>Twice-Locked Mountain</i>	Heilongjiang Longjiang Opera Experimental Troupe	Maid of Liu Jinding	(unknown)	1991
3.34	Cantonese	<i>The Fire Phoenix</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	White Crane Fairy	Gong Jieying	2006
3.35	Cantonese	<i>The Fire Phoenix</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	White Crane Fairy	Gong Jieying	2006
3.36	Peking	<i>The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea</i>	Liaoning Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Goldfish Fairy	Xue Junqiu	1986
3.37	Sichuan	<i>The Hibiscus Fairy</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Hibiscus Fairy	Yu Haiyan	1988
3.38	Cantonese	<i>The Red Peony Fairy</i>	Hong Kong Fook Sing Cantonese Opera Troupe	Red Peony Fairy	Liza Wang	1991
3.39	Peking	<i>Inn at the Crossroads</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Liu Lihua, Ren Tanghui	Shi Xiaoliang, Wang Lijun	1990
3.40	Peking	<i>Inn at the Crossroads</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Ren Tanghui, Liu Lihua	Wang Lijun, Shi Xiaoliang	1990
3.41	Cantonese	<i>Hanging a Painting</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Ye Hanyan	Wu Kunru	2006
3.42	Cantonese	<i>The Haunting of Zhang Sanlang</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yan Xijiao, Zhang Sanlang	Zeng Xiaomin, Wang Yanfei	2006
3.43	Cantonese	<i>Blocking the Horse</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yang Bajie, Jiao Guangpu	Zhu Hongxing, Wu Guowen	2006
3.44	Cantonese	<i>Blocking the Horse</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Jiao Guangpu, Yang Bajie	Wu Guowen, Zhu Hongxing	2006
3.45	Cantonese	<i>Lion Tower</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Wu Song	Peng Qinghua	2006
3.46	Peking	<i>Changban Slope</i>	Peking Opera Performing Artists Troupe of China	Zhang Fei	Zhang Lianzhang	1985
3.47	Sichuan	<i>Flooding the Golden Mountain Temple</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	White Snake, Green Snake	Ye Changmin, Wang Shibin	1988
3.48	Cantonese	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Hong Kong Elite Cantonese Opera Troupe	White Snake	Chan Wing-ye	1997
3.49	Hui	<i>Crossing Wits</i>	Anhui Provincial Hui Opera Troupe	Lü Dongbin	Xu Yousheng	1991
3.50	Peking	<i>The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea</i>	Liaoning Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Lü Dongbin	Wu Kun	1986
3.51	Yue	<i>Finding Mother in a Convent</i>	Shanghai Yue Opera Theatre	Zhizhen	Jin Caifeng	1991
3.52	Yue	<i>Finding Mother in a Convent</i>	Shanghai Yue Opera Theatre	Zhizhen	Jin Caifeng	1991
3.53	Peking	<i>The Drunken Monk</i>	Liaoning Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Lu Zhishen	Zhao Hui	1986
3.54	Cantonese	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Hong Kong Elite Cantonese Opera Troupe	Boatman	Yau Sing-po	1997
3.55	Cantonese	<i>The Dragon Phoenix Battle</i>	Hong Kong Yin Sang Fai Cantonese Opera Troupe	Qiao Danfeng	Wan Fei-yin	2005
3.56	Cantonese	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Hong Kong Elite Cantonese Opera Troupe	Boatman, Green Snake, White Snake, Xu Xian	Yau Sing-po, Gao Li, Chan Wing-ye, Yuen Siu-fai	1997
3.57	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	White Snake, Green Snake	Chen Qiaoru, Zhu Jianguo	1991
3.58	Cantonese	<i>The Battle of Baqiu</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Fei	Li Yongbin	2006

Photo	Opera Type	Opera/Scene Title	Troupe	Character	Performer	Year
3.59	Kunqu	<i>Splendour Tower</i>	Shanghai Kunqu Opera Troupe	Li Cunxiao	Wang Zhiquan	1989
3.60	Peking	<i>Bringing the Magic Pearl Over the Rainbow Bridge</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Wave Walker	Li Jingwen	1992
3.61	Cantonese	<i>Xue Dingshan Thrice Angers Fan Lihua</i>	Foshan Youth Cantonese Opera Troupe	Soldiers	(unknown)	1997
3.62	Peking	<i>Tilting the War Carts</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Gao Chong	Wang Lijun	1987
3.63	Cantonese	<i>Worshipping the Moon</i>	Hong Kong Yin Sang Fai Cantonese Opera	Wang Ruilan	Wan Fei-yin	2005
3.64	Peking	<i>The Cave of Spiders</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	Spider Spirit	Zhou Yang	1992
3.65	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Green Snake	Zhu Jianguo	1991
3.66	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Green Snake, White Snake	Liu Ping, Chen Qiaoru	1991
3.67	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	White Snake, Green Snake	Chen Qiaoru, Zhu Jianguo	1991
4.01	Cantonese	<i>Raid on Hu Village</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Hu Sanniang	Lu Yueling	2006
4.02	Cantonese	<i>Changban Slope</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhao Yun	Wen Ruqing	2006
4.03	Cantonese	<i>Phoenix Terrace Fortress</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Xiuying	Zeng Xiaomin	2006
4.04	Sichuan	<i>The Nine-Tailed Fox Fairy</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Nine-Tailed Fox Fairy	Li Sha	1992
4.05	Peking	<i>Bringing the Magic Pearl Over the Rainbow Bridge</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Wave Walker	Li Jingwen	1992
4.06	Peking	<i>Bringing the Magic Pearl Over the Rainbow Bridge</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Wave Walker	Li Jingwen	1992
4.07	Cantonese	<i>The Fire Phoenix</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	White Crane Fairy	Gong Jieying	2006
4.08	Cantonese	<i>The Fire Phoenix</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	White Crane Fairy	Gong Jieying	2006
4.09	Peking	<i>The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea</i>	Liaoning Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Goldfish Fairy	Xue Junqiu	1986
4.10	Cantonese	<i>Xue Dingshan Thrice Angers Fan Lihua</i>	Foshan Youth Cantonese Opera Troupe	Fan Lihua	Li Shuqin	1997
4.11	Cantonese	<i>Xue Dingshan Thrice Angers Fan Lihua</i>	Foshan Youth Cantonese Opera Troupe	Xue Dingshan, Fan Lihua	Yuen Siu-fai, Li Shuqin	1997
4.12	Peking	<i>Wreaking Havoc in Heaven</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	The Giant God	Chen Xiqiang	1990
4.13	Peking	<i>Wreaking Havoc in Heaven</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	The Giant God, Sun Wukong	Chen Xiqiang, Shi Xiaoliang	1990
4.14	Hebei Clapper	<i>Lu Wenlong and His Double Spears</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Lu Wenlong, Yue Yun	Pei Xiaoling, Zhang Kehai	1991
4.15	Hebei Clapper	<i>The Burning of Pei Yuanqing</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Pei Yuanqing	Liu Liwei	1991
4.16	Shao	<i>Monkey Steals the Magic Fan</i>	Zhejiang Shaoxing Shao Opera Troupe	Sun Wukong	Liu Jianyang	1991
4.17	Peking	<i>The Cave of Spiders</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	Sun Wukong, Spider Spirit	Zhao Guohua, (unknown)	1992
4.18	Peking	<i>The Cave of Spiders</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	Sun Wukong, Spider Spirits	Zhao Guohua, (unknown)	1992
4.19	Cantonese	<i>Shi Xiu Scouts Out Zhu Village</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Shi Xiu, Guard of Zhu Village	Liu Jianke, (unknown)	2006
4.20	Hebei Clapper	<i>Burning the Camps</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Huang Zhong	Pei Yanling	1991
4.21	Peking	<i>Huarong Pass</i>	Peking Opera Performing Artists Troupe of China	Guan Yu	Li Huiliang	1985
4.22	Longjiang	<i>Twice-Locked Mountain</i>	Heilongjiang Longjiang Opera Experimental Troupe	Liu Jinding	Bai Shuxian	1991
4.23	Cantonese	<i>The Red Peony Fairy</i>	Hong Kong Fook Sing Cantonese Opera Troupe	Red Peony Fairy	Liza Wang	1991
4.24	Cantonese	<i>Yuan Chonghuan</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yuan Chonghuan	Luo Jiabao	1987

Photo	Opera Type	Opera/Scene Title	Troupe	Character	Performer	Year
4.25	Cantonese	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Hong Kong Elite Cantonese Opera Troupe	Crane Spirit, White Snake	Liang Junqiang, Chan Wing-ye	1997
4.26	Peking	<i>Farewell, My Concubine</i>	Peking Opera Performing Artists Troupe of China	Xiang Yu, Concubine Yu	Yuan Shihai, Du Jinfang	1985
4.27	Hebei Clapper	<i>Wu Song's Revenge</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Wu Song	Pei Yanling	1991
4.28	Peking	<i>Cleaning Out the Bandit's Lair</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	He Tianbao	Xi Zhonglu	1992
4.29	Peking	<i>Inn at the Crossroads</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Ren Tanghui, Liu Lihua	Wang Lijun, Shi Xiaoliang	1990
4.30	Sichuan	<i>Hua Rong Shoots the Hawk</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Hua Rong	Tang Yong	1988
4.31	Cantonese	<i>Xue Dingshan Thrice Angers Fan Lihua</i>	Foshan Youth Cantonese Opera Troupe	Xue Dingshan	Yuen Siu-fai	1997
4.32	Longjiang	<i>The Romance of the Iron Bow</i>	Heilongjiang Longjiang Opera Experimental Troupe	Chen Xiuying, Kuang Zhong	Dou Chunfeng, Zhou Jingkui	1991
4.33	Hui	<i>Drowning the Enemy Troops</i>	Anhui Provincial Hui Opera Troupe	Guan Yu	Zhang Qixiang	1991
4.34	Cantonese	<i>The Battle of Baqiu</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Fei, Zhou Yu	Li Yongbin, Peng Qinghua	2006
4.35	Hebei Clapper	<i>The Magic Lotus Lantern</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Chenxiang	Pei Yanling	1990
4.36	Hebei Clapper	<i>Wreaking Havoc in the Eastern Sea</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Nezha	Pei Yanling	1991
4.37	Peking	<i>Tilting the War Carts</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Gao Chong	Chen Qingguang	1992
4.38	Cantonese	<i>Women Warriors of the Yang Family</i>	Hong Kong Tuen Mun Cantonese Opera Experimental Troupe	Yang Qinian	Poon Wai-ying (Chor Wan-yuk)	1983
4.39	Peking	<i>Tilting the War Carts</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Gao Chong	Wang Lijun	1987
4.40	Peking	<i>Tilting the War Carts</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Gao Chong	Wang Lijun	1987
4.41	Peking	<i>Tilting the War Carts</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Gao Chong	Chen Qingguang	1992
4.42	Peking	<i>Tilting the War Carts</i>	Shenyang Peking Opera Theatre	Gao Chong	Chen Qingguang	1992
4.43	Cantonese	<i>Raid on Hu Village</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Hu Sanniang	Lu Yueling	2006
4.44	Peking	<i>Raid on Hu Village</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Hu Sanniang	Li Peihong	1990
4.45	Peking	<i>Raid on Hu Village</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Hu Sanniang	Li Peihong	1990
4.46	Cantonese	<i>Women Warriors of the Yang Family</i>	Hong Kong Tuen Mun Cantonese Opera Experimental Troupe	Yang Qinian	Poon Wai-ying (Chor Wan-yuk)	1983
5.01	Peking	<i>Raid on Hu Village</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Hu Sanniang	Li Peihong	1990
5.02	Yue	<i>The Story of the White Rabbit</i>	Zhejiang Little Flowers Yue Opera Troupe	Liu Chengyou	Xia Saili	1991
5.03	Yue	<i>The Story of the White Rabbit</i>	Zhejiang Little Flowers Yue Opera Troupe	Liu Chengyou	Xia Saili	1991
5.04	Sichuan	<i>Delights of the Mortal World</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	White Eel Fairy	Yu Haiyan	1988
5.05	Shao	<i>Monkey King Battles the White-Boned Demon</i>	Zhejiang Shaoxing Opera Troupe	Sun Wukong	Liu Jianyang	1991
5.06	Sichuan	<i>Wresting the Dragon Throne</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Yang Guang	Xiao Ting	1991
5.07	Peking	<i>Raid on Hu Village</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Hu Sanniang	Li Peihong	1990
5.08	Hui	<i>Meeting at the Riverside</i>	Anhui Provincial Hui Opera Troupe	Zhou Yu	Li Longbin	1991
5.09	Gaojia	<i>The Trial of Chen San</i>	Xiamen Jinliansheng Gaojia Opera Troupe	Governor	Zhang Qinghu	1988
5.10	Peking	<i>The Beheading of a Wicked Husband</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Bao Zheng	Meng Guanglu	1990
5.11	Yu	<i>The Story of the Perfumed Sachet</i>	Henan Provincial Yu Opera Theatre	Zhou Ding	Meng Xiangli	1986
5.12	Yu	<i>The Story of the Perfumed Sachet</i>	Henan Provincial Yu Opera Theatre	Zhou Ding	Meng Xiangli	1986

Photo	Opera Type	Opera/Scene Title	Troupe	Character	Performer	Year
5.13	Cantonese	<i>The Merciless Sword</i>	Hong Kong Chung Sun Sing Cantonese Opera Troupe	Wei Chonghui	Lam Gar-Sing	1993
5.14	Yu	<i>The Story of the Perfumed Sachet</i>	Henan Provincial Yu Opera Theatre	Wang Tiancai	Li Bin	1986
5.15	Cantonese	<i>Accusing the Traitor</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Xia Yuanchun	Xian Jiantang	2006
5.16	Xiang	<i>Drawing Lots for Life and Death</i>	Hunan Xiang Opera Theatre	Huang Boxian	Liu Chunquan	1986
5.17	Cantonese	<i>The Battle of Baqiu</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhou Yu	Peng Qinghua	2006
5.18	Gan	<i>The Grievance of Dou E</i>	Jiangxi Provincial Gan Opera Troupe	Dou E, Cai Po	Tu Linghui, Hong Liyun	1992
5.19	Chaozhou	<i>Suing the Husband</i>	Guangdong Provincial Chaozhou Opera Troupe	Wen Shuzhen	Zheng Jianying	1984
5.20	Gaojia	<i>The Trial of Chen San</i>	Xiamen Jinliansheng Gaojia Opera Troupe	Pan Shi	Zhang Lina	1988
5.21	Hebei Clapper	<i>Shi Xiu Slays an Unfaithful Wife</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Pan Qiaoyun, Shi Xiu	Xu Heying, Pei Yanling	1992
5.22	Peking	<i>The Marriage of the Dragon and the Phoenix</i>	Peking Opera Performing Artists Troupe of China	Sun Quan	Chen Zhenzhi	1985
5.23	Peking	<i>The Beheading of a Wicked Husband</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Bao Zheng	Meng Guanglu	1990
5.24	Hui	<i>Drowning the Enemy Troops</i>	Anhui Provincial Hui Opera Troupe	Guan Yu, Zhou Cang	Zhang Qixiang, Gu Huamin	1991
5.25	Peking	<i>Cleaning Out the Bandit's Lair</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	He Tianbao	Xi Zhonglu	1992
5.26	Gan	<i>Meng Liang Raises Troops</i>	Jiangxi Provincial Gan Opera Troupe	Meng Liang	Li Weide	1992
5.27	Shao	<i>The Prime Minister of Wei</i>	Zhejiang Shaoxing Opera Troupe	Zhai Huang	Zhou Jianying	1991
5.28	Shao	<i>The Prime Minister of Wei</i>	Zhejiang Shaoxing Opera Troupe	Zhai Huang	Zhong Guoliang	1991
5.29	Shao	<i>The Prime Minister of Wei</i>	Zhejiang Shaoxing Opera Troupe	Zhai Huang	Zhong Guoliang	1991
5.30	Cantonese	<i>The Haunting of Zhang Sanlang</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Yan Xijiao	Zeng Xiaomin	2006
5.31	Cantonese	<i>Mourning at the Tomb</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhu Yingtai	Liu Li	2006
5.32	Yue	<i>The Romance of Emperor Han Wu</i>	Zhejiang Little Flowers Yue Opera Troupe	Wei Zifu	He Saifei	1991
5.33	Cantonese	<i>The Story of the Purple Hairpin</i>	Hong Kong Chor Fung Ming Cantonese Opera Troupe	Huo Xiaoyu	Mui Suet-see	1984
5.34	Gan	<i>The Story of the Wooden Hairpin</i>	Jiangxi Provincial Gan Opera Troupe	Qian Yulian	Tu Linghui	1992
5.35	Jin	<i>The Killing of the Imperial Concubine</i>	Shanxi Provincial Jin Opera Troupe	Liu Guilian, Liu Chengyou, Su Yu'e	Mi Xiaomin, Gao Yalin, Chang Xiangguo	1986
5.36	Cantonese	<i>At Odds with a God</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Jiao Guiying	Zheng Lipin	2006
5.37	Longjiang	<i>Twice-Locked Mountain</i>	Heilongjiang Longjiang Opera Experimental Troupe	Liu Jinding	Bai Shuxian	1991
5.38	Peking	<i>The Beheading of a Wicked Husband</i>	Tianjin Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Bao Zheng	Meng Guanglu	1990
5.39	Cantonese	<i>The Legend of the Red Plum</i>	Hong Kong Chin Fung Cantonese Opera Troupe	Li Huiniang	Nam Fung	2005
5.40	Peking	<i>Li Kui Visits His Mother</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	Li Kui	Shang Changrong	1992
5.41	Cantonese	<i>The Butterfly Lovers</i>	Hong Kong Chin Fung Cantonese Opera Troupe	Liang Shanbo	Ng Chin-fung	2005
5.42	Peking	<i>Zhang Fei Honours the Sage Magistrate</i>	Shanghai Peking Opera Theatre	Zhang Fei	Shang Changrong	1992
5.43	Gan	<i>Meng Liang Raises Troops</i>	Jiangxi Provincial Gan Opera Troupe	Meng Liang	Li Weide	1992
5.44	Cantonese	<i>Escape from the Golden Mountain Temple</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Xu Xian	Li Zhanping (Sima Xiang)	2006
5.45	Chaozhou	<i>Dr. Happpenance</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Zhang Wuyi	Fang Zhanrong	1991

Photo	Opera Type	Opera/Scene Title	Troupe	Character	Performer	Year
5.46	Hebei Clapper	<i>Prince Lanling</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Prince Lanling	Pei Yanling	1992
5.47	Hebei Clapper	<i>Wu Song's Revenge</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Wu Song	Pei Yanling	1992
5.48	Cantonese	<i>Shi Xiu Reconnoiters a Village</i>	Guangdong Cantonese Opera Theatre	Shi Xiu	Liu Jianke	2006
5.49	Hebei Clapper	<i>Shi Xiu Slays an Unfaithful Wife</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Shi Xiu	Pei Yanling	1992
5.50	Hebei Clapper	<i>Shi Xiu Reconnoiters a Village</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Shi Xiu	Pei Yanling	1993
6.01	Sichuan		(Face changing performance in a tea-house in Chengdu)	(unknown)	(unknown)	2010
6.02	Sichuan	<i>Wresting the Dragon Throne</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Yang Guang	Xiao Ting	1991
6.03	Sichuan	<i>A Palace Interrogation</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Chen Lin	Li Sen	1991
6.04	Sichuan	<i>The Haunting of Zhang Sanlang</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Yan Xijiao, Zhang Sanlang	Tian Huiwen, Li Zenglin	1991
6.05	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Begging Bowl Spirit	Xiao Ting	1991
6.06	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Begging Bowl Spirit	Xiao Ting	1991
6.07	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	Begging Bowl Spirit	Xiao Ting	1991
6.08	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	White Snake, Begging Bowl Spirit	Chen Qiaoru, Xiao Ting	1991
6.09	Sichuan	<i>The Nine-Tailed Fox Fairy</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	God of Fire	Zhang Wenming	1992
6.10	Qinqiang	<i>The Sorrow at West Lake</i>	Shaanxi Qinqiang Opera Youth Troupe	Li Huiniang	Xiao Ying	1990
6.11	Hebei Clapper	<i>Zhong Kui Arranges a Marriage</i>	Hebei Clapper Opera Troupe	Zhong Kui	Pei Yanling	1991
6.12	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	God of Fire	Xiao Haiqing	1991
6.13	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Sichuan Opera Theatre	White Snake	Chen Qiaoru	1991
6.14	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Weituo	Yu Haiyan	1988
6.15	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Weituo	Yu Haiyan	1988
6.16	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Weituo	Yu Haiyan	1988
6.17	Sichuan	<i>The Legend of the White Snake</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Weituo	Yu Haiyan	1988
6.18	Sichuan	<i>Pi Jin Plays the Fool</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Pi Jin	Su Mingde	1988
6.19	Sichuan	<i>Pi Jin Plays the Fool</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Pi Jin	Su Mingde	1988
6.20	Sichuan	<i>Pi Jin Plays the Fool</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Du Pishi, Pi Jin	Xiao Daifang, Su Mingde	1988
6.21	Sichuan	<i>Pi Jin Plays the Fool</i>	Chengdu Hibiscus Sichuan Opera Troupe	Pi Jin	Su Mingde	1988
6.22	Chaozhou	<i>A Woodshed Encounter</i>	Guangdong Provincial Chaozhou Opera Troupe	Li Laosan	Fang Zhanrong	1991
6.23	Chaozhou	<i>A Woodshed Encounter</i>	Guangdong Provincial Chaozhou Opera Troupe	Li Laosan	Fang Zhanrong	1991
7.01	Peking	<i>The Warrior Maiden Mu Guiying</i>	Liaoning Youth Peking Opera Troupe	Mu Guiying, etc.	Wang Yulan, etc.	1991

Remarks: Performers are identified from left to right.

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Notes: Page references to photographs are given in bold type, viz. 25(2.24).

To assist readers identify characters mentioned in the text, a brief description (in parentheses) has been added after the name of the character, for example, Chen Lin (eunuch), Song Jiang (robber chieftain). Similarly, the terms used to describe different effects, moves, poses and skills are followed by the relevant descriptor, for example, “stiff corpse fall” (move) and “leg twist” (pose).

- Accusing the Husband*, 145
Accusing the Traitor, 142(5.15), 143
 acrobatics, 16–22, 49, 71
 back flip, 17
 high somersault, 19
 actors
 emphasis on, ix, 1, 69
 training, 189
 alienation device, 3
All Men Are Brothers, 35
At Odds with a God, 158(5.36)
 audiences, 1, 16, 192
 axes, 120

 “back crossed double spears” (pose), 28
 “back whisk” (move), 78
 “backward battering the tiger” (move), 17
 “balancing the oil lamp” (skill), 185–7
 Bald Eagle Fairy, 67
 bandits, 35, 127, 137, 168
 Bao, Judge, 140, 149, 159
Battle of Baqiu, The, 24, 25(2.24), 50(3.15),
 84(3.58), 119(4.34), 144(5.17)
 Battle of Red Cliff, 137
 battles, 91, 98, 100
 preparation for, 122–9
 “beard work” (move), 148, 149, 152
 beards, 148–53
 characters without, 144
 designs, 148
Beheading of a Wicked Husband, The, 139(5.10),
 149(5.23), 160(5.38)
 belts, 167–9
Blocking the Horse, 43, 44–6 (3.07–3.10),
 72(3.43), 73, 73(3.44)
 “board leg pose”, 26
 “board waist” (pose), 31
 boat poles, 81
 boats, 34, 80–3
 movement of, 80, 81
Borrowing at New Year, 60(3.27)
 bows and arrows, 115–17
 Brecht, Bertolt, 3

Bringing the Magic Pearl Over the Rainbow Bridge,
 86(3.60), 96(4.05–4.06)
Burning the Camps, 23(2.21), 108(4.20)
Burning of Pei Yuanqing, The, 103(4.15)
Butterfly Lovers, The, 155, 162, 162(5.41)

 Cao Cao (general), 45, 137
Cao Cao and Yang Xiu, 45, 47(3.11)
Cao Cao, Guan Yu and Diaochan, 29(2.28)
 “carpet work” (skill), 17
 carrying chairs, 10
Cave of the Spiders, The, 88(3.64), 105(4.17),
 106(4.18)
 chairs, 69–74
Changban Slope, 74, 74(3.46), 94(4.02)
 Chaozhou opera, 165, 188
 Chen Lin (eunuch), 172
 Chen Shimei (malicious husband), 159
 Chen Yong (martial arts master), 117
 Chenxiang (son of fairy), 120
 Chinese opera
 as cultural achievement, ix
 defined, 2
 development of, 3
 language of, 191–2
 perception of, by Westerners, 16
 styles of, ix, 2
 suggestion as principle of, 3, 15, 37, 91
 women in, 56
Chinese Opera: Images and Stories (by Siu Wang-
 Ngai with Peter Lovrick), ix, 191
Choosing Qiuxiang, 61(3.29)
chuanqi (classical drama), 2
 “circling the stage” (mime move), 8
Cleaning Out the Bandit’s Lair, 14(2.11), 15,
 49(3.14), 114(4.28), 150, 151(5.25)
 cloud boards, 89–91
 “cloud flip” (move), 18
 cloud whisks, 75–80
 clouds, *see* cloud boards
 clowns, 165, 185–7, 188
Comedy of Eight Errors, A, 4(2.01)
Cosmic Belt, The, 26(2.25)

 command flags, 84–5
 Contemporary Legend Theatre Company (Taiwan),
 3
 conventions, stage, ix, 1, 192
 Cosmic Circlet, 121
 costumes (*see also* belts, hats, robes), ix, 140, 159
Crossing Wits, 63(3.32), 77(3.49)
 Cui Yingying (young maiden), 54

dachushou (fighting style), 94
Delights of the Mortal World, 134(5.04)
Dong Sheng and Li Shi, 6, 6(2.02)
Dr. Happenstance, 165, 165(5.45)
Dragon Phoenix Battle, The, 82(3.55)
Drawing Lots for Life and Death, 143, 143(5.16)
Drowning the Enemy Troops, 118(4.33), 149,
 150(5.24)
Drunken Monk, The, 80(3.53)
 dust whisks, *see* cloud whisks
 dwarfs (*see also* “playing the dwarf”), 34–35

Eight Immortals Cross the Sea, The, 66(3.36),
 77(3.50), 78, 98, 99(4.09)
Eighteen Crossings, The, 54(3.19), 55(3.20)
Eighteen Luohan Pursue the Golden Crane, The, 18,
 18–20(2.15–2.17), 35, 36(2.38)
 “embrace the whisk” (move), 76
 emotions, 56, 59
Escape from the Golden Mountain Temple, 17,
 17(2.14), 164(5.44)
Execution of the Commander, The, 25(2.23)
 “exploring the sea” (special move), 30, 31, 45
 eyes, *see* “opening the eye of wisdom”

 face changing, 170(6.01), 171–6
 face painting (*see also* face changing), ix, 1, 2
 Fahai (Buddhist abbot), 17, 175, 181, 182
 Fan Lihua (warrior maiden), 100
 fans, 51–8
 magic, 179
Farewell, My Concubine, 112, 112(4.26)
 fighting, 94, 100, 113
Finding Mother in a Convent, 78(3.51), 79(3.52)

- fire breathing, 177–81
Fire Phoenix, The, 65(3.34), 66(3.35), 97(4.07),
 98(4.08)
 flags, 84–8
Flooding the Golden Mountain Temple, 75(3.47)
Flower Matchmaker, The, 52, 52(3.17)
 fly whisks, *see* cloud whisks
 flying tiger flags, 84
 Fox Fairy, 94
- Gai Liangcai (wicked husband), 145
 galloping, horses, 42–3, 45
 Gao Chong (general), 31, 85, 88, 121, 123
 Gao Junbao (general), 26
gaomao (high somersault), 19
 Goddess of Mercy, 68
 Golden Crane (bird), 18, 19, 35
 golden cymbals, 175
 Golden Eagle Prince, 18
 Golden Iron Staff, 118
 “Golden Melon Warriors”, 101
 Goldfish Fairy, 78, 98
 Green Snake (spirit), 81, 89, 91
Green Stone Mountain, 41(3.04)
Grievances of Dou E, The, 145(5.18)
 Guan Gong (Guan Yu, deified hero), 118
 Guan Sushuang, 100
 Guan Yu (general) (*see also* Guan Gong), 28, 42,
 108, 120
 Guo Yanwei (insurgent leader), 19
- Hai Rui (high official), 144
 hair (*see also* beards)
 female roles and, 145–7
 loose, 143
 male roles and, 141–4
 Han dynasty, 65
 handkerchiefs, 59–64
 spinning, 62, 64
Hanging a Painting, 63(3.31), 71, 71(3.41)
 hats, 138–40
Haunting of Zhang Sanlang, The, 21, 22(2.20),
 31, 32(2.32), 72(3.42), 154(5.30), 172,
 174(6.04)
 He Tainbao (warrior), 15, 49, 113, 150
 headgear, *see* hats
 heavenly beings, *see* supernatural beings
 “Hegemon Rises, The” (*see also* *qiba*), 122
 Hibiscus Fairy, 68
Hibiscus Fairy, The, 67(3.37)
 Hong Kong, opera troupes visit, 191
Hong Kong Ballet, The (by Siu Wang-Ngai), ix
 “horse ride” (move), 40, 45
 horses (*see also* horsewhips), 33, 39, 49
 galloping, 42–3, 45
 horsewhips, 39–50, 93
 Hu Sanniang (female warrior), 127, 128
Hua Rong Shoots the Hawk, 115(4.30)
 Huang Guiying (mistress), 56
Huarong Pass, 109(4.21)
 hunting, 115
 Huo Xiaoyu (young wife), 157
- Inn at the Crossroads*, 69(3.39), 70, 70(3.40), 113,
 114(4.29)
Intoxicated Concubine, The, 54, 56(3.22)
- jade belt, 167
 Jia Junying (young man), 52
 Jiang Zhong (bully), 165
 Jiao Guangpu (exile), 45, 73–4
Journey to the West (by Wu Cheng'en), 88, 105
 journeys, 8
 night, 10, 13, 15
Joyous Return, The, 62(3.30)
 juggling, 102
- “kicking the spear” (move), 98
Killing of the Imperial Concubine, The, 158(5.35)
Kneading the Dough, 37(2.39)
 Kuang Zhong (handsome youth), 117
 Kunqu opera, 2
- ladders, 188–9
 language, of the stage, 1, 5, 192
 Lanling (prince), 165, 166(5.46)
 “leg twist” (pose), 26
Legend of the Red Plum, The (*see also* *Story of the
 Red Plum, The*), 159, 160(5.39)
Legend of the Water Margin, The, 35, 74, 106, 165
Legend of the White Snake, The, 17, 76, 76(3.48),
 81, 82(3.56), 83(3.57), 89–91(3.65–3.67),
 111(4.25), 174(6.05), 175, 175–6(6.06–
 6.08), 180(6.12), 181, 181(6.13), 182,
 182–4(6.14–6.17)
 Li Cunxiao (warrior), 84
 Li Huiniang (young maiden), 159, 179
Li Kui Visits His Mother, 161(5.40)
- Li Laosan (pedlar), 189
 Li Sanniang (mother), 132
 Li Yangui (handsome young man), 56
 Lian Jinfeng (young maiden), 30, 31, 31(2.31)
 Liang Shanbo (young scholar), 53, 162
Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, *see* *Butterfly Lovers*
 “lifting the big belt” (move), 167–8
 Lin Chong (hero), 13
Lin Chong's Night Flight, 13, 13(2.10)
Lion Tower, 74(3.45)
 Liu Bei (general), 24, 120, 137
 Liu Chengyou (young man), 132
 Liu Guilian (warrior maiden), 157
 Liu Jinding (warrior maiden), 26, 159
 Liu Lihua (innkeeper), 70, 113
 love stories, 52–3, 117
 Lü Dongbin (immortal being), 64, 76, 78, 98
 Lu Wenlong (male warrior), 28, 102
Lu Wenlong and His Double Spear, 29(2.29),
 103(4.14)
 Lu Zhishen (monk and fighter), 79
 Luo Cheng (warrior), 42
 luohan (ascended beings), 18, 19
- mace, 101–2
 Magic Fan, *Yinyang*, 179
 Magic Lotus Lantern, 120
Magic Lotus Lantern, The, 10(2.06), 119(4.35)
 magical beings, *see* supernatural beings
 make-up (*see also* face changing), ix, 155
Marriage of the Dragon and the Phoenix, The,
 148(5.22)
 masks, 1, 171, 172
Meeting at the Riverside, 137(5.08)
 Mei Lanfang, 3, 54, 112
 Mei Ying (maidservant), 56
 Meng Liang (military officer), 26, 28, 150, 162,
 164
Merciless Sword, The, 141(5.13)
 military, the, 84–5
 military opera, 19, 74, 85
 mime, 5–15, 40
 Ming dynasty, 2
 Model Revolutionary Opera, 3
 Monkey King (mythical being), 88, 102, 105, 106,
 118, 134
Monkey King Battles the White-Boned Demon,
 135(5.05)
Monkey King Steals the Magic Fan, 104(4.16)

- moonlight flag, 85
 “mountain shoulders” (pose), 24
Mourning at the Tomb, 155(5.31)
 moves and movement (*see also* acrobatics, mime, poses, *qiba*), 35
 special, 30–4
 Mu Guiying (female warrior), 10, 33, 108, 190(7.01)
 Murong Yanchao (General), 19
- naobo* (golden cymbals), 175
 naturalist theatre, 1, 5
 Nezha (mythical being), 121
Nine-Tailed Fox Fairy, The, 94, 95(4.04), 177(6.09)
- oil lamp, *see* “balancing the oil lamp”
 “opening the eye of wisdom” (effect), 182, 184
- paddles, *see* boats
Palace Interrogation, A, 173(6.03)
 Pan Jinlian (ruthless woman), 8, 37, 74
Pan Jinlian Tempts Her Brother-In-Law, 9(2.05)
 Pan Qiaoyun (adulteress), 147
 Pan Shi (young woman), 147
 Pang Tong (magistrate), 58, 162
 “pedalling heaven” (pose), 26
 Pei Yuanqing (general), 102
 Peking opera, 2–3
 pheasant tails, 131–7
Phoenix Terrace Fortress, 19, 20(2.18), 43(3.06), 94, 95(4.03)
 photographs and photography, ix, 191, 192
Pi Jin Plays the Fool, 185–6(6.18–6.20), 187, 187(6.21)
Picking Up the Jade Bracelet, 6, 7(2.03), 8(2.04)
 “playing the dwarf” (technique), 34, 35, 37
 polearm, 107–8, 118
 poles, boat, *see* boat poles
 poses, 23–8, 31–2
Prime Minister of Wei, The, 15(2.12), 152, 152–3(5.27–5.29)
 prisoners, 143
 props, 5, 39–91
- Qian Jin (rich maiden), 143
 Qian Yulian (wife), 157
 Qianlong emperor, 2
qiba (move), 35
 female, 127–9
 male, 123–6
- Qiba* (“The Hegemon Rises”), 122
 Qin Qiong (general), 42
Qin Qiong Observes the Troops, 40(3.02), 41(3.03), 42
 Qin Xianglian (young woman), 149
 Qin Ying (fighter), 26
 Qing dynasty, 2
 Qiuxiang (maid), 60
 quarterstaff, 105–6
 Queen of Spiders, 106
- Raid on Hu Village*, 36(2.37), 92(4.01), 127(4.43), 128(4.44–4.45), 130(5.01), 136(5.07)
 Red Peony Fairy, 68, 68(3.38), 110(4.23)
 Ren Tanghui (fighter), 70, 113
 ribbons, 65–8
 robes, outer, 161–7
Romance of Emperor Han Wu, The, 156(5.32)
Romance of the Iron Bow, The, 30(2.30), 117(4.32)
Romance of the Three Kingdoms, The, 58
Romance of the West Chamber, The, 54, 55(3.21)
- sabres, 113–4
 Sanbao (handsome man), 52
 scripts, 2
Selecting a Horse for War, 33(2.34), 38(3.01)
Selling Water, 57(3.23)
 Sharp Fire Spear (weapon), 121
 Shi Xiu (fighter), 106, 147, 168
Shi Xiu Reconnoiters a Village, 168(5.48), 169(5.50)
Shi Xiu Scouts Out Zhu Village, 107(4.19)
Shi Xiu Slays an Unfaithful Wife, 147(5.21), 169(5.49)
 “shooting the wild goose” (special move), 31
 “Short-legged Tiger”, *see* Wang Ying
 Sichuan opera, 171–2, 175, 177, 185
 “side step” (move), 10
 “side walk” (mime), 13
 “singing side walk” (mime), 13
Sisters Switch Marriages, The, 59(3.26)
 Siu Wang-Ngai, ix, 191, 192
 sleeves, *see* water sleeves
 Snake Spear (weapon), 120
 Song Jiang (robber chieftain), 106, 137
Sorrow at West Lake, The, 178(6.10)
 spears, 93–100, 120, 121
 double-headed, 94
 spinning, 62, 64
Splendour Tower, 84, 85(3.59)
 Spring Grass (maid), 10
- Spring Grass Rushes to Court*, 11(2.08)
Spring Stroll, A, 53(3.18), 61(3.28)
 stage conventions, *see* conventions
 stage technique, 3, 80
 “stiff corpse fall” (move), 21
 “stormy eyes” (face change), 171
Story of the Perfumed Sachet, The, 139(5.11), 140(5.12), 142(5.14)
Story of the Purple Hairpin, The, 156(5.33)
Story of the Red Plum, The (*see also Legend of the Red Plum, The*), 35(2.36)
Story of the White Rabbit, The, 132(5.02), 133(5.03)
Story of the Wooden Hairpin, The, 157(5.34)
 Su Yu’e (concubine), 157
 Sui dynasty, 134
Suing the Husband, 146(5.19)
 Sun Erniang (female villain), 56, 58
 Sun Wukong, *see* Monkey King
 Sun Yujiao (country maiden), 6, 8
 supernatural beings, 94, 108, 121, 177, 185
 fairies, 67–8, 78, 85, 94, 97
 spirits, 75–6, 78, 89, 182
 swords (*see also* sabres), 110–12
- tables, 69–70
 Tang dynasty, 54, 65
tangma (“horse ride”), 40
tanzigong (“carpet work”), 17
 theatre
 Chinese approach to, ix, 1, 3
 Western, 1
 “tiger roll” (move), 18
Tilting the War Carts, 31, 32(2.33), 85, 87(3.62), 121, 121(4.37), 123, 123–6(4.39–4.42)
 tresses, *see* hair
Trial of Chen San, The, 138(5.09), 146(5.20)
Twice-Locked Mountain, 26, 27(2.26), 64, 64(3.33), 108, 109(4.22), 159, 159(5.37)
- “umbrella whisk” (move), 80
verfremdungseffekt (alienation device), 3
- “Waiting for the Command” (move), 123
 Wang Boxian (magistrate), 143, 144
 Wang Guiying (young woman), 157
 Wang Tiancai (poor young scholar), 143
 Wang Ying (fighter), 35, 127, 137
 Wang Yuhuan (young maiden), 143–4

- Wang Zhaojun (princess), 47, 49
Wang Zhaojun Leaves Her Homeland,
 48(3.12–3.13)
Warrior Maiden Mu Guiying, The, 190(7.01)
 warriors (*see also* women warriors), 131
 water flags, 85
 “water hair”, 141, 144, 147
 water sleeves, 141, 154–60, 161
 Wave Walker (fairy), 85, 97
wawa, *see* clowns
 weapons, 93–121
 Wei Liangfu (musician), 2
 Wei Zifu (concubine), 155
 Weituo (spirit), 182, 184
 Wen Shuzhen (wronged wife), 145
 Western drama, 3
 naturalist theatre, 1, 5
 Westerners, perception of Chinese opera, 16
 White Crane Fairy, 67
 White Egret Fairy, 97
 White Peony (young maiden), 64
 White Snake (spirit), 78, 81
 battles with, 91, 175, 181, 182
 incarnation of, as human, 17, 76, 89, 112
 White Tiger (spirit), 115
 White-Boned Demon (spirit), 134
 women, in Chinese opera, 56
 women warriors, 43, 85, 97, 127–9, 190(7.01)
 poses by, 26, 28, 33
 weapons used by, 94, 108, 112
Women Warriors of the Yang Family, x(1.01),
 11(2.07), 24(2.22), 122(4.38), 129(4.46)
- Woodshed Encounter, A*, 188(6.22), 189, 189(6.23)
Worshipping the Moon, 87(3.63), 88
Wreaking Havoc in the Eastern Sea, 12(2.09), 13,
 120(4.36)
Wreaking Havoc in Heaven, 51(3.16), 101(4.12),
 102, 102(4.13)
Wresting the Dragon Throne, 136(5.06), 137,
 170(6.02), 172
 Wu Dalang (ugly dwarf), 21, 37
 Wu Song (fighter), 8, 37, 74, 165, 167
Wu Song, 21, 21(2.19)
Wu Song's Revenge, 113(4.27), 167(5.47)
Wu Song's Tavern Fight, 57(3.24), 58
wuxi (military opera), 19
- Xia Yuanchun (falsely accused prisoner), 143
 Xiang Yu (King), 112, 122
 Ximen Qing (evil man), 21, 74
 Xiuying (young maiden), 117
 Xu Xian (young man), 17, 81, 164
 Xuanzang (monk), 88, 105, 134
 Xue Dingshan (warrior), 34, 100, 115
Xue Dingshan Thrice Angers Fan Lihua, 34(2.35),
 86(3.61), 99(4.10), 100, 100(4.11),
 116(4.31)
- Yan Xijiao (ghost and young maiden), 21, 31, 71,
 73, 172
 Yang Bajie (female warrior), 43, 45, 73–4
 Yang Guang (prince), 134, 137
 Yang Paifeng (housemaid and female warrior), 26,
 28, 150, 162
- Yang Xiong (wronged husband), 168
 Ye Hanyan (young maiden), 71
Yinyang Magic Fan, 179
 Yu Ji (concubine), 122
 Yuan Chonghuan (general), 111(4.24), 112
 Yuan dynasty, 2
 Yuan opera (*zaju*), 2
 Yue opera, 3, 132
 Yue Yan (young maiden), 15
 Yue Yang (general), 152
 Yue Yun (general), 28, 102
- zaju* (Yuan opera), 2
 Zhai Huang (prime minister), 152
 Zhang Fei (warrior), 24, 58, 74, 120, 162
Zhang Fei Honours the Sage Magistrate, 58(3.25),
 163(5.42)
 Zhang Junrui (young scholar), 54
 Zhang Sanlang (young man), 21, 31, 71, 73
 Zhang Wuke (maiden), 52
 Zhang Xiuying (general's wife), 19, 42–3, 94
 Zhao Cuihua (maiden), 52, 60
 Zhao Yun (general), 24, 93
Zhao Yun Hides the Baby Prince, 16(2.13)
 Zhizhen (Buddhist nun), 78–9
 Zhong Kui (ghost and official), 179
Zhong Kui Arranges a Marriage, 179(6.11)
 Zhou Cang (bodyguard), 149
 Zhou Ding (official), 140
 Zhou Yu (general), 24, 137, 144
 Zhu Yingtai (maiden), 53, 155, 157, 162
 Zhuge Liang (master of strategy), 51