



DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER
A NEW AMERICAN OPERA BY BRIGHT SHENG AND DAVID HENRY HWANG
WILL TOUR THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

**Beijing, Changsha and Wuhan opera audiences welcome
work commissioned by the San Francisco Opera, directed by Stan Lai
with sets and costumes by Tim Yip (September 8–23, 2017)**

BEIJING (August 15, 2017) — *Dream of the Red Chamber*, an opera by the Shanghai-born composer Bright Sheng with a libretto by Sheng and Tony Award-winning playwright David Henry Hwang, will tour to the People's Republic of China in September 2017, a press conference announced today at the late 18th-century Prince Gong Mansion in Beijing. The production, directed by Stan Lai with visual designs by Oscar-winner Tim Yip, will appear on tour co-produced by Poly Theatre Management Co., Ltd. and Armstrong International Music & Arts Enterprises, Ltd., traveling to three Chinese cities in six performances.

The tour opens with two performances at Beijing's Poly Theatre on September 8 and 9. The work will then be presented as part of the grand opening of the Meixihu International Culture and Arts Centre Grand Theatre in the southern city of Changsha on September 15 and 16. Designed by the late Zaha Hadid, the Meixihu complex was among the noted British Iraqi-born architect's last projects before her sudden death in March 2016. The third and final stop will be the Qintai Grand Theatre in Wuhan on September 22 and 23.

Based on China's literary epic, *Dream of the Red Chamber* had its world premiere at San Francisco Opera (which originally commissioned the work) on September 10, 2016, playing to capacity crowds at San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House. The *San Francisco Chronicle* hailed the opera's "series of tautly constructed scenes that reveal [Sheng's] skill in crafting an operatic language that is a hybrid of Chinese and Western traditions." The opera later appeared in March 2017 at the Hong Kong Arts Festival, a co-producer of San Francisco's premiere production.

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock said: "*Dream of the Red Chamber* had a profound impact in connecting San Francisco Opera to its broader Bay Area community. It's

thrilling, then, that this will continue as *Dream of the Red Chamber* travels to China in one of the most exciting American–Chinese cultural bridges to emerge in recent years. I couldn't be more proud that San Francisco Opera was the birthplace of a work that speaks so powerfully to such a broad audience."

Wray Armstrong, Chairman and CEO of Armstrong International Music & Arts Enterprises, envisioned a China tour early in the opera's history. "When I saw the dress rehearsal for the premiere last season, even before its sold-out performances in San Francisco and later Hong Kong, I was certain this work would be a hit in China," said Armstrong, an artist manager and touring agent with offices in London, Beijing and Rome. "What an honor to bring China's greatest literary treasure back home in this unique and beautiful production, created by a 'Dream Team' of artists!"

The cast features Chinese tenor Yijie Shi as Bao Yu, a role he created in San Francisco. Soprano He Wu portrays Dai Yu; mezzo-soprano Lin Shi is Bao Chai; mezzo-soprano Katherine Pracht sings the role of the Jia matriarch Lady Wang; contralto Qiulin Zhang is Granny Jia; soprano Karen Chia-ling Ho is Princess Jia; soprano Yanyu Guo is Aunt Xue; and Pichead Amornsomboon plays the Monk. Quilin Zhang, Karen Chia-ling Ho and Yanyu Guo were also members of the original cast.

Tour performances of *Dream of the Red Chamber* will be conducted by Sheng, marking the composer's first time conducting his opera. In Beijing, Sheng will lead the Hangzhou Philharmonic Orchestra; in Changsha and Wuhan, the Wuhan Philharmonic Orchestra will be in the pit. The Chorus of the State Opera of Dnipro, Ukraine, will sing at each performance.

The opera first took root when Pearl Bergad, Executive Director of the Minneapolis-based Chinese Heritage Foundation, approached former San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley in 2013 about producing an English-language opera based on *Dream of the Red Chamber*, making the classic story accessible to non-Chinese-speaking audiences. As in previous performances, Sheng's opera will be performed on tour in English, with surtitles in both English and Chinese.

Dates and Venues

Beijing Poly Theatre (Sept 8 and 9) (opened since 1991, a major venue of the annual Beijing Music Festival) <http://en.polyculture.com.cn/business/&c=17&i=58&comContentId=58.html>
Tickets available: RMB280 to RMB2017 (VIP)
Ticket inquiries: 010-51287320

Meixihu International Culture and Arts Centre Grand Theatre, Changsha (Sept 15 and 16) (*Dream of the Red Chamber* will feature in the venue's opening festival, September 2017) <http://www.zaha-hadid.com/architecture/changsha-meixihu-international-culture-art-centre/>
Tickets: Sept 15 SOLD OUT; Sept 16 availability RMB100 (student) to RMB1680 (VIP)
Ticket inquiries: 0731-89518800/8811

Wuhan Qintai Grand Theatre (Sept 22 and 23) (opened in 2007, it is paired with the Qintai Concert Hall, one of the most established performing arts venues in central China) <http://en.polyculture.com.cn/business/&c=17&i=65&comContentId=65.html>
Official website: <http://www.whqtdjy.com/>

Cast and Production Team

Bao Yu:	Yijie Shi / Lu Yuan (Sept 22/23)	Composer/Librettist:	Bright Sheng
Dai Yu:	He Wu / Jingjing Li (Sept 22)	Librettist:	David Henry Hwang
Bao Chai:	Lin Shi	Stage Director:	Stan Lai
Lady Wang:	Katherine Pracht	Production Design:	Tim Yip
Granny Jia:	Qiulin Zhang	Conductor:	Bright Sheng
Princess Jia:	Karen Chia-ling Ho	Choreographer:	Ran Arthur Braun
Aunt Xue:	Yanyu Guo	Lighting Designer:	Wang Tien Hung
The Monk:	Pichead Amornsomboon	Revival Director:	Reed Fisher

CAST BIOS

Shanghai-born tenor **Shi Yijie** began his vocal studies in his native city, later earning top marks at the Toho College of Music in Tokyo. After winning a fellowship offered by the Toho Postgraduate School of Music, he moved to Europe to continue his studies in Graz. He won several international vocal competitions, including the Ferruccio Tagliavini International Singing Competition in Graz, the Toti dal Monte International Competition in Treviso, the Festspielstadt Passau Competition and the Maria Caniglia International Singing Competition in Sulmona. Shi's considerable success in bel canto repertory dates from his 2008 debut in *Il viaggio a Reims* at the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro. He was immediately invited to return, and soon began appearing at major opera houses throughout Italy, Spain, France and Holland. In China, he has been at the forefront of bel canto premieres at Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts, appearing in such productions as *L'italiana in Algeri* and *Guillaume Tell* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Recent engagements include Iago in *Otello* (Gran Teatre de Liceu, Barcelona), Argirio in *Tancredi* (Opera Nacional de Chile, Santiago), Narciso in *Il turco in Italia* (Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse).

Chinese soprano **He Wu** studied at the Royal Academy of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Royal College of Music International Opera School, completing her training at the National Opera Studio, supported by the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. She won the Voice of China European Competition (2014), the Lies Askonas Singing Competition (2015) and was a finalist in the Kathleen Ferrier Competition (2016). She was a Young Artist at the International Kammeroper Schloss Rheinsberg Festival 2015 and Samling Scholar 2016. Her recent operatic engagements include Tansy Davies's *Between Worlds* for English National Opera and *Giove in Argo* at the London Handel Festival. Concert appearances include Mahler's Symphony No.2 with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven's Symphony No.9 with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Mozart's *Exsultate Jubilate* for the Amersham Festival Chamber Orchestra, and Beethoven's Mass in C and Choral Fantasy at St John's Smith Square.

Mezzo-soprano **Lin Shi**, who received training from China's Central Conservatory of Music before pursuing studies at the Munich University of Music and Performing Arts and the Curtis Institute of Music, was a member of the International Opera Studio of Zurich Opera in the 2013/14 season. Among her awards and recognitions were the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation's 2014 Encouragement Award, a scholarship from the Hamel-Stiftung in Hannover, Germany, and a Lauréat HSBC de L'Académie Européenne de Musique, France. Among her stage roles in the US, Europe and China were the page in *Rigoletto*, Coryphee in *Le comte Ory*, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Sister Mathilde in *Dialogue of the Carmelites*. Conductors she has worked with include Christian Thielemann, Asher Fisch, Daniel Oren and Fabio Luisi.

Mezzo-soprano **Katherine Pracht** has been a Metropolitan Opera Competition Regional finalist in San Antonio, Memphis, and twice in Minneapolis, where, in 2006, she won the Outstanding Mezzo Award. Recent appearances include Flora in *La Traviata* for Opera Philadelphia and Meg in *Falstaff* with Opera on

the James. In 2017, she appeared in composer Bright Sheng's *The Intimacy of Creativity* festival at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center. During the 2014–15 season, she was highly involved with Opera Philadelphia's devotion to new American operas, developing the role of Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter in workshops of Daniel Schnyder's *Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD* (covering the role in its world premiere performance) and also developing the role of Glenda in *We Shall not be Moved*. She performed the role of Meg in *Little Women* with Opera on the James and made her role debut as Sharon Falconer in *Elmer Gantry* with Florentine Opera.

The Xian-born contralto **Qiulin Zhang** made her American and San Francisco Opera debuts as Granny Jia in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Trained in China and France, she has performed at many of Europe's prestigious opera houses and concert halls. Her many roles include Maddalena in *Rigoletto* in Rennes, Sesto in *La Clemenza di Tito* and Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* in Saint-Étienne and Marseille, the title role of *Carmen* at the Hong Kong Arts Festival with the Orchestre National de Lille, and Erda in several stagings of the *Ring*, including Robert Wilson's production at Paris' Théâtre du Châtelet. In concert, she performed *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Orchestre de Paris under Christoph Eschenbach, and the Orchestre National de Lille with Jean-Claude Casadesus. Zhang recently took part in Detlev Glanert's *Solaris* at the Cologne Opera.

A graduate of the Eastman School of Music and University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, soprano **Karen Chia-ling Ho** is a winner of the Eastman's prestigious Renée Fleming Award and the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (South Carolina District Winner and Southeast Regional Finalist), the Marcello Giordani Foundation International Vocal Competition, the Sergio Franchi Music Foundation, and was a finalist in the Belvedere and Francisco Viñas Competitions. She made her role and company debut recently as Liù in *Turandot* with St. Petersburg (Fla.) Opera and performed music by composer Li Shaosheng with the American Composers Orchestra in Washington D.C. She has appeared in concerts of operatic repertory with both the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra. In the summer of 2014, she participated in San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program where she was featured as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*.

Chinese American mezzo-soprano **Yanyu Guo** has sung with many opera companies throughout Europe and the United States, including the San Francisco Opera, Washington Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Opera Paris de Bastille, Volksoper Wien, Göteborg Opera Sweden, Landestheater Salzburg, Nationaltheater Mannheim, Nationaltheater Weimar, and Staatstheater Hannover. Her roles include Ortrud in *Lohengrin*, Amneris in *Aida*, Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera*, Fricka in *Die Walküre* and *Das Rheingold*, and Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*. At Beijing's National Centre for the Performing Arts she has performed as La Cieca in *La Gioconda* and Jezibaba in *Rusalka*. A former Adler Fellow at San Francisco Opera, she performed in the title role of *Ariodante* and as Pauline in *Pique Dame*. Also at San Francisco Opera, Guo stepped in for Frederica von Stade singing Penelope opposite Thomas Hampson in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, receiving considerable critical acclaim.

Tenor **Lu Yuan** was born in Shandong and admitted in 2001 to the Tianjin Conservatory of Music in the Music Education Department, where he studied piano with Li Hongmei and voice with Professor Li Xiuqi. After receiving a Masters degree in Vocal Performance in 2008 under the guidance of Professor Du Jigang, he began work at the Conservatory as voice coach. Yuan first traveled to Italy in 2010 as a senior visiting scholar and soon won several international competitions, including Germany's Neue Stimmen International Singing Competition, the IBLA Bellini International Vocal Competition and the Magda Olivero International Voice Competition in Milan. He made his Italian debut in *Il viaggio a Reims* at the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro. Recent engagements include *La Cenerentola* in Beijing and Treviso, *Petite Messe Solennelle* in Rome, and Donizetti's *Furioso all'Isola di San Domingo* in Bergamo, Modena, Ferrara and Rovigo.

Soprano **Jingling Li** trained at the Central Conservatory of Music and Vienna's University for Music and Performing Arts. She received First Prize at Austria's International Nico Dostal Operetta Competition in

2007, and two years later won Second Prize in Bulgaria's first international competition of "Lied-Duo" for piano and voice. She is the first Chinese singer to have received these international prizes in different vocal fields of Opera, Operetta and Lied. Since making her debut at the China National Opera House in *Die Fledermaus*, she has performed in *Die Zauberflöte*, *Die Walküre* and *Fidelio*. She made her debut at China's National Centre for the Performing Arts in 2011 in *Carmen*, returning in *La Cenerentola*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Un ballo in maschera*. In 2015, she was invited to the Singapore Esplanade's Huayi festival to perform the leading role in Jin Xiang's opera *Savage Land*.

Actor **Pichead Amornsomboon** graduated from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours), majoring in Acting. In 2005, he co-founded the theatre group "2 On Stage" and, in 2011, founded "Pichead On Stage." He joined the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre in 2014, where his richly expressive power has also found outlets in writing, directing and teaching. Acclaim from the Hong Kong Drama Awards include Best Actor (Drama/Tragedy) for *Scrooge – the Musical*, and Best Actor (Comedy/Farce) and Best Director for *Two of Us*, as well as winning Best Supporting Actor (Comedy/Farce) three times for his performances in *Aladdin*, *Sylvia* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

CREATIVE TEAM

Bright Sheng (composer, conductor, co-librettist), a graduate of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, moved to New York City in 1982, where he pursued graduate studies and conducting privately with his mentor Leonard Bernstein. Proclaimed by the MacArthur Foundation in 2001 as "an innovative composer who merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries," Sheng's music has a strong Asian influence fully synthesized with Western musical traditions and is performed regularly in the most prestigious performing arts institutions in North America and Europe. In addition, he enjoys an active career as a conductor and concert pianist, and frequently acts as music advisor and artistic director to orchestras and festivals. He is currently the Leonard Bernstein Distinguished University Professor at University of Michigan, and the Y. K. Pao Distinguished Visiting Professor at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology where, in 2011, he founded and has been serving as the Artistic Director of "The Intimacy of Creativity—The Bright Sheng Partnership: Composers Meet Performers" in Hong Kong.

David Henry Hwang (co-librettist) is a Tony Award winner, a three-time OBIE Award winner, and a two-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. In addition to his spoken dramas (*M. Butterfly*, *Chinglish*, *Golden Child*, *Yellow Face*, *The Dance in the Railroad* and *FOB*), Hwang has also written the Broadway musicals *Aida* (co-author), *Flower Drum Song* (2002 revival) and *Tarzan*. He is also America's most-produced living opera librettist, having penned texts for composers Philip Glass (*1000 Airplanes on the Roof*), Osvaldo Golijov (*Ainadamar*), Bright Sheng (*The Silver River*), Unsuk Chin (*Alice in Wonderland*), Huang Ruo (*An American Soldier*), and Howard Shore (*The Fly*). He was the Residency One Playwright and New York's Signature Theatre, which produced a season of his plays including the world premiere of *Kung Fu*, a musical on the life of Bruce Lee. Since 2014, he has been a faculty member of Columbia University, and his many board positions include Chair of the American Theatre Wing, which administers the Tony Awards.

Stan Lai (director) is one of the most acclaimed playwright-directors in Asia, known not only for creating some of the most memorable works for the contemporary Chinese stage, but also for creating bold new genres and innovative stagings. He is artistic director of Taiwan's Performance Workshop and the founding artistic director of China's Wuzhen Theatre Festival. Lai's works, which include over 30 original plays, two feature films, and four operas, include his epic *A Dream Like a Dream* (2000) and *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land* (1986) Born in the U.S. and based in Taiwan, Lai received a doctorate degree in dramatic art from University of California, Berkeley. He was a professor and founding dean of the Department of Theatre

at Taipei National University of the Arts and has also been a visiting professor and resident artist at Berkeley and Stanford University.

Tim Yip (visual design) is an art director and designer best known for his Oscar-winning visual design from *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (which also won a BAFTA award for the film’s costume design). After his studies in Hong Kong, Yip began working with many celebrated film directors, including John Woo, Ang Lee, Tsai Ming Liang, Stanley Kwan and Feng Xiaogang. He is well known in Taiwan, having worked with the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, Contemporary Legend Theatre and U Theatre, among others. As an artist, Yip first gained attention for his “New Orientalism” aesthetic. He has presented many exhibitions in costume, photography and visual art around the world.

For further press information about the *Dream of the Red Chamber* China Tour, please contact Joanna Lee, Museworks Limited Hong Kong / jchlee23@gmail.com

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