

ARCHITECTURE IS ART FESTIVAL 2015

Zuni Icosahedron

History Theatre

1587, A Year of No Significance

Adapted from the book by Ray Huang



Rerun for SevenTimes Across the Strait

Gaining Widespread Critical Acclaim

Wuzen Festival 20142 & Taipei-Hong Kong Week 2012

Cantonese Grand Theatre Version × Newly Arranged Kunqu Opera Excerpt

“A wonderful performance.”— **Stan Lai**

“A rich cautionary experimental theatre”— **Tsui Hark**

“Accomplishment in all acting, script and directing.”— **Tsim Tak Lung, Hong Kong Economic Journal**

“The lengthy lines are as smooth as natural breathing to performers. I admire their enthralling delivery.”— **Lilian Lee Pik-wah**

“An unreal splendor emerges from the stage amidst its sheer austerity” — **China News Service**

“This is a dramatic work with a simple structure and sophisticated content.”— **Performing Arts Review (Taiwan)**

Six solos from six characters of the Ming Court. Six Theatrical performance forms. 2015 Grand Theatre Version: Cantonese X Newly Arranged Kunqu Opera Excerpt (Emperor Wanli). Interspersed with classic excerpts from The Peony Pavilion with (wusheng)(male warrior) excerpts. A look at the rise and fall of China of several hundred years.

Synopsis

The title, 1587, A Year of No Significance, points out directly that no distinct historical events occurred during the year 1587, and it was a seemingly unimportant and bland period of time. Shen Shih-hsing had been First Grand Secretary for four years. He managed to keep things in peace and order, and was considered “a great compromiser”.

Yet, the period was not as peaceful as it seemed. A bloody movement to replace and purge Chang Chu-cheng and his associates was just over, and Chang was overthrown by the court officials who were once offended by him. Even the general appointed by Chang, Ch’i Chi-kuang, was censured and dismissed. Hai Jui, the eccentric official was reappointed to public service. All the partisan and court politics had crippled the efficiency of the bureaucracy, hindering it to act creatively.

Wan-li Emperor, was now weighed down, weakened, and blunted by the ceremonial court proceedings, and became disenchanted with the feud between the rival partisans. He refused to see his courtiers, neglected his duties. However, Wan-li’s rule of 48 years was the longest in the Ming Dynasty. The country witnessed the steady decline of the Ming Dynasty, which was the last ethnic Han-led dynasty in China. And thus, the empire was plagued and paralysed by the inadequacies of the political milieu, and was gradually stepping towards the verge of disintegration.

1587, A Year of No Significance

The Year: 1587

The year 1587 was the 15th year of the reign of the Wan-li Emperor. It was a year in the late Ming Dynasty and 57 years before the Manchu invasion (1644), and around 250 years before the Opium War. That was the time when the western world had come out of the Dark Ages, and had just entered the era of the Renaissance, and was gradually entering the age of the Industrial Revolution. To most historians, 1587 was an uneventful year, and nothing of historical significance occurred during that year; but from the perspective of macro-history, the year was full of incidents that carried a

lot of implications, affecting the fate of China from then till now.

The Book: “1587, A Year of No Significance”

The author of the book, 1587, A Year of No Significance, Ray Huang served in the army for many years, witnessing the civil war of China. When he retired to the United States of America, he resumed his studies in Chinese history, concentrating his researches in the financial administration and system of the Ming Dynasty. This eventually led Huang to the idea of writing the book, 1587, A Year of No Significance. The book was first published in 1981, and was nominated for an American Book Award in the history category. It is highly regarded among historians and scholars, and has become a must read for all students of Chinese history, and an important reference book for Chinese businessmen, high-ranking administrators and politicians.

The Performance: “1587, A Year of No Significance”

The script for the performance is a collaboration of Mathias Woo with Zhang Jianwei, the screenplay writer of the television historical drama, For the Sake of the Republic. The costume design of this performance is by the acclaimed art director, William Chang; while the music is composed by Yu Yat-yiu. The work evolves around six monologues performed by six characters. Interspersed with Kunqu opera, it is the art genre which is the most exemplary of the Ming Dynasty. A classic masterpiece of Kunqu opera, The Peony Pavilion, about the pursuit of the freedom of love was composed during the reign of Wan-li. Interspersed with wusheng excerpts, staged with multi-media presentation. Revealing macro-historical perspective through narrative of small anecdotes.

History Theatre *1587, A Year of No Significance*

17-20, September, 2015

Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

17-19 Sept (Thu – Sat) 7:45pm

20 Sept (Sun) 2:30pm

\$480 \$280 \$190 \$140 (Fri – Sun sessions)

\$432 \$252 \$171 \$126 (Thu sessions)

Running time approximate 3 hours with a 15-minute intermission

Performed in Cantonese, with Chinese & English surtitles

Creative Team

Scriptwriter, Director, Designer & Story: Mathias Woo

Scriptwriter: Zhang Jianwei (Beijing)

Costume Designer: William Chang

Music Director: Yu Yat-yiu@PMPS

Kunqu opera excerpt (Emperor Wanli):Zhang Hong (Nanjing)

Guest Performers (Nanjing): Shi Xiaomei, Zhao Jian, Kong Aiping, Shan Xiaoming

Performers: David Yeung, Dick Wong, Carson Chung, Cedric Chan

Adapted from the book by Ray Huang with agreement and permission by Jefferson Huang

Credit Card Telephone Booking: 2111 5999

Online Booking: www.urbtix.hk

Programme Enquiries: 2566 9696

Ticketing Enquiries: 3761 6661

Zuni's Webpage: www.zuni.org.hk

Media Enquiries

Mr. Luka Wong

Office Tel: 852-2893 8704 | Mobile: 852-6301 6569

Fax: 852-2838 7527 | email: luka@zuni.org.hk