

The Cultural Bridge of Chinese-Western and Western-Chinese Theatre
Comparative Design of 'The Wild Man' and
'The Good Person of Szechwan'

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Abstract

This paper will aim at researching and examining design methodology for bridging Chinese and Western cultures in Western-Chinese and Chinese-Western theatre, which is based on my experience designing *The Wild Man* of Gao Xingjian (first shown in 1985) and *The Good Person of Szechwan* of Bertolt Brecht (first shown in 1943). The core of my methodology is how to use the visual language of design to help fill in the absent knowledge for audiences with different cultural identities in order to help them more easily decode complex contextual layers in “Intercultural Theatre”. The reasons for choosing these two playwrights and these two specific plays, as well as Brecht’s preconceptions of Chinese theatre, will also be discussed.

Other relevant information contributing to building the cultural bridge of Chinese-Western and Western-Chinese Theatre will also be discussed, such as the value of Intercultural Theatre as a new format of contemporary theatre in both Western and Chinese theatre, and the burgeoning of the Chinese-Western and Western-Chinese theatre.

Dedication and Acknowledgment

For Shawn, Ian and Marcus.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

With cultural exchange comes new inspirations and possibilities for developing a new theatrical format. Erika Fischer-Lichte, as one of the first critics who assessed contemporary Intercultural Theatre, defined it as a format that is “not concerned with specific cultural identities, but is aiming towards the ‘universal,’ the whole human homogeneity beyond the differences determined by ones’s own culture” (280). The purpose is to allow “any elements of any number of foreign cultures to undergo cultural transformation through the process of production, thereby making their own theatre and their own culture productive again” (287). The cultural transformation should be both textual and visual. As a designer with intercultural background, my privilege is that I am already in the process of cultural transformation. Using my own intercultural knowledge, in this thesis I aim to investigate design methodology for Intercultural Theatre specifically within the context of Chinese-Western and Western-Chinese Theatre.

In the next chapter, for background information, I will explore the roots of Intercultural Theatre in the twentieth century. The boom of Chinese-Western and Western-Chinese theatre all derives from it. However, to the audiences without sufficient multicultural knowledge, “the lack of comprehensive knowledge of either of these traditions makes it difficult to decode dramatic compositions of the playwright with their complex contextual, aural and visual layers, and to translate them into the language of the stage” (Labeledzka 7). “Comprehension of Intercultural Theatre is not enough to describe its internal function or directly display visual symbols to entertain audiences, but it is necessary to help them decode and appreciate the cultural references

within their context, through the ‘*mise-en-scène*’ or ‘placing on stage’ ” (Henderson 315). Any design for Intercultural Theatre should be blended into a designer’s own knowledge of the cultures represented on stage in the play. By exploring Pavis’ theory about *mise-en-scène* and Intercultural Theatre, I will demonstrate how *mise-en-scène* becomes the vital pathway for audiences to understand Intercultural Theatre, which further leads to the important function of design for bridging different cultures in the realm of theatre.

Chapter three will demonstrate why I chose the playwrights Gao Xinjiang and Bertolt Brecht in this thesis, as well as the rationale for choosing *The Wild Man* and *The Good Person of Szechwan* rather than any other plays of Brecht and Gao. By analyzing the texts and drawing upon examples, chapter four will clarify the cultural bridge between *The Wild Man* and *The Good Person of Szechwan* from a textual perspective, while Brecht’s preconceptions of Chinese theatre will also be discussed in this section. In chapter five, the main design concept will be demonstrated—applying the principles of Western realism to design *The Wild Man* and Chinese traditional theatrical principles to design *The Good Person of Szechwan*. Chapter six will outline design details of both set and costume to show how they function as a means for audiences to more easily understand both plays and how cultural knowledge affects the design. This paper intends to serve as an important guideline for designers to help audiences with a narrow or singular cultural focus to decode Intercultural Theatre.

Chapter 2. Background Information

The Flourish of Intercultural Theatre

Min tan views Intercultural Theatre as “a process of displacement and re-placement of culturally specified and differentiated forces, rejecting any universalist and essentialist presumptions” (2). It can be simply seen as the manifestation of cultural assimilation within the development of global communication. Essentially, it does meet the urgent need of a new way to approach theatre practice and institute a new methodology for analysis. That is why it is now becoming one of the most prominent phenomena in the realm of theatre.

Traced back to the beginning of twentieth century, as theatre traditions were being overturned in the creation of new styles, intercultural exchange filled in a void that hadn't yet been explored. Western artists such as Antonin Artaud, Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, and Eugenio Barba all contributed to examining traditions, acting styles and cultures which might never have had a chance to meet one another. Instead of struggling to find a way to refine already-established Western performance analysis, they used intercultural understanding to build a new way to approach this purpose.

However, the consequential effect of cross-cultural influence is that the domestic culture would inevitably be redefined by other culture's influences and traditions. Patrice Pavis invites this, saying “the fact that other cultures have gradually permeated our own leads (or should lead) us to abandon or relativize any dominant western (or Eurocentric) universalizing view” (5).

On the other hand, the situation in China is more complicated. Since the end of the nineteenth century, even as an imported good, Western theatre has always participated in the

development of Chinese theatre because of the political and cultural demands, which will be discussed in chapter two. After the cultural revolution in the 60s and 70s, as Chinese theatre professionals investigated the future of Chinese theatre, Western theatre provided new possibilities for the development of traditional Chinese theatre, such as Wu Hsing-kuo's Contemporary Legend Theater. Instead of reassessing or re-evaluating traditional Chinese theatre from Western realistic theatre, he is seeking to revitalize them by adapting Western classical plays to the style and techniques of Peking Opera (one specific format of Chinese traditional theatre) such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

The Important Role of Design in Decoding Intercultural Theatre

The concept of *mise-en-scène*¹ (placing on stage) can be seen as the hinge to the theory of Intercultural Theatre, because it “is a mediation between different cultural backgrounds, traditions and method of acting” (Pavis 6) and “is bound to the practical, pragmatic aspect of putting system of signs together and organize them from a semiotic point of view” (Pavis 5).

From the perspective of the audiences, the most direct way to access a piece of Intercultural Theatre is through what visually happens on the stage. Thus, *mise-en-scène* (or an organized system of signs) is the only reference audiences can use to pick to help them decode Intercultural Theatre, which including all design aspects of a play such as set, costume design and all the visual elements shown through acting. Eventually, design becomes the key point in decoding Intercultural Theatre for an audience. My main design methodology in this thesis is to fill in the knowledge absent to the audience by blending it into the design. Thus designers are burdened with the most responsibilities for translating complex contextual, aural and visual

layers into the visual language of the stage and guiding the audience to understand the piece of Intercultural Theatre.

In the further discussion, instead of generally discussing Intercultural Theater, this paper will focus on the specific relationship between Western and Chinese Theatre.

The Bourgeoning of the Chinese-Western and Western-Chinese theatre

The Transition Period of Chinese-Western Theatre in China

In Shanghai in 1899, a student of St. John's College wrote and performed a play called *Scandals in Officialdom* which can be seen as the beginning point of Chinese-Western theatre. The fusing of Chinese and Western theatre can be seen as the use of an aesthetic/artistic method for a cultural-social-historical-political purpose. Beginning with the end of the nineteenth century, traditional Chinese theatre was gradually influenced by the Western method of realism. The earliest contact of Chinese people and Western theatre were the diplomats who traveled to Western countries in the early nineteenth century. They were surprised by the grand buildings and high social status of performers. Later, with the opening of the coastal cities to the Western world, Western people began to settle in China. In that period, Shanghai was one of the places of settlement. In 1866 foreign residents built the first Western theatre there called the Lan-Xin Theatre, which was run by western people. This met people's desire for seeing Western drama or were interested in Western culture. Gradually, Chinese people had a better understanding of the Western performance style. The new cultural ideologies of the Western world allowed the

Chinese people to reexamine if traditional Chinese theatre could reflect the dissatisfaction of social reality during the period when political power changed at the end of Qing dynasty.

One of the dominant creators of Chinese traditional theatre is the actor. Actors began to rewrite some of the famous traditional stories and blurred the responsibilities of the categories of characters. “The characters in the Chinese dramas are divided into four distinct categories: the male characters (生 Sheng), the female characters (旦 Tan 旦), the masked characters (Jing 净) and the comedians (Chou 丑)” (Hsu 43). The sets were designed in a realistic style. Compared with traditional Chinese theatre, Western theatre provided much easier skills for students who were the dominant creators in the “Shi shi xin xi” period to learn and perform.

The proceeding style of theatre that would develop, called “Wen Ming Xi,” would increasingly integrate more Western theatrical elements into traditional Chinese theatre. On the mainland of China, Wen Ming Xi was adapted from folk stories in that time and based on acting style of Jing Ju (a singing-based performance style of the Chinese traditional theatre). While less singing was used in Wen Ming Xi in favor of more dialogue, the performances often did not have a text, and were improvised around a storyline. This new format also became a place for politicians to advocate their own political purposes by taking to the stage and talking to the audience between acts. However, in 1913, after Zheng Zhengqiu’s *Family Scandal*, Wen Ming xi became very popular because of its focus on secular stories. Eventually, overexposure led to its decline in popularity. On this stage, Chinese-Western theatre was inspired by the format of Western theatre that used techniques such as pure dialogue and realistic visual effects. Thus, Tian concludes this period as “a vulgar and degenerated imitation of Western realism” (149) .

Because of the influence of the Meiji restoration³ in Japan from 1860 to 1880, Chinese theatre professionals in Japan had more access to the Western theatre. The Chinese play *Hei Nu Yu Tian Lu* (which was an adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Tokyo in 1907) can be seen as the beginning point of new type of theatre called "Hua Ju", created by Chinese dramatists in Japan, while the Wen Ming Xi style developed on the mainland of China. The Chinese theatre artists tried to perform the Western theatre pieces in a Western style which helped them to develop their understanding of Western theatre.

Hua Ju was a new theatrical format which was not strictly Chinese theatre nor entirely Western theatre. Also called "spoken drama", Hua Ju was dialogue-based, seldom with singing and music. In 1928, Hong Shen first used the term for this kind of Chinese Western theatre. Chinese people began to use Western structure styles to create their own Chinese-Western theatre and tried to find a way to create a Chinese Contemporary theatre which fundamentally developed from Western theatre. Gao Xinjian's *The Wild Man* is one such play.

Western Theatre inspired by Chinese traditional Theatre

The traditional Chinese theatre can be described as a non-realistic and imaginative style of theatre: qualities that had become appealing to the modern Western theatre. Western audiences can often appreciate and understand traditional Chinese theatre by comparing it with their understanding of Greek theatre, the Elizabethan theatre or with modern anti-realist theatre. While Contemporary Chinese theatre in the second half twentieth century was maturing, it was traditional Chinese theatre that held the most interest for Western theatre. Because of Mei Lanfang's visit to Western countries, traditional Chinese theatre's influence on Western theatre

can be examined in two different ways. Either the Chinese elements were taken out of context and parodied from a Western perspective or traditional Chinese theatre was taken as a means of legitimizing artists' theatrical theoretical needs, meeting both practical and political contingencies. Examples of this are Bertolt Brecht's "Alienation Effect", Vsevolod Meyerhold⁴'s "Theatre of Convention" and Eugenio Barba's⁵ "Eurasian Theatre".

Prior to Mei Lanfang's visit to America in 1929 and Russia in 1935, Western-Chinese theatre was characterized by misunderstanding and misrepresentation because of the West's inadequate knowledge of Chinese theatre. The Chinese traditional theatre 'did not influence contemporary Western theatre (especially the avant-grade) through shared affinities and principles but rather as a mechanism of displacements of the different in terms of the familiar' (Tain 7). In this period, there were a number of 'pseudo-Chinese plays' (Tain 26) such as *The Yellow Jacket*, *Turandot*, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. One of the most significant of these production in the early twentieth century was *The Yellow Jacket*, written by George C. Hazleton and J.H. Benrimo. By presenting certain Chinese theatrical elements, the playwrights intended to "string on a thread of universal philosophy, love and laughter the jade beads of Chinese theatrical conventions" (Tain 27). The playwrights did not want to recreate Chinese theatre, and as it was an American play there was no Chinese acting. In this period, Chinese theatre was relegated to its role in renewing Western theatre.

Vsevolod Meyerhold predicted in 1936 (one year after Mei's visit) that: "a certain union of techniques of the Western-European theatre and the Chinese theatre will occur" (Meyerhold 121). His aim of acting in the Theatre of Conventions was making actors' craft "the

contraposition in the art of stage” (Meyerhold 1969 38) and giving full freedom to the audience’s imagination (Meyerhold 1969 26), which is very similar to the core of traditional Chinese theater’s concept of performing. In traditional Chinese Theatre, the movement of actors is seen as a vital way to demonstrate the space on the stage and audience’s imagination required to complete the whole progress of performance. For example, there is no need to bring a horse on stage for an actor to act as though he is riding a horse; the actor need only suggest this and the audience will understand what meaning is being conveyed. Meyerhold also asked his members of his studio to “read about the Chinese traveling companies” (Meyerhold 1969 147). However, the essence of Meyerhold’s theory diverges from Chinese traditional theatre’s as his later research integrated his “Theatre of Convention” with the concept of ‘grotesque’.

While Meyerhold focused his research on the technical aspect of Chinese theatre, Eugenio Barba was studying “recurring ‘similar principles’ underlying both various Asian and Western performance traditions” (Tain 97). Barba used traditional Chinese theatre as an example to illustrate his own theatrical methodology: ‘Theatre Anthropology’. It is “the study of the pre-expressive scenic behaviour upon which different genres, styles, roles and personal or collective traditions are all based” (Barba 1996 218) and “is not concerned with applying the paradigms of cultural anthropology to theatre and dance” (Barba 1995 10), but seeks universal aesthetics that transcend culture. He thought Mei Lanfang’s successful work as an actor of female characters was not a culturally and historically determined phenomenon but was attributed to the universal power of his performance. However, Barba’s point is misguided as theatre is undeniably a social and cultural event. Tain critiques that: “the creative process [is] informed and affected by the performer’s cultural, ethnic and social given” (99). Even though Barba’s research of Chinese

theatre was isolated from the Chinese culture and context, he did make effort to interpret traditional Chinese theatre from a different perspective.

Differing from simple exoticism and Chinoiserie, Peter Sellars' use of Chinese Theatre and culture are predominantly politically and ideologically Chinese, as presented in his productions such as *Nixon in China* and *Peony Pavilion*. Most importantly, by collaborating with Chinese-born artists, Sellars' productions directly connect with Chinese culture and within a Chinese context. Thus, the inspiration Sellars took from Chinese traditional theatre was highly fused with Western ideology.

From the bourgeoning of Chinese-Western and Western-Chinese theatre, Yu concludes the necessity and prospect for both Chinese and Western theatre:

It is significant that at the same time that the Chinese stage is turning from symbolism to realism, the western stage is turning from realism to symbolism. Perhaps at some point on the road the two will meet and, joining forces, develop the perfect drama" (201).

Chapter 3: The Reason of Choosing These Two Playwrights and Plays

The Reason of Choosing Gao Xingjian and Bertolt Brecht

The Biography of Gao Xingjian and Bertolt Brecht

Gao Xingjian

Gao Xingjian was born in 1940 in Ganzhou, China, to a father who was a banker and a mother who was an amateur actress. Growing up in a liberal family environment, Gao had opportunities to access a large amount of Chinese literature and many volumes of Western literature and art. From 1957 to 1962, he attended university at Beijing Foreign Languages Institute, where he began to study French and literature. He recognized his early interest in Absurdism during his studies there, and he began to study Western theatre. After graduation, Gao began to work as a translator and editor of the French edition of *China Reconstructs*⁷. During this period, he began to secretly write plays, stories, and essays, which he had to hide from the authorities due to Mao Zedong's edict that all literature and arts should only be used to serve the Chinese Communist Party. After being denounced to government officials by his wife, Gao was sent to rural China for “cultural re-education”⁸. He burned or buried all of his writings, including unpublished novels, plays, and essays, for fear of being further labelled as a subversive.

Gao returned to Beijing in 1975 and began to work for the *Chinese Writers Association*. With the end of the cultural Revolution, Gao's writing began to appear regularly in Chinese publications and in 1981 he was assigned to work as a writer for the *Beijing People's Art Theater*. His first play *Absolute Signal* (绝对信号) was produced in 1982 and became a popular

success. His next play, *The Bus Stop* (车站) was banned soon after its premier in 1983 for its criticisms of the government. Gao decided to leave Beijing in order to escape possible prosecution from the Chinese Government. He spent the next five months on a fifteen thousand kilometer trek though rural China, an experience which later became the basis for his novel *Soul Mountain*. When the political climate in China changed in 1984, Gao returned to Beijing. His next plays received negative comments from the Chinese government which forced Gao to flee to Germany and settle down in Paris later in 1988. Gao condemned the massacre during students' protest in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989 which was done by Chinese authorities and afterwards he applied for political asylum in France. In 1992, Gao wrote and produced a play called *Fleeing* (逃亡) outside China based on the Tiananmen Square massacre⁹, which caused the Chinese government to ban all Gao's works in China. Eventually, Gao became a naturalized French citizen in 1998 and was awarded *Nobel Laureates in Literature* in 2000.

Bertolt Brecht

In *The Empty Space*, Perter Brook wrote: "Brecht is the key figure of our time, and all theater work today at some point starts from or returns to his statements and achievement" (8). Bertolt Brecht was born in a middle-class family in 1898, in Augsburg, Germany. His mother was a Protestant and his father worked for a paper mill. When he was 16 the first World War broke out. From 1916, Brecht began to work for newspaper and in October 1919 his first criticism for the *Augsburger Volkswille* appeared. In 1917, on his father's recommendation, he attended Munich University where he met and studied drama with Arthur Kutscher. In 1918, Brecht's first full-length play, *Baal* was completed during his study with Kutscher. In the

following year, he finished his second major play— *Drums in the Night*, which was awarded the *Kleist Prize*¹⁰ in 1922. In 1924 Brecht worked with the novelist and playwright Lion Feuchtwanger on an adaptation of *Edward II* which proved to be a milestone in his early theatrical development and was credited as the germ of his concept of “Epic Theatre”. Brecht's early plays can be described as expressionistic, combined with social content.

In February 1933, as he opposed the growing Nazi movement, he fled Germany the day after the Reichstag fire to settle in Denmark which became the residence of the Brecht family for the next six years. During this period Brecht also travelled frequently to Copenhagen, Paris, Moscow, New York and London for various projects and collaborations. In 1935 Brecht took a sojourn from Denmark to Leningrad and Moscow. It was in Moscow that Brecht saw the Peking Opera performer Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) who fully embodied Brecht's main theory, which had been later defined as ‘Verfremdungs Effekt’. Before he saw Mei Lanfang's performance, “Brecht's first exposure to Chinese drama was presumably through Klabund's adaption of a German version of Stanislas Julien's translation of the Yuan play, *The Story of the Chalk Circle*” (Tian 39). He wrote his essay on Chinese acting before that winter in 1935. Afterwards, the clear influence of the Chinese theatre could be seen in Brecht's works.

In 1941, he emigrated to the United States and lived in California until October 31, 1947. In 1947, he left Hollywood and returned to Europe. In 1954, Brecht received the Stalin Peace Prize. He settled down in East Germany until his death on 14 August 1956.

From the biographies, we can see both of these playwrights have abundant intercultural experiences. They both fled from their homeland and travelled to different countries because of

political forces, which in a sense deconstructed their cultural identities and accelerated the cultural fusion process for both men. Early in both Brecht and Gao's careers, their productions reflected the temporal political situations, such as Brecht's *Baal* and Gao's *Taowang*. Gao's other plays, *The Wild Man* and *The Other Shore* (彼岸, 1986), all openly criticized the government's state policies. Gao and Brecht have identities beyond just playwrights; they wrote poetry, novels and did translations for literature.

Both Brecht and Gao viewed each other's culture as a medium to continue their own theories. Gao tried to explore a new way to evolve traditional Chinese theatre in order to develop a contemporary Chinese Theatre and used Western Theatre as an inspiration.

"I turn to modern Western theatre as a rich source of inspiration in the belief that national culture should a basis for, but not a limitation on the development of Chinese culture. I am sure that the synthesis of Western and Eastern theatre is possible and believe that pursuing it may stimulate the theatre as a whole. I am grateful for the inspiration which modern western theatre has given me." (193)

Throughout Brecht's career, he "was interested in traditional Chinese theatre and arts, even in its ancient philosophy, such as the philosophical thought of Mozi [墨子] and Kongzi [孔子]" (Yangzhong 29). He did admire the plain language used in Tang poems and even translated them. He studied Mao Zedong's philosophical thought and dialectical theory and used it in the theatre realm. Compared with the other artists influenced by Chinese culture listed in chapter two, Brecht made a greater effort to access to the core of Chinese culture (even though there

were some misunderstandings) and applied it as foundation of his *Verfremdungseffekt* (translated to “Alienation Effect”) . The Alienation Effect (or “A-Effect” for short) is the theory of a phenomenon that occurs when elements of a theatrical performance create a sense of emotional disassociation from the performance. This effect is desirable because this disassociation allows the viewer to observe the performance from a critical distance, and is especially useful in performances that are dialectical in nature. This is an important theory to his work, which he notably outlined in his essay “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting”.

The Reason for Choosing “The Wild Man” and “The Good Person of Szechwan”

The Wild Man

Among Gao’s other plays, *The Wild Man* (1985) used many elements from traditional Chinese theatre, as well as Western elements of Hua Ju. After leaving China, for fear of government persecution, the format of Gao’s plays tended to be more contemporary or avant-garde (*The Wild Man* was written before his exile). Therefore, I have more opportunity to negotiate the very Western format and very Chinese theatrical conventions in designing *The Wild Man*. In this part I will examine the reasons why two other important plays in Gao’s career (both of which are similar to *The Wild Man*) are not used in this thesis for design. Gao’s theory of “omnipotent theatre” will also be discussed.

As far as unique Chinese conventionality goes, Gao’s 1992 play *A Tale of Shan Hai Jing* (山海经传), which consists of all kinds of Chinese conventions, seems to be a better choice.

However, excessive application of conventions unnecessarily complicates and slows the storytelling. In terms of storytelling and presentation skill, *The Wild man* is more fluent and more western. Gao's 1997 play *Snow in August* (八月雪) is another play for consideration. It would more successfully incorporate his theory of "Omnipotent Theatre" (全能的戏剧).

"This theatre combines the word, music, song and dance, including singing conventions typical of both the Western opera and of the Beijing opera, gestures of an actor of classical music drama and modern dance, acrobatics, circus art, as well as experimental and traditional Chinese music." (Gao 1988 208)

In his first attempt at this theory, Gao wrote *The Wild Man* which has different kinds of theatrical traditions integrated into the story. Assistant Professor of Theater and Dance of Colby college, Todd, Coulter, pointed out Gao's "personal call for a return to the traditional aesthetics of Beijing Opera [Chinese traditional theatre] as being the major theatrical models to shape his dramaturgy" (3). Gao advised that Chinese Contemporary theatre should become the renaissance of traditional Chinese theatre in terms of concept, but not an imitation (46). He promoted the idea of "Omnipotent Theatre" as a way to investigate new formats of contemporary Chinese theatre by applying Chinese traditional aesthetics. He wrote about his research as early as 1986:

"The foundations of rethought traditional theatre must support the creation of a new theatre which, although not identical with the old musical drama (戏曲), will retain and develop its artistic tradition; one has to create the Modern Eastern Theatre, not very similar to the modern of the West." (Gao 74).

In my opinion, compared to directly taking elements from the Western Theatre to revolutionize Chinese Theatre, this self-reinvention and self-replacement of its own tradition can be seen as a closer connection between Western and Chinese theatre. After all, The acting style and aesthetic of *The Wild Man* (clarified as Hua Ju) is actually typical of Western theatrical format. Therefore, beginning to use Chinese theatrical traditions in plays is the preliminary step of Gao's investigation. "*Wild Man* turned not only towards the aesthetics of the experimental theatre in the West" (Labedaka 195) but also "closer to the traditional Chinese theatre than most spoken dramas" (Roubicke 188). In 1997, twelve years after creating of *The Wild Man*, Gao wrote *Snow in August* which he called a completed piece of "Omnipotent Theatre".

Where *The Wild Man* was written with traditional Chinese conventions, Gao eliminated many traditional Chinese aspects for *Snow in August*, so that he may create a more pure Omnipotent theatre. Contemporary music and modern dance were applied in the production. The set and costume design were now modern, instead of traditional design. Even though all of the actors in the show had backgrounds performing in the Beijing Opera, they were asked to give up many of the symbolic gestures: essential components of the Beijing Opera. The Beijing Opera singing style was the only element of the Chinese traditional theatre used. Also, the vocal music was mixed with modern singing with traditional Beijing Opera, which limited and reduced the aesthetic. Thus, while *Wild Man* is a less mature Omnipotent theatre play, it is more "pure" in its use of Chinese traditions, and more suitable for the purpose of this thesis.

The Good Person of Szechwan

“*The Good Person of Szechwan* (1943) and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948) have been highly praised as two of Brecht’s best plays” (Tian 41). That is the reason I narrowed down my choice to these two plays, even though Fuegi comments *The Good Person of Szechwan* is “a very German play set in a very German milieu” and “a Chinese costume piece” (131). In order to “(achieve) some aesthetic, economic, and political distance from the event described or presented” (Fuegi 132), China is chosen as the location for the play. From a designer’s perspective, this play’s textual use of Chinese elements like the characters’ names and the locations of China all contribute to building the cultural bridge, especially for Chinese audiences.

It is also close to Chinese theatrical structure. Brecht uses several Chinese theatrical traditions such as the self-introduction of characters, story structure, as well as the use of singing throughout the play. It provides a very strong visual similarity with Chinese traditional theatre.

However, as a playwright without a Chinese cultural background, the use of Chinese elements can be controversial. In traditional Chinese theatre, applying episodic structure is based on the audience’s knowledge of the story. It is used to charge the audience’s emotions and invite empathy. Brecht’s goal of episodic structure in both *The Good Person of Szechwan* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is to help interrupt illusion and give the audience a sense of distance to create the ‘A-effect’. In spite of the Chinese elements used in *The Good Person of Szechwan*, I did not choose *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* because its improper episodic structure and over-abundance of songs ruins the flow of storytelling which Tian criticized “frequently and intentionally interrupted by the singer’s song and narratives” (42). *The Good Person of Szechwan*

has more recognizably Chinese structures that can be found in traditional Chinese Theatre, which I described in a later chapter.

Chapter Four: Cultural Bridge in Texts

Cultural Bridge in The Wild Man

As I described in the second chapter, beginning with the first decade of nineteenth century, Western theatre had deep influences on the formation of contemporary Chinese theatre. Tian concludes that “Xiqu [a Chinese traditional theatre] was re-evaluated according to the paradigms of Western realistic theatre” and was chosen as an alternative to replace the dominant Chinese traditional theatre in that special time (142). Radical Chinese intellectuals began to write realistic plays, and Gao’s *The Wild Man* was finished after that period of time.

In *The Wild Man*, Gao makes use of many characteristics from realistic Western theatre. In traditional Chinese theatre, characters are always divided by their certain responsibilities (Shen生, Dan旦, Jin净, Mo末, Chou丑) and always have distinctive personalities. In *The Wild Man*, the characters are believable, everyday types who are all situated within a real location and time period, such as flood prevention officers, the matchmaker (popular in the Chinese countryside), and Sun Yu, who is a primary school teacher. Gao highlighted in the script that period costumes and props should be used, and the set should be deliberately ordinary. In terms of performance, dialogue is not heightened for effect, but that of everyday speech. Details about actors’ blocking, as well as the transitions between each act are given in Gao’s script. The storytelling is typically psychologically driven, where the plot is secondary and the primary focus is placed on the interior lives of the characters, their motives and the reactions of others. The specific kinds of music, singing, make-up and the stylized movements used in traditional Chinese theatre are all eliminated in the text and are replaced by tradition conventions, as per the

requirements for Gao's theory. In the text, Gao also shows details of how traditional conventions were used in this more realistic style of play.

In total, there are six sequences of traditional conventions used in *The Wild man*. The sequences are: "Haocao Gong and Drum" (蓐草锣鼓), "Climbing Beam Song" (上梁号子), "The Rain Dancers" (赶旱魃舞), "The Song of Darkness" (黑暗传), "Companied by Ten Sisters" (陪十姐妹) and "The Logging Dance" (伐木舞).

蓐草锣鼓 or "Haocao Gong and Drum"

The song which the old singer, his assistant and several performers sing throughout Act I is the "Haocao Gong and Drum" (or "Weeding Grass with Gong and Dram" according to Bruno Boubicek's translation of *The Wild Man*). In *The Wild Man*, Gao did adaptations of the lyrics which work into the plot, introducing the context of the story, while also keeping Haocao Gong and Drum's traditional structure. This song appears in the beginning of the play and leads into the dialogue between Ecologist and Su in their home in the city. The following description is:

(.....The OLD SINGER and the OLD SINGER'S Assistant enter. House lights fade down. The OLD SINGER beats a drum. The OLD SINGER'S ASSISTANT bangs a gong.)

OLD SINGER: (Sings)

Oh, sing for the fields, sing for the earth

All right, I know they will blame me.

First, I sing of the rising sun,

Then sing of the young girl's flowered dress.

If you know what you want—

OLD SINGER'S ASSISTANT: (Sing.)

Oh sing for it!

(Boubicek 196)

In traditional Chinese folklore, “Haocao Gong and Drum” is a labor folk song unique to the Tujia (土家) people of the Wuling area, part of a song cycle consistent with the work hours of the day. Its music mainly consists of elements called Getou, Qingshen, Yangge and Songshen, with colorful musical forms such as genres, arias and tones. Lyrics can be either fixed or impromptu while its content aims to improve labor enthusiasm and labor efficiency.

上梁号子 or “Climbing Beam Song”

Climbing Beam Song is another kind of labor folk song unique to the Chongqing (重庆) area. It generally is sung by craftsman, and is often sung along with “Treading Beam Song” and “Trowing Beam Song”. The main format is call and response. This song is used in Act I, referring to the work song sung by roof workers. Instead of a black out for scene changes, this song is used to suggest a transition. Actually, in *The Wild Man* there are seldom changes of set or scenery; it is aimed to allow the play to flow as an entire piece.

(Sun Yu enter the house and ECOLOGIST closes the door behind him.)

Down-stage several ROOF WORKERS enter, calling their work song.)

ROOF WORKER ONE: (Leading the song)

Oh, ah, must obey.

OTHER ROOF WORKERS: (Joining in.)

Oh, ah.

ROOF WORKER ONE: (Leading the song.)

The sound of the worker's songs all day.

OTHER ROOF WORKERS: (Joining in.)

.....

MATCHMAKER: (Enters.) Yes, and what a splendid situation for a house! So Old Li, it will be a house for your baby, eh?

(Boubicek 204-205)

赶旱魃舞 or “The Rain Dancers”

The Rain Dancers represent a tradition of religious dancing (described at the end of Act I), which was widespread in China during the Zhou dynasty (eleventh century to 221 B.C.) (Dyson 71). Similar to the function of “Haocao Gong and Drum”, this dance is used to transition from Act I into Act II. The description in the text is :

ECOLOGIST: Can you tell me who it is?

Su: You could probably guess

(Quietly the ECOLOGIST whistle through his lips. Two men suddenly appear. They let out intermittent whistle and listen for a reply..... A group of RAIN DANCERS rush in leaping around and hitting gongs and drums. Behind them two men enter with a long wood wind instrument: one is playing it, the other carrying it across his shoulder. Those in the

front of the group carry streamers and yellow paper umbrellas. Those in black carry flags, some with serrated edges and some triangular. All wear carved wooden masks, rough sandals, red lace around their waist, and pheasant feathers on their heads. They carry swords, spears, and sticks with iron chins attached to them. They are lead by a shamanic character who wears a mask and moves as if in a trance, practicing a sword display. A POOR MAN, stripped to the waist, lights a bundle of incense sticks as the RAIN DANCERS kneel. (Boubicek 212)

In Gao's notes on the costumes, he points out that designer can reference the Nuo dance. The purpose of this dance is driving out Hanba (旱魃), the monster causing drought, and praying for rain. Serving Gao's theme of protecting the environment, this dance is done in cooperation with the flood plot. The rain dance is in fact a kind of Nuo¹² dance which is all aimed to exorcize evil spirits and keep disaster at arm's length, pray for good weather and good harvests in the coming year. Nuo performance was staged at the turn of each year when spring came.

黑暗传 or “The Song of Darkness”

In Act II, there are two instances in the play which refer to the “Song of Darkness” (also called the “Dark Tale” in Boubicek's translation). One is when the Ecologist goes into the wooden house to read what Sun Yu wrote in the notebook. The text reads:

ECOLOGIST: (Moving Close to lamp, begins to read.)

Great knowledge over time acquired,

Study the starts, understand truth,
 Living in the present, debating the past.
 What did our world emerge?
 When did Pan Gu use his axe
 to split heaven from earth?

(Boubicek 219)

Another quotation of “The Song of Darkness” is at the end of Act II, from the dialogue of the Ecologist and Xiang Mei to the end of this Act.

(The OLD SINGER appears on a platform at the back of the stage. He is beating a big drum and there are copper bells hanging down from his clothing. The sound of his voice gradually increases in volume)

OLD SINGER: (Sings.)

Your question: when did earth from chaos split?

Inquire: what method used in this division?

I'll tell you the tale of ancient lords,

That's all you'll hear from my old lips.

No time, no sky

.....

(Boubicek 231)

Gao manages to work The Song of Darkness into the plot of *The Wild Man*. For example, using the dialogue of Actor A and Actor B, Gao uses the “The Song of Darkness” to denounce

the poachers. As the following description is:

(.....The audience also hears the OLD SINGER singing in a quiet, husky voice. Parts A and B are performed simultaneously.)

A

ACTOR A: The wild fox and horse have vanished.

ACTOR B: We've killed the lion and rhino and shot dead elephant herds.

.....

(Boubicek 231)

The original version of The Song of Darkness was a libretto of folk songs, known as the Han dynasty's first mythological epic. It started spreading from the Ming (明) and Qing(秦) dynasty. It vividly describes the birth and formation of the world and the origin of humanity based on the Han dynasty's culture. Generally, it is a combination of different deities' stories, such as Pangu (盘古), Nuwa (女娲), Fuxi (伏羲), Yandi(炎帝), Shennong (神农), the Yellow Emperor (黄帝), Xuanyuan (轩辕) and many other mythological figures and events. It was re-discovered in the Shennongjia (神龙架) area in Sichuan province in 1984, then collected and published in 1992.

民间花歌“陪十姐妹”or “Companied by Ten Sisters”

Weeping when getting married is one of the popular folk customs. Being “companied by ten sisters” is an activity held in the night before the woman's wedding. Along with the bride, nine unmarried women are invited to sing a song together weeping, and this activity would last

for the whole night into the next morning. This occurs in *The Wild Man* in the following text:

(Enter TEAM OF SISTER in bright cloths, Wearing yellow flowers.....she is accompanied.)

MATCHMAKER: (Sing.)

Blossom opens, leaves are green,

Ten sisters, laughing, come along,

on fragrant slope, ten more are seen, in turn they learn to sing this song.

.....

(Boubicek 240)

Gao uses this in the middle of Act III, which leads to the logging dance of the lumberjacks, where the singing and dance integrate. Finally it transitions to the dialogue of the Ecologist and Lin.

伐木舞 or “The Logging Dance”

The song of “Companied By Ten Sisters” works together with the logging dance by the lumberjacks. The logging dance is a one kind of dance of the Amis tribe, an aboriginal tribe in Taiwan. They have a very special dance called the logging dance which is choreographed for relief from the boring logging work.

After the voices of the team of sisters fade and the Ecologist enters the auditorium, Lin comes towards him in the audience. The transition is finished.

The following description shows how this works:

SISTER FOUR: (Sings.)

Embroider flowers, the pain still here.

A piece of your heart, a daughter, lost.

(Sound of a bubbling brook. TEAM OF SISTER hands to form a line to the edge of the stream. The back of the LUMBERJACKS become visible. “Whop, whop, whop,” the sound of chopping trees, followed by the snap and creak of a tress slowly falling, then the crash as it hits the ground. This dance is more basic and abstract than the previous two, the dance continues as the woman begin singing.)

SISTER ONE: (Sings.)

Leave mother’s home and enter this.

.....

(Boubicek 241)

In *The Wild Man*, the traditional conventions Gao applied connected with the plot, so that textually, the western realistic structure and Chinese conventions become a whole piece. This textural structure also gives me the guideline for the set design.

The Cultural Bridge in The Good Person of Szechwan

According to Tatlow, Brecht “abandoned conventional Europeanized dialogue” and “responded to the self-commendations, typical of Chinese style” (277). Differing from *The Wild Man*, which is based on Western theatrical structure, Brecht uses typical Chinese styling to achieve the “Alienation Effect” in *Good Person of Szechwan*. I might argue that the typical Chinese devices such as introductory passages, songs and verses directly addressed to the spectator, which Brecht used in this play, could very well come from a play by Shakespeare or

Marlowe¹³; however, corresponding structures, that are obviously borrowed from Chinese traditional theatre, help root the *Good Person of Szechwan* in the realm of Chinese theatre.

In Chinese traditional theater, introductory passages are a typical and important component, where, “audiences are engaged in pleasurable activities other than watching the drama, the formal entrances and exit serve to emphasize the outline of action” (Hsu 36). That is the reason why the introductory passage in the beginning or end of the scene is very important. Technically, the introductory passage is used in different combinations according to the needs of the particular scene. According to Tao-Ching Hsu, there are five kinds of “introductory passages” (36)

They are: “*Introduction*” (引子), a passage of varying length in verse and sung ad libitum at the beginning of a drama or a prominent section of it, usually a commentary on the theme of the drama or on the character and events in it; “*Couplet*” (上场联) lines are spoken opposite the character speaking with them, used most often by a pair of clowns; “*Pome*” (坐场诗, 定场诗), similar in content and form to the “Introduction”, declaimed without musical accompaniment. Military officials sing it, alone or unison, according to whether it is a single or multiple entrance. The only tune used is fixed by convention (点绛唇). It is used for multiple entrances of non-military; “*Self-introduction*” (通名), a passage that begins with “I am so-and-so of such-and-such city...” and in which the character tell the audience their age, profession, family relations and so fourth; “*Opening Speech*” (定场白), similar to “*Self-introduction*” except

it is a longer and fuller statement of the background and past developments of the drama (1985 36-37).

The prologue introducing the character of the water seller Wang in the beginning of the play can be seen as a combination of the “*Self-introduction*”(通名) and “*Opening Speech*” (定场白). In this part, Wang not only introduces himself but states what has happened before. The following description is:

A street. It is evening. Wang, the water seller, introduces himself to the audience.

WANG. I sell water here in the city of Szechwan.....They must be gods, Dispose of me, illustrious ones!

(He throws himself down before them.)

(Brecht 3)

These introductions go throughout the whole play. In the beginning of Act I, there is a description of what occurred in the backstory from Shen Te, and can be seen as kind of “*Opening Speech*” too:

A small tobacco store. The store is not as yet completely furnished and has not opened.

SHEN TE (to the audience): Its now three days since the gods went away. They said they want to pay me for the night's lodging.....across the square with her pot.

(Enter Mrs.Shin . The two women bow to each other.)

(Brecht 12)

A similar usage also appear in Act I-A, where the water seller Wang states what happened during the past four days:

Below a bridge. The water seller crouches by the river.

WANG (looking around): Everything's quiet. It's four days now that I've been hiding out.....Now they must be a long way off, and I'm safe.

(Brecht 20)

In Act V-A, Shen Te sings a song called “The Song of the Defenselessness of the God and Good Men” that is similar to the function of “*Pome*”(坐场诗,定场诗). This song applies the format of poem, and SHEN TE sings it before a new act.

Before the curtain, Shen Te appears with the suit and mark of Shui Ta in her hands. She sings.

In our country

The useful man needs luck

only if he finds strong helpers

.....

Fire their guns and suffer no suffering then?

(Brecht 47-48)

Both Mrs. Shin 's statement at beginning of Act VI and Shen Te's description at the beginning of Act VI-A have a very similar function of “*Opening Speech*”(定场白):

MRS. SHIN. A little store like this soon comes to ruin when certain rumors start spreading in the neighborhood.....And that, if I may say so, proves real affection.

(Brecht 48)

Mrs. Shin summarizes the scandal of Shen Te and Mr. Shu Fu prior to this Act. In the following description, Shen Te presents that her meeting with the old couple and the struggle in her mind of how she can tell the truth about retuning the money to Sun Yang:

Before the curtain. Shen Te, in her wedding outfit and on the way to her wedding, turns to audience.

SHEN TE. I've had a terrible experience. As I was stepping out of the house, gay and full of expectation, the carpet dealer's old wife was standing on the street.....I waver between fear and joy.(She goes quickly off.)

(Brecht 59-60)

Mrs. Yang's lines in Act VIII is similar to “*Opening Speech*” (定场白):

MRE. YANG (to the audience). I have to tell you how the wisdom and strength of the universally respected Mr. Shui Ta.....After a short time he received me.

(Brecht 82)

The epilogue at the end can be clarified as the extension of “*Introduction*” (引子), which actually is a kind of commentary that outlines points out the theme of *The Good Person of Szechwan*:

One of the actors walks out in front of the curtain and apologetically addresses the audience.

Ladies and gentlemen, don't be angry! please!

We know the play is still in need of mending.

.....

There must, there must, be some end that would fit.

Ladies and gentlemen, help us look for it!

(Brecht 106)

There are also some verses directly addressed to the spectators which Brecht noted as being “to the audience”, such as Shen Te’s monologue in Act IV and her poem in the end of Act IV.

Barker thought songs in the theater can stop the play being a “demonstrator of a given thesis” but encourages the spectators to “abandon its moral and intellectual baggage and permit itself the greater freedom of an imaginative tour” on which Brecht has similar comments (80). In the *The Good Person of Szechuan*, there are six songs, which respectively are: *The Song of the Smoke*, *The Song of the Water Seller in the Rain*, *The Song of the Defenselessness of Man*, *The Song of the Saint of Nevernever Day*, *The Song of the Eighth Elephant*, and *The Trio of the Vanishing Gods on the Cloud*.

There are no fixed musical accompaniments to go with the songs, and different productions have used different versions. For example, the Chinese version by Meng Jinghui (arguably the most influential director of China’s avant-garde stage) shown in the National Centre for the Performing Arts in 2014 integrated diversified musical elements such as rock, pop and classical Chinese music in the play. This is quite different from the song in Chinese traditional theatre where “Led by the drummer, plays the standard accompaniment for each type of ‘rhythm’ and are unaffected by the exact details of the melody because the singer has to conform to the tempo and general structure of the particular ‘rhythm’ he has chosen” (Hsu 66).

Even though some of the devices I listed in this section function differently in Chinese theatre than in Brecht’s play because of their different purposes, these similarities in *Good Person of Szechwan* do textually and structurally build the connection between the two cultures.

They will also contribute to the later Chinese design style for this play in its presentation on stage to Chinese audiences.

Brecht's preconceptions of Chinese Traditional theatre

One of Brecht's goals in his theatre is to abolish the illusion of viewing actual life. Chinese theatre inspired his idea for the Alienation Effect, which derives from acting styles in Chinese traditional theatre. However, Chinese traditional theatre actually is based on the illusions mainly created by the actor's action through which Chinese audiences decode the performance. There is always only one table and two chairs on the stage for the whole play while the audience use their imaginations to complete the storytelling. The actor's "performance is constantly on a conscious, artistic level with all emotion transposed" (Pronko 56). That is why Chen comments: "Brecht's 'alienation effect' was a product of nothing more then his 'misunderstanding' of the Chinese stage conventions" (412).

Brecht did make mistakes in using elements of Chinese traditional theatre, but his theory is not a complete misunderstanding or preconception. I might argue that Brecht's Alienation Effect theory, borrowed from Chinese theatre, was based on his in-depth research of Chinese culture. He displaces the core of Chinese traditional theatre and replaces it with his own theory which I think was not the intended result, but the Chinese culture indeed had a deep influence on him. Compared with other theatrical artists in his generation, I think Brecht had in-depth knowledge of China, as Brecht studied Chinese literature, art, political views and even philosophers. He took "examples from the lives and writings of these Chinese sages to illustrate

his own views on a variety of subjects. Sometimes he incorporated whole lines or even paragraphs into his work” (Berg-Pan 287).

It is hard to say if Chinese traditional theatre is only a reference he used to complete his theory. “It extended his emotional and intellectual horizon and supplied him with a vision and with new metaphors which could be used to express familiar as well as dangerous ideas” (Berg-Pan 290). “Alienation Effect” might be one of them.

Chapter Five: Design Concept—Cultural Bridge in Design

My design methodology fills in audiences' absent knowledge caused by cultural difference in order to help them decode Chinese-Western or Western-Chinese theatre. In these two specific plays, I plan to use traditional Chinese methods to design *The Good Person of Szechwan* and Western style to design *The Wild Man*. On one hand, this method obeys the playwrights' original intentions which for Gao is combining Chinese traditional conventions with Hua Ju (based on western realistic style) to develop Modern Chinese theatre while for Brecht it is incorporating Chinese traditional theatrical devices to demonstrate his theory of "Alienation Effect". On the other hand, this aesthetic exchange of cultures provides me more opportunities to build a cultural bridge via design. In this chapter, I will discuss my costume and set designs for these two plays and how my method works.

The Wild Man

The main design concept for the set and properties is to mix realistic and expressionistic aesthetics while leaving enough space for the performance of traditional conventions. In terms of costumes, the design objective is to keep the familiarity to make them recognizable to Chinese audiences but also modified for the Western audience's understanding.

Set Design for The Wild Man

With the demands of multiple locations and its quick transitions, Gao wrote in his design notes that "the setting design does not need to be realistic while the location transition can be done by lighting and sound. Acting is the most important part in the play" (272). Gao mirrors

Chinese traditional theatrical acting and design principles in *The Wild Man*. Further more, the conventions used in the play should be given enough space. In order to meet these requirements, I think multiple-level structure provides several interesting spaces for actors to use, while different areas can represent different locations. I view the forest as an important role in the set. Throughout the whole play, there are several key scenes that happen in the forest. For instance, the murder of the doctor by the two poachers or the conversation between Xiang Mei and the Ecologist. Also, the forest in this play presents a main theme of *The Wild Man*—the contrast and contradiction between humans and the environment.

In my design, the two-level structure splits the space: the upper level mainly shows the indoor spaces while the lower level presents the forest and other outdoor spaces. According to Gao's notes, lighting should carry the responsibility for deciding spaces, especially for the indoor spaces on the upper level. Three staircases attached to the platform are the junctions for actors shuttling back and forth. In order to create the illusion of forest, grid patterns are hollowed out on the wooden textural platform. Organically shaped trees go through the structure both as standing support and serve to indicate the outer environment for the second level (see Fig.1-1 to 1-2). I also list lighting storyboards in the figure section (Fig.1-3 to 1-8). All the large scale properties can easily move around with wheels, such as the deck chair for Su, the big stone Xiang mei hide and the television before the appearance of the Wild Man Investigation Team in Act III. For the properties, I took reference from the furniture and interior decoration style in the specific period of the 'Cultural Revolution' in 1966 when the play is set. Generally, there are very few traditional Chinese elements used in the set and properties, if any. The aesthetic is quite modern which I think both Western and Chinese audiences can easily access.

Costume Design for The Wild Man

For the costumes, I designed all the characters first in black and white sketches, choosing fifteen of them to do the completed color design. There are three categories of characters: characters that come from traditional Chinese theatrical conventions (always with complex structure and signifiers); characters which are Zhuang ethnic minorities; and characters who wear modern costumes.

For the first category, which includes the leader of the Rain Dancers and the Matchmaker, I keep the appearances relatively close to the original appearance for this small group of characters in order to not lose the essence of the play (Fig.2 and Fig.3). For example, In Fig.2, the format and the color of the costumes are based on the Nuo Dance Character called Zhong Kui (钟馗), the ghost hunter, whose goal (like the rain dance) is to drive out the evil causing drought. For the Zhuang ethnic minorities characters, I simplified the color, pattern and structure of costumes while still keeping the presentative elements. For example, all the female characters have kerchiefs and aprons, which is a symbol for Zhuang ethnic minorities. I simplified the colorful striped pattern to a pure blue strip on the kerchief for Sunsi (Fig.4) and I also reduced the pattern on the apron for her. The embroidered shoes are all changed to general black shoes (Fig.4 and Fig.5). The main colors for the actual Zhuang ethnic minorities are blue or black, hence their use in this part of design. However, I adjusted the costume for Young Man to bright yellow and blue to accentuate his young age and balance the color proportion on the stage (Fig.6). For the characters who wear modern costumes, modern colors and textures are sometimes used but most of the designs are still based on the period. For instance, the costume

for Lin (Fig.7), Sun Yu (Fig.8) and Ecologist (Fig.9) are all somewhat general while the Professor, Flood Prevention Officer and Hydrologists are designed expressionistically with high contrast color and transparent materials. For example, in the design for the professor, I used a red scarf and white gown coat to express his identity as a scholar and his later sacrifice for animals (Fig. 10), and a bright yellow raincoat for the Flood Prevention Officer to illustrate the sense of caution (Fig.11).

The Good Person of Szechwan

My design objective is to apply Chinese traditional theatrical style for both the set and costumes. Compared with costume design, the set design is more aesthetically modern.

Because “the conventionality of the Chinese stage is a mixture of arbitrary rules and trained imagination”, too many unfamiliar rules and information might lose the Western audiences’ comprehension, or even Chinese audiences who are not very familiar with traditional Chinese theatre (Hsu 42). Some Chinese methods for representation might still be understood by Western audiences. For example, for an actor to represent riding a horse, he would hold the whip vertically and point upwards, to mime leading the horse to ride, might be easily understood. However, there are still some actions that cannot easily be understood or decoded because of differences in cultural background. For example, if actors (after entering) stand on chairs and then come down again, it is understood that they are riding the clouds as if they are supernatural beings, or going over a hill if they are mortals. Or if an actor is led away by a stagehand holding the “water flag” or “wind flag”, it means there is a stone or flood. Even the small table on the Chinese stage stands for different types of furniture according to the type of room it is in, as

indicated by the arrangement of the stage. A simple black curtain may be the only background. That, to an extent, explains the simplicity of set design in Chinese traditional theatre. The actors' performances, especially their gestures, satisfy many of the needs for dramatic representation.

Set Design for *The Good Person of Szechwan*

Therefore, for the set design of *The Good Person of Szechwan*, I abandon the traditional symbolic "one table, two chairs" in Chinese traditional theatre sets. I cannot push such a large amount of information to be imagined by my audience to satisfy the dramatic presentation of the play. Instead of being trapped by these traditional principles, I decided to extend the usage of screen, which is also a common element in traditional Chinese theatre. I still obey the essential elements of anti-realistic and imaginative theatre, because audiences are not given realistic figures on the screen but abstracted drawings or Chinese characters. Imagination still needs to be used by audiences, but not in a way that will leave the audience dumbfounded by strict the rules of the Chinese conventions.

As the main body of the set, there are six 7'x15' screens and one 8'x15' flexible screen, two of which are on wheels, the rest in the fly gallery. All the abstract figures are projected onto the screens. The use of projections instead of scenic painting simplifies the practicality of the set, while the application of technology in traditional Chinese theatre can interest Chinese audiences. The usage of projections will also be relatively familiar with Western audiences, so that connections can be made. Through different assemblages of the screens I can flexibly create different two-dimensional backgrounds and three-dimension spaces. For instance, in Scene One (Fig.12) and Scene Five (Fig.13), the screens will be used to show the projected image of shelves

of goods, behind a counter. Similarly, in the Interlude after Scene Two, it will show the corner where the water seller Wang sleeps under the bridge (Fig.14) and the old willow tree in the City park in Scene three (Fig.15). The screens' three-dimensional function appears in Scene Three, as the square in front of Shen Te's tobacco store. I use six screens to create the area of a town square and project pictures of the carpet store, barber's shop and Shen Te's tobacco store on them (Fig 16). A similar design is also used in Scene Six in the yard behind Shen Te's tobacco shop (Fig.17) and Scene eight in the tobacco factory (Fig.18). The screens are used to provide multiple entrances and exits.

In Chinese theatre, "the audience does not demand realistic properties because the style of the symbolic acting makes them incongruous with other elements of the Chinese drama," while the "properties which add to the color of the pageantry are beautifully made" (Hsu 42). With these principles, I reduce the amount of furniture used but still keep the design realistic as a consideration of Western audience's understanding.

Costume Design for The Good Person of Szechwan

The "uniformly rich and beautiful" (Hsu 45) costume in Chinese traditional theatre not only alleviates the plainness of its set but "at one glance the audience can recognize the social status and the temperament of the character" which makes it easier for the audience to understand the action (45). As I discussed previously, the keynote for my costume design in *Good Person of Szechwan* is much more Chinese traditional style than the set design is, which Chinese audiences can notice in the details, while Western audiences will still view it as very traditional Chinese style.

In the process of my design, I kept the principle of using pattern, color and structure to distinguish characters' social status, age, gender, and even health condition. In traditional Chinese theatre, "the standard costume is a self-contained system of garments, head-gear, foot wear and other personal ornaments" (Qi 40). For the design of foot wear, I defer to the original structure for each character but get rid of the pattern and reduce the numbers of colors. On the aspect of head-gear, I generally reduced the decoration and color but kept the basic structure such as the hat of Mr. Shu Fu (Fig .20) and Shui Ta's kerchief (which in Chinese theatrical costumes is always worn underneath head gear to keep it stable, to show his virility).

Basally, there are five kinds of costumes most commonly used in Chinese theatre:

Mang(蟒): a kind of ceremonial robes for Emperors, king, generals and high-ranking officials for the official occasions; *P'ei* (帔): a semi-formal gown worn by upper class men and woman in daily life; *Tieh-tze* (褶子): a kind of casual coat for lower class people like scholar and ordinary people"(Tan 7); *K'ao*(靠): armour worn by military officials, general, or female general in combat occasion; *Yi* (衣): all the other costume not belong to the previous four which also includes some specially formatted costumes.

In consideration of the fact that almost all of the characters in *The Good Person of Szechwan* are from a lower social status, I only used *P'ei*, *Tieh-tze* and *Yi* as main costume formats. In Chinese theatrical costume, the pattern of 8 vector circles always appear in *Mang*, which represents people with high class and power. I borrowed this concept in my design. The pattern of 8 vector circles is used on two characters whom I think have a big influence on plot:

Shui Ta (Fig.19) who presents the powerful evil person and Mrs. Yang (Fig.20) who is elderly and manipulates her son to defraud Shen Tai's property. I also used the pattern on the wedding clothes of Shen Tai (Fig.21) and Sun Yang (Fig.22). It obeys the rules of *Mang* used in official or ceremonial occasions. In terms of pattern, in Chinese theatrical costume, flowers (Fig30-A), dragons (Fig30-B), clouds or water (Fig.30-C) and Chinese characters (Fig.30-D) are used to fill the circle while in my design I simplify them to plain color circles (Fig.19,21,22) or patches (Fig. 20). The usage of a patch in Chinese theatrical costumes illustrate that the characters are poor and low-class. For example, in the design of Mrs. Yang, I used the pattern for high class but filled it with signifiers for the poor and lower class to demonstrate her poverty but powerful statue in the play. I used patch patterns in all character who are poor, such as Shen Tai's causal dress (Fig. 23), the unemployed (Fig. 24), and the nephew couple (Fig. 25, 26). In the design of Sun Yang's two costumes (Fig. 22, 27), both of the upper part of their bodies are tied with rope. It is a typical feature for traditional Chinese theatrical characters who have a martial role, which I used to present Sun's aggressiveness to Shen Tai in the first half of play. The head-gear is also for a young martial role, but the format of costume is for a scholar which is also suitable for Sun's occupation as a pilot. In the design of the Sister-in-law (Fig. 26), I used a special costume and hair style which is usually representative of psychosis to show her glamour, and I used the circle vector pattern on her belly to represent her pregnancy. For the Gods, the design is more complex. As the role of the gods in the play is neutral, I used both a black veil (which typically illustrates dead people or ghosts in Chinese theatrical costume) to show their evil side and long ribbon attached to the head-gear (which means the character is a god) are to show their goodness. Specifically, for the second god (Fig. 28), I used the format and color customary to the form of

Guanine (a female god), while for the first God (Fig. 29), the design comes from a demon character. All these detail is to show the God's neutrality.

In terms of color, in order to create an effect of wash painting (as both set and floor are plain color), I used gradients for each character. I more or less followed the usual rules of using color in Traditional Chinese theatrical costume:

“ In the theatrical practice, which follows roughly the social conventions, there are five basic colors: red for formal and happy occasions, green for virtuous people, yellow for royalty, black for servants foot soldiers and white for young people. For informal dress, in order to vary the color-scheme of a large assembly of character on the stage, five other colors are used: purple, pink, blue, light green and scarlet” (Hsu 46).

For instance, both of the wedding clothes are red and yellow because the wedding is ceremonious event in the play. The first God is yellow, which illustrates his power and special status. The policeman is a civil servant who should have an official look, while green and pink are always used for young people such as Sun Yang and Shen Tai.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

My research into Intercultural Theatre, has revealed that the reason for audiences' misunderstanding or incomprehension is because they lack the necessary cultural knowledge for understanding the signifiers and coding of a piece of theatre. Based on Patrice Pavis's theory about Intercultural theatre, I believe that the stage design is one key for decoding it. With the knowledge of the history of Western-Chinese theatre and Chinese-Western theatre, I can see the difficulties of these two cultures' fusion and how they borrow each others' techniques and styles to develop themselves, which resulted in this thesis project. As a designer with the privilege of having an intercultural background, I hope the methodology I used for designing these two plays can be helpful for those who have the difficulties designing Intercultural Theatre. With ever-intertwining cultures in the modern world, having such abilities as a designer will be a blessing as this skill will inevitably become necessary.

Figures-The Wild Man



Figure1-1: Uncompleted set structure with furniture.



Figure 1-2: Complete set structure, with furniture.

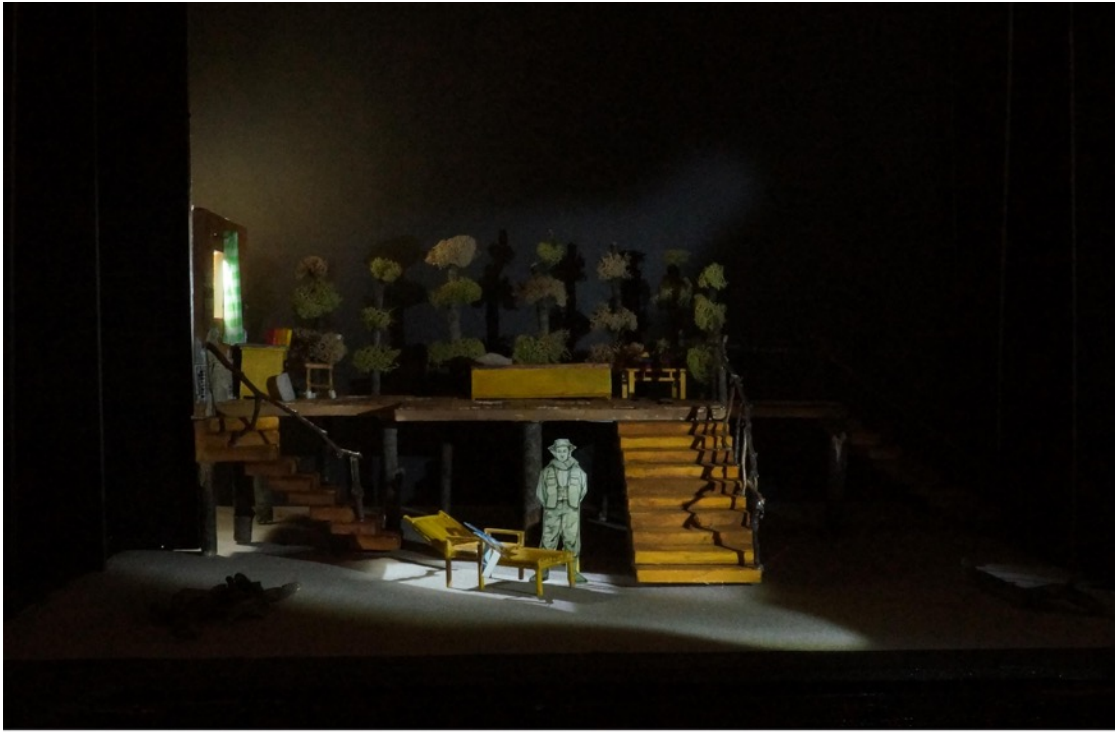


Figure 1-3: Act I, in the Ecologist's home in the city.



Figure 1-5: Act I, as all the city residents are escaping the flood.



Figure 1-5: Act I, the clearing in the village.



Figure 1-6: Act II, in Sun yu's room..



Figure 1-7: Act II, the professor is killed by poachers.



Figure 1-8: Act II, Xiang Mei and the Ecologist talking in forest.

Figure 2: The Leader of Rain Dancers



Figure 3: The Matchmaker

Figure 4: Sunsi



Figure 5: Old Li

Figure 6: Young Man



Figure 7: Lin



Figure 8: Sun Yu



Figure 9: Ecologist

Figure 10: The Professor



Figure 11: The Flood Prevention Officer

Figures-The Good Person of Szechwan



Figure.12: Scene One, In the small tobacco shop.



Figure.13: Scene Four, the square in the front of tobacco shop.



Figure.14: The Interlude shows the sleeping corner for water seller Wang.



Figure.15: Scene Three, in the City Park.

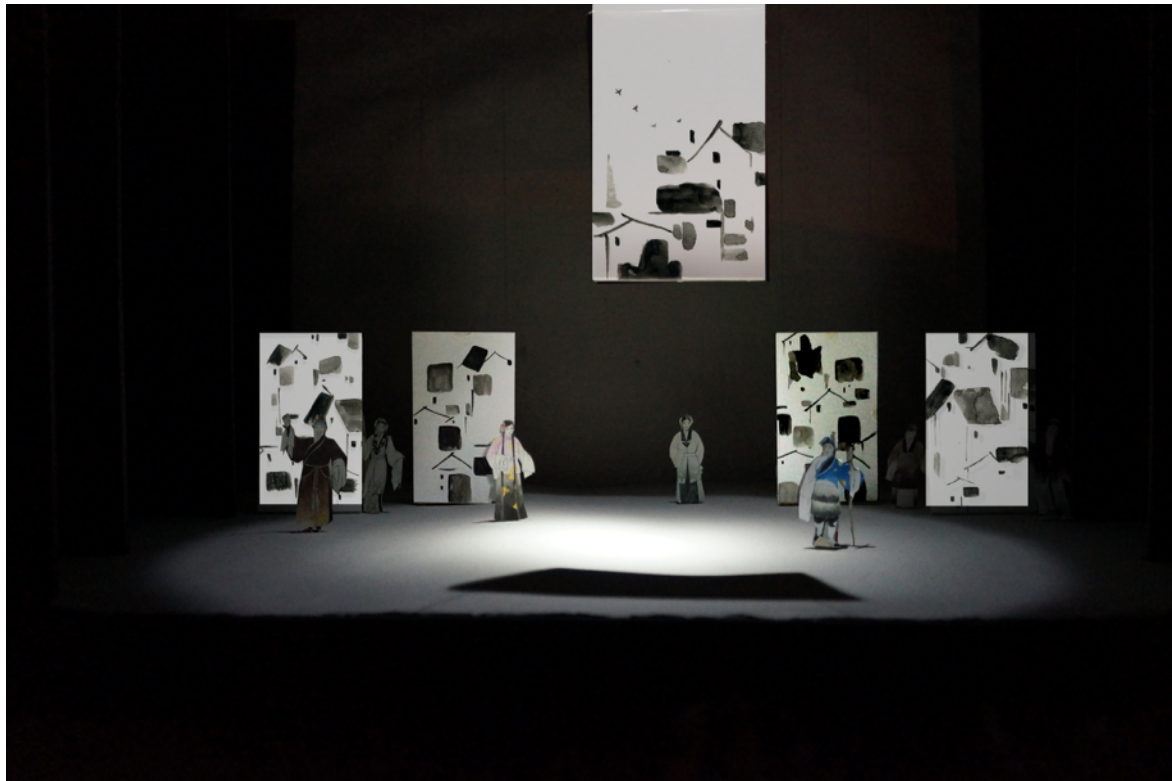


Figure.16: The Town Square.



Figure.17: Scene Six: Yard behind the tobacco shop.



Figure.18: Scene Eight, in the tobacco factory.



Figure.18-A, Scene Two, in the small tobacco shop.



Figure 19: Shui Ta

Figure 20: Mrs. Yang





Figure 21: The wedding dress of Shen Tai



Figure 22: The wedding dress of Sun Yang



Figure 23: Shen Tai's casual dress



Figure 24: The unemployed



Figure 25: The nephew

Figure 26: The nephew





Figure 27: Sun Yang's casual costume

Figure 28: The second God





Figure 29: The first God

Figure 30-A



Flowers

Figure 30-B



Dragons

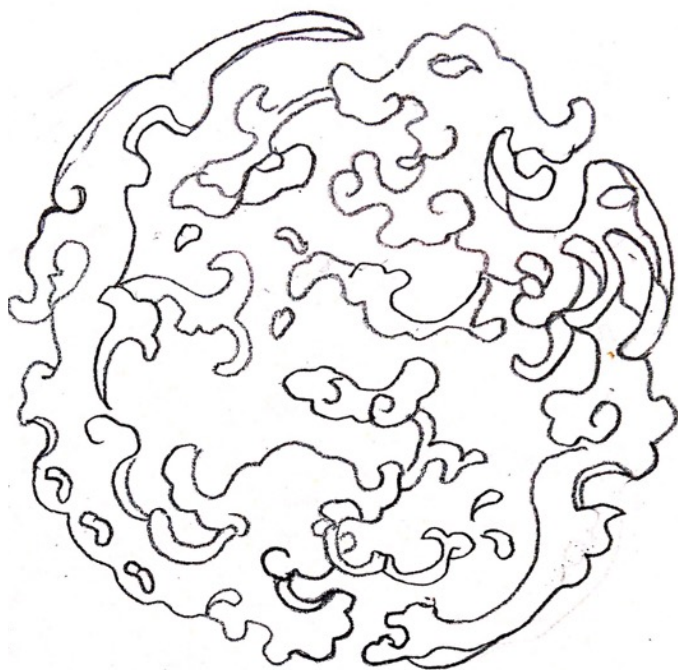


Figure 30-C



Figure 30-D

Character

Notes

1. Mise-en-scene, or 'placing on stage', is an expression used to describe the design aspects of a theatre or film production. It can refer to the choices of visual themes or storytelling methods such as storyboarding, cinematography and stage design.

2. Wu Hsing-kuo is the leading actor and director of Legend Theater. He is a Taiwanese actor, known for his innovative adaptations of Western classics into traditional Peking Opera format. He adapted such as *Macbeth*, *Waiting for Godot* and *King Lear*.

3. The Meiji Restoration (also known as the Meiji Ishin, Renovation, Revolution, Reform, or Renewal), was a chain of events that restored practical imperial rule to Japan from 1868 to 1912, under Emperor Meiji.

4. Vsevolod Meyerhold was a Russian and Soviet theatre director, dramatist, actor and theatrical producer.

7. China Reconstructs is a magazine founded in 1952 by Soong Ching-ling with the help of the naturalized Chinese citizen Israel Epstein. Originally it appeared bi-monthly (6 issues/year), and later became a monthly publication. In 1990 it changed its name to *China Today*.

8. "Culture Re-education" is the Maoist theory of reforming counter-revolutionaries into socialist citizens by re-education through labor during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

9. The Tiananmen Square protests of spring 1989, commonly known as the *June Fourth Incident* (六四事件), or *89 Democracy Movement* (八九民运) in China. It was a demonstration

led by students in Beijing received broad support from city residents. The violent police crackdown on June 3–4 is known as the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

10. The Kleist Prize was intended for unestablished writers and was seen as Germany's most significant literary award. It was abolished in 1932.

11. Tujia is the 8th largest ethnic minority in China. They live in the Wuling (武陵) Mountains, straddling the common borders of Hunan, Hubei and Guizhou provinces, and the Chongqing municipality.

12. Nuo dance was part of the ancient Chinese sacrificial rites which originated from the worship to totem in primitive society. It later evolved into a form of folk dance for entertainment. Nuo Dance, a combination of ancient dance and wood-carving art, is also called ghost dance. One of its most salient features is the wood-carving mask worn by the dancer, in reflection of the fact that ancient people wanted to look ferocious to scare away the imaginary monsters and demons. The Nuo mask is usually made of willow or cottonwood. It was believed that mask had a magic power only held by the saints or deities and therefore was a symbol of exorcising the evil with super-natural power.

13. Christopher Marlowe was an English playwright, poet and translator of the Elizabethan theatre.

14. Guanyin is an East Asian deity of mercy, and a bodhisattva associated with compassion as venerated by Mahayana Buddhists.

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