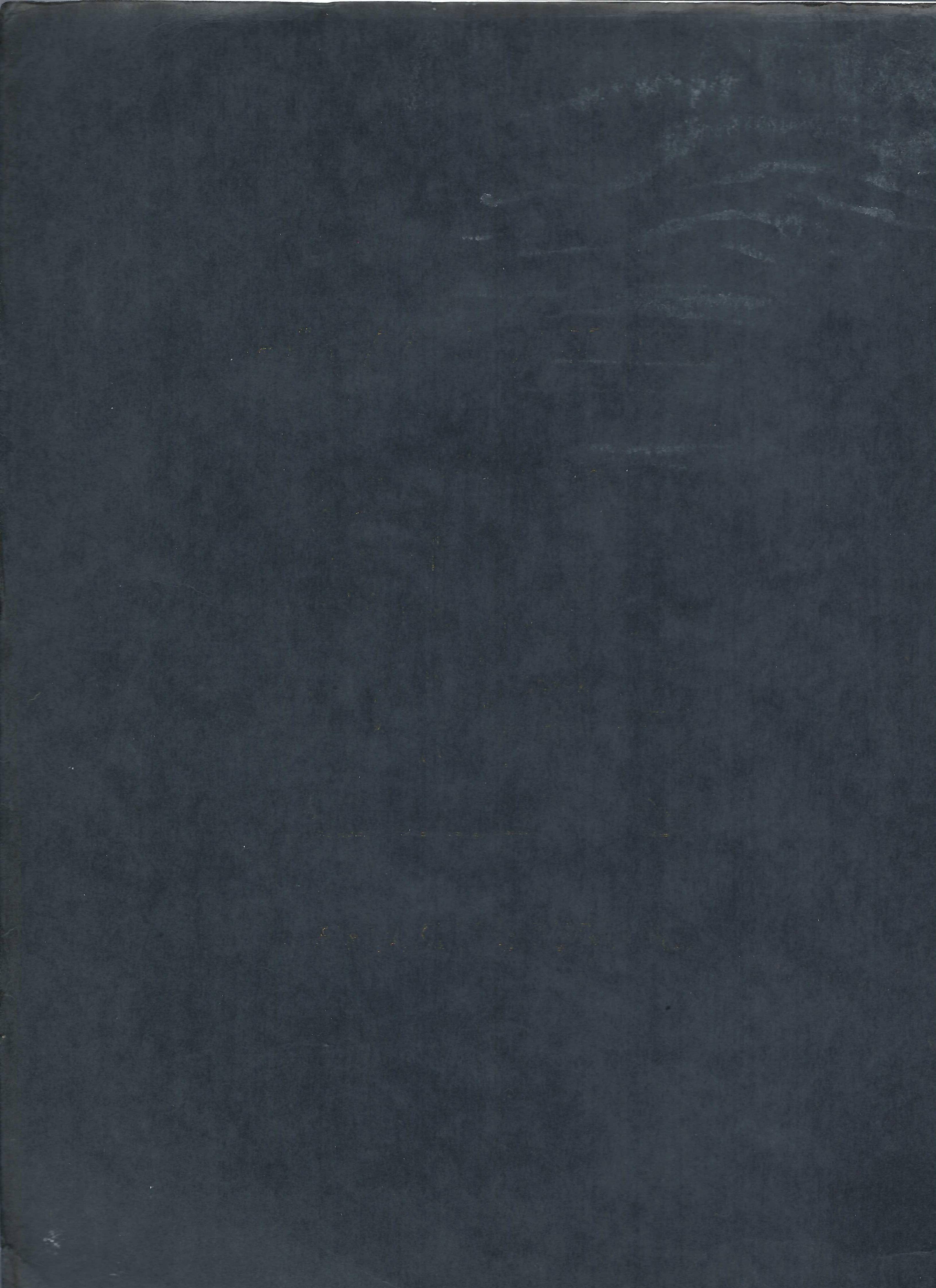
MEI LAN-FANG

CHINESE DRAMA



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MEI LAN-FANG AND THE CHINESE DRAMA

By HU SHIH

(Father of the Chinese Renaissance)

THE Chinese drama is historically an arrested growth. It is not yet freed from its historical association with music, singing, dancing and acrobatic games. It has not yet succeeded in becoming a drama of natural speaking and spontaneous acting. All this cannot and need not be denied.

But this very fact of being an historically arrested growth should make the Chinese drama all the more interesting to the student of the history of the drama. For nowhere in this modern world are to be seen such vivid presentations of the irrevocably lost steps in the slow evolution of the dramatic art as are seen on the Chinese stage today. There one sees every historical survival preserved and carried out with artistic perfection. The mask is seen in the gorgeously painted face; the dance in the conventionalized rhythmic movements; the acrobatic games in the battles fought on the stage; the soliloquy almost in every play; and the symbolic scenery of the Elizabethan and pre-Elizabethan stage is most skillfully handled by the property men.

It is needless to say that historical primitiveness is *not* incompatible with artistic beauty. Very often it is artistic beauty which perpetuates a primitive convention and stunts its further growth; more often it is primitive conditions of theatrical development and equipment which encourage the imagination and compel the perfection of the art. Both of these two phases are clearly evidenced in the Chinese drama.

Mr. Mei Lan-fang is an artist with a most thorough training in the old dramatic arts of China. In many of his plays, the student of the drama will see the history of the Chinese drama during the last three or four centuries presented with an artistry which often disarms even the most severe critic with unorthodox views. His *k'un-ch'ing* plays (that is, those in which the singing parts are sung to the tunes of the flute) represent the theatre of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries; and his *pi-huang* plays sung to the violin-like *Hu-ch'in* represent the popular theatre of the last century. The former type of Chinese drama had, by the 17th century, come to be written by the literary men of the age and, while representing a richer content and more refined ideas, was no longer intelligible to the masses. Hence the rise of the more popular *pi-huang* plays. But some of the earlier plays which Mei Lan-fang presents, are of great historical interest. *The Nun Seeking Love*, for example, is a soliloquy throughout and reads like one of Robert Browning's dramatic poems portraying the psychology of a Medieval artist in a cell of his monastery. *The Intoxicated Yang Kuei-fei*, another play of this period, is not much more than a series of difficult but exquisite dances. In these and other plays, one sees not only an artistic presentation of some of the unique techniques of the old theatre, but also the reasons for the gradual disappearance of the older and aristocratic drama and its replacement by the more popular *pi-huang* plays. Mere poetry and beauty could not appeal to the popular theatre-goer.

The *pi-huang* plays came from the people; but in recent years friends of Mr. Mei Lan-fang have indulged in writing plays with him in the principal role. Thus *The Meeting of Heroes* is taken from the popular stage, but *Mu-lan* and *Beauty's Smile* are recent productions.

These friendly playwrights are largely men of the old culture and free from the influence of the Western drama. Consequently the newer plays of Mr. Mei Lan-fang's are reservoirs into which many of the older dramatic techniques and motifs are adapted and preserved. It is in this sense that some of his new plays are interesting to the student of dramatic development.

Mr. Mei Lan-fang is a conscientious student and has always shown a strong desire to learn. With the assistance of his scholarly friends, he has built up a library and museum of the Chinese drama. The necessary limitations imposed by a long trip have required him to reduce his equipment and in some cases to modify his plays. But the modifications have been made with his rich knowledge of his art. And the numerous charts and other illustrative materials which he and his friends have prepared for this tour, will surely be of tremendous value to the students of the historical development of the dramatic art in the world.

MEI LAN-FANG

THE supreme favorite of the Chinese stage owes a part of his greatness to heredity. Idols of of the Court were Mei Lan-fang's ancestors. His grandfather, Mei Ch'iao-ling, was a renowned impersonator of female roles during the Hsien-feng period (1851-61); he was also the head of the Ssu-hsi Training School for Actors, the leading institution of its day. Mr. Mei's dramatic technique is largely the result of the training he received from his paternal uncle, Yu-ti'en, one of the most famous musicians of China, and considered the greatest master of the *hu-ch'in*, a stringed instrument commonly used for the accompaniment of Chinese vocal artists.

At the age of seven young Lan-fang had mastered music and song; in 1905, when he was only twelve years old, he made his professional debut as a *tan*, or impersonator of female roles. Since then his fame has spread over the entire Orient, and he has become the idol of the more than five hundred millions of people who inhabit China and Japan. He is the only actor in present-day China whose appearance on any stage in any part of the country at any season of the year is hailed invariably by a capacity audience.

He occupies the highest position in Chinese drama today not only by unanimous acclamation of the people, but also by acknowledgment of his colleagues of the stage. Peiping (Peking) is the theatrical capital of China; the foremost actors of the country exhibit their art before the nation's most critical audiences there, and Mei Lan-fang is the president of the Actor's Association.

In 1923 Mr. Mei was summoned by Hsuan-tung, the ex-Emperor, to appear in the Yang Hsin Palace of the Forbidden City. There the latter presented the artist with rare imperial porcelains and at the same time made him head of the Ching-Chung Monastery. Under Manchu rule, to be the head of that institution was the highest honor to which one in the profession could attain. Mr. Mei was also permitted to retain the title, "Foremost of the Pear Orchard," which designation implies that he is the first actor of the land; for during the T'ang Dynasty, under Emperor Ming Huang, when art flourished in all its ramifications, the Imperial Troupe called themselves "Disciples of the Pear Orchard" because they performed in a palace surrounded by pear trees.

In China, as in America, a person of great popularity is the recipient of the many forms of compliment which an admiring people delight to bestow upon him. While the practice of purchased endorsements of popular personages by manufacturers is not yet a feature of sales promotion in China, the same results commercially are freely attained by the makers of all sorts of things who distinguish the best brand of their merchandise with the name of Mei Lan-fang.

In private life, Mr. Mei is noted as a painter of considerable ability. At the Japanese Art Exhibition, a special section was devoted to his pictures. His painting of the Buddhist deity, P'u-hsien, has evoked much admiration from both oriental and western artists. Aside from his natural interest in European as well as Chinese drama he is fond of the study of gardening, biology, entomology, and even of electricity and machinery.

Mei Lan-fang's collection of ancient manuscripts and old treatises on music and the dance is probably the most extensive in China. His intimate acquaintance with these may partly account for the success with which he has introduced innovations into Chinese music and classical dancing. His reputation for creative art extends also to play-writing. Mr. Mei is the author or co-author of some fifteen percent of the more than four hundred plays constituting his repertoire.

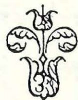
The fact that Mr. Mei is gentle in disposition and yet athletically inclined seems paradoxical to his countrymen. The actor's proverbial gentleness, as the Chinese language so picturesquely puts it, "touches the extreme limits," yet he excels in the strenuous and difficult art of Chinese boxing. This quality may hold the secret of his social popularity, for Mei Lan-fang is not only one of the leaders in Chinese social life; he has been the host to or the guest of nearly every important foreigner who has visited or resided in Peking during the past decade or more.

The principal purpose of Mei Lan-fang's visit to America is to exhibit the art of China's stage. Whatever the basic differences in the histrionic technique of two different cultures, he brings the best of that which has evolved in the millennia of China's drama. That the fundamental differences in the method of approach will not preclude the American people from appreciating in a substantial manner the art which Mei Lan-fang portrays may be inferred from the host of Europeans and Ameri-

cans who have witnessed and enjoyed his performances in China. The Occiden[illegible] admirers of his art include the widely ass[illegible]ople who make up groups of world tourists, and extend to such competent observers as Fritz Kreisler, Somerset Maughm, the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, and many others with like discriminating taste.

Possibly the shortest, most comprehensive and sympathetic as well as the boldest and most prophetic estimate of Mei Lan-fang's art and the Chinese drama in general was made by a certain European gentleman who wrote:

"Although I had lived in China for over twenty years I had never entered a Chinese theatre; but it was after hearing of the fair fame of Mei Lang-fang that I went expressly to see his performance. In this, my first experience, I could see that Mr. Mei's beauty was really extraordinary, that his actions possessed a rare charm, although the drama itself: the music, singing, settings, costuming, and conventions, I could not fully comprehend. After attending other performances, I gradually fathomed the meaning of that mass of intricate convention, which is peculiar to the Chinese drama. It was well worthy of serious study. At the time, I became fascinated with the art. Since I became a habitue of the theatre, I have learned that in the old Chinese drama every movement, from the waving of the hand to the flashing of the eye, was executed according to fixed and irrevocable convention, while the same movement is done to a well defined rhythm and *tempo*, the whole producing a most graceful and charming effect. The variety in melody and in the types of music possesses qualities equal to those in European and American music. I therefore acquired the habit of attending the theatres in Peking. As for Mr. Mei's acting and singing, he left not the slightest thing to be desired; furthermore, the actor is able to set forth the best in Chinese drama. I venture to predict that some day Chinese drama will take the world by storm."



WHAT THE CHINESE SEE IN MEI LAN-FANG

It is needless to stress the point that Mei Lan-fang's art is at least exotic. Much of his acting is necessarily done in conformity with the fixed conventions of the Chinese stage with which it is assumed most Americans are not acquainted. An adequate appreciation of his talent is therefore impossible unless the observer is familiarized with some of the standards by which histrionic ability is measured by the Chinese. It may be interesting to summarize briefly some of the characteristics by which Mei Lan-fang is distinguished in the eyes of the most competent dramatic critics in his native country.

The following is a summarized translation of appraisals and commendations written by nine of China's outstanding authorities on dramatic technique. The translation is by Mr. George Kin Leung, a prolific writer on and interpreter of Chinese drama. The original essays, as Mr. Leung properly and perspicaciously explains, are composed by critics who are necessarily scholars, and since the substance expresses praise rather than criticism, the text naturally abounds in "poetical effusions" and classical allusions. By the following explanation, the translator kindly spares his readers from the task of acquiring a knowledge of the Chinese classics before they might appreciate a description of Mei Lan-fang's talent.—EDITOR.

HILE in every reasonable case, I have tried to preserve the flavor and letter of the various articles here compiled by the nine writers of the original Chinese, in this article, I must, for the sake of the American novitiate, draw the line and leave out much of the original Chinese. The eight line poetical effusions, introducing each section would require a full page of explanation in order to establish a connection, sometimes too slight, with the main essay. Here I take the liberty to make it clear that where the Anglo-Saxon critic, at least, has said: "I cannot find further words to express myself," a Chinese critic, especially a friendly one, HAS ONLY BEGUN, for he can draw upon a veritable universe of poetical allusion, often direct and more often indirect, and rhapsodize on and on using similies, metaphors, etc. in order to win his hard-fought-for point!

One example and one of the most understandable will be used to prove my point. Under the discussion of Mei's waist, there are eight Chinese characters, which, roughly rendered, read as follows: "The pines tower against the horizon; on the jade waters float the duckweed." An Occidental reader may ask what have a pine tree and duckweed to do with a beautiful waist? A Chinese scholar would explain that Mei's waist is straight and strong like a pine, but supple as the soft motion of duckweed afloat on calm green waters. The comparison, however, must not be taken too literally, because the point involved is an artistic, a delicate, and almost spiritual likeness. Imagine the effusion of ideas in such a phrase as "Through the severed clouds, come the moon; the startled Heavens weep rain," which is meant to be descriptive of Mei's attitudes. While these lines, with explanations, are intelligible to the Western mind, what of those poetical lines that are more than half composed of the names of precious stones?

THE EYES

The merits of Mei's eyes lie in their expressions of joy, anger, and sorrow; even before these emotions have been revealed, his eyes mirror those feelings beforehand. When there is no special emotion to express. he manages his eyes so that they perfectly express the situation. Examples are the eyes of anger in "The Lion's Roar;" the wistful, pensive eyes in "Tai-yu Burying the Blossoms." The expression of fear shown in his eyes is entirely different in the two plays, "The Story of the Guitar," and "Three Strange Meetings," because in the first play the fear grows to terror; but fear turns to sorrow in the second play. In the drama, "The Romance of the Heavenly River (Milky Way)," the main attraction of the weaving room scene is the play of eyes.

THE FACE

Mei's quiet facial expressions and his intelligent use of the same may be compared with the adaptability of running water, which, placed in a square receptacle is square; when put in a basin, round.

When Mei acts a scene of meditation, his facial expression is masterly. Is there any other Chinese actor who can attain the perfection of this great artist's facial expression?

MEI'S SMILE

There is a coy smile, the sudden smile, a forced laugh, and an unpremeditated laugh, as in "Rainbow Pass." In some of the newer plays, there are smiles that show the actor in a charmingly innocent mood.

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

To express joy is easy, but to mirror deep tragedy is extremely difficult. The anger shown in the first part of "The Wild Goose Gate Barrier," the fear expressed in the eyes in the second part, and the third part, namely, the scene of entering the palace hall, where embarrassment beyond endurance, anger, trembling of the heart, make the body quiver—all this, then is excellent acting, true realism. Also there is the joy of a wife meeting her husband after eighteen years of separation in "The Tragedy of Fen-ho Cove."

THE HEAD

A head, stiff in movement, is like a wooden puppet. When an actor is on the stage, he must keep his head in constant but barely perceptible motion before, that part of the body is, according to stage conventions, considered properly animated. Others who imitate Mei's head movements quiver as clumsily as the metal rings on a leather drum!

THE NECK

A head that does not move with ease speaks of a very poorly trained and stiff neck. Mei is famous for the graceful manner in which he moves his neck.

THE SHOULDERS

Although the shoulders are a mark of true beauty, still, when Mr. Mei portrayed the role of the warrior heroine in "Mulan in the Army," his shoulders did not slope at all in feminine grace, but were raised high in virile strength.

MEI'S FAMOUS HANDS

Fair they are, but their main charm lies not in their fairness alone, but in their exquisite softness. His fingers taper to dainty points, while his exquisite wrists are the joy of all connoisseurs. His bones are not large; his veins are not prominent. Who, then, besides Mei, has such a divine hand?

THE WAIST

The public in China knows how wonderfully Mr. Mei uses his waist in the contortionistic episode of the much loved short operatic drama, "Kuei-fei Intoxicated with Wine," as well as the marvelous slipping in the imaginary mud in "The Pavilion of the Royal Monument," the graceful stooping to pass through the hovel door in "The Tragedy of Fen-ho Cove," and the leaving of the gaol in "Three Strange Meetings."

Mr. Tse-ch'ing once said: "Everyone knows of the beauty of Mei's stage gait, but who knows that much of his grace lies in the use of his waist? Sheer beauty lies in his waist, which stands strong and erect like a pavilion on a mountainside. He is like a sail, fluttering in the brisk breeze, his feet moving in dainty animation. All of this would be impossible without a perfectly controlled waist. This particular accomplishment was heaven-sent, a gift not to be learned, but which was improved by assiduous practice.

STAGE WALK

The exquisite beauty of the actor's stage walk has been praised elsewhere. In the drama, "The Betrothal at the Bright Tower," he sings as he walks, never increasing or decreasing the length of his footsteps by a fraction of an inch, while in other plays, such as "Picking the Mulberry" and "Washing the Thread," his manner of walking is the very essence of animation.

VOCAL ART

The *er-huang* style is alluring, while the *hsi-pi* is grave and majestic. From these older models, Mei has created new musical scores. The *hsi-pi* must be handled with the utmost care, while the actual singing demands both masterful enunciation and pronounced melody. In the most intricate songs, the actor enunciates, literally "bites," every word with perfect clarity. It suffices to say that Mr. Mei is a past master of all the dramatic styles of Chinese vocal technique.

THE USE OF THE SLEEVE

Here, at least, the eight character line is quite obviously appropriate: "Fluttering like a frightened swan, swift like a sportive butterfly." The turning or folding of the sleeve about the wrist this actor has reduced to a fine art. He may drop it speedily like a sail or make it leap like an arrow lightly and animatedly from its bow. Other actors complain of the excessive length of the attached inner sleeve, while Mei sometimes thinks his is too short.

THE CHINESE THEATRE

A Brief Consideration

By GEORGE KIN LEUNG

THE Occidental waves his hand towards himself in order to signal a friend to come; in China to do the same one waves the hand outwards just as the westerner waves farewell. The result, while the method is totally different, is the same. This appears to be true of the two theatres; their technique may be diametric but their object to please the audience is one and the same.

The bareness of the Chinese stage, relieved by an embroidered curtain and a few tables and chairs, makes severe demands on the attainments of the actor. When a character in the role of a general comes to a sudden pause at the front of the stage, the white silk pompoms of his hat aquiver, his embroidered coat sweeping down between his carefully poised legs and his fingers clasped tightly about a white-shafted spear, the bareness of the stage would emphasize and exaggerate any lack of grace or muscular control.

It follows that an artist of first degree by means of pantomime, singing and recitation can convert a bare stage into a moonlit garden, the entrance to a temple, a field of battle, or whatever place the text of the play requires. The art of the actor must be supreme and the audience not infrequently goes to see and to hear him rather than the drama.

Actors, according to their physical and vocal gifts, strive to perfect themselves in one special, conventionalized stage type, among which may be mentioned the operatic heroine, the old woman, the operatic hero, the warrior, the comedian, etc. The best artists of each type are assured of regular employment and sometimes national fame and wealth.

With the rarest exception, nothing contributes to realistic effect. On the contrary, everything tends to remove the spectator from the drab of life, no opportunity being lost to delight the ear and eye. Voice, gesture, costume are subservient to beauty and convention. The wrapping of a long sleeve about the wrist may heighten the tensity of a song, which itself is one degree higher in emotional expression than rhythmic recitation.

Here one finds a marvelous blending of the arts of the playhouse: singing, recitation, pantomime, dancing combining to form a harmonious whole. Music punctuates speech, accentuates posture and sets the pace for battle.

The imagination is given full rein on the unlocalized stage where the characters unbolt and push open imaginary doors and are separated by unseen walls. To the Chinese audience, a whip to represent a horse or a mere word to suggest an orchard, is just as real as an elaborate setting is to a New York audience.

If sex has been a matter for lively discussion in the west, it has also made a deep impression on the Chinese theatre. On the stage itself, men impersonate women, as is done in Java and Japan. The emperor Ch'ien Lung (1736-1795) banished women from the professional stage; and although they have gradually returned since the Republic (1911), they have, with rare exception, proved no match for men in the highly stylized acting and singing of feminine roles. Women in order to hold the public are obliged to imitate the leading male exponents of feminine art who, in the beginning, devised the falsetto and conventional manner to imitate real women!

The fact that old China observed the strictest propriety between the sexes has affected the seating of an audience to the present day. In Peking, of two old-style theatres, one does not admit women, while the other allows a limited number in specially designated boxes of the balcony, which is reached by a private passage. Some modern-style playhouses allow women in the boxes and in a special section downstairs, while the Kaiming alone, the most up-to-date theatre at the present writing, permits both sexes to sit anywhere in the audience.

The casual visitor will be surprised to discover that many plays which have been presented for centuries may still be seen week in and week out, and more surprising is the fact that people never seem to tire of them. This is mainly because the audience enjoys listening to a favourite singer or watching a skilled military star in action. *Hao*, "good," in a variety of inflections, greets a phrase well sung or a gymnastic turn cleverly done. New dramas, written in the old conventional style, when produced, are accompanied by programs containing the story and the words of the important songs.

Music plays an exceedingly important part as is proved by the phrases: an actor sings a

play and one goes to hear a drama. A character speaks until his emotions become raised to a certain pitch when he proceeds to express himself in song, a practice believed to have been true in ancient Greek drama.

The present musical drama vogue is the *p'i-huang*, which is characterized by brass percussion instruments and the *hu-ch'in*, a two-stringed violin, bowed with a horizontal motion.

The *k'un-ch'*ü, a quiet style, in which the notes of the flute and reed organ dominate, flourished during the Yuan (1280-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties. Because its subtle appeal was limited to the educated class, it was displaced by the more spectacular and more easily understood *p'i-huang*, which quickly became the favourite of the late Ch'ing rulers and the masses. However, there is a movement on foot to revive the *k'un-ch'*ü,

The *pang-tzu*, in which style a resounding rhythm is maintained by the beating of a wooden block, is the least refined of the three. While it was liked a few years ago, it also had been eclipsed by the all-prevailing *p'i-huang*, which now includes elements from the other two styles.

In China there is no indigenous popular drama without musical accompaniment although an effort is now being made by the modern set to produce spoken plays after the fashion of those of America and Europe.

While there are tragic and comic elements in the Chinese drama, there is no definite falling into these two divisions. Plays may be divided musically as already shown, or more commonly into the two great groups: the *wên*, or civil and operatic, and the *wu*, or military and action, the former being rather quiet and the latter set to loud brass and swiftly-moving stage battles.

Plots are most uneven in quality. Some are well worked out while others are nothing more than a most slender thread, on which are hung songs, dances, or military display. Thus, it is not uncommon to present a detached scene from a long work in order to display to advantage the attainment of a particular actor. The audience invariably familiar with the whole story, concentrates on the fine technical points, vocal and gymnastic, and enjoys the art of the immediate moment.

Here it may be well to consider the general setting: historical, religious and moral.

From the innumerable centuries of history that reach back to the dim legendary period, heroes of the court and battle field, emperors, scholars, famous beauties and occasionally people of humbler rank furnish subject matter for the majority of the plays.

Ethics and religion people the stage with distinct types of characters. Confucian ethics champion filial piety, loyalty of friend to friend, devotion of servant to master. Thus, a servant will place his own child in death's jaws to save the infant crown prince. Buddhism supplies the stage with laughable nuns and lazy, often immoral, monks and provides many temple scenes; Taoism furnishes a veritable pantheon of demi-gods, fairies and supernatural animals. Just as the forces blend harmoniously in the everyday life of the people so do they jointly contribute a distinctive colour to the theatre.

The Chinese dramatist who delights in teaching a moral lesson often goes to what may appeal unreasonable lengths to reward good and to punish evil. Heroic feats in battle, the faithfulness of a minister to his sovereign, the fidelity of a wife in adverse circumstances—these and similar qualities are glorified, while villainy and meannesss come in for their full share of ridicule and scathing censure. Variations on these favourite themes are common. For instance, the story of a husband who has been away for eighteen to twenty years and returns to test the faithfulness of his wife, may be seen in no less than three plays, any of which may be presented in leading playhouses several times a year.

From the foregoing it is plain that realism is shunned and in its place is to be found a lightness of touch, markedly impressionistic and enhanced by music, metre, rhythmic gesture and expressive posture, which combine to produce a stylized beauty and sometimes an illusion of reality denuded of the commonplace. As in Chinese painting, the playwright strives to achieve his effect with an economy of line, going straight to his idea by brushing aside time, geographical and scenic considerations.

Here the surface only of a rich field has been scratched; there is no space to consider the suppression and return of actresses, the training schools for boys, the metamorphosis of the stage from the platform with its lacquer columns and roof to the present picture-frame type and a host of other phases.

It is desirable to conclude with one main thought: while the Chinese drama does not hold up the mirror to present day life, realistically depicted, it offers something far more precious, namely, what the millions in the great oriental republic enjoy now, have enjoyed for centuries and will enjoy for years to come.

To know their theatre is to know, in no small degree, the Chinese people.

THE ORIGIN AND PLACE OF THE FEMALE IMPERSONATOR IN THE CHINESE DRAMA

PEOPLES of other countries think it strange that in the Chinese drama men have, until very recently, portrayed the feminine roles though this would not have seemed strange to Europeans in the age of Shakespeare. This is, indeed, an outstanding characteristic of oriental drama. The playing of female parts by young men was inevitable, because in the old social system of China, the strictest barrier between the sexes was maintained and because the appearance of women on the stage was absolutely forbidden by public opinion. In old Chinese drama a large number of plays are of the following types: "sorrow-gladness," "separation-reunion," and tales of love. If a man and a woman were to reproduce on the stage a love scene, they would invite upon their unfortunate heads an avalanche of public censure. Nevertheless, since the drama could not exist without a female character, there was no course except to train handsome young men to impersonate the other sex. If, then, men did not impersonate women, there would be no means of carrying forward the plot of the play.

It is obvious that the *tan* occupies the most important position on the Chinese stage. The reasons are two.

First, the investigations of many critics have resulted in the conclusion that in the field of drama and imaginative literature, as the novel, poetry, etc., the fact persists that a woman or a feminine motif is of necessity the center of interest. As much has been stated by a certain English scholar, who said "In detective and diplomatic tales, women must be included so that the story may have the better opportunity for success, because the world is a stage for the drama of the sexes, and woman is really the more important character." If we accept the foregoing statement, the *tan* or female impersonator should occupy in the Chinese drama the most important position.

Second. if we read passages in the history of Chinese drama, we shall learn that the female impersonator has ever been the central figure of the dramatic text. From the Yuan Dynasty, 1206-1368 A.D., the ancient *yuan-pen* and *chuan ch'i* styles of drama have been constructed with this point in view. Although the *tan* and *sheng*, the latter being the type for important male characters, seem of equal importance, the fact is that the most important part of the play falls on the shoulders of the man impersonating the heroine. As for drama in general, most people are interested in the "sorrow-gladness" and "separation-reunion" elements, which can be delineated by female characters only. It is thus evident that the female impersonator, in the final analysis, occupies the most important position in drama, this being especially true of the present Chinese stage.

There are no less than six types of *tan* on the Chinese stage and some native writers add to that number by making even more minute sub-divisions. The term *tan* covers in general the whole class of impersonators, which is sub-divided into the six following divisions:

I Ching-tan or Ch'ing-i
II Hua-tan
III Kuei-men Tan
IV Tsai-tan
V Lao-tan
VI Wu-tan

The distinctions between these six classes are both numerous and detailed; but mention of the types and manner of acting is a convenient means of entering this intricate subject.

The *ching-tan*, more popularly known as the *ch'ing-i*, is the type representing the good matron, faithful wife, or the filial daughter. In this type singing is greatly stressed and no fighting and gymnastics are required; indeed, when the characters *ch'ing-i* appear on one of the theatre programs over the name of the actor, the audience settles comfortably in its seats and is prepared to enjoy several arias of highest order, and woe to the reputation of the actor who proves vocally inferior!

The *hua-tan*, usually a younger woman than the *ch'ing-i*, is a demi-monde or a maidservant. Generally speaking, the *ch'ing-i* is the type for a good woman, and singing, especially the plaintive kind, is predominant, while the *hua-tan* is the role of a woman of

questionable character, great emphasis being placed on the acting.

Of the remaining four types, the *kuei-men tan* is an unmarried girl, while the *wu-tan*, of which the "sword and horse *tan*" is a type, is a military maiden. One of the most realistic types is the *lao-tan*, the type for an aged woman, often a mother. Another type is the *tsai-tan*, which type is the means of delineating a wicked woman, an evilly inclined maidservant, or the ever present matchmaker.

These types are iron-bound by certain conventional requirements of demeanor and action. The good woman or *ch'ing-i* is retiring, refined, and gracious, while the *hua-tan* is bold and full of charm and seduction. The maidenly type or *kuei-men tan* is elegant, attractive, and graceful. The *tsai-tan*, while sometimes beautiful or graceful, is trifling by nature and often mean. The *wu-tan* or military type is both good to look upon and heroic; the type for an old woman or *lao-tan* a gentle and quiet, as very good old women are believed to be.

Characteristic actions often give clue to the type. The *ch'ing-i* is most properly behaved; in her action there is not a vestige of seduction or winsomeness. Her footsteps are even and carefully taken, while in walking the feet are kept close to the ground. The hands, always in a graceful and dignified position, are often crossed. On entering or withdrawing, the head is slightly inclined forward; on leaving the stage, the right sleeve is often elevated.

With due allowance for her youth, the *kuei-men* or maidenly type is somewhat like the *ch'ing-i* in behaviour. On making her exit, the right hand is lifted while the left is placed at the side.

Most seductive and charming are the ways of the demi-monde or *hua-tan* type, as she sways with airy grace to the stage on her false "golden lilies," her left hand on her waist and her right holding a red handkerchief. Every movement of hers vibrates with life, from the suggestive and devastating glance of her eyes to the coy turn of her head. Unlike the foregoing types, she may perform gymnastic and military action. In order to charm the spectator to the very last, on leaving the stage, she turns her head alluringly toward the audience with a smile that begins at the eyes and spreads down to the luscious curves of her cheeks and lips, or she may lift her right foot to reveal a tiny flash of her red satin trousers.

The *tsai-tan*, in point of liveliness, is akin to the *hua-tan*. She is comic, lowly, and detestable. Her long strides are full of action; her eyes roll in diabolical mischievousness. And to prove that she is not a lady, she walks with crooked legs! On entering or going off, she makes a strange movement or smiles intriguingly at the audience.

Although not so seductive as the *hua-tan*, the *wu-tan* or military type is strong, beautiful, and vibrant with action, for she needs must enter the fray of battle and give exhibitions of gymnastics of the most difficult character. Sharp and bright are her eyes.

As has already been mentioned, the type for an old woman or *lao-tan* is the most realistic. With lowered head and stooped shoulders she totters across the stage. A long staff is her indispensable support. She is gentle and motherly. Her eyes mirror the tired expression of old age.

Even the eyebrows tell their tale. Those of the *ching-i* are dignified and beautiful, while those of the *hua-tan* are alluringly slender. Mischievously slanting are those of the *tsai-tan*.

The spoken lines and the declamatory passages, known in the stage vernacular as *pai*, also serve to distinguish the types.

In singing, the voice of the *ch'ing-i*, which is the most prized type and brings the highest salary, is clear, and "pointed" with an inclination to be weak rather than robust. The voice of the *lao-tan* is even, full, and patterned after that of an old woman. The *hua-tan*, who relies on her skill in acting, may have a voice of medium quality, although many have good voices.

In spite of the aforementioned conventions and many more restricting the actor, a great artist may, by his genius, act through the iron-bound requirements, not only offering the spectators a verisimilitude of life, but often the very essence of realism, denuded of the commonplace.

However, among female impersonators, the name of Mei Lan-fang stands foremost in China. . . . Today Mei is the foremost exponent of both the *ch'ing-i* and *hua-tan* types, occasionally acting the *wu-tan* or military type. . . . He has also introduced some graceful dances and has created celestial beings of airy feminine grace . . . etc., etc.

THE CHARACTER TYPES *of the* CHINESE DRAMA

THE *SHENG* OR MALE CHARACTERS

HE male roles in Old Chinese drama are collectively known as SHENG. Aged and bearded characters are designated as "old," or *lao-sheng* while youthful male characters are known as "youthful," or *hsiao-sheng*. All who specialise in diction and singing are termed "civil" or *wen-sheng;* those skilled in gymnastics and military action are known as "military" or *wu-sheng*. In the singing of a *wen-sheng*, the most important consideration is that all high and low notes be sung in the best of style, while a thorough mastery of vocal technique is necessary, because, in the drama, the types of singing are exceedingly numerous. A *lao-sheng*, often the role of a scholar, or retired general, must be proficient in conventional stage-technique. In his enunciation, he must be fastidiously correct, while in acting, he must possess grace, dignity and distinction; above all, he must not overdo his part. The *wu-sheng* specializes in bodily posturing and in conventional stage-fighting; the movements of his hands and feet must be clean-cut and his manner of expression good. He is expected to be an expert tumbler and acrobat also. A *wen hsiao-sheng* should be refined and cultured in a worldly fashion.

THE *TAN* OR FEMALE IMPERSONATOR

The general term in old drama for all feminine roles is *tan*, meaning female impersonator. There are the "old," or *lao-tan*, who may be mothers or other aged women; *ch'ing-i*, the roles for good and dignified women; *hua-tan*, the roles for vivacious maid-servants or women of doubtful reputation, as the demi-monde and courtesan; *kuei-men tan*, the type for maidens; and the *tao-ma* or "sword-horse" *tan*, who is a "military" type.

Of these types there is a fuller account in the preceding section, where some paragraphs have been quoted from the article, "The Female Impersonator of the Chinese Stage" reprinted by courtesy of "The China Journal of Sciences and Arts."

THE *CHING* OR CHARACTERS WITH PAINTED FACES

Actors, portraying the character type, known in the stage vernacular as *ching*, must be coarse and heavy in physique and possess voices that are rich and robust, while their movement must be dignified. In the bewildering variety of facial painting, there are both fine lined and thick lined designs. If one is a *wu-ching*, he must also be a master of boxing gymnastics, and conventional military action.

While gentle and peace-loving characters appear with natural faces, others, especially adventurers, commonly paint their faces in various styles that range from a single colour to bewildering combinations and figures. The origin of facial painting may be traced to ancient stone sculptures and bronze engravings, but as time passed, the original art underwent radical changes. Many of the colours have a specific meaning; for instance, a predominance of red indicates that the person is courageous, faithful, and virtuous; much black indicates a fierce and coarse nature while blue denotes cruelty. Green, blue, lavender, and red, when used in elaborate combinations, have no deep significance. A person with triangular eyes is branded as crafty, while a person with a small white butterfly painted across his nose may be a comedian, a villain, or an evil supernatural being. Again, the face may be painted in ways that have no special meaning.

During the Northern Chi Dynasty, Prince Lan-ling, or Lan-ling Wang, who was a brave warrior with an exquisitely beautiful face, thought of the idea of painting his face to inspire fear in the hearts of his adversaries. It is possible that conventional facial painting for the stage originated from this source.

THE *CH'OU* OR COMEDIAN

The general term for comedians is *ch'ou*, a type which is common on both the Chinese and the European stage. Those who are supposed to be comediennes are called *ch'ou-tan*, or "*female ch'ou*," while comedians of military type are called *wu-ch'ou*. The whole class paint their noses powder-white, along with a few black lines to show that they are comedians. Although other lines may, at times, be added to the face, the most common design is the butterfly.

The comedian's main burden is to win laughs from the audience; thus, his lines must be especially well enunciated, sparkling with wit, and otherwise attractive. If he displays military action, it must be humorous in nature. When a play has in it a first class comedian, the entire work vibrates with life. The *ch'ou*, then, occupies an important place in the drama. Furthermore, legend informs us that the great ruler, T'ang Ming Huang himself sometimes played the part of the *ch'ou*, which type as a result has acquired great prestige and is allowed many privileges denied the other actors.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF THE OUTSTANDING PECULIARITIES OF THE OLD CHINESE DRAMA

By CHI JU-SHAN

(Professor of Chinese Drama, Peiping National University)

SINGING AND DECLAMATION

HE spoken lines and vocal passages in the Chinese drama are, generally speaking, similar to those of other nations. When a Chinese actor, however, comes upon the stage, he must deliver what is termed the prologue, and perhaps poetry also, as well as lines of a couplet. The *tien chiang ch'un* tunes used by those who impersonate officials are similar in construction to the prologue just mentioned. An actor, on gracefully making his way off the stage, may recite any one or more of the following: poetry, lines of a couplet, or passages of recitation. These distinctive practices on entering and exiting are characteristics, which set the Chinese drama apart from that of any other nation. The stage speech is invariably marked by cadence and rhythm and so differs, in a marked degree, from that of every day life. Although, in the drama of every nation, there is a decided difference between the speech of the stage and real life, the difference, in Chinese drama, is much greater. While, in the vocal art of all countries, *tempo* is a predominating factor, still, the types of songs are not all alike. In Chinese drama, the actor's movements also are set to musical accompaniment, while in European plays there exists no such practice. So far an attempt has been made to point out the difference, in general, between Chinese and European drama. Details of this will be found under the headings that follow.

THE PROLOGUE

When an actor makes his entrance, the first words he utters are, what is technically known as the prologue, which literally "introduces" or brings forward the idea of the play. There is, during the recitation, a distinct rhythm; but there is no musical accompaniment (even the wooden *pan tzu* not being used to beat time.) The prologue found its origin in the extreme dislike of mentioning at once and directly the subject of a literary work. Thus, in drama, introductory lines are added to uphold this tradition, the prologue doing one of the following things: it may narrate vaguely the entire action of the play, tell the history or nature of the character in question, or explain the general action of the act immediately at hand. But whatever be the case, there is merely delivered a general account, from which one may trace little or no clue to the actual story.

COUPLETS WHEN ENTERING

(SHANG CHANG TUI CHU)

After the prologue, actors invariably recite two couplets, this seeming to be a development of the prologue. At the beginning, the *ch'ou*, or comedian, used couplets more than any other character type, for the simple reason that it was permissible for comedians to speak in the various local dialects of the districts in which they were acting. Thus, he was not obliged to use the Chung-chou intonations on the endings of his monosyllables. The Chung-chou, being the standard intonations, are used in Honan and in the central part of China. Since a comedian found it inconvenient to recite these intonations, he substituted couplets in native dialect, at the same time doing away with *tempo* and musical accompaniment. It came about afterward that all types of actors, in order to facilitate action, recited on entering the stage the more easily delivered couplets.

POETRY WHILE SITTING

After the prologue, and sometimes couplets also, have been delivered, the actor, seating himself, recites four lines of poetry, which is technically termed "poetry that opens the play." In idea and construction, this same practice, also called "poetry while sitting," bears a close resemblance to the prologue. Its origin comes from the style of the Chinese

novel, or an entertainment, known as "recitations with the drum "*ku-tz'u*," in which forms there are always at the opening of the work a few lines, which outline the entire theme. The dramas of the Yuan and Sung Dynasties were strikingly similar in construction to the novel and "recitations with the drum," and thus plays have introductory lines also. While the *k'un-ch'u* employs lines of uneven length, the *p'i-huang* uses a poetical text exclusively. "Poetry while sitting" differs from the prologue in that the actor must recite without tempo, and without musical accompaniment.

ANNOUNCING ONE'S NAME

(T'UNG MING)

After an actor has recited his four lines of poetry, he never fails to tell the audience his name and if he does not recite poetry, he may announce his name immediately after the delivery of the prologue.

LINES THAT ACTUALLY OPEN THE PLAY

(TING CH'ANG PAI)

The technical term *pai* means to express, to explain, to speak. An actor, having gone on the stage and spoken both his prologue and poetic lines and having announced his name, then, proceeds to deliver what is termed the *ting ch'ang pai*. That the prologue, poetry, etc., must be very general in nature has already been explained; in the *ting ch'ang pai*, however, an actor gives a detailed account of himself, or his family, or the drama, often of the immediate act or episode at hand, making such facts clear in minute detail. If the action of the present moment is too far removed from that of the preceding event, it behooves the actor to explain this state of affairs while delivering the *ting ch'ang pai*.

There is often, in European drama, a person, not belonging to the cast of the play, who, standing in front of the curtain, delivers lines that are similar to the *ting ch'ang pai*. After a Chinese actor has delivered his *ting ch'ang pai*, the actual play begins to unfold. While the actor recites the prologue, poetry, and the *ting ch'ang pai*, he is mirroring the general feeling of the action or the theme of the play. Although, in subsequent acts, there may be another announcement of the name, according to old practice, this came into being merely because some of the episodes were too far apart, also because the changing of costume might lead to the audience's forgetting the names of the various characters. Thus, the actor sometimes announces his name once more. The ancients, however, found for such situations remedies slightly different from those employed at present.

The four foregoing practices are, in the construction of the old Chinese drama, distinctive features, in which it differs signally from European drama. In the plays of Europe and America, any preliminary passages are made before the lowered curtain to the audience by a person, who is *not* a member of the cast, an announcement sometimes being made previous to each act. In Chinese drama, such lines must be delivered by members of the cast. At one time, there was in Chinese drama a special person who made announcements and was known as the *fu mo chia men*, but he made the briefest remarks only, not at all in the detailed manner of the European and the American stage. Furthermore, he who delivered, the prologue in old drama, was obliged to wear a special stage costume, in this respect again differing from foreign practice.

It was, in western drama, the former practice to employ a man in formal dress to make the necessary preliminary explanations, later, because of public demand, the man was replaced by a young girl, beautifully attired. More recently, there has been introduced an improvement, wherein the girl sings, before the first curtain, the entire story of the play. This last practice seems to approach more closely the peculiar practices of Chinese drama. In times past, when an actor came on the stage to recite the prologue and announce his name, he was obliged by inviolable custom to conceal his face with his sleeve in order not to reveal the "face of the actor in the play," but after the announcements have been made, the sleeve is waved aside and lo! we have before us the actual face of the character of the play! The actor has stepped into character. Is there not, in this, a striking similarity to the practices in European and American drama?

THE ASIDE

(PEI KUNG)

The "aside" may be described as words uttered to oneself in the presence of two or three others on the stage to reveal one's emotion or secrets. If one is suddenly overwrought with emotion, he naturally expresses himself by facial expression or pantomime; if the emotion is so complex that neither facial expression nor pantomimime can make clear the meaning, then, the Chinese actor lifts his sleeve, behind which he speaks or sings, or he may quickly step to one side of the stage, such actions making it clear that the others on the stage have not heard what was said.

When a solitary actor sings or tells of his own affairs, the practice is also somewhat similar to the "aside."

The "aside" is a distinct feature of Chinese drama. Considering the early date at which this dramatic peculiarity was discovered, it must be conceded to be a special merit of native drama. The "aside" eliminates great quantities of explanation, at the same time adding much interest to the situation. In European drama also, a person may say a few words to himself. Since people in everyday life are known to speak to themselves, the "aside" may have found its origin in that human trait. In European opera, it is a common practice for one person to sing long solos; this practice has in it something of the nature of an "aside."

THE "CALL" OR SIGNAL FOR MUSIC

(CHIAO PAN)

When all preliminary announcements have been made, the actor, just before breaking into song, must prolong the last word he has spoken. This is done by sustaining the last word, almost to a musical pitch, so that the musicians know by this signal that the song is to come at once and so set their musical instruments for accompaniment. Again, when the actor is about to conclude his singing, he also prolongs the last word or two in his song so that the musicians will know that the song is completed and will prepare to lay aside their instruments. Such vocal prolongations are absolutely necessary, because in the *p'i-huang* music, there is no arbitrary musical score so that it is impossible for a singer to prolong or abbreviate his song as he deems fit; thus, there must be a distinct signal given by the singer as to when the song will begin or end.

SINGING

(KO CH'ANG)

It is a common practice in Chinese drama when, during spoken lines, the emotions become raised to a high pitch, for the character to give vent to his feeling in song, as in moments of sudden fear, anger, grief, ecstasy, etc. Again, there are occasions when long dramatic passages must be repeated by the actors, this also serving as a reason for a long aria. If one character asks another about a matter, of which the latter is ignorant but of which the audience has been already informed, there is a possibility of the audience's patience being tried by the tedious repetition. The reply, therefore, is set to music so that the actor may have the opportunity to explain the situation, but to embellish his tale with such musical beauty as to save the audience monotonous repetition.

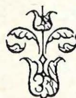
In singing, there is great variety of style for the character types, as for instance, the *hua-lien* or "a flowery faced one," so-called in reference to the elaborate facial painting, who sings in broad, rich, robust tones to delineate a coarse character; the *sheng* ,who sings in almost natural voice that labels him as an educated and refined person, while the *tan* sings in a small falsetto voice in order to suggest the weak voice of women.

COUPLETS RECITED BEFORE GOING OFF THE STAGE

(HSIA CH'ANG TUI LIEN)

After an actor has played his part and is about to move off the stage, it is customary for him to recite four lines, namely two couplets, or if two or more people go off together, they may recite four lines of poetry. These recitations are supposed to conclude the act or scene in question. Such peculiar practices trace their origin to the literary form of the old Chinese novel.

The following sections are compiled from manuscripts and translations by George Kin Leung,—EDITOR.



PANTOMIME AND ACTING

VERY movement made by an actor in an old Chinese drama is done in accordance with time honoured convention, and so is somewhat different from the actions of everyday life. Although in European and American plays, the actions are also different from those of ordinary life, still, the difference in Chinese drama is much greater. An attempt will now be made to explain some of the Chinese stage conventions and to point out where they differ from western theatrical practice.

MAKING ENTRANCE AND EXIT

Usually in European drama, the various actors have, before the curtain goes up, placed themselves in appropriate positions on the stage, and they proceed, as soon as the curtain has been raised, with the immediate action or conversation of the play. The Chinese drama opens with an empty stage, on which the various characters make their appearance. Before their entrance, there is an orchestral selection, and most of the movements of the actors are made to definite musical setting. All action, even the simple act of walking, must be done gracefully and to a well defined *tempo*, which may or may not be set to musical accompaniment. The *tempo* is determined by the musicians. When an actor makes his first appearance, it is highly important that his every movement be pleasing to the eye, while every action is dictated by inviolable rule. An actor, on making his exit, with either declamation or singing, is required to leave unsaid one word, which, with body slightly turned to the audience, he must declaim or sing just before he turns to walk off the stage. The exit must also be done to musical accompaniment.

WALKING AND RUNNING

In the drama of every nation, actors, while on the stage, walk differently from people in everyday life; in Chinese drama the difference is even more striking. Yet, the highly conventional gait of the various character types has a logical origin. The coarse types walk with long strides, and so the *hua-lien* takes steps that are technically termed "wide". Both scholars and officials invariably move about with marked grace and leisure; thus, the gait of the *sheng* is described as "round," "square," or "dexterous," while female characters or *tan* walk with short, swaying, mincing steps, described as "slow," "graceful," etc. But it matters not which character type is on the stage, he must take his steps in accordance with strictly determined *tempo;* in situations demanding quick movement, there is the "swift tempo," while for slow gait, there is "slow tempo," and never for a moment does an actor of any merit dare to depart from that *tempo*.

PASSING THROUGH A DOOR

Whenever it is necessary for an actor to enter through a door way, he merely indicates that he has done so by lifting one foot as if stepping over the door-bar; while female characters raise the hand to show that they are leaning against the wall for support, this being a means of revealing the delicate grace that is associated with the weaker sex. It matters not whether one enters or exits by the front door, room door, or garden door, the pantomimic action is the same. The actor merely indicates that he has opened or closed a door; with both hands, he pushes the imaginary panels of the door, sliding them apart or drawing them together. In cases of knocking, bolting, or locking a door, these actions are indicated by pantomimic gesture also.

MOVEMENT IN GENERAL

Chinese actors must give undivided attention to every movement. Action must be not only good to look upon but also done according to strict *tempo*. The manner in which the head is moved, the body controlled, the hands and feet are placed, the posture of the arms and thighs,—all such action must be done according to established convention. The movement of a finger, the glance of an eye, the lifting of a foot, all entail a vast amount of study, but always these movements must be pleasant to the eye and done to strict *tempo*.

One of the many examples may be taken to make clear the point, namely, one of the positions of the *tan's* fingers. The index finger is bent back with great strength; the thumb and middle finger form a circle; the ring finger, in Chinese the "no name" finger, is bent so that the tip rests against the middle

joint of the middle finger; while the little finger must be so curved that its tip rests against the middle of the ring finger. This, then, is but one example from the endless number of conventional practices in the old drama. It is highly desirable for one interested in the theatre to attend plays and observe for himself the various peculiarities and develop an ability to make his own fascinating discoveries.

SLEEPING

In the past, it was not permissible to give a realistic representation of sleep, because the act itself was considered unbeautiful to look upon! When slumber was to be shown, the actor did so by leaning on a table. Maidens, however, may at times be seen sleeping full length, merely because a beauty in slumber is considered a pleasing sight, and so such scenes are created for the especial enjoyment of the spectator. Even this departure from tradition was made in modern times. . . . When a *ch'ou* or comedian sometimes sleeps sprawled on a chair, his head thrown back, and his mouth agape, it is understood that this is done merely to win laughs from the audience.

THE ART OF DANCING

In European dramà, it is common to see dancing, unaccompanied by singing, or *vice versa;* in Chinese drama, however, dancing is accompanied by singing, as well as acting. Again, European musical drama has an especial regard for *tempo;* Chinese drama required not only strict adherence to tempo but also that movements of the dance must harmonise with the idea of the written text, that is, the rhythm and action must express the musical score as well. Thus, Chinese dancing is even more difficult to master than European dancing although until quite recently terpsichorean creations on the Chinese stage had been rare. It was after Mr. Mei Lanfang had created his own plays that his school of dancing became popular throughout the entire Chinese Republic. His method of dancing is patterned after the ancient canons of terpsichorean art, said to be over one thousand years old; the movements he has set to the music of today, making a real contribution to the stage.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIONS

It may be reiterated, in conclusion, that every movement on the Chinese stage is done in accordance with strict, time honored convention. For example, when a male character laughs, he does so directly; but a female character must conceal her mouth with her sleeve. In weeping both men and women wipe away their tears with their sleeves; to express worry, the character moves his hand about and contracts the forehead; in mediation, the breast is stroked with a circular motion of the hand, the finger being pointed to the temples, while to show bashfulness, the sleeve is raised before the face. Women cover their faces even more completely than male characters in order to emphasise the innate modesty of their sex. In anger, the foot is stamped, the breast pounded. When one wishes to motion a person away, the hand is waved aside or the sleeve is flourished outward, while to signal a person to come, the hand is waved up and down just as Europeans wave farewell! To show fear, the body is turned aside and one hides. While the foregoing examples are in accordance with theatrical convention, still, they are not so very far removed from the practices of everyday life. In this respect, then. Chinese drama is not unlike European drama.

COSTUMES OF THE CHINESE STAGE

IN the vernacular of the Chinese stage, wearing apparel is generally termed *hsing-t'ou*, and is designed according to strict convention. The outstanding modes of the T'ang, Sung, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties supply the patterns for conventional stage clothing. No matter what character type is concerned, the clothing is designed according to a standard that grows from a combination of the modes of these various dynasties, no special attention being paid to any one dynasty or locality. A brief description of the more important garments follows:

THE ROBE OR MANG

The *mang* has a soft, kerchief-like collar, its large, overlapping front being buttoned from the collar, down under the arm and down the side, also inner, literally, "water" *shui* sleeves, which are long, flimsy, trailing silken inner sleeves, attached to the ordinary sleeves and hanging a few feet below the waistline, almost touching the ground. The body of the robe is satin, usually embroidered with dragons, while the lower border is decorated with representations of sea-waves. This is the most important garment for official attire, and is worn in audience with the Son of Heaven, at official gatherings, at formal ceremonies, banquets, etc., or on any occasion of the first importance. The colours indicate the rank of the wearer, as imperial yellow for the emperor and the crown prince, incense-brown or white for old officials, red or blue for upright persons, and black for coarse-mannered or treacherous natures. On important festive occasions, even the warriors wear the *mang*. . . . The *mang* worn by women, while in general like that worn by men, is somewhat shorter.

THE OFFICIAL ROBE OR KUAN-I

The *kuan-i*, or official robe, is, in general, like the *mang*, just described. It is because, previous to the Ming Dynasty, officials of the highest rank only could wear the *mang*, that officials of middle and lower rank were obliged to wear the *kuan-i*. This robe is, perhaps, most familiar to the westerner, for the embroidered squares that are attached to the front and back of the robe were used by American women in the making of the so-called Mandarin bags. Robes may be red, blue, or black, the rank of the official being graded in the order of the colours here mentioned. The robes of officials of lowest rank are strikingly similar to the *mang*, only there is no embroidery and at the opening at the sides of the *kuan-i*, there is a pair of small wing-shaped decorations projecting to the rear.

THE P'EI

The robe, known as the *p'ei*, has a large collar and buttons down the front, with long inner sleeves, reaching almost to the knees. The material is of satin, with various decorations, the flowers being sewn on entire or in scattered blossoms or broken branches. There are also *p'ei* without embroidery. Being an important garment, it is worn in ordinary banquet scenes or at official trials. In colour and manner of wearing this robe is similar to the *mang*. People of advanced age only wear blue or incense-brown, while those of middle age wear blue and youth dons red. The *p'ei*, worn by female characters is about the same as that worn by male characters, although young unmarried women wear a garment made of soft material, known as the *kuei men p'ei*, or "maiden's gown," which is of red or pale blue silk that may or may not be embroidered.

THE TIEH-TZU OR LINED COAT

The lined coat, known as the *tieh-tzu*, has a large collar and buttons under the arm, with inner sleeves and reaches to the feet. A woman's *tieh-tzu* is somewhat shorter than a man's. The garment may be designated as soft or stiff, the former being done of soft silk, while the latter is made of stiff satin, which may or may not be embroidered. This is one of the most common garments of the stage, the plain *tieh-tzu* being more widely used than the embroidered one. In colouring and manner of wearing, it is, in general, like the *p'ei*. A plain blue *tieh-tzu* is usually associated with a young scholar, while a plain black one is worn by a poverty stricken person. When a plain black *tieh-tzu* is decorated with pieces of silk of various colours to represent torn places and mending in the garment, it is worn by the poorest person and called the *fu kuei i*, or "garment of wealth and distinction," because the character who wears it, although very poor in the beginning,

is, however, a person of lasting ambition and will surely attain high position and good fortune BEFORE THE END OF THE PLAY! Hence, the name of the garment. There is a *tieh-tzu* of pure white to be worn by aged villagers, male or female, or by gods of the earth, etc. and is called a *lao tou i*, or "an old person's garment." The *tieh-tzu* may be worn by military or civil characters.

THE EUNUCH'S COAT OR T'AI CHIEN I

The *t'ai chien i* is worn exclusively by eunuchs, the garment having a large soft collar and buttons down the side. The material may be red or brown silk, the whole having wide borders of black or blue. The waist may or may not be decorated or embroidered. The coat, reaching to the feet, has inner sleeves.

THE JADE BELT OR YU TAI

The jade belt is considered a very important article in an actor's wardrobe. When wearing the *mang* or *kuan i*, the jade belt is worn about the waist, this being the vogue previous to the Ming Dynasty. The actual belt is made of stiff material which is studded with pieces of jade. That worn on the stage is almost an exact replica of the real one.

THE SKIRT OR CH'UN

The skirt is worn exclusively by female characters. An official skirt is plaited and embroidered, but a common skirt is without decoration of any kind. Skirts of present day style only have four panels. When a skirt is fastened well above the waist, it is an indication that the wearer is a poor woman in travelling garb, which is supposed to be disarranged.

JACKET AND TROUSERS OR K'U AO

Old stage traditions, at least, did not permit women to show their trousers, but now for a century, the vivacious character type, known as the *hua-tan*, has always worn jacket and trousers, doing away with the skirt. The jacket has a small collar and buttons down the side with string-fasteners, having plain sleeves, without the inner sleeves, the garment being about half the length of the body. These characteristics, however, are entirely after the modes of the day and not according to orthodox stage tradition. Women wear such costumes on ordinary occasions only; on formal and festive occasions, they don the *p'ei*.

THE APRON OF K'AN CHIEN

The apron is worn by maidservants only and is made of silk that may or may not be embroidered, and may or may not be bordered with other material. There are two kinds: those of knee length follow the old convention, while the short ones that come barely to the waist follow, like the jacket and trousers, the modes of the day.

COSTUMES FOR PALACE WOMEN OR KUNG I

The *kung i*, or palace garment, is worn by princesses, daughters of aristocratic families, or celestial being, never by women of humble birth. Thus, the garment is called the palace robe. . . . It is made of embroidered silk, having silken sashes, as well as inner sleeves; and is about knee-length.

THE TASSELED CAPE OR YUN CHIEN

The "cloud" cape, or *yun chien*, is a most important article in a tan's wardrobe, and may be worn over a *mang, p'ei, or kung i.* Empresses, princesses, and palace women may wear this garment, which is a circular cape, embellished with tassels and embroidery. It is worn on the shoulders.

THE K'AI K'AO OR WARRIOR'S REGALIA

The *k'ai k'ao* is the most important garment in a stage warrior's wardrobe, and is worn while in public service or when going to battle; but when in audience with the emperor, reviewing soldiers, or on festive occasions, a *mang* must be worn over the whole. Its colour scheme and manner of wearing are similar to those of the *mang*. An old general of distinction wears a brown *k'ai k'ao,* while a youthful warrior wears a white or a pink one. The garment is made of silk, is embroidered back and front, and has narrow sleeves. Panels, designed like armour, are added to the sides, while at the breast is the so-called "heart-protecting glass." Embroidered representations of tiger heads are attached at the waist and near the shoulders, all these details being patterned closely after ancient war regalia. The stage costume differs most largely in its more elaborate decoration and embroidery. With the exception of the many hanging streamers, or sashes, the female warrior's costume is like that of the warrior's. Men only wear the *k'ai k'ao.*

THE K'AO CH'I OR MILITARY FLAGS

The *k'ao ch'i* are simply the flags worn on a warrior's back when he enters the fray. The origin of these flags grew from their actual use by a general, who, when issuing orders, in the thick of battle gave one of his subordinates a flag to serve as a warrant. On one side of the flag were marks of identity. Every general took with him one or two flags to be used in cases of emergency. Thus, the flags now included in the stage regalias of generals still retain the old idea of field orders; but the fact that there are four flags is due to a desire for beautiful effect. The flags, triangular in form, are made of silk and embroidered with flowers or dragons. Their colour should be the same as that of the warrior's robe, as white flags for a white robe, black for a black one, etc.

THE MA KUA

The *ma kua* is a garment still worn in everyday life, and is indispensable on formal occasions. Invariably of black silk, a *ma kua* buttons down the front and reaches a bit below the waistline. On the stage, the garment may be the semi-official garb of emperor or general, travelling on the road. The emperor alone is privileged to wear a *ma kua* of deep yellow, while all others wear black. Embroidered dragons are a common decoration. The stage *ma kua*, having a small collar and buttoning down the front, was also introduced during the late Ch'ing Dynasty.

HEADGEAR AND FOOTWEAR

The hat, helmet and shoes, worn in Chinese drama, have been designed from a combination of the styles that prevailed during the T'ang, Sung, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties, and bear a very close resemblance to the originals although those used on the stage are somewhat more elaborate.

THE K'UEI, OR HELMET, OR HAT

The *k'uei* or *kuan* is the most important hat of officaildom, the emperor and high military officials only being allowed to wear it. The hat of the emperor differs from all others in that it is of royalty. Tassels hang from the sides. While the hat worn by military officials is somewhat like that of the emperor's, yet, the form varies according to the rank of the person in question. For instance, a robber chief may wear a hat that is shaped only a trifle differently from that of the emperor.

THE SHA MAO OR GAUZE HAT

The *sha mao* or gauze hat, also for officials, is worn exclusively by civil dignitaries when waiting on the emperor, attending public trials, or at important festivities and banquets. Its form is very much like that used in real life; low in front, high at the back, and black in colour. There extend horizontally from the sides a pair of wing-shaped decorations. Officials of highest rank may wear a long, narrow decoration that is slightly curved in the middle; the next in rank may wear oval shaped ones; a rank lower wearing round ones, while the official of lowest rank wears round decorations, which are pointed on the outer sides.

THE LO MAO OR MILITARY HAT

The *lo mao* is also worn by military persons and finds its origin in the pages of history although the stage hat has undergone marked changes. In form, it is large at the top and small near the head, while its six sides are richly embroidered and decorated with pearls and jade, its top being adorned with fluffy silken balls of various colours. This lavish display has for its sole purpose the pleasing of the eye.

THE FENG KUAN OR PHOENIX HAT

Although the *feng kuan* or phoenix hat is worn exclusively by women on formal occasions, yet, empresses, princesses, and women of high official families only are privileged to wear such headgear. They consist of a framework, thickly studded with pearls and jade, from the sides of which depend tassels, while other tassels cover the forehead.

THE CHIH WEI OR PHEASANT PLUMES

The *chih wei* are the two long pheasant plumes that are attached to the actor's headgear, the longest specimens being as much as six or seven feet in length. Such feathers indicate that the wearer is a barbarian; hence, those impersonating military leaders of Mongolia or other barbarian regions, or robber chiefs, use such plumes. As time passed, because of their beauty, stage characters, in the roles of Chinese generals, also wore the *chih wei;* but this is a violation of orthodox theatrical convention. Generally speaking, the plumes are worn by officials or warriors, who are not fighting for China. While youthful Chinese stage generals are fond of wearing the pheasant plumes, because of their pleasing appearance, there is no justification for such a practice.

HSUEH HSIEH OR SHOES AND BOOTS

Everyone, in ancient China, from the emperor to the scholar and merchant, wore shoes, actors wear the same, the only exception being those playing the parts of labourers and farmers. While the stage footwear is generally like that worn in everyday life, the soles of the former are a trifle thicker in order to give the actor additional height. Women wear shoes that are usually embroidered, while warriors' boots are embroidered and thin soled. The embroidery is merely to please the eye.

THE HU HSU OR BEARDS AND MUSTACHES

Since the ancients of China prized most of all a long beard, it came about that actors wore long artificial beards. Although, at first, beards were not so long as those at present, still, afterwards the stage beard gradually increased in length. Varying through shades of white and black, the beard may indicate the age of the wearer. Red or blue beards are worn by people of questionable character, masters of black magic, or supernatural beings; and are made of horse hair.

A FULL BEARD

A full beard, which covers the mouth, indicates that the owner is both wealthy and heroic.

A TRIPART BEARD

A beard, divided into three parts, shows that the wearer is a person of culture and refinement.

SHORT MUSTACHES

The short mustache, only an inch in length, indicates a rude and unrefined person.

MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS

The types of beards are too numerous to consider in detail. Briefly, it may be said that mustaches, pointing upward, reveal a crafty nature, while those drooping downward indicate a dirty or uncouth person, while some beards are worn merely to win laughs from the spectators, *etc. ad infinitum.*

STAGE PROPERTIES AND SYMBOLISM

SINCE in the old drama every situation, every object, must be abstract in nature and often symbolical, pure realism is invariably shunned and realistic stage properties are not favoured. In the gags and bickerings of the comedians, however, realism may be found; but the other important members of the cast are not permitted liberties of speech and action. Every object on the stage is fashioned according to strict convention. Sometimes, a common object may be symbolized, as an oar may represent a boat, the following examples making this clear:

THE HORSE WHIP OR MA PIEN

Symbolism, on the Chinese stage, at once a convention, a convenience to the actor, and the bugbear of the outsider, allowing the holding of a whip by an actor to indicate that he is on a horse. Both the mounting and dismounting of a horse are represented by strict conventional pantomimic movements. If one has already dismounted from the unseen horse, he may still hold the whip; but in such a case, the whip must be allowed to hang at the rider's side. When one is about to fasten a horse to a post or tree, he need only to place the whip on the ground or hand the same to another person who is supposed to lead the animal away. A brown whip represents a brown horse; black, white, or reddish whips stand for horses of corresponding colour; but when a whip is decorated with a bewildering variety of colours, it must be confessed that there is no such horse, merely a desire to please the eye!

THE DUSTER OR YING CH'EN

The symbol of greatest refinement and the most highly treasured object throughout the long centuries of Chinese history is the duster of horsehair. The literati, while conversing, delight in fingering it; thus, in Chinese drama, the most exalted persons only may hold a duster, as gods, demi-gods, bodhisattvas, Buddist monks, Taoist priests, wanderers, recluses, celestial beings, and spirits of many orders. Sometimes, however, a maidservant may use a duster to clean the furniture. In general, then, a duster, which is very common in the Chinese drama, may represent any number of things.

THE (CLOTH) CITY WALL OR PU CH'ENG

The stage city wall consists of blue cloth, on which are painted white lines to represent bricks that give a resemblance to an old wall. Whenever the text of the play calls for a wall, two attendants lifting a cloth representation of the structure, take their place on the stage. Since the arch is often too low, the attendants, who have nothing to do with the play, elevate the cloth gate in order to facilitate the passage of those who enter or leave the city. Although this is a very simple piece of stage property, it is practically the sole genuine bit of scenery in Chinese drama.

THE FENG CH'I OR WIND FLAGS

Four black flags, called wind flags, when the text calls for a great wind, are carried and waved about by four attendants, who rush by to show that spirits "are riding on the wind."

THE SHUI CH'I OR WATER FLAGS

Four flags, with sea billows painted on a white surface, to represent ocean waves, are used to represent water, as when a character leaps into a river and is rescued. Such flags are carried across the stage by four attendants.

THE TA CHANG TZU OR GREAT CURTAIN

The *ta chang tzu* is a large embroidered curtain, which may be used for many settings, most of them being associated with women, some of which are as follows: a bed, a canopy, or a bright tower. When a generalissimo assumes his post or an official of high rank sits in state, the great curtain is also used. On the other hand, the emperor seldom makes use of this hanging, while the empress dowager invariably does.

THE SHIH SHAN PIEN OR MOUNTAIN ROCKS

Cloth nailed to oblong wooden frames on which are painted representations of mountain rocks are used in Chinese drama to show that the characters have arrived in a hilly region. When one is to ascend a mountain, these blocks of "mountains" are placed in

front of the actors in order to represent a mountain range, for this purpose two or four blocks being sufficient; if one is to go through a mountain pass, one or two blocks may be placed to either side of the path before the travellers to represent the rocky formations that tower to either side. This, then, is also a genuine example of scenery in the older drama.

THE CHO-TZU OR TABLE

The *cho-tzu* or table, represents, perhaps, more things than any other single object, some of them being as follows: a teaboy, a dining table, a judge's desk, an incense table, *etc.*, *etc.*, while the acts of going from lower to higher levels, as the ascent of a mountain, or the scaling of a wall, may also be effected by using a table. When in actual use, the table may be placed in the ordinary position, on its side, *etc.*, namely, in that position which is appropriate for the scene it is used in. There is no fixed rule for such placing.

THE I-TZU OR CHAIR

Although for sitting, the chair is the most common object used, yet, the manner in which a chair is placed on the stage makes a decided difference. If one is sitting in a palace, at an official gathering, or while reading or writing, the *i-tzu*, or chair, is placed BEHIND the table and then is called a *nei chang i-tzu*, or "a chair inside." If one is making preparations to receive guests, relatives, etc. for a quiet chat, then, the chair is placed IN FRONT OF the table and is called a *wai chang i-tzu*, or "a chair outside." There are, however, certain important occasions when a chair is placed behind the table. There are hair-splitting distinctions as to the manner of placing a *wai ch'ang i-tzu*. For example, the parents are seated in the centre, the place of honour, while the children take seats to the sides. Host and guest of equal rank sit to either side of the table in the centre of the stage, those of lower rank seating themselves farther away from the centre. On some occasions, women sit to the right side and men to the left, the last being the side of honour. If a father and a mother are seated, the daughter unfailingly takes the seat to the right, while the son takes the seat to the left. The manner of seating just described is that followed in daily life. If, however, an actor is supposed to be sitting on the ground, on rocks, or in any other unconventional position, the chair is placed on its side to describe such a position, this being called a *tao-i*, or "chair on its side." If a female character must climb to a higher place, she uses a chair to represent the eminence. Although at times a male character may use a chair for the same purpose, he prefers a table for such a situation. Again, two or three chairs placed together may represent a bed, while a cloak or large covering is placed on the whole to complete the representation.

THE SAN OR UMBRELLA

The *san*, or umbrella, an object used for protection from sun and rain is commonly used in the orient. A *san* is held from behind, over the head of the emperor and empress whenever they go abroad. When officials conduct their business in the open, they also use the umbrella, while the fairies include pretty umbrellas in their train in order to appeal to the audience's sense of beauty. *San* are made of silk, plain or embroidered, and the handles may be straight or curved, but are always long. The curved handles give the character more prestige than the straight ones.

THE IVORY HU OR TABLET

The ivory *hu* was used by officials, civil and military, previous to the Ming Dynasty, as a mark of respect to the resigning house and also as a means of making memoranda, which later might be reported to the emperor. In the drama, when an official has audience with the emperor, he must hold a *hu*, which is usually made of ivory and is a foot or more long and two inches wide, being narrow at the top and wide at the bottom.

THE PING CH'I OR MILITARY WEAPONS

All military weapons used on the stage, such as lances, swords, guns, poles, *etc.*, are made of wood, and are close likenesses of the real articles although they may differ in measurement. Since the stage traditions do not permit the use of real weapons, wooden ones are used in the plays.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

N musical drama the world over, it is customary for instruments to accompany the voice; in Chinese drama, apart from vocal accompaniment, orchestral instruments play interpolated passages, technically known as *kuo men*, or "passing the door," as when an actor has completed the singing of a phrase and the instruments, then, play a few additional measures. Also when half a passage has been sung, instruments may play a passage, giving the singer an opportunity to rest. In a Chinese orchestra, there are modulations of tone, pauses, and the rudiments of harmony. Although, in European drama, there is no *kuo men*, certain musical passages are similar to this Chinese musical practice.

A general description of instruments follows:

THE PAN OR WOODEN TIME BEATER

The *pan*, or "board" is the main instrument in an orchestra for beating time. While the music of every nation pays due regard to tempo, European musicians "watch time," and Chinese instrumentalists "listen to time," because the European conductor uses a small wand to direct his musicians, while the Chinese player listens to the sound of the *pan* in order to have the instruments play in unison. The *pan* is made of three pieces of wood of the hardest variety, two of them being fastened together side by side, while the other piece, tied at one end with a cord to the others, is, when keeping time, manipulated by one hand in such fashion as to hit against the other two with a loud resonant sound.

THE HSIAO KU OR SMALL DRUM

Although, in Chinese music, it is necessary to listen to the *pan*, which maintains the *tempo*, at times, the sound of the other music is so loud that the *pan* cannot be heard. To avoid possible confusion, the *hsiao ku*, or small drum, is used, for its sound is much louder than that of the *pan*. The *hsiao ku* gives additional indications of tempo, because sometimes the beat of the *pan* is so rare that tempo may be lost. So between the beats of the *pan* are interpolated drum beats, known in the stage vernacular, as "auxiliary beats." When cymbals and similar instruments are used, the small drum not only helps to beat time, but also creates such flourishes as delight the ear. The *hsiao ku* is made of heavy circles of wood, over which is stretched thick pigskin.

THE TA KU OR GREAT DRUM

The great drum is used exclusively to assist in creating the effects produced by other instruments. Excepting on one or two dramas only, it has no place as a solo instrument. It is made of a wooden frame, over which is drawn cowhide, and is about the size of a European drum, but has a much deeper resonance.

THE HU-CH'IN

In the current Sino-Mongolian *p'i-huang* drama, the *hu-ch'in* often called the Chinese violin, is the leading instrument of vocal accompaniment. Its sound box is made of bamboo, the ends of which are covered with snake skin, while two strings, about a foot in length, are striped with a bow. The *hu-ch'in* was not originally a Chinese instrument, but came from the northern barbarian tribes known as the *Hu*, from which it derived its name. In the course of time, however, the Chinese kept modifying the instrument until it acquired its present form. While the *hu-ch'in* was introduced by the Ch'ings, it had been in use among the northern *Hus* for some time.

THE YUEH-CH'IN OR MOON GUITAR

The *yueh-ch'in*, often called the Chinese guitar or mandolin, is also an important instrument for vocal accompaniment, and is used to support the *hu-ch'in*. The instrument consists of a piece of round wood, with four strings, which are shorter than those of the *hu-ch'in*, being about five or six inches in length.

THE HSIEN-TZU

The *hsien-tzu* is another stringed instrument that is commonly used in vocal accompaniment to assist the *hu-ch'in*. It is constructed of circular pieces of hard wood, over which is stretched snake skin. It has three strings of about three feet in length, and possesses a slight overtone.

THE TI-TZU OR FLUTE

The *ti-tzu*, also an instrument for vocal accompaniment, is made of a bamboo tube that is pierced with eight holes; and is held parallel to the mouth when played. It is somewhat similar to the European flute. The Chinese *ti-tzu*, which has in its second hole a thin layer of rush tissue, is considered most pleasant to the ear. It is the leading instrument for vocal accompaniment in *kun-ch'u* drama, and held the most important position in the orchestra until the *hu-ch'in* along with the *p'i huang* drama, was introduced by the northern *Hus*.

THE SHENG OR REED ORGAN

The *sheng*, also an instrument for vocal accompaniment, may be classified in the same family as the *ti-tzu*, or flute. While all other instruments in China are single-toned, the *sheng* alone has harmony. It is constructed of over ten pieces of bamboo, each of which contains a hole, the entire number being fastened to a frame. The sound, produced by blowing, while weak, is delightful to the ear.

THE ERH-HU OR TWO-STRINGED HU

The *erh-hu*, also a stringed instrument for vocal accompaniment, possesses tones that are somewhat lower than those of the *hu-ch'in*. Like the latter instrument, it is constructed of a wooden frame, over the ends of which is stretched snake skin, its two strings being about one foot and five inches in length. The *erh-hu* is a modification of the *hu-ch'in*.

THE SZU-HU OR FOUR-STRINGED HU

The *szu-hu*, also an instrument for vocal accompaniment, is similar in construction to the *erh-hu*, the only difference being that it has four strings instead of two. It is also an offspring of the parent *hu-ch'in*.

THE SHAO NA OR CLARIONET

The *shao na*, while customarily used as a solo instrument, may sometimes be played for vocal accompaniment. A female impersonator never uses this instrument for singing. The *shao na*, said to have been introduced from the savage tribes of the west, is made of a piece of wood, pierced with eight holes. At the upper end is a piece of rush tissue, attached to the mouthpiece, producing a loud sound when blown. At the lower end, is a brass sound-magnifier. The Chinese *shao na* is like that of India.

THE LO OR GONG

The *lo* is an auxiliary instrument entirely, and is beaten when a musical passage is to begin or just about to close, or at times it may be sounded once or twice in the course of a musical selection, ostensibly to delight the ear. When an actor first comes upon the stage, or is about to depart, or is executing pantomimic gesture, the gong is commonly used. This instrument is made of a piece of brass, the edges of which are bent into a circle; it is struck with a wooden stick.

THE NAO OR CYMBALS

The *nao*, or cymbals, are used after the fashion of the gong; they also are constructed of brass, the two pieces having between them a place for the hands. During the last decade, the military bands of many countries have added the *nao* to their collections of instruments.

THE HSIAO LO OR SMALL GONG

The *hsiao lo*, or small gong, is similar to the large gong, and is beaten alternately with the larger instrument. It is used most when a *tan*, or female impersonator, steps upon the stage for the first time. While similar to the large gong in construction, the small gong is but six or seven inches in diameter; it is convex.

THE BELL

The bell is used exclusively to aid in keeping time, while additional tappings on the same are done to delight the ear. It is made of brass into a cup-shaped instrument, while at the upper end is bored a hole through which a string is passed for hanging. When in use, the bells are beaten together.

THE CHIU YIN LO OR NINE TONED

The *chiu yin lo* is played to restricted tempo, and while used with other instruments, is never played when an actor sings, for it is believed that the tones of this instrument confuse the tones of the human voice. The *chiu yin lo* is made of nine gong-shaped pieces of brass each of about two inches in diameter; which are hung in a wooden frame; they are hit with a small wooden stick in strict time with the directions given in the musical score.

REPERTOIRE

for the AMERICAN TOUR *of*

MEI LAN-FANG

P L A Y S

1. The Auspicious Hour and the Beating of Hung-niang.
2. A Nun Seeks Love.
3. Killing the Tiger General.
4. The Goddess of the River Lo.
5. Kuei-fei Intoxicated with Wine.
6. The King's Parting with His Favourite.
7. Beauty's Smile.
8. Mu-lan in the Army.
9. The Pavilion of the Royal Monument.
10. The Meeting of Many Heroes.
11. Hsin-an Inn.

THE AUSPICIOUS HOUR AND THE BEATING OF HUNG-NIANG

Chia Chi K'ao Hung

Scenes from The Western Chamber; *Hsi Hsiang*

Cast of Characters in Order of Appearance

Chang Ch'un-jui......................

Hung-niang, a Maidservant............MEI LAN-FANG

Ying-ying, her Mistress................

Mrs. Ts'ui, Ying-ying's Mother.........

THE STORY IN BRIEF

OF the Yuan or Golden period of Chinese drama (1280-1368), the outstanding masterpiece is *The Western Chamber.* The best liked scenes *The Auspicious Hour* and *The Beating of Hung-niang* make severe demands on the leading actor, because the three essentials of Chinese drama: singing, recitation and acting are of the most exacting nature.

The music, known as the *k'un-ch'ü,* a quiet style flourishing in the Yuan and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties, has been displaced by a noisier kind. The leading instrument of the orchestra is the flute although the *shêng,* or ancient reed organ, has a prominent place.

The drama tells of a certain youth, Chang Ch'un-jui, who met a Mrs. Ts'ui and her pretty daughter, Ying-ying, in a monastery. The mother promises to give her consent to the marriage of the couple provided Chang drives off the bandits who, at the time, were terrorizing the district. This he accomplishes but the woman does not keep her word.

It is at this point that the action of the scenes to be presented this evening begins. The youth and maid take matters into their own hands; but since in old China the rigid moral barriers between the sexes made meetings difficult, Ying-ying's vivacious maidservant, Hung-niang, proceeds with keen enjoyment to arrange trysts for the lovers.

Mrs. Ts'ui, suspecting that something was amiss, beats Hung-niang into confession. The pert maidservant not only reminds the mother of her broken promise but makes it clear that marriage alone will save the situation. To this the woman sullenly agrees but demands that Chang leave at dawn to take the imperial examinations.

THE SCENES IN DETAIL

SCENE 1. Through the moonlit garden, Hung-niang leads her mistress to Chang's study. She knocks on the imaginary door while the shy Ying-ying waits at a distance. To tease Chang, Hung-niang at first pretends that her mistress has not come.

Unable to get rid of the sprightly maidservant, Chang tells her to look about for intruders and takes the opportunity to hurry Ying-ying into his room, bolting the door.

Hung-niang objects to being left alone. With her ear to the imaginary door, she sings and shows by delicate pantomime the joys of the lovers. One passage of the song will give the flavour of the scene: "Like dew dropping on a peony that blooms forth its fragrance and a flying bee that takes its honey. The cloud-like hair massed over her temples heeds not the falling and breaking of jewelled hairpins. . . . " Extremely impatient, she knocks on the door, reminding her mistress that she must not linger too long in her happiness lest she risk the disaster of discovery.

When the lovers come into the garden, Hung-niang tells them how she objects to being left outside. She first sees that Ying-ying has gone off before she proceeds to banter with Chang, but retreats in dainty confusion when she hears her mistress calling her.

SCENE 2. The mother, concerned over the fact that Ying-

ying has not appeared well of late, summons Hung-niang. The lively girl enters, lifting her foot to indicate that she has stepped over the doorsill and singing to herself that if it were not for her efforts the lovers never could have realized their desires. When the woman commands her to kneel, Hung-niang saucily asks what wrong she has committed to merit punishment, but on being intimidated, gracefully sinks to her knees.

"What have you been doing on your daily excursions to the garden?"

"Burning incense," replied Hung-niang, who added that it was done to pray for long life for the old woman!

Knowing this to be a gross falsehood, Mrs. Ts'ui applies the resounding bamboo rod to Hung-niang who slowly confesses that she and Ying-ying had called on Chang to inquire about his recent illness. She also remarked that she had left her mistress alone with the youth. That was enough to enrage the old woman, for she believed it a breach of morals for her daughter even to visit Chang.

In the end, Hung-niang manages to extricate herself from the abject position of receiving strokes to the triumphant one in which she counsels, not without a touch of mischievous delight, the woman to consent to the marriage of the lovers. She makes it clear that there is no other way to avoid scandal and to make the best of matters. The indignant but helpless Mrs. Ts'ui, summons the offenders.

Outside, Hung-niang, their self-appointed guardian to the last, encourages the trembling youth and her shamefaced mistress. As the guilty couple enters the room, each lifts his foot to indicate he has passed through the door.

When the mother upbraids Ying-ying, Hung-niang flippantly remarks, "This is but her first offense!"

"Mr. Chang," began the woman seriously, "I am giving you Ying-ying to wife but after your marriage to-day, you must proceed on the morrow to the Capital to take the examinations, because for three generations in our family there have been no sons-in-law who have not worn official robes. . . ."

When the nuptial wine is handed from prospective groom to bride, Hung-niang gleefully steals a sip as her due reward as match-maker. This never fails to delight Chinese audiences.

As the old woman is about to leave, Hung-niang imitates the remarks made by the former, at which Mrs. Ts'ui reprimands her. Hung-niang brazenly denies she has imitated the woman and saucily exclaims, "Whoever imitates our old mistress must kneel and receive one hundred strokes." The woman insists the girl is guilty but the latter boldly makes denial, in the same breath mimicking the mother as the latter makes her exit.

The highly stylized acting of the dainty, restless and saucy Hung-niang is the forerunner of a legion of maidservants who now grace Chinese plays but few of them reveal the fresh vitality of Hung-niang, who throughout the centuries, has maintained her invincible spirit.

A NUN SEEKS LOVE

Ssu Fan

A Monodrama

BY MEI LAN-FANG

AN outstanding musical monodrama of the present Chinese stage, sung to the soft accompaniment of the flute and other instruments, is *A Nun Seeks Love.* Recitation, song, posture and dance harmonize to produce a synthesis that is typical of Chinese dramatic art. The duster of horsehair and the headdress indicate that the character is a nun.

The maiden recites how deeply she regrets that a lamp only accompanies her to slumber and that her youth may vanish before she has tasted of the joys of love. In childhood, she had been given by her parents to the monastery, where life has been a monotonous routine of burning incense, reciting sutras, pouring water,—and worst of all, her solitary couch.

She sings that one day while at the foot of the hill, she had exchanged meaningful glances with a handsome youth and that she would gladly endure the tortures of Hades if thereby she might be joined in wedlock to him. The endless repetition of O-mi-t'o-Fu, the Buddhist Amen, and the monotonous sound of ceremonial bells, gongs and wooden fish-drums weary her.

Tired of chanting and craving for life, the nun both announces and sings that she will try to lighten the heaviness of her heart by strolling. She indicates she has passed out of her cell by lifting her left foot over the imaginary doorsill.

A few encircling steps accompanied by song and she has passed along the covered walk to arrive at the Hall of the Lohan. Her hands push apart the imaginary panels of the door, while her left foot is lifted over the doorsill as she enters.

Looking up, she recites that to either side of her are solemn arrays of idols. By pantomime and song the maiden depicts various figures; one with his hands clasped about a knee, one with the palm of the hand supporting his chin, and still another gazing at her through weary eyes. She sings that the Laughing Buddha, Maitreya, smiles as if asking who will want her when she is old. She further contrasts the bliss of wedlock and the emptiness of monastic life.

The depression caused by dull religious duties vanishes instantly when she has decided to seek the youth of her desire. Singing that she will take off her nun's robes and put from her sight the holy books while she actually does so, the sad nun is at once transformed into a creature sparkling with high hopes for life and love.

Posturing in the exultation of freedom, the nun sings: ". . . To-day I will go far from the temple; go down the hill to seek a youth. He may beat me, revile me; yet, would I not choose to become a Bodhisattva or to chant the sutras. . . ."

Mincing steps indicate that the nun has descended the hill and gone out into "the world."

The dance of the finale, like much of the singing in Chinese drama, is descriptive of the character's state of mind rather than of the actual occasion. At the same time, the dance itself pleases the eye, as does the richness of the costume. The latter, while following the general lines of a nun's garments, does not conform to them in colour and quality. The situation vividly drives home the fact that the highly stylized use of the voice, the conventionalized grace of gesture and the display of costume are above all an effort to please the ears and eyes of the audience, a requisite that a Chinese playwright and stage-manager never loses sight of.

KILLING THE TIGER GENERAL

Tz'u Hu

A One-Act Play

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Fei Chen-o, a Court Lady . . . . MEI LAN-FANG

Ts'ao Fang-ts'ai, of the enemy forces and known as the "Tiger" General . . . .

Courtmaids

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

YEARS have not dimmed the memory of the valiant court lady, Fei Chen-o, who lived during the reign of the last Ming emperor, Huai Tsung (1628-1643). To-day Peking residents still point to the spot where she is said to have avenged the royal family and where a peony, planted by her, may still be seen.

NOTES

The music of the play is known as the *k'un-ch'ü*, a quiet style, in which the notes of the flute dominate. It is a fine art which flourished during the Yuan and Ming dynasties and which the élite of China to-day are making an effort to revive.

Ts'ao Fang-ts'ai is a *hua-lien*, or conventional type, characterized by painted faces and the use of the full voice. Here, dramatic effect rather than realism is sought, as is generally true of Chinese drama.

THE STORY

After the tragic death of the imperial family she had served, the court lady, Fei Chen-o impersonates the princess in order to mete vengeance on the rebel, Li Tzu-ch'eng, whom the royal maiden was to wed. But when Li unexpectedly gives the princess to his foster brother, Ts'ao Fang-ts'ai, the "Tiger" General, Chen-o decides to kill the latter.

She first drugs her victim with wine and on the nuptial bed, thrusts the fatal dagger into the man's body, thus avenging the family she loved. Rather than face the torture that awaited her Fei Chen-o, deeply regretting her inability to kill Li Tzu-ch'eng, takes her own life with the same weapon.

THE PLAY IN DETAIL

Having sung that hers is a desire for vengeance, Fei Chen-o proceeds to recite how kindly she had been treated by the empress, who had ordered her to wait on the princess and how the rebels had forced on the emperor and his family an unhappy death. She reflects bitterly that none who have enjoyed the imperial bounty are ready to wipe out the disgrace and so decides to impersonate the princess. The foregoing facts are recited directly to the audience in characteristic Chinese stage fashion. When the blowing of musical instruments announces the arrival of the man, the heroine tearfully exits to don her disguise.

The prospective groom, Ts'ao Fang-ts'ai, known as the "Tiger" General, enters, tipsy from the wine which his fellow-officers had forced on him by way of congratulation. The female attendants summon Chen-o, now dressed as the princess. Ts'ao is delighted when the maiden lauds his prowess. He assures her they will rule together.

The wedding ceremony is performed. While Chen-o sings of the nuptial candles, implying that theirs will be long years of wedded bliss, she persuades the man to drink beakers of strong wine. She cleverly has the two female attendants sent off on the pretense that she herself will minister to his wants. She also objects to his wearing armour on this happy occasion. Once more, she prevails upon him not to call the attendants but insists on helping him take off the heavy garments.

Having seen that he first gets into bed, she sings of the precious ornaments she is taking off. The beating of the second watch, 10 P.M. to midnight, is heard. She approaches the embroidered bed curtains and calls the man twice, and on receiving no reply, sings with emotion, "Brigand, receive the point of my dagger!" She stabs her victim again and again.

When the female attendants appear and threaten to call for help, Chen-o silences them with the threatening dagger. She refuses to be addressed as the princess and reveals her own identity. The women accuse Chen-o of wickedness; but the latter realizes that they can know nothing of the high motives that prompted her action. Loudly addressing herself by name and regretting her failure to kill the rebel leader, Li, she diverts the attention of the women from herself while she plunges the bloody dagger into her body.

The attendants weep over Ts'ao Fang-ts'ai.

THE GODDESS OF THE RIVER LO

Lo Shen

A One-Act Play

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Ts'ao Tzu-chien.......................
A Minor Official of Lo Ch'uan-.........
Fairy................................
Fairy................................
The Goddess of the River Lo...........MEI LAN-FANG
Eunuchs, Celestial Pages, etc.

INTRODUCTION

THIS is a theme that never grows old, namely, the tale of a love, unrealized on earth but carried to the Great Beyond. The inspiration of the drama is to be found in the immortal essay by Ts'ao Tzu-chien. His ecstatic phrases extol a goddess who, in reality, is the shade of his departed loved one. Mr. Mei Lan-fang's dances, songs and pantomime, which capture the spirit of the essay and which portray the Goddess Lo, so-called because she disported herself at the river of the same name, are considered the acme of ancient costume drama by the present Chinese public.

THE PLAY BY SCENES

SCENE 1. Ts'ao Tzu-chien, who has just had an imperial audience, is accompanied by his head eunuchs. The latter carry dusters of horse-hair, which here are used for the practical purpose of dusting chairs and furniture before the advent of a distinguished person but which often may denote personages of divine origin, priests, monks, nuns, recluses, etc.

Ts'ao having recited his introduction and a poem, announces his name to the audience in characteristic Chinese stage fashion. He is eager to return home. The holding of the horsewhip and appropriate gestures imply that the hero is riding. Singing, Ts'ao shifts from one side of the stage to the other, as do his men, the movement indicating that the retinue is travelling. At Lo Ch'uan a minor official welcomes them.

The party encircle the stage and thereby accomplish the journey which brings them to the imperial hostel maintained for the accommodation of official travellers. All withdraw leaving the guest to sleep. The regular drum beats in the orchestra denote the passing of the night.

Ts'ao asks for the gold-embroidered cushion, which had once belonged to the maiden he loved. He first recites his lines but as his emotions are aroused, he sings of memories the treasure revives. Placing his head on the cushion, he is soon deep in slumber.

The Goddess, on arriving, sends her celestial attendants away. Unwilling to disturb her sleeping lover, she decides to summon him in a dream to meet her on the day following at the bank of the River Lo. The duster of horsehair, carried by the Goddess, indicates her divine

nature. On awaking, Ts'ao sings of his dream and decides to rest in order to rise early to keep his tryst with the beautiful apparition.

SCENE 2. Two fairies go to the Goddess in answer to her summons and agree to sing and dance with her in order to entertain Ts'ao Tzu-chien.

Meanwhile, the hero brandishing a whip to denote that he is riding, sings that he has arrived at the river. The Goddess asks him if he recognizes her.

She leads him to a secluded part of the river bank, where she and her companions entertain him with pageantry and dance. Accompanied by divine maidens, the Goddess sings while she dances and postures. From the last words of her song, Ts'ao Tzu-chien discovers that the Goddess is the apparition of Pi-fei, the woman he had loved.

She presents the man with a pearl earring as a keepsake, while the latter, in return gives her a jade pendant. After thanking her attendants for their assistance, the Goddess takes one long, lingering glance at Ts'ao and vanishes forever. The other, controlling his emotion, departs.

KUEI-FEI INTOXICATED WITH WINE

Kuei-fei Tsui Chiu

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Yang Kuei-fei........................MEI LAN-FANG
P'ei Li-shih, a Eunuch................
Kao Li-shih, a Eunuch................
Courtmaids..........................

THE PLAY IN BRIEF

THIS popular playlet deals with Yang Kuei-fei, the most artful of China's four great beauties and the supreme favourite of the emperor Ming Huang of the T'ang dynasty, whose long reign extended from 713-755. Kuei-fei, who had agreed to meet her royal lover in the Pavilion of a Hundred Flowers, learned that the latter had not only broken his promise but had gone to Mei-fei, her most hated rival. Consumed with pique and jealousy, the beauty drains one bumper of wine after another until she sways about in a series of tottering dances. The slender plot provides a framework for the rapid changes in mood, dances of inebriation, expression of bitter jealousy and dreamy wine-laden songs which hold for Chinese audiences a perennial charm.

THE PLAY BY SCENES

SCENE 1. Yang Kuei-fei, attended by her women and the eunuchs, P'ei Li-shih and Kao Li-shih, enters singing languidly that the moon, rising like the Goddess, Ch'ang-o, from the Moon Palace, has flooded the world with dazzling brightness. She is joyous at the prospect of banqueting with the emperor. Having received homage from the eunuchs, she recites among other things that although there are three thousand beauties in the palaces, her lord has bestowed all his love on her person. As is the common practice on the Chinese stage, she announces her name and tells the audience directly of her tryst with the Son of Heaven.

The eunuchs carry dusters of horsehair, which usually denote personages of divine origin, nuns, monks, recluses and so on, but which here are employed for the practical purpose of brushing chairs and furniture before the arrival of royalty.

The retinue make their way towards the Pavilion, shifting their positions from one side of the stage to the other to denote travel in the conventional manner. The eunuchs call the woman's attention to the Jade-Stone Bridge, the ascent of which is indicated by wrapping the sleeve about the elevated wrist and stepping carefully with a motion suggestive of mounting. From the imaginary elevation, Kuei-fei looks down upon and sings of the handsome goldfish. She also is attracted by the swans overhead. Having sung in praise of the passing scene, she concludes as follows: ". . . We arrive at the Pavilion of a Hundred Flowers."

On learning from the eunuchs that the emperor has gone to the Western Palace, the apartment of her rival, Kuei-fei, attempting to conceal her burning jealousy and wounded pride orders one cup of strong wine after the other.

SCENE 2. When the favourite exits, the eunuchs move pots of flowers in order to decorate the pavilion. Here pantomine and the words of the eunuchs alone suggest the existence of the unseen pots.

SCENE 3. Yang Kuei-fei re-enters with tottering movements and sinks to her knees when she hears that His Majesty has arrived. On learning that the announcement is a mistake, she can no longer control the passion which the wine has aroused and proceeds to make advances to the unfortunate P'ei Li-shih. Her next victim is Kao Li-shih, the white spot across his nose marking him as a conventional comedian.

The carefully arranged scenes carried out with the two eunuchs, who, in turn, occupy first one side of the stage, then, the other, incidentally reveal the Chinese fondness for balance, which is so marked in other artistic endeavours, notably in architecture.

When the eunuchs announce that the hour is late, Kuei-fei having once more expressed her displeasure with the emperor, dolefully sings, "I return alone to the palace."

THE KING'S PARTING WITH HIS FAVOURITE

Pa Wang Pieh Chi

A One-Act Historical Drama

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Yu Chi, Favourite of Hang Yu.........MEI LAN-FANG
Hang Yu.............................
Female Attendants, Soldiers, etc.

THE FALSETTO

The heroine, Yu Chi, sings and speaks in a highly stylized manner known as the falsetto. Its appeal lies in a maze of intricate conventions, admittedly artificial. The mode, originally created by men who sang the leading feminine parts, is preferred to the natural voice of actresses, who now invariably attempt to master the conventionalized falsetto.

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

THE action of this historical play is based on the last moments of Hang Yu, a renowned character, who lived during the period of Chinese history remembered as the "Struggle between Ch'u and Han" (B. C. 206-202). Hang Yu's rival for the national supremacy, Liu Pang, was destined to become the founder of the great house of Han.

The quick temper and impulsive nature of Hang Yu, which hasten his downfall, are kept well to the fore both in action and in speech. The role conventionally is classified as a *ching*, also *hua-lien*, or painted-face type, which sings and recites in a rich and full, if somewhat raucous, tone of voice.

On the other hand, Liu Pang, ever resourceful and infinitely patient, in the end became victor. The years of struggle and bloodshed were marked by Hang Yu's winning a series of mighty battles. But when Liu Pang made Han Hsin the head of his military affairs, the tide of fortune at once turned in his favour.

THE DRAMA OF THE EVENING

Yu Chi, the favourite of Hang Yu, accompanied by her female attendants, enters singing that she has followed her royal spouse through many severe winter campaigns.

Hang Yu, holds high a whip, which signifies that he is riding on his famous steed. Having gone through the conventional pantomime of dismounting, he addresses Yu Chi, who asks news of the day's battle. Crestfallen, the man informs her that after being entrapped in an ambush, he has suffered reverse. The woman consoles him saying, "Victory and defeat are in the life of a soldier but matters of course; there is no need for despondency."

They drink wine in order to forget their sorrows.

Hang Yu and his spouse step behind the embroidered curtains, which represent a bed. The beatings of the drum in the orchestra mark the passing of the night. Mindful of her consort's problems, Yu Chi makes sure that he is asleep before she goes out into the moonlight to walk and to think. Dolorous wailings in the night cause the woman to sigh over the sufferings of her people whose families have been ruthlessly torn apart and whose blanched bones litter the river banks.

From the distance in the enemy camp may be heard the songs of her own native Ch'u, Liu Pang, the rival leader, had his men sing the songs in order to weaken the morale of his enemy. His plan was to make the latter believe that he had already captured Ch'u so that Hang Yu's men would have no place to return.

Two soldiers discuss the situation and at once conclude that the songs are evidence that the enemy have vanquished their people, on whom they were depending for reinforcements. Consequently, their present depleted force of eight thousand men is inadequate to meet the victorious enemy. They decide to support the conqueror.

Yu Chi, who overhears the conversation, is grief-stricken to learn that the soldiers intend to desert them. Once more the intriguing melody floats across the night. After she has aroused Hang Yu, the distant song continues: "If we are slain on the field of combat, on whom will our parents depend?"

In the excitement of trying to discover why the enemy sang songs of Ch'u, Hang Yu, half-dazed, at once suspects that the opposing forces have taken his native district. Yu Chi, always careful to console her irascible mate, suggests that he send scouts to learn what is the exact situation before he draws conclusions. When informed that the songs are actually those of Ch'u, the gloomy warrior concludes that all is lost. The woman, however, assures him he must keep faith and seek reinforcements elsewhere. In fateful tones, Hang Yu continues: ". . . My consort, my beloved, during the many years of battle you have accompanied me, we have never been separated; but to-day by the turn of events I know that it is the time for our final parting." He sings of his grief at their leavetaking.

His faithful horse, outside the tent, neighs mournfully. The animal, represented by a whip, is led in. Hang Yu strokes and tearfully addresses it as in farewell, saying that although they have passed through innumerable victories, to-day the steed has no opportunity to display its prowess; he sings that Fate must be against him as the neighing of the faithful animal too clearly proved. The horse is led away.

Assuring him that his stronghold will stand until he has secured help, Yu Chi tries to persuade Hang Yu to revive his spirits. Stricken with grief herself, she invites her mate to drink fragrant wine. When the man again sings of his forebodings, Yu Chi with supreme effort arouses herself to do the sword dance which never failed to delight her lord. The woman sings encouragement and bravely dances. Secretly she wipes away her tears.

A messenger announces that the enemy are attacking them from all sides. When about to set forth, Hang Yu informs Yu Chi that they may never meet again, singing that if he fails to return it is because Heaven has decreed his end. The woman insists that even in the event of defeat, he might seek a kingdom elsewhere and that he should not allow thought for her safety to cause him anxiety.

The man begs that she take a carriage and follow him; otherwise, he would be unable to find heart to fight his way out. When he offers her safety with the ruler of the enemy, Yu Chi heroically replies: "Your Majesty's words are wrong. A faithful minister will not serve two sovereigns; a virtuous matron will not wed twice. If you wish to conquer an empire, why should you be hindered by concern for one woman? Gladly I beg of you the sword by your side that I may end my own life to repay you for your love and to end your thought of me." When Hang Yu refuses to give her the fatal weapon, she sings that she cannot live on alone. Diverting his attention she seizes the sword and dies with her eyes gazing at him. Weeping hoarsely, Hang Yu regrets that he cannot save the life of the woman he loves.

According to actual historical record, Hang Yu committed suicide at the O-Chiang River, not far from Hochou, which today is in the province of Anhui.

BEAUTY'S SMILE

Ch'ien Chin I Hsiao

Pao-yu, a youthful Dandy..............
Ch'ing-wen, a Maidservant.............MEI LAN-FANG
Hsi-jen, a Maidservant.................

THE PLAY IN BRIEF

THE action of this drama is based on incidents from the famous Chinese novel, *Hung Lou Meng*, or *The Dream of the Red Upper Storeys*, also commonly known among foreigners as *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Pao-yu, a much spoiled youth of a wealthy family, spent his time idling with the charming young women of the large household. Sometimes, amusing, if bitter and protracted, quarrels grew from trifling or imaginary reasons, as in this instance, because of a fan. Pao-yu, who had returned from a sumptuous holiday banquet, asked the maidservant, Ch'ing-wen, to assist him take off his coat. The girl unwittingly let fall his fan which became damaged, whereupon the youth upbraided her with stinging sarcasm. Ch'ing-wen, who had much affection for her master, was nevertheless a little spitfire and came back at him with more than full measure. Driven to distraction, the youth was on the point of sending the girl away. Only the intervention of Hsi-jen, another maidservant, whose intimacy with Pao-yu had become a scandal among the other menials, saved the tearful Ch'ing-wen from being driven from the house. The saucy offender showed no gratitude towards Hsi-jen, because she well knew that the latter was insincere in her action.

When alone, Ch'ing-wen, suffering remorse and misery, fell asleep. Pao-yu returning from a feast and feeling

lonely, had quite forgotten or at least had forgiven what had gone before. Ch'ing-wen, on the other hand, hung onto the subject. Knowing that the girl must have the satisfaction of unconditional victory in the quarrel, Pao-yu gave her a fan, which he requested her to tear. This she does with naive delight. But when the youth hands her a second fan, Ch'ing-wen, unable to maintain her displeasure any longer, smiles saying she will tear it on another day!

THE PLAY BY SCENES

Scene 1. The luxury-surfeited Pao-yu finding no pleasure in the holiday feast given by the family, returns to his apartment. He lifts his foot over the doorsill to indicate that he has entered his room. As often happens in Chinese drama, he sits directly facing the audience and recites as follows: "You see there is not a single soul in the house. Hsi-jen, I think, has not got up. Ch'ing-wen, Ch'ing-wen!"

The maidservant enters and while helping Pao-yu take off his coat, lets fall his fan, which is broken. The youth, who had been in ill humour for days, called her a silly stupid and asked how after she had her own family, she could manage her own affairs when she was so careless with his fan. Ch'ing-wen, not to be worsted, replied at great length, spitefully narrating how yesterday he had kicked Hsi-jen and how to-day he was making it a point to find fault with her. She maintained that the mere dropping of a fan was a matter of no importance, that more valuable things had been broken causing no comment, that if he did not like the service she gave him, he was free to seek elsewhere for it! Although Ch'ing-wen had deep affection for Pao-yu, she was too honest to resort to the flattering ways of her rival, Hsi-jen.

As the quarrel grows worse, Pao-yu calls the maidservant, Hsi-jen, who reveals her attitude by saying, ". . . and when I am away for a moment, trouble begins. . . ." The frank but fiery tempered Ch'ing-wen adds with vengeance, ". . . You should have come earlier to save the master from anger! From ancient times to the present you are the only person who knows how to wait on him. Because you tended him too well yesterday, he rewarded you with blows and kicks!"

Hsi-jen smiles. Her efforts to make peace are met with bitter sarcasm from Ch'ing-wen who hints at the affair between the other maidservant and Pao-yu. In the end, the quarrel is shifted from the youth to Hsi-jen, who in order to show her own good character, tries to pacify the other girl.

Enraged, Pao-yu starts off to tell his grandmother to dismiss Ch'ing-wen; but Hsi-jen, still acting, on her knees begs him to forgive the girl. Well knowing that the display is insincere, Ch'ing-wen dislikes her rival all the more. She insists she has done nothing to merit being sent off, maintaining that she is the innocent victim of their meanness. After Hsi-jen has persuaded Pao-yu to be lenient and to go to his room to rest, Ch'ing-wen, defiant to the last, makes sly gestures at Hsi-jen insinuating that the latter had better join her master in his room.

Scene 2. Ch'ing-wen enters reciting a poem after which she seats herself narrating that Pao-yu has been invited to a banquet. She prepares his bed with great care and affection. The girl has fallen asleep when late in the night Pao-yu, slightly intoxicated, returns. He lifts his foot over the doorsill to enter his room. Although Ch'ing-wen has espied him, she purposely pretends to be asleep. Pao-yu awakens the girl, explaining he has mistaken her for Hsi-jen. The latter exclaims, "And who else but her do you have in your heart?"

His affection aroused, he goes on to explain that the tearing of the fan was of no importance and that Hsi-jen had merely tried to make peace. Ch'ing-wen is embarrassed but rather than directly admit her fault, smilingly confesses that she is unworthy of being in Pao-yu's room.

When Ch'ing-wen starts off for her bath, Pao-yu insists on joining her but the girl waves her hand in a playful and horrified refusal. She laughingly reminds him how when he had been attended at a bath by the maidservant, Pi-hen, water had been splashed over the floor and the bed and how for days the incident had been laughed at among the other maidservants.

Pao-yu finally asks for his fan, which the girl offers to bring. When a firefly appears, Ch'ing-wen sings she will capture it with the fan, but the insect makes good its escape. Pantomime alone suggests the existence of the firefly.

The youth has a difficult time persuading the beauty to sit because he has left such a small space for her that she cannot take her place without leaning on him. It is only after he has moved well to one side that she sits and chats.

He asks her to eat fruit with him and not to call the others, not even Hsi-jen. The girl suddenly exclaims that if she has damaged his fan then how can she bring the dish of fruit safely. Knowing that his fair companion still harbours resentment, Pao-yu assures her that if she derives pleasure from tearing fans, she shall do so. When Ch'ing-wen tells him nothing could give her more joy, he hands her a fan, which she tears with a dainty sense of vengeance. She sings how pleasant the sound of ripping fans is to her ears! When Hsi-jen enters with her fan, Pao-yu snatches and gives it to Ch'ing-wen to destroy. The beauty smiling with mischievous charm, informs the other two that she is weary but will continue the tearing on the next day.

Pao-yu laughs exclaiming: "The ancients said, 'It is difficult even for a thousand pieces of gold to purchase a smile,' so of what worth are a few paltry fans! It is late. You should return to your room, for tearing fans has made your hands weary. . . ."

As Pao-yu leaves and Hsi-jen follows him, Ch'ing-wen, saucy to the last, gazes insinuatingly after the girl and whispers, "A slightly intoxicated youth accompanies you to slumber!" "What did you say?" demands Hsi-jen. To which Ch'ing-wen replies, "The master in his room is calling you!" Hsi-jen exclaims, "Your words are always filled with unjust insinuations!" Whereupon, Ch'ing-wen, highly delighted, passes her finger over her cheek as a sign of shaming her rival and gaily exits.

MU-LAN IN THE ARMY

Mu-lan Ts'ung Chun

Cast of Characters in Order of Appearance

Hua Hu, a Retired Soldier..............

Hua Mu-lan, his Daughter.............Mei Lan-Fang

The Khan of T'u-li, or King of the Barbarians.............................

Ho T'ing-yu, the Chinese Generalissimo..

The Emperor.........................

A Messenger, a Barbarian General, Banner Bearers, Eunuchs, etc.

FOREWORD

CELEBRATED in story, poem and drama is Mu-lan, who, over fifteen hundred years ago, donned the costume of a warrior and went to fight in the place of her aged father. In old China, the motive of filial piety was as great as, if not greater than, patriotism.

Since feminine roles in Chinese drama are written for men who impersonate women, as was also done in Shakespeare's time, it is not surprising that on both stages there is a distinctive group of heroines who masquerade as men.

THE STORY IN BRIEF

In order that her father who had recently been ill may remain in safety at home, Mu-lan answers the imperial summons by wearing a soldier's uniform and going forth to fight the barbarians. For twelve years, she remains undetected, saving the life of the generalissimo and winning imperial recognition for her bravery. A model daughter, she returns from the rigours of the field and her great triumph to put on her feminine attire and to perform homely duties in the women's apartments.

Scene 1. This episode and others depict the happy life in an old Chinese family with its touch of formal dignity and its concern for the well being of each member of the group.

Hua Hu, in typical Chinese stage fashion, recites as follows: "I am Hua Hu, a native of T'inganfu, Shensi. In the past, I served in the army; but after my retirement, I have passed my days here in Shang-i Village. . . . Life is quite pleasant. . . ."

Mu-lan entering, sings what, in reality, are her own thoughts, "Since my father has just recovered from illness, and his appetite must be poor, I bring to him a tray of food." She then greets him and informs him that she has prepared game birds, which she herself has killed.

An imperial messenger arrives outside the house. Although in plain view of the other two characters, stage convention allows an imaginary wall to shut him off from view. He knocks on the unseen door, which Hua Hu suggests by pantomime he has opened. The lifting of the left foot over the doorsill denotes that the old man has stepped out. He reads the royal summons to arms.

Mu-lan is unwilling that her aged father, still weak from illness, go to the wars. After much argument, she succeeds in convincing Hua Hu that she can don his warrior's costume and take his place, mentioning that Chinese history was not without examples of women who had fought for their country.

Scene 2. Two barbarian soldiers, who may represent as many men as the text calls for, precede the barbarian king, known as the Great Khan of T'u-li, who recites that it is his life-ambition to devastate the Middle Kingdom. In typical stage fashion, he announces his title and remarks that the enemy camp is not far off, that he must be cautious in his attack.

The two pheasant plumes and two foxtails in the headdress indicate that the character is a barbarian.

Scene 3. Two soldiers carrying banners and representing as many hundreds or thousands of men as the drama requires, precede the Chinese generalissimo, Ho T'ing-yu, who sings of his devotion to his country. From his stronghold, here the conventional cloth gate with painted lines to represent bricks, he watches the barbarian horsemen ride by. Stage practice allows the latter to pass within easy reach of the Chinese onlooker although both parties are supposed to be separated by a considerable distance. The brandishing of whips indicates that the barbarian soldiers are riding past the foot of the rampart.

Scene 4. Hua Hu's singing that although Mu-lan is a girl, she is heroic by nature, reminds one of the strict seclusion in which women of that day lived. They were expected to attend to weaving, embroidering and other womanly duties.

Mu-lan enters reciting that she has changed her embroidered skirt for a warrior's costume. She sings, "Father, do you think I look the part?" Satisfied that Mu-lan can walk with a masculine stride, Hua Hu in order to make sure that his daughter's voice will be husky enough, pretends that he is the generalissimo and she a soldier addressing him. Again, she acquits herself creditably. The father reminds his daughter that hereafter she is to be known as Hua Hu and not as Mu-lan.

Scene 5. Two barbarian generals defeat two Chinese generals.

Scene 6. A wind instrument represents the neighing of the horse, which is merely the conventional whip held in Mu-lan's hand. She sings that she has purchased saddle and bridle. In recitation, she reveals that she has crossed the Yellow River and the Black Waters until white clouds obscure her village and the rushing of river waters silences the voice of her father.

The rapid strides about the stage indicate that Mu-lan is riding over a great distance.

Scene 7. When the generalissimo battles with the barbarians, he falls from his horse, Mu-lan drives off several of the enemy, rescuing her superior. The man's song mirrors the confused condition of his mind. On enquiring what is the name of his rescuer, Mu-lan tells him Hua Hu of T'inganfu. She hands the generalissimo a whip, while the latter executes the pantomime of mounting the horse. Both ride off.

Scene 8. The barbarian Khan recites that the youthful warrior, Hua Hu, prevents his defeating the Chinese. He has about decided to withdraw his forces when he is persuaded to make a surprise attack on the enemy at midnight.

Scene 9. A division of the army, represented by two soldiers carrying banners, enter with the generalissimo. Mu-lan, on coming, sings what, in reality, are her thoughts, namely, her belief that the birds she has seen flying in the dead of the night from the north must have been stirred up by the noise of the advancing horses of the enemy. This information she imparts to her superior, who at once sends her with three thousand cavalrymen to prepare an ambush for the barbarians.

Scene 10. The Khan of T'u-li and his men discover that they have gone into a trap and suffer severe defeat at the hands of Mu-lan. The gymnastic display with the spear has for its purpose the exhibition of the main actor's skill although the excited and speedy action heightens the idea of a mêlée.

Scene 11. The Khan with a defeated force of about two hundred men decides to withdraw to his own country.

Scene 12. The generalissimo on learning of the withdrawal of the enemy, sends the information to his emperor and awaits the order of the latter for the return of the Chinese army to the capital.

Scene 13. Two eunuchs carrying dusters of horsehair to brush off furniture, enter with the emperor, who recites that the barbarians have kept the land in a state of unsettlement but that he has received word from Ho T'ing-yu of a Chinese victory. At that moment, Ho himself arrives and is shown in.

When the emperor offers to confer high rank on the conqueror, the generalissimo magnanimously gives the credit of the victory to Mu-lan. The ruler then attempts to present her with a title, but Mu-lan refuses it on the ground that she prefers to return to take care of her parent.

"If those who do meritoriously are not well rewarded how can the world be made to want to do good deeds?" queries the monarch. To this, Mu-lan replies that he might use the reward that was hers to distribute among those who served under her. The emperor follows her suggestion and grants her permission to return for the time being to her native village.

Scene 14. The father, Hua Hu, who has heard of his daughter's success and return, goes forth to meet the heroine. Mu-lan riding by recognizes her father and dismounts from her steed. So changed is she that she must assure her parent she is his daughter. Hua Hu has turned grey.

Mu-lan's concern for her father is shown by her trying to persuade him not to grieve over the hardships she has suffered in the field and her fearing that the cold wind may prove injurous to him. She tenderly helps him along. As they make their way to their home, the father sings of his joy at receiving back his courageous daughter.

THE PAVILION OF THE ROYAL MONUMENT

Yu Pei T'ing

Cast of Characters in Order of Appearance

Wang Yu-tao, a Scholar................
Meng Yueh-hua, his Wife.............MEI LAN-FANG
Wang Shu-ying, his Sister.............
Te-lu, a Servant of the Meng Family.....
Mrs. Meng, Yueh-hua's Mother........
Liu Sheng-ch'un, a Youthful Scholar....
The Chief Examiner..................

NOTE ON FALSETTO SINGING

When the Emperor Ch'ien Lung (1736-1795) banished actresses from the professional stage, handsome youths essayed the roles of heroines, thus developing a highly specialized technique to portray the opposite sex. The impersonations are conventional rather than realistic, this being true of the vocalization, particularly the falsetto. The style gains its appeal from the intricacies of fixed conventions, admittedly artificial; and is preferred to the natural voice of women.

THE PLAY IN BRIEF

WANG YU-TAO, a poor and unsuccessful scholar, starts out for the Capital to participate in the imperial examinations, leaving at home his wife, Meng Yueh-hua, and his sister, Shu-ying.

The heroine, Yueh-hua, portrayed by Mr. Mei Langfang, belongs to the *ch'ing-i*, or conventional stage type for a well-bred and virtuous woman, falsetto singing of a difficult and highly stylized nature being stressed. There is also a vivid presentation of the strict moral beliefs held in domestic life not so many years ago.

The wife on returning from a visit to her mother, is driven by a terrific storm to a pavilion containing an imperial monument. Presently a youthful scholar seeks the same protection. Yueh-hua finds herself in a dilemma, for there is no other structure in sight. She must remain. Fortunately however, the newcomer understands the plight of the timid woman and spends the night huddling outside under the eaves. In accordance with the belief in the strict separation maintained between men and women, not a word passed between the strangers. At dawn each went his way.

So deeply impressed is Yueh-hua by the unknown man's gallantry that she tells the story to Shu-ying, who, on her brother's return, repeats the tale to him. The jealous man sends his wife to her mother on the pretext that the latter is ill. To her surprise, Yueh-hua finds her parent enjoying good health and is struck down with grief when she reads the letter in which her husband accuses her of unfaithfulness and puts her away.

How Wang Yu-tao passes the examinations with honours; how he learns from Liu Sheng-ch'un the youth who had spent the night at the pavilion of his wife's innocence; and how he abjectly begs Yueh-hua's forgiveness concludes a play, which, because of its popularity, is offered several times a year in leading Chinese cities.

The theme well illustrates the stress Chinese drama places on poetic justice. Thus, the husband, hitherto master of the situation, humbles himself before his wife. Liu Sheng-ch'un, who has accompanied Wang to help effect a reconciliation, is given Shu-ying as his wife. With Wang punished and Liu rewarded, the playwright has come to the point where "All's well that ends well" and the Chinese spectator is satisfied that each has had his due.

THE PLAY BY SCENES

SCENE 1. Wang Yu-tao recites that although he has studied the classics he has not yet been awarded official position. When he informs his wife, Yueh-hua, that he is about to journey to the Capital to take part in the examinations, she offers him a cup of wine, singing that he will surely succeed. The second cup, she sings, is in token of the love that exists between them. The sister, Shu-ying, while singing that she and her brother have been orphans since childhood, hands the latter a cup with her good wishes.

Yueh-hua unbolts and pulls open the panels of the imaginary door, over the sill of which they lift their feet as they leave the room.

Presently, Te-lu, a servant of Yueh-hua's family, appears saying that he has arrived and will knock on the door. The character, with white painted across his nose, is a conventional comedian type and apart from playing the role assigned in the drama, must also carry on the traditions of his class, which include a comical drawl of voice, a ludicrous carefree walk, an aptitude for extemporaneous humor and so on. Although the three characters are in plain view on the stage, the unseen wall of the house separates the women from the newcomer and it is not until Yueh-hua opens the door that she for the first time sees him. Te-lu informs Yueh-hua that her mother wishes her to return in order to worship at the ancestral graves. While unwilling to leave Shu-ying alone, the youthful wife decides to go but to return early. Shu-ying re-enters the house and bolts the door.

SCENE 2. Yueh-hua and her mother, back from the graves, are accompanied by Te-lu, who sings and then recites, "We have arrived at home; I beg that you enter." They therefore step over the doorsill. When Yueh-hua makes known her desire to return, the mother says, "We have just come back and have not yet had our rice," adding with firm decision, "it will not be too late to return tomorrow." Pretending that she is suffering pain, Yueh-hua enters the garden whence she hastens home. The mother sings querulously: "It is said that after rearing a daughter, she inevitably takes the surname of another. This is well said indeed, for as soon as mine comes home, she insists on leaving in haste."

SCENE 3. The rapid measures sung to express the eagerness of Yueh-hua to return to her sister-in-law are also descriptive of the quick steps the woman takes while encircling the stage. The action implies that a required distance has been travelled. The sleeve held high protects Yueh-hua from the rain. The slipping in the imaginary mud and the wringing of the supposedly wet garment illustrate admirably the conventions of the Chinese stage.

Having sung that she will remain in the pavilion until the wind and rain have subsided. Yueh-hua is embarrassed to see a youthful scholar coming to the same place for shelter. The latter, rather than cause the fair occupant inconvenience, sits outside under the eaves.

The tappings of the drum in the orchestra denote the passing of the night, each watch striking new terror into the heart of Yueh-hua, who from childhood had been trained to observe the strictest deportment and reticence when in the presence of the opposite sex. She also fears for her chastity and reputation. Under such circumstances in Chinese drama, emotion is expressed in song; and the woman and the youth, in turn, sing with the beating of each watch, what in reality are their thoughts. In the fourth watch, 2 to 4 A.M., Yueh-hua ends her song thus, "If my virtue remains unsullied, on my return home I will burn incense as a thanksgiving to heaven." At dawn, the fifth watch, the youth sings that the rain has subsided and he must hasten to the examination stalls. Yueh-hua on the departure of the man sings of her great relief.

SCENE 4. After Shu-ying has admitted her sister-in-law into the house, the latter tells how gallantly the youth behaved. The mischievous younger woman hints that

Yueh-hua may have had an affair with him. So far removed is such a thought from the Yueh-hua's mind that she is thoroughly exasperated. It is only after Shu-ying begs forgiveness that the other woman makes peace. Yueh-hua writes a poem to commemorate the events of the night, Shu-ying playfully adding a line, "Theirs was a meeting arranged by Heaven."

Scene 5. Wang Yu-tao arrives at the door of his home in high spirits; but as soon as he has heard from Shu-ying of Yueh-hua's passing the night in the pavilion, he becomes darkly suspicious. When his sister reads the poem and adds her own line, "Theirs was a meeting arranged by Heaven," the man sings, "One word I hear and anger singes the hair on my temples; when I listen to the poem, I am certain there must be in it some clandestine meaning. . . ." Rather than risk the notoriety that might come of a noisy quarrel, he sends Yueh-hua home with a letter on the pretense that her mother has fallen ill as a result of the daughter's hasty departure. The attendant holds for Yueh-hua two flags, painted with wheels to represent a wagon. It is with deep regret that Yu-tao watches his wife ride off, but his jealousy keeps him obdurate.

A messenger, a conventional comedian type with the usual white painted across the nose, recites to the rhythm of the wooden *pan*, and informs Wang that he has been chosen as one of the successful candidates in the imperial examinations. Such good fortune meant riches and position for the happy scholar. Wang sings, "After the hardships of the past, comes the good fortune of to-day; I will prepare to call on the Chief Examiner to express my gratitude for the imperial kindness."

Scene 6. Yueh-hua is surprised to find her mother in good health and hands her the letter which proves to be a statement accusing her of infidelity and putting her away. "One glance at the document is like a knife thrust through me!" sings the woman. In Chinese drama, when words are inadequate to express intense emotion, song begins. After the daughter makes clear the situation, the indignant mother is tempted to bring the husband to his senses but is dissuaded from doing so.

Scene 7. The Chief Examiner summons the successful candidates, who wear the scarlet official robes and black gauze hats typical of such an occasion. The Examiner has chosen Liu Sheng-ch'un's essay because after he had tossed it aside three times, it had returned to the desk in a miraculous fashion. The man concluded that the writer of the essay must have done a good deed to merit supernatural aid. Finally, he extracts from Liu the story of the night spent under the eaves of the pavilion of the royal monument in order to put at ease an unknown matron. Wang Yu-tao, the other successful candidate, becomes filled with remorse. When he asks Liu what was the matron's surname and maiden name, the youth replies, "In the dark pavilion, not a word passed between us; how could I know her surname and maiden name?" The Examiner suggests that Wang immediately seek forgiveness from his wife and Liu offers to help bring about peace.

Scene 8. Te-lu, an inimitable comedian, recites and sings that when the repentant husband arrives, he will do his utmost to make the man miserable. While Wang tries to plead with his wife, Te-lu stands by refusing to depart and making meaningful grimaces at the husband. A Chinese audience enjoys to the full the embarrassment of the man and the antics of the comedian, who offers Yu-tao a cushion just as the latter is in the act of kneeling.

Yueh-hua tosses at Wang her long sleeve thereby showing she will have none of him and sings how she has been a faithful wife to him, how unjustly she has been suspected and how she fears that in dreams only will they be reunited. He sings abjectly pleading for pardon while she gives further vent in song to her grievances. When Wang kneels, it is too much for Yueh-hua who forgives him.

Liu Sheng-ch'un is announced. Yu-tao at once arranges a match between the gallant youth and his sister. The play ends with wedding tunes and Shu-ying entering, a scarlet nuptial cloth over her head. With Liu rewarded for his good deed, Yueh-hua reinstated and Wang punished, the action comes to what a Chinese playwright and audience consider an ideal ending.

THE MEETING OF MANY HEROES

Ch'un Ying Hui

Historical Drama of the Three Kingdoms Period

Cast of Characters in Order of Appearance

Chou Yu, Strategist of Wu............. Mei Lan-Fang
Lu Su, His Friend....................
Chiang Kan, a Spy of Wei..............
Huang Kai, a Faithful General of Wu.....
Kan Ning, a General of Wu............
T'ai Shih-tz'u, a General of Wu........
Ts'ao Ts'ao, Leader of Wei.............
Chu-ko Liang, or Kung Ming, Strategist of Shu.............................
Kan Tse, an Official of Wu.............
Attendants, Soldiers, Executioners, Boatmen, etc.

HISTORICAL SETTING

No heroic period in Chinese history has been more popular both in fiction and on the stage than the Three Kingdoms era (221-265). Innumerable dramas delineate the heroism and treachery of the main characters of the three contending factions: Sun Ch'uan and Chou Yu of Wu; Liu Pei and Chu-ko Liang of Shu; Ts'ao Ts'ao of Wei; and a host of intrepid warriors. It is not unusual for two or three theatres in Peking or Shanghai to present on the same day Three Kingdoms dramas.

THE PLAY IN BRIEF

Chou Yu, the leading military genius of Wu, received in his camp his former friend, Chiang Kan, who was now serving under the enemy, Ts'ao Ts'ao. Knowing, that the other man had come for information, Chou Yu had a fictitious letter placed where his guest could find and read it. The scheme was to have Chiang report to Ts'ao Ts'ao its contents and so incriminate two of the latter's naval officers, who were invaluable as defenders of the water-side camp. Just as Chou Yu had carefully planned, Chiang Kan steals the letter and hears General Huang Kai repeat to Chou Yu a confirmation of the arrival of the message. Chiang, making good his escape, shows the fatal letter to Ts'ao Ts'ao, who has the two innocent officers beheaded.

Although Wu had joined forces with Shu against their common enemy, Ts'ao Ts'ao of Wei, Chou Yu was jealous of his fellow-strategist, Chu-ko Liang, or Kung Ming of Shu, hoping that he might find opportunity to put his rival out of the way.

After Lu Su informs Chou Yu that the two officers have been decapitated, the latter is piqued at having Chu-ko Liang, who was not supposed to know of the plan, congratulate him for his success.

Chu-ko Liang and Chou Yu write in the palms of their hands the character, "fire," which is the means of attacking the enemy camp.

In the course of conversation, Chou Yu remarks that he will need one hundred thousand arrows, which his rival offers to deliver within three days. Although this is a superhuman task, Chu-ko Liang calmly assures the other man that the arrows will be secured on time. Chou Yu gloats over the fact that his rival has promised to submit to decapitation in the event of failure. Lu Su, highly excited, fears that Chu-ko Liang is needlessly throwing away his life.

Ts'ao Ts'ao in the meanwhile sends to the camp of Wu two spies whom Chou Yu distrusts mainly because they have not brought their families as hostages.

Two days pass and Chu-ko Liang does nothing. Lu Su, trembling with excitement, begs the other man to flee. The strategist calmly invites the latter to a boat ride, taking along twenty war vessels, well padded with straw and peopled with dummies. As they approach the enemy camp under the cover of a dense fog, Chu-ko Liang makes his men create a din with gongs and drums whereupon Ts'ao Ts'ao, suspecting an attack, orders his archers to shoot a rain of arrows at the boats. Chu-ko Liang calmly quaffs his wine while Lu Su trembles from head to foot. The straw-padded boats are bristling with arrows.

When Lu Su realized what had happened and asked his host how he knew there would be a fog, the latter remarked that one could make no pretense at being a strategist without a knowledge of astronomy.

Chou Yu, who learned from Lu Su the ingenious manner in which his rival had obtained the arrows, hated and feared Chu-ko Liang the more.

Huang Kai, the aged general, volunteers to join Chou in a scheme and to suffer a severe beating so that he may have a good reason for deserting to the enemy in order to spy on them. The two men plan to quarrel and do so at a banquet. Huang Kai argues against Chou Yu, who orders that the old general be beheaded. It is only on the mediation of several men that Chou Yu lightens the penalty to forty strokes.

Throughout the entire proceedings, Chu-ko Liang, who being a guest should have pleaded for Huang, sat quietly drinking his wine, not so much as glancing up at the turbulent scene. This aroused Chou Yu's ire, for the other strategist's indifference clearly pointed out that he either knew of, or suspected, a plot. Jealousy and anger overwhelmed Chou Yu.

When Lu Su cricitized Chu-ko Liang's attitude, the latter explained in detail that there was an understanding between Chou Yu and Huang Kai, thus once more revealing the genius of an incomparable mind that has, for centuries, been immortalized in novel and play.

THE PLAY BY SCENES

Scene 1. Two attendants, who carry long banners, may represent as many hundreds or thousands of soldiers as the text calls for. Chou Yu, the leading military genius of Wu, recites that it is his avowed purpose to defeat Ts'ao Ts'ao of Wei by land and sea. His friend, Lu Su, asks why the strategist, on hearing of Chiang Kan's arrival, laughs. Chou Yu explains that Chiang must have come to spy for Ts'ao Ts'ao and that he would take advantage of the situation to dupe the leader of Wei. He accordingly tells Lu Su to place a fictitious letter where Chiang will surely find it.

Chou Yu being a *hsiao-sheng*, or the conventional type for a youth, is the only male character who speaks in falsetto. Chiang Kan, apart from his actual role in the play, is, by grace of convention, also a *ch'ou*, or comedian, as the white, painted across his nose, clearly indicates.

On receiving Chiang Kan, Chou Yu accuses the former of coming to spy; but when the guest makes firm denial, the host states he has merely been joking. A group of generals, including Huang-Kai and Kan Ning, ask Chiang whether he has come to secure information for the enemy, but Chou Yu assures his men that the caller is an old friend. He orders a banquet spread and commands the general, T'ai Shih-tz'u, to execute anyone who dares to mention present hostilities.

The strategist of Wu takes great delight in asking his guest what the latter thinks of his stalwart men and abundant provisions, adding that the banquet might well be called a "meeting of many heroes." Chou Yu, stressing the fact that they have not met for some years, insists that they drink until they become intoxicated. Both men, however, stealthily pour aside the contents of their cups and merely pretend to be under the influence of wine.

When Chiang Kan is helped off to bed, Chou Yu whispers secret directions to the faithful general, Huang Kai, also giving orders to Kan Ning to allow Chiang Kan to escape unmolested. Huang Kai is notable for his make-up of red, the color denoting fidelity, and ceruse, as well as his snow-white beard.

Scene 2. Lu Su lifts his foot to indicate that he has entered Chou Yu's tent and places on the table the important letter.

Scene 3. Chiang Kan is helpful to Chou Yu's bed. The latter sings that he will pretend to sleep in order better to watch the movements of the other man.

Shortly after midnight, Chiang Kan stealthily examines the documents on the table. Taking a candle and stepping cautiously outside the imaginary tent door, he reads a letter supposedly from the naval officers, Ts'ai Mo and Chang Yun, stating that within seven days they will deliver to Chou Yu Ts'ao Ts'ao's head. The military leader of Wu was anxious to put these naval officers out of the way, because they were the main obstacle between himself and a successful attack on the riverside camp of the enemy. Chiang Kan places the letter in his coat. Meanwhile, Chou Yu has been pretending to be asleep inside the tent.

Again, Chiang Kan pretends to sleep. At the third watch, 12 to 2 A.M., which is beaten by the drum in the orchestra, Huang Kai, as previously instructed by Chou Yu, comes to the tent and is told by the latter to speak in lower tones. Chiang Kan, naturally, is listening intently while Huang Kai repeats to Chou Yu that Ts'ai Mo and Chang Yun have sent a letter. As the strategist of Wu had planned, Chiang Kan believed everything: the contents of the fictitious letter and the spoken message which confirmed its arrival.

Fearing that escape will be cut off at dawn, Chiang Kan sings that he only regrets he has not wings with which to fly across the river.

Lu Su informs his friend that Chiang Kan has fled with the letter. At this, Chou Yu laughs and sings that Ts'ao Ts'ao has made a mistake by sending a stupid fellow like Chiang.

Scene 4. Ts'ao Ts'ao of Wei recites that he is bent on conquering Wu. Chiang Kan returns and shows the incriminating letter to his master, who has the two innocent officers, Ts'ai Mo and Chang Yun, beheaded.

The make-up of Ts'ao Ts'ao is one of the best known examples of facial painting on the Chinese stage, the dominance of ghastly white denoting his crafty nature.

Scene 5. Chou Yu comes reciting that he is still uncertain of victory over Ts'ao Ts'ao. Although delighted to hear from Lu Su that the two officers have been executed, he is especially anxious to know whether Chu-ko Liang can have learned of his secret success.

The immortal strategist, Chu-ko Liang, wears a coat decorated with the *pa-kua*, or eight-figure diagram, which suggests his skill in Taoist magic. From his unpainted face hangs a full beard. A fan is invariably held by the character. He enters singing his thoughts: "Last night when I examined the heavens, I discovered that Ts'ao Ts'ao had been duped and had killed his two naval officers." Addressing Chou Yu, he exclaims, "Congratula-

tions, hearty congratulations, Sir!" When Chou Yu affects ignorance, the other man announces that Ts'ao Ts'ao has fallen victim to the false letter. Chou Yu is stung to the quick.

Later, the strategist of Wu tells his visitor that he has a plan to attack the enemy, but suggests that they separately write on the palm of the hand one character, descriptive of the mode of attack. They do so and find that each has written the same charactor, "fire."

It is therefore decided that arrows will be needed. Chou Yu suggests that his rival secure one hundred thousand arrows within a month, then within ten days, or seven days; but Chu-ko Liang offers to do so within three. Because Chou Yu insists that this is no matter for joking, the other man promises to submit to decapitation in the event of failure. Lu Su is excited, for he is sure that the strategist is needlessly throwing away his life, while Chou Yu is darkly delighted and certain that his hated rival cannot produce the arrows within the set time. Cho-ko Liang writes the terms of agreement. He exits singing that three days later they may get the arrows at the riverside.

Chou Yu derides Lu Su for his concern over Chu-ko Liang and promises to behead his rival should the latter fail to deliver the arrows.

The faithful Huang Kai announces to Chou Yu that the brothers, Ts'ai Chung and Ts'ai Ho, have arrived from the enemy camp to offer their allegiance. They are sent to the tents of Huang Kai and Kan Ning. Huang Kai is certain that their surrender cannot be sincere because the men have not brought along their families as pledges. They decide to watch the newcomers carefully.

When Chou Yu sighs that Wu has no able person to spy in Ts'ao Ts'ao's camp, Huang Kai offers to do so. The courageous general insists that in spite of his age he can undergo the necessary torture to effect the scheme, singing that for three generations he and his family have enjoyed the favour of Wu.

Scene 6. Chu-ko Liang realizing that his rival has sent Lu Su to watch his movements, assumes a tantalizingly calm attitude. Lu Su sings reminding him that he must deliver the arrows within three days. The other man, pretending to have forgotten his obligation, joins his caller in counting the days and finds that already two have gone by, whereat the former advises the unfortunate man to hire a boat and flee. Lu Su also suggests that if the strategist were to end his life by drowning he would at least preserve his body intact! Finally, exasperated, he informs Chu-ko Liang that he has prepared for him a coffin and funereal garments.

The wily strategist asks that Lu Su secure for him the following: twenty war vessels, five hundred men, 100,000 catties (1 catty equals 1 1/3 lbs.) of straw, as well as cloth, canvas, gongs, drums and a banquet spread. To this unusual request, Lu Su complies.

Chu-ko Liang sings that Lu Su cannot guess the cunning plan he has in mind. The other man, who returns from preparing the things asked for, is dragged aboard one of the vessels. In spite of Lu Su's unwillingness, Chu-ko Liang thrusts on the man the unwanted invitation.

Scene 7. A boatman announces that so dense is the fog that it obscures the scenery. The holding of an oar by the attendant indicates that the party is in a boat. Two dummies represent a legion of straw-padded figures on the twenty war vessels.

When Chu-ko Liang orders the craft to be directed northward to the enemy camp, Lu Su, terrified, insists on being let off. His trembling is not lessened when the boatman announces, "We are but an arrow's flight from Ts'ao Ts'ao's camp."

Chu-ko Liang orders his men to create a din with gongs and drums. Chiang Kan, who peers through the fog over the enemy ramparts, here represented by the conventional cloth-gate, summons Ts'ao Ts'ao. The latter straining his eyes at the dummies, dimly visible in the mist, orders his archers to shoot at the intruders. After both sides of the straw-padded vessels have been filled with arrows, Chu-ko Liang orders one of his men to shout to Ts'ao Ts'ao, "Chu-ko Liang of Nanyang thanks His Eminence for the loan of one hundred thousand arrows!" Then only does Lu Su grasp the full meaning of the ruse.

Highly conventionalized practice allows the shooting of two arrows from their bows to represent the flight of more than one hundred thousand missiles.

With favourable wind and tide, the boats make good their escape. When Ts'ao Ts'ao says he has once more been duped by the enemy, Chiang Kan suggests that he need not be deceived the next time!

Scene 8. While the strategist smiles coldly, Lu Su waxes enthusiastic over the fact that the former knew beforehand of the coming of the fog. To this, Chu-ko Liang remarks, "How can one be a strategist without a knowledge of astronomy!"

When it is announced that over one hundred thousand arrows have been secured, the delighted Lu Su offers to deliver them to Chou Yu. Chu-ko Liang smilingly reminds Lu Su how he had trembled when on the boat.

Scene 9. In his tent, Chou Yu's recitation discloses that he keeps in mind his rival's attempt to deliver the arrows within three days. Lu Su tells of the ruse whereby the strategist of Shu secured the one hundred thousand arrows, which he has brought.

The commander of Wu invites Chu-ko Liang to have wine and food. Lu Su and Kan Tse, an official, are also present. Chou Yu then summons Huang Kai ordering the old general to prepare three months' provisions and attack the enemy. The latter not only refuses but announces that they had better surrender to Ts'ao Ts'ao. Chou Yu, pretending to be enraged, calls the executioners. When Kan Ning attempts to mediate, Chou Yu remains obdurate; but when Lu Su and Kan Tse beg that Huang Kai be spared, he commands that the death penalty be lightened to forty strokes. After the painful beating, Huang Kai exchanges with Chou Yu a quick, meaningful glance and exits supported by Kan Tse.

Meanwhile, Chu-ko Liang, who being a guest should have been among the foremost to plead for Huang Kai, sits calmly sipping his wine, never lifting his eyes. Chou Yu noting his attitude and fearing that he may have seen through his carefully guarded secret, exits consumed with rage.

"Have some wine, Sir," requests Chu-ko Liang of Lu Su as if nothing had taken place.

When Lu Su upbraids the other man for doing nothing in behalf of Huang Kai, the latter explains that if one was willing to order the strokes and the other willing to accept them, what could he do to mediate, adding in song that the scheme was known to him even without his being told. Lu Su is filled with admiration for the enigmatic Chu-ko Liang.

The strategist's uncanny knowledge of every event: from his inability to defeat the enemy on certain occasions to the foretelling of his own death, is told and retold in novel and drama. Here, his learning from the stars of Ts'ao Ts'ao's unheading the two officers, the manner in which he secures the one hundred thousand arrows and his uncovering of the secret scheme between Chou Yu and Huang Kai are feats and traits that endear Chu-ko Liang to the heart of the Chinese reader and theatregoer.

HSIN-AN INN

Hsin-an I

A One-Act Play in Two Scenes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mistress of the Inn, Madam Li . . . .
Chao Mei-yung . . . . Mei Lan-Fang
Lo Yen, her Maidservant in Male Disguise
Daughter of the Inn Keeper, Feng-ying . . .

Scene 1.

THE carefree manner in which the mistress of the inn enters marks her as the conventional comedienne. She recites among other things: "Ah Ha! My family lives in Li Chia P'o; we murder people, ne'er regretting their number. . . . My daughter and I have opened an inn at Hsin-an. . . . I will hang out the banner to attract the attention of prospective patrons. . . ."

Scene 2.

Lo Yen, who is Miss Chao Mei-yung's maidservant, calls her mistress. Fleeing from their troubled district, they are bent on seeking vengeance for the unjust imprisonment of Mei-yung's father. The maidservant has disguised herself for the convenience of the road.

When Lo Yen asks her mistress whether she resembles a man, the latter agrees but asks her whether she can walk like one. She then shows the maidservant how to take wide masculine strides. After they agree to pass as brother and sister in the future, Lo Yen is told to call Mei-yung "Sister" and not "Mistress."

The two girls encircle the stage which action denotes that they have travelled over the required distance. Lo Yen announces, "We have arrived at Hsin-an Inn," and knocks on the imaginary door, which the inn keeper, Madam Li, indicates by pantomime that she has opened. The girls, who step over the make-believe doorsill, are shown inside by the woman.

When the new arrivals ask for a candle, Madam Li holding it up to their faces, remarks that they are brother and sister. The maidservant compliments the woman on her keen eyesight!

In spite of their refusal, the mistress of the inn sees that Lo Yen takes drugged wine. The latter loses consciousness. Mei-yung, although Madam Li presses her to drink, refuses the cup.

Meanwhile, the inn keeper has told her daughter, Feng-ying, to murder the visitors. The girl enters disguised as a fierce bewhiskered brigand and lifts a menacing sword over the trembling Mei-yung. After the latter has pleaded piteously for her life, Feng-ying stating that she would not kill a person whose name was unknown to her, orders the former to tell her story. Mei-yung accordingly proceeds to narrate how her father, Chao Yun-lung, was imprisoned by corrupt officials. "I have told you facts honestly, I beg that you spare my life!"

When Feng-ying lifts the candle to examine the sleeping maidservant's face, she suddenly becomes infatuated with what she thinks is a handsome youth and dropping her disguise, assures the amazed Mei-yung that she need have no fear for her safety.

The mistress of the inn, who knocks on the door, is admitted by Mei-yung. Madam Li at once proceeds to make offers of marriage in behalf of her daughter. Lo Yen having recovered from the effects of the wine, explains that it would be unseemly for him to take part in so festive an event as a wedding.

Madam Li fearing that the youth has refused the offer because he suspects that her daughter may be as ugly as herself, thinks: ". . . He has merely seen me and not my daughter. You need not think an unsightly kiln is incapable of producing beautiful porcelain! . . ."

She therefore summons Feng-ying, who, believing that the wedding has been arranged, kneels to worship Heaven and Earth in order to consummate the match. The girl on learning that Lo Yen has rejected her, draws her sword to kill the youth; but is dissuaded from doing so by her mother.

The crafty woman instead requests that he and her daughter bow to each other. In this manner an attempt is made to inveigle the youth into marriage.

Feng-ying who is adept at handling weapons, suggests to the mother that Lo Yen and she engage in a contest, that if he turn victor, he and his sister be allowed to depart but that it he suffers defeat, he remain and marry.

When the girl goes off to don her fighting costume, the mother seeks information from the brother and sister. Although Mei-yung insists that her brother cannot fight, Madam Li demands that the girl question him directly. The crestfallen youth replies, "If there must be a contest, let there be one!" "Say you don't know how to fight," pleads Mei-yung.

At this Madam Li brushes Mei-yung to one side while Lo Yen and her daughter engage in combat. After the defeat of the youth, the mother separates the fighters.

"This will never do!" Mei-yung keeps exclaiming in spite of the older woman's assurance that the match is a happy one. Matters become tense when Madam Li insists that the girl help her brother prepare, while she assists Feng-ying to dress for the wedding.

Presently, the bridal pair kneel to Heaven and Earth and enter their nuptial chamber.

". . . What are you doing, Miss Chao?" questions Madam Li.

"I am waiting for my brother."

"Your brother doesn't wish you to wait; he has my daughter to wait for him. Begone!"

The maidservant in a dilemma says in an aside: "She thinks I am a real man and has given me her daughter to wife. I know it will be a hard night for me in the wedding chamber!" When the new groom explains that he is unaccustomed to sharing his bed with another, the accommodating bride suggests that he sleep first, offering to remain up for a while.

"He is a girl!" exclaims Feng-ying after lifting the bed-curtains.

In the excitement and explanations that follow, Madam Li learns how Mei-yung and her maidservant, the latter disguised as a youth, came to Hsin-an. Mei-yung adds that Madam Li need have no fear for her daughter's marriage because she herself would arrange a match with her own brother, Chin-yung, who was now at Lo Mountain.

A comedy scene follows in which Lo Yen is finally told by Mei-yung and Feng-ying no longer to refer to herself as "he" but as "she."

Mother and daughter accompany their guests a short distance and part but not without the assurance that Mei-yung will arrange for the marriage of Feng-ying to her brother.

SCENES

PRINCIPALLY DANCE NUMBERS

1. The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers.
2. Tray and Sleeve Dance from Ma-ku's Birthday Offering.
3. Table Dance from Yang Kuei-fei.
4. Flute and Pheasant Plume Dance from Hsi Shih.
5. Dance from Ch'ang-O's Flight to the Moon.
6. Sleeve and Duster Dance from The Goddess Shang Yuan.
7. Marine Dance from Lien Chin-feng.
8. Military Display from The River Fan Pass.
9. Sword Dance from Golden Mountain Monastery.
10. Sword Dance from Hung-hsien's Theft of the Box.
11. Ballet from Rainbow Pass.
12. Scene from Peony Pavilion.

DANCES

From The Play, The Heavenly Maiden Scattering Flowers

BY MEI LAN-FANG

T'ien Nu San Hua

FOREWORD

THE drama, Buddhist in flavour, is concerned with a devout priest, Wei-mo-ch'i. When he preached to his disciples, Sakyamuni, the Buddhist World Saviour, sent the Heavenly Maiden to scatter flower petals. To the sleeves of those who had conquered every carnal desire the petals did not cling but to the sleeves of those who had not, the petals adhered tenaciously. To the latter, Wei-mo-ch'i would say, "You have not yet cut yourselves off from the world."

THE DANCES OF THIS EVENING

The good Wei-mo-ch'i being ill, Sakyamuni sends various deities to inquire after the priest's health. While on her way to earth, the Heavenly Maiden, who has been ordered to scatter petals, sings: "I have left behind the Kingdom of Fragrant Flowers; and have floated over vast distances. The nations below, like a veil of mist, drift past my eyes. . . ." The next song paints an extravagant picture of Buddhistic deities and demi-gods, the final measures mentioning Kuanyin, whose face is full like the moon, the Dragon Daughter, fabulous birds, and so on.

The maiden sings a poem in praise of flowers; then dances to the accompaniment of the flute and other soft musical instruments, which are typical of old Chinese orchestration. The song is rich in Buddhist references. In the finale, she asks her attendant for the flower-basket, from which she scatters petals. Having performed the orders of Sakyamuni, the Heavenly Maiden announces that she will return to the Western Paradise.

The dance with its long silken streamers and carefully set to song is typical of creations which Mr. Mei has added to the classical drama. It may be said that in the old days song, dance and music were inseparably linked; but later became separated for some time until the actor revived them with great success.

TRAY AND SLEEVE DANCE

From the Play, Ma Ku's Birthday Offering

Ma Ku Hsien Shou

BY MEI LAN-FANG

FROM the crowded pages of Chinese legend comes the celestial maiden, Ma Ku. In honour of the birthday of Hsi Wang Mu, or the Queen of Heaven, she had gathered rare herbs and made fragrant wine.

In the first part of the dance, Ma Ku offers the pot of wine on a tray. This is followed by a sleeve dance. The close association of song and dance is typical of Chinese drama.

TABLE DANCE

From the Drama, Yang Kuei-fei

BY MEI LAN-FANG

FOREWORD

THE enchanting Yang Kuei-fei possessed both the delicate charm of the woman of her day and every wile of the present flapper. By her beauty and caprice, she swayed the ruler of the T'ang dynasty, Ming Huang (713-755), often making him pick up jewels she had purposely let fall near her dressing table. Such was her charm that after her advent to the palace, she is said to have won from the emperor the affection he had formerly bestowed on the three thousand beauties in his seraglio.

THE TABLE DANCE OF THIS EVENING

On Kuei-fei's birthday, a sumptuous feast was given. The giddy favourite mounted a table on which she did a dance to the accompaniment of the Court Musicians, while the emperor himself is said to have beaten the drum.

FLUTE AND PHEASANT PLUME DANCE

From the Play, Hsi Shih

Hsi Shih, a Patriotic Beauty............MEI LAN-FANG
Hsuan P'o, Her Companion............Yao Yu-fu

SWORD DANCE
From the Drama
Golden Mountain Monastery
Chin Shan Ssu

The White Snake.....................MEI LAN-FANG
The Green Snake.....................Yao Yu-fu
Hai Fa, An Abbot....................

FOREWORD

THE perennially popular play, *Golden Mountain Monastery*, is based on an old legend of the Hangchow region, *The White Snake*. Destined to give birth to the God of Literature, the white snake assumed the form of the White Damsel, who, along with her companion, a green snake also in human form, went to earth to fulfil her destiny. The beautiful maiden at once falls in love with the youth, Hsu Sheng. When the abbot of a neighbouring temple suspects that the youthful wife is a supernatural demon, he takes Hsu Sheng under his protection.

THE DANCE OF THIS EVENING

The two maidens display to the abbot their skill in handling swords in order to intimidate the old man into releasing Hsu Sheng. The situation gives rise to a rhythmic dance, because in Chinese drama, song, dance and graceful pantomime embellish what might otherwise be an ordinary incident. The *k'un-ch'ü* music, a style sung to the soft notes of the flute and other quiet instruments, flourished during the Yuan (1280-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties but has been displaced by a noisier style. The educated classes of China are now making efforts to revive it.

SWORD DANCE
From the Drama
Hung-hsien's Theft of the Box
Hung-hsien Tao Ho

BY MEI LAN-FANG

THE sword dance which occurs in the drama, *Hung-hsien Tao Ho*, or *Hung-hsien's Theft of the Box*, is a fanciful tale of the T'ang dynasty (618-906). Two warlords, T'ien Ch'eng-ssu and Hsueh Sung, are at odds. The latter, determined to subjugate T'ien by methods more subtle than force, sends his female attendant, Hung-hsien, by night to his rival's bedroom. There the dauntless warrior maid pilfers from the sleeping man's body a golden lacquer box, his most treasured talisman.

When T'ien received the box from Hsueh and then realized that his rival might have taken his life if he had chosen to, he gladly makes a friendly alliance.

THE SWORD DANCE OF THIS EVENING

The sword dance of this evening takes place while Hung-hsien is hastening to the enemy territory. She sings that T'ien Ch'eng-ssu is eager to usurp Lochou. Having announced that she has arrived at the River Chang and crossed it, Hung-hsien again sings, ending her song as follows: ". . . I hope each will guard his own territory and not cause the populace to suffer. . . ." At the distance she espies her goal, the camp of T'ien.

The songs and recitation which reveal the state of mind of the leading actor, and the encircling of the stage to denote traveling over a great distance, are characteristic of Chinese drama.

BALLET
From the Play, Rainbow Pass
Hung I Kuan

The Widow, Tung-Fang...............MEI LAN-FANG
Wang Pai-tang.......................
Soldiers

TOWARDS the end of the Sui dynasty, seventh century A.D., China was thrown into a state of turmoil by powerful warlords, who swept the country before them. Rainbow Pass, however, being guarded by the courageous general, Hsin Wen-li, withstood their attacks. They accordingly sent Wang Pai-tang, who slays General Hsin with an arrow.

The victim's widow, Tung Fang, donning her white weeds of mourning, set out, spear in hand and mounted on a fiery steed, swearing to wreak vengeance on the murderer.

The brandishing of a whip suggests that the woman is riding a horse, while the two soldiers bearing long banners, may represent as many hundreds or thousands of men as the text requires.

THE BALLET OF THIS EVENING

In the beginning, the widow angrily demands to know whether her opponent is Wang and at once attacks him. But she finally sings that she is smitten with his handsomeness and suggests that if he will surrender, she will wed him. The warrior repulses the woman whereupon he is captured by her men.

The songs, the posturing and rhythmic movements that make the performance a veritable ballet reveal the letter and spirit of Chinese drama. The most tense situation is set to music and graceful stylized movement, the result being a peculiar aesthetic enjoyment rather than a realistic picture.

SCENE
From the Play, Peony Pavilion
Mu Tan T'ing

Tu Li-niang..........................MEI LAN-FANG
Ch'un-hsiang, Her Maidservant.........Yao Yu-fu

FOREWORD

THE great classic *Mu-tan T'ing*, or *Peony Pavilion*, of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), deals with a talented maiden, Tu Li-niang, who after a stroll in her garden at springtime, is filled with thoughts of love. She dreams of a handsome scholar, who makes passionate advances to her. On waking, she cannot forget her dream-lover but pines away. The Ruler of the Nether World touched by her rare devotion, sends Li-niang back to life where she is happily wedded to the real youth of her dream.

The play is sung to the accompaniment of the flute and other soft instruments, typical of old Chinese orchestration.

THE GARDEN SCENE OF THIS EVENING

Tu Li-niang and her maidservant, Ch'un-hsiang, are enjoying the sight of a garden in full bloom. Pantomime and song alone suggest the joys of springtime: a red blossom, twittering birds, and so on. When the maidservant tells her mistress to save some of the pleasure for the day following, they exeunt.

The movements, set to song and often accelerating into what seem dance measures, the acting, that suggests the presence of a garden and other objects on a bare stage, are characteristic of Chinese drama.

'PEAR OF ORCHARD'

Mei Lan-Fang, Actor, Co-Workers Tell S. F. Center of Work

An old cry of art—that only through a superb mastery of technique can an artist attain real freedom—was brought from far Peking to the San Francisco Center yesterday. Bringing the message was the great Mei Lan-Fang and his co-workers in the cause of Chinese drama, Dr. P. C. Chang and Miss Soo Young. Mei declared he had come to this country to study the American theater and also to present to the American theatergoers his way of doing things. Art, he named, as the best vehicle for the bringing about of world understanding.

TELLS OF TRAINING

Chang, acting head of Nankai University, and himself a playwright and producer, said:

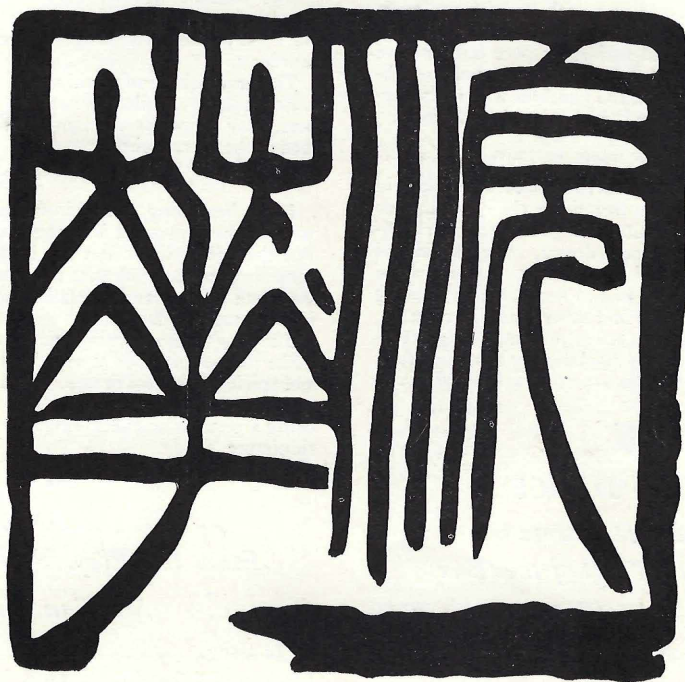
"Seven years of training is required of a Chinese actor before he can go upon the stage. He learns all the traditions and patterns of the stage, but not the reason for them. He is usually too young to learn that. And when, with this training, he has the genius to grow out of the bonds of these patterns but with them all at his fingers' tips, imagine how free he is. How many of us wish we had such freedom, such perfect control of pattern and stylization."

Reality, but not actuality, was the characterization given by Chang of Chinese drama.

DRAMA PURIFIED EMOTION

"It's intellectual, purified emotion," he said. "It undertakes to do with environment what we would like to do with it. It makes important, not the setting, but what the human beings do in that setting. It brings the audience to the appreciation of the 'howness' of things. Mr. Mei's appearance in America may help answer the question so pertinent since the talkies have come:

" 'What can we do with real people on the stage?' The unique Chinese theater, combining as it does drama, music, dancing, pantomime and story telling, may give Occidental drama lovers one or two things to consider in the solving of that question."



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