

Black Dragon Residence

*—from Script to Stage Productions**

By Daniel S. P. Yang

IN APRIL 1970, a full-length traditional Peking opera "Black Dragon Residence" (烏龍院) was performed at the University of Colorado by sixteen American student actors and musicians who had had no previous contact with either the Chinese theatre or Chinese music. In December of the same year, this play was revived at the University of Colorado with a new cast. Both of these productions were directed and choreographed by me. Two years later, while I was a visiting professor at the University of Hawaii, I staged a more elaborate production of this play at the Kennedy Theatre on the Honolulu campus. Again, I trained sixteen non-Chinese actors who had not previously been exposed to the traditional Chinese theatre. In this production, Peking opera singing was attempted with a highly satisfactory result. This article is an account of how these three productions were put together, with specific emphasis on the methods used for training actors and musicians. It also deals with some of the technical problems encountered and the solutions devised for them.

Staging Peking opera with American actors is no longer the unique thing it was a decade ago, but it is still an uncommon experience. American military personnel in Taipei and their families have done such productions under the tutelage of professional instructors, musicians and stage technicians. In the United States at least three major productions have been staged in university and off-Broadway theatres. The first such attempt was made by A. C. Scott in 1961 when he directed *The Butterfly Dream* (蝴蝶夢) for the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Theatre Arts (IASTA) in New York. Scott imported two professional Chinese actors from Hong Kong to choreograph the entire production; it was strikingly effective and authentic. This production was revived by IASTA in 1966 and performed off-Broadway. A year later Scott staged *The Butterfly Dream* again at the University of Wisconsin. In 1963 I directed *Twice A Bride* (鴻鸞禧) at the University of Hawaii as my M.F.A. thesis production. In that production a percussion orchestra was trained to provide live accompaniment to the stage action; Peking opera singing was attempted but only to a limited degree. In 1967 Josephine Huang Hung staged *A Missing Head* (九更天) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. This production also employed a live percussion orchestra. There have been a few other Peking operas produced in American college theatres since 1963, but it appears that none of them have achieved the same level of complexity or authenticity as the three mentioned above.

*An earlier article entitled "Staging a Traditional Peking Opera with American Actors and Musicians", which described the two University of Colorado productions, was published in *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3 (October 1971). Portions of that article are incorporated here by permission of the *ETJ*.

ON OPPOSITE PAGE:
Student actress Valerie
Charles in Hawaii apply-
ing traditional Chinese
makeup and hair pieces
for the coquette role
before going on stage.

The Play and the English Adaptation

The play, *Black Dragon Residence*, is based upon a few episodes in the famous Chinese novel *Shui-hu chuan* (水滸傳) or "Story of the Marshes", known in the Western world as *All Men Are Brothers* (translated by Pearl Buck in 1933) and *Water Margin* (translated by J. H. Jackson in 1937). The novel, long held to have been written in the sixteenth century by Shih Nai-an (modern scholarship tends to attribute it to Lo Kuan-chung), relates the story of one hundred and eight bandit-heroes who rose against the government in early twelfth-century China because of heavy taxation and official oppression. Their bravery and adventures inspired the creative genius of many Chinese playwrights who left us a rich repertoire of traditional plays in the styles of Yuan drama (written before the novel was published), *k'un-ch'ü*, Peking opera, and other regional dramas. *Black Dragon Residence* is one such example written by an anonymous playwright in the style of Peking opera.

The story of this play involves a court scribe named Sung Chiang and his mistress Yen Hsi-chiao. Though a generous provider, Sung has paid little attention to Yen because of his heavy schedules in the court. The woman has taken a lover—none other than a student of Sung named Chang Wen-yuan. The gossip of this coming to Sung Chiang's ear, he and his mistress have a terrible fight. Leaving *Black Dragon Residence* (the house Sung had built for Yen) in a rage, Sung swears that he will never come back.

Sung had once saved the lives of some desperados who are now bandit chieftains at the Liang-shan Marsh. To express their gratitude a messenger is sent to deliver a letter of appreciation and some gold to Sung Chiang. Yen Hsi-chiao somehow gets the letter and immediately uses it as a means for blackmail. She forces Sung to write a divorce statement allowing her to marry his student Chang Wen-yuan. This request and other stronger demands are granted, but the woman still refuses to give back the letter. Seized by a frenzy Sung kills his mistress and the play ends abruptly following this climactic scene.

When the traditional version of *Black Dragon Residence* is performed on the Chinese stage, only three key scenes are done. However, my English adaptation is based on the revised and augmented version of Chou Hsin-fang (周信芳), a noted Peking opera actor who is better known under his stage name Ch'i-lin t'ung (麒麟童). Chou's version has three additional scenes and has slight Communist overtones, suggesting that the bandit-heroes at Liang-shan are "revolutionaries" fighting against the government for the oppressed common people. It is far better than the old versions in terms of characterization and thematic continuity. My adaptation follows the Chou version very closely: the few changes I made were mainly because of puns and modes of expressions which can never be rendered into satisfactory English equivalents. I have also added detailed stage directions to make this adaptation an "acting version" for the use of Western actors and directors.



Preparations Prior to Audition

The production of *Black Dragon Residence* was decided upon by the University of Colorado Theatre faculty in December 1968. In the summer of 1969, I spent six weeks in Taipei collecting materials and making other preparations. I studied under three professional actors six days a week to learn the acting techniques required for this production. Since I have been an amateur Peking opera actor with considerable acting experience over a period of years, my sessions with the three instructors were essentially devoted to studying the major choreographic patterns of the production. The fact that they didn't have to teach me the basic acting techniques made it possible for me to learn this rather difficult play within six weeks.

While I was in Taipei, I purchased the complete set of costumes, accessories, properties, and percussion instruments required for a proper staging of the play. Although expensive, they added greatly to the authenticity and spectacle of the production.

I started making the English adaptation in late 1969. At the same time I was working with two music students transcribing all of the arias into Western musical notations. To me, the production of a Peking opera without singing is comparable to staging Verdi and Puccini as straight drama without music; so much of the aural effect is lost that I could never consider such a production a true Peking "opera". So I decided to retain as many arias as possible in my production, cutting only a few short ones which struck me as repetitious or as having little musical value. During later rehearsals, two long arias were also cut, so finally this English production retained about seventy percent of the original sung passages.

The transcription of the arias was indeed a difficult task. Chinese actors are accustomed to learning arias by ear and there is thus no need for musical scores. For our production, scores in Western notation had to be prepared; otherwise American actors could never learn the arias. Fortunately I have some sense of pitch and rhythm and I know a little about music. The two music students and I first spent hours listening to the tape of the arias. After a passage was played on tape I would sing the melody in the "sol-fa" system. One of the music students would then play it on a clarinet (piano would have been better, but my office was too small for it) until, to my ears, the correct pitch and rhythm were established. Then the other music student would record the passage in standardized score form. When a score was finished it was played again on the clarinet to double check the pitch and rhythm. Finally a clean score was copied for me and I started to put the words under the notes. They were all Chinese words transcribed into romanized English phonetic symbols. My actors were to sing the aria in *Chinese* by following the musical scores and reading the romanized phonetic symbols. It took about two months of this complicated process to transcribe twenty-five arias into Western notation.

Audition Methods

Open tryouts for the first production were held in early February of 1970, about eight weeks before the opening of the show. Partly because of strong competition from other shows and partly due to the students' unwillingness to get involved in a long period of rigorous training for an unknown show of uncertain quality, only twenty-six students showed up for auditions. A cast of sixteen was selected from among those who tried out, and I was fortunate enough to find talented actors for most of the lead roles. Tryouts for the December 1970 revival were better attended, partly riding on the success of the April production and partly because the show was designated as the University's entry to the American College Theatre Festival. For my Hawaii production in 1972, more people came to the auditions, including some veteran actors from the Honolulu community. I finally picked an all-student cast, owing to the consideration that this particular production would again enter the American College Theatre Festival contest under the category of "student-cast productions."

In selecting my cast for each of the three productions I was greatly influenced by whether the actor was interested in oriental theatre and whether he was willing to undergo a long period of rigorous and disciplined training. My judgment was generally correct, for those who got the leads proved to be the ones who were most dedicated and worked hardest.

In the first tryout session, I usually asked the actors to read a few passages in the play using their own interpretations of "stylized recitation" of the traditional Chinese theatre. This kind of improvised delivery often gave me an idea as to a particular actor's voice quality, his capability to handle verse drama, and especially his creativity and imaginary forces. I also asked them to perform some improvisations and pantomimes as a test of their ability to handle mimes. A final test was for them to copy some of my movement patterns after only a few times of demonstration. It was an effective way to find out whether the actor was quick enough to learn movements and choreography which were alien to him.

Since the Hawaii production was to feature authentic Peking opera singing, I had to design a method to test the actor's singing voice. In the first two audition sessions, actors were asked to sing a song of their own choice. As it turned out, they ranged from opera arias to Elizabethan madrigals, interspersed with a generous sampling of musical comedy numbers. In the final call-back session, contenders for the leads were given a quick lesson in Peking opera falsetto singing. They all learned a short aria of their particular roles. They were all given a score and a tape of the aria to take home for overnight studying. The next day I gathered them again to test the result of their study. The ones who managed to create the best vocal assimilation finally got the lead roles.

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The Movement Training

Rehearsals started immediately after tryouts. The cast was gathered first to see a documentary film about Peking opera, followed by a discussion and reading of the play. The next three rehearsals were devoted to the fundamental postures and movements such as standing, sitting, turning, walking, running, sleeve movements, simple pantomimic routines like opening and closing an imaginary door, ascending and descending imaginary stairs, etc.

Individual rehearsals of two hours each were set up following the first few general rehearsals. In these sessions, each actor was given rigid training and individual coaching. He was first trained in movements. Each movement was broken down into separate steps as in military drilling, and the actor was to learn and master one step at a time. Gradually steps were combined to form a movement, movements were combined to form a routine, and routines were set within the choreographic pattern of a specific scene.

While learning movements, the actor was taught the traditional way of reciting the percussion notes so that later he would be able to coordinate his movements with the live percussion accompaniment. This was a slow process but was nevertheless most effective. After a short period of struggling the actors were able to adjust to this method and started to pick up movements and routines quickly.

The most amazing results were achieved by a large, heavy-set actor at the University of Colorado who played the swashbuckling bandit

YEN HSI-CHIAO opens the imaginary door to meet her lover Chang Wen-yuan. A scene from the University of Hawaii production that went on to successful performances at the Kennedy Centre in Washington, D.C.

messenger nicknamed "Red-Headed Devil." Among other things he had to perform a dance routine called *tsou-pien* (走邊) which literally means "walking along the edge," suggesting that the person performing this dance routine is on a dangerous mission as if "walking along the edge" of a cliff. The dance routine symbolizes a swordsman stretching his limbs, tightening his outfit, feeling his way around at night, etc. It was a series of highly complicated and vigorous movements, generally beyond the capability of average amateur actors even in China. The actor cast in this role, notorious for his poor stage movement, practiced this routine with me one hour every night for seven weeks. Finally he performed the four-minute dance routine and other complicated movements so beautifully that he amazed everybody in the theatre who knew about his limitations.

The female lead in this play (Yen Hsi-chiao) belongs to the "coquette" role on the Chinese stage. Traditionally she should be in stilts which suggest the tiny bound feet of ancient Chinese women. The practice of walking in stilts, called *ts'ai-ch'iao* (踩蹠), is a difficult acting technique practiced only by professional actors. To make this production authentic to the last detail, I decided to train my leading lady in the *ts'ai-ch'iao* technique. The actress who played the female lead for the first Colorado production wore the stilts during rehearsals and at home for quite a long period until she had built up enough strength in her ankles to sustain a two-hour performance. For an extended period she even conducted her household chores on the stilts. The actress for the same role at the University of Hawaii went through a similar training process for nine weeks. The stage effect was ultimately most pleasing. The *ts'ai-ch'iao* technique created a gentle swaying motion in the actress' gait that was befitting her role; such an effect could never have been achieved otherwise.

The Singing Training

Owing to the absence of a string orchestra for accompaniment, certain compromises had to be made in handling the sung passages. During the two Colorado productions, actors learned to "mouth" the arias rather than sing them. Taped arias (sung by professional Chinese actors) were played through the sound system during performance, and the actors had to "mouth" them in perfect lip-synchronization while going through appropriate movements and gestures.

This process still necessitates the learning of the arias by heart. Singing lessons for the actors playing the leads started with the second week of rehearsal. Each actor was provided a tape containing his required arias. He was encouraged to listen to it over and over again at home. During individual singing sessions the actor was first taught how to pronounce Chinese words through the romanized phonetic symbols. Then he was asked to follow the musical score and sing along with the taped aria. After many practice sessions which were often frustrating to both director and cast, the actor was able to follow the taped aria with a considerable degree of accuracy.

The lip-synchronization technique worked very well during the two productions at the University of Colorado. The only draw-back was the poor sound quality of the aria tape, which was copied from a monaural recording made in Communist China during the 1950's. For the third production at the University of Hawaii, a special tape was made in Taipei at considerable cost. A professional orchestra was engaged to record the aria accompaniment in stereo. The sound quality of the tape was therefore much improved.

The main reason I used the lip-synchronization technique in Colorado was not because my actors could not sing the arias; rather, it was due to the absence of an "accompaniment tape"—one that had only the orchestral music without the singing. Peking opera recordings are quite abundant in the market, but finding one with only the musical accompaniment is most difficult, let alone finding one for a specific play such as *Black Dragon Residence*. Now, with such a special tape for accompaniment, I was able to attempt a more daring experiment: to train American actors who did not even know the Chinese language to sing Peking opera arias in Chinese.

The training process was similar to that of the two earlier productions, with of course a much longer training period. After three months of rigorous practice, my actors were able to sing the arias with the right pitch and rhythm. Their pronunciation of the lyrics was in general quite acceptable, although here and there a Chinese audience could detect that it was pronounced by a foreigner without proper language training.

The main problem I encountered was for my actors to sing with the right "flavor". On the superficial level, Peking opera singing uses the falsetto technique with a lot of nasal tones which are quite different from Western style singing. After a month of singing lessons my actors were able to make the initial switch. Gradually they built up confidence, knowing that the falsetto would not hurt the singing voice. At the end of the second month, most of my actors were able to sing the arias in falsetto with a good degree of accuracy.

The next step was to achieve the right "flavor" in a more sophisticated sense. I tried my best to point out to my actors (through the playing of recordings and through my personal demonstrations) the right way of "stealing" a breath, of controlling the voice, of putting a stress or two at the end of a musical phrase, etc., in order to suggest that hard-to-describe "essence" in a star actor's singing voice. It was a difficult job, a time-consuming process, but my efforts eventually paid off. Started in the third month of rehearsals, each additional singing session with my actors resulted in some kind of improvement. Comparing the performance tape of the February production in Hawaii with that of the Kennedy Center production in April, the listener can immediately tell that the two extra months of rehearsals had improved the "flavor" of my actors' singing considerably. So the myth that it is impossible to train Western actors to sing Peking opera arias has been dispelled through this experimentation.

Training of the Percussion Orchestra

Percussion accompaniment is an inseparable element of a Peking opera performance; it accentuates every single movement on the stage and plays an important role in controlling the tempo and rhythm of a production. For *Black Dragon Residence*, I trained a percussion orchestra consisting of a conductor-drummer, a big-gong player, a small-gong player, and a cymbal player. In the two Colorado productions, all musicians were American students who had had no previous contact with Chinese theatre or Chinese music. The four musicians in the Hawaii production were all Chinese. Two of them were third-generation Chinese born and raised in Honolulu; the other two were graduate students coming from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Again, none of these four students had had previous training in Chinese theatre or Chinese music.

In the Chinese theatre there are no percussion scores as such; musicians and actors simply memorize all the notes and patterns which are always recited during rehearsals. Occasionally the musicians will make notations on paper, but these primitive "scores" are only good for quick reference by specialists. Only in recent years have more sophisticated percussion scores been developed and published for the use of knowledgeable practitioners.

The method I used in training my musicians was midway between the traditional and the modern. Inspired by some modern percussion scores developed in Communist China, I used specific symbols to suggest the definite patterns of each instrument. For instance, "k" reads "k'uang" (匡) and suggests a single beat of the big gong; "d" reads "ta" (答) and represents a single beat of the conductor's drum with one stick; and "d_{||}" reads "tu-erh" (嘟兒) which represents the rolling of the conductor's drum with both sticks. A complete percussion score can thus be made by using these symbols to indicate the notes and rhythms of various percussion patterns.

The musicians were given this kind of score and taught how to play the instruments. First a few simple patterns were taught; at the same time they were trained to recite the patterns in the traditional Chinese fashion. It was first an impossibility for the four frustrated musicians, but gradually things became natural to them and soon after they could play the patterns without the score.

At this point actors were brought into the orchestra rehearsals. Correlation with the actors' movements started to make sense out of the loud, weird sound-patterns; this helped the musicians tremendously in their efforts to memorize the score. By the time they played on the stage in the last three weeks of rehearsals, they had totally discarded the score and could produce exact percussion patterns at the command of the director. Their playing was very authentic and highly effective. Except for a few complicated patterns which proved just too difficult to play, they managed to reproduce all the rest of the more than twenty percussion patterns used in an authentic Chinese production of this play.

The Stage Setting

The stage setting for *Black Dragon Residence* was a mixture of features of the "court theatre" and the "teahouse theatre" of nineteenth-century China. The front end of the stage was lined by a balustrade about twenty inches high. A false proscenium was constructed under the proscenium arch. It consisted of two pillars supporting a highly ornate arch. Four Chinese palace lanterns were hung under the arch for embellishment. For the more lavish production in Hawaii a Chinese-style roof was also constructed as part of the false proscenium. In addition, a pair of "pillar scrolls" were hung on the pillars, upon which two lines of rhymed couplets were inscribed.

About twenty feet upstage parallel to the proscenium line a huge, satin backdrop was hung. The curtained doorways at either side of the backdrop served for entrances and exits. A table and three chairs were placed in front of the backdrop, all covered with red, embroidered satin cloth.

The backdrop for the Colorado productions was made of pale-blue evening gown satin, whose center was dominated by a huge circular "longevity" motif. Less dominant but equally colorful patterns were repeated on the door curtains which were made of light yellow satin. The Hawaii production utilized a dark-blue satin backdrop with more complicated designs dominated by a gold and silver phoenix motif. The two door curtains were made of the same material. The painting of these backdrops was done in detailed brush strokes to suggest embroidery; the effect was very satisfactory from a distance.

Since the Hawaii production allowed a much higher budget for scenery, eight latticed door panels were constructed, four on either side, to connect the two ends of the backdrop with the two front pillars. These door panels were not traditional features of the Chinese stage but scenic elements introduced by the great actor Mei Lan-fang (梅蘭芳) on his 1930 tour of the United States. The pillars, the balustrade, the false proscenium, and the door panels were all in red. The entire stage was covered by red carpet. Under the bright stage lights the set gave a rich glow which, reflecting against the dark blue backdrop with its gold and silver designs, produced a warm and festive atmosphere befitting the production of a traditional Chinese play.

The four-piece percussion orchestra was placed at downstage left in full view of the audience. The stage was brightly and evenly lighted for the whole performance without light changes. Since the arias were sung in Chinese, English translations of the libretti were shown line by line on two rear-projection screens at either side of the stage. (The Colorado production used front projection on a single screen at downstage right.) Such use of screen projection is not a traditional feature of the Chinese theatre; however, it does have a degree of "cultural validity". Ever since the 1950's, aria texts have been similarly projected, in Chinese, for the benefit of modern audiences both in Taiwan and in mainland China.

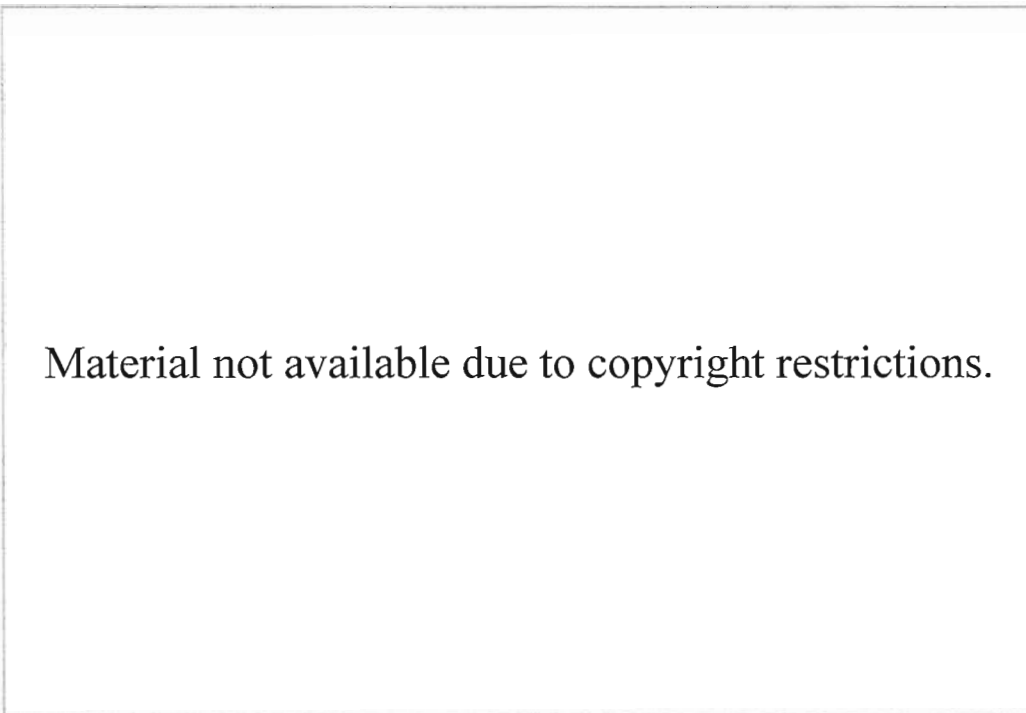
Costumes and Accessories

The complete set of costumes, accessories, and properties which I had purchased in Taiwan were a worthwhile but expensive investment. For instance, the costume, headdress (including a pair of genuine pheasant feathers six feet long), and accessories for the role of the bandit chieftain alone cost approximately two hundred dollars—in 1969. (The 1974 price must have been doubled.) The female lead had three costume changes; her costumes and accessories were quite dazzling. The male lead, on the other hand, wore the same plain costume throughout the show and it was the cheapest item on the costume list. This set of costumes not only added to the authenticity of the production but also enhanced the element of “spectacle”, a major ingredient in a Peking opera production which must never be slighted.

Rehearsal costumes and accessories were used throughout the entire rehearsal period, so that actors could learn to manipulate the “water sleeves”, the artificial beards, and other related accessories which were inseparable from the complicated movement patterns. Actual costumes were worn about two weeks prior to the opening. At least four dress rehearsals with full costumes and makeup were scheduled to make sure that both the actors and the costume crew knew exactly what to expect during an actual performance.

The costume room was supervised by a costume mistress and her crew was specially trained for this production. Their devotion was amazing. In the more than thirty performances of this play, I have never seen a soiled or wrinkled piece of costume on the stage. Some of the

OPENING SCENE of
“*Black Dragon Residence*”,
University of Colorado
production,
December 1970. The
percussion orchestra is
at downstage left.



costume people developed a strong attachment to a few special pieces. Since the six-foot pheasant feathers were such a delicate and expensive item, Miss Linda Letta, the Costume Mistress in the Hawaii production, insisted that the plastic container for these feathers had to stay with her all the time, especially when travelling. I still remember the trouble I went through to get clearance from the airlines to let her carry that long tube into the plane cabin, under the inquisitive gazes of stewardesses and other travellers.

Makeup and Hair Dressing

The makeup and hair dressing in *Black Dragon Residence* were strikingly authentic. Actors were trained to do their own makeup and to help one another with their hair dressing during the two weeks before dress rehearsals. Chinese cosmetics and traditional methods of application were first used, but the actors and the makeup chief soon discovered ways to make minor adaptations for better results. They found that some American cosmetics could create the same effect with much less effort in application. A good example was the white base for the female lead. Traditionally it should be rice powder mixed with sugar and water. After steaming, this mixture produces a cake, the diluted paste of which is then applied to the face as the white base. Since we were without this special mixture, we had to find a quick substitute. The makeup chief and I soon discovered that clown white was too sticky for such a purpose. After much experimentation, Max Factor white pancake was found to be satisfactory. It did not give as heavy white a base as the Chinese mixture would, but it looked fine under lights and from a distance.

Another good example was found in the painted makeup of the bandit chieftain and the bandit messenger. Both of them belonged to the "painted face" role and both must therefore have multi-colored designs painted on their faces. In the Chinese theatre, the colors are created by mixing color powders with water or oil. The solution is then applied on the face with a brush pen. Somehow this process did not work for our actors. In the first place they were not used to handling the brush pen, so they often had difficulty in drawing detailed patterns. In addition, when the water-based solution dried on the face it started to peel and the perspiration often washed off the powder. Later it was found that Stein grease sticks worked much better. They were easier to apply and not only provided a higher color intensity but also prevented the painted design from smearing with heavy perspiration. In the Hawaii production the makeup chief, Holley Lindley, discovered an even better solution. She mixed baby oil with regular scene paint pigments (without any binder) and created several colors that looked stunning on our actors' painted faces.

The traditional method of treating the hair pieces for the female lead's coiffure was retained. Wood shavings (from the *machilus pauhoi kaneh* tree) were pre-soaked in warm water until a sticky fixative was produced, in which hair pieces were dipped, combed, and shaped. As they dried, they retained a desired shape. By applying a thin layer of

this fixative, the hair pieces could be glued to the forehead and the two cheeks to form a desired "frame" of the face. This is a complicated process practiced only by the trained professionals in the Chinese theatre. Since there was no way to find a substitute for the wood-shaving fixative, this traditional process was faithfully followed. After much practice, the makeup chiefs of both the Colorado and Hawaii productions mastered the hair-do techniques. The results of their efforts were quite close to those done by Chinese professionals.

The complete coiffure for the female lead consisted of approximately fifty pieces of hair and jewelry which took a good three hours to complete. For an eight o'clock performance the actress and the makeup chief had to start work at half past four. The makeup and hair dressing time required for the rest of the cast varied from one to two hours.

Conclusion

The premiere production of *Black Dragon Residence* played to capacity audiences at the University of Colorado Theatre for seven performances and then toured to the University of Kansas for an additional performance. The reaction of audiences and critics was most favorable, in part, perhaps, because they had never expected that a classical Chinese drama could be so entertaining. They had come prepared to endure a boring evening of "high culture", but found instead a delightful visual and aural experience in this traditional Chinese theatre form. Out of their sense of sheer amazement and enjoyment they applauded the actors most generously. Almost everyone in the cast, including the walk-ons, received warm applause during their entries and exits.

Because of its obvious success and its uniqueness as a seldom seen oriental drama, this production was revived in December of 1970 with a new cast and subsequently taken on tour to Colorado State, Northern Colorado, and Brigham Young universities. It became the University of Colorado's entry and won the Regional IV competition in the American College Theatre Festival.

In February of 1972, while I was a visiting professor at the Department of Drama and Theatre of the University of Hawaii, *Black Dragon Residence* was revived for the third time. It played to capacity houses for eleven performances, toured the four outer islands following the Honolulu run, and won the "top ten" honor at the American College Theatre Festival out of 330 entries from throughout the nation. On April 22, it played two performances at the Eisenhower Theatre of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C., as part of the Center's inaugural season. As an experimental production, this Peking opera has gotten much more exposure and recognition than I had originally anticipated.

Black Dragon Residence was the second Peking opera I staged for American audiences. It was a difficult, time-consuming project, but also a most rewarding one. Through these experimental productions I have come to the realization that, quite contrary to common belief, the highly stylized acting and singing techniques of the traditional Chinese

theatre is well within the capability of American student actors. Further, I have become convinced that American audiences will respond intelligently and appreciatively to the format and conventions of a well-staged Peking opera. Apart from its obvious educational functions, this type of experimental production is an effective way of closing the gap of misunderstanding between the peoples of the East and the West.

The Saga of "Black Dragon"

Black Dragon Residence (烏龍院), a traditional Peking opera in six scenes. English adaptation by Daniel S. P. Yang, who also directed and choreographed the productions.

April 1970. First produced at University of Colorado Theatre.

December 1970. Second production at the same theatre won the Rocky Mountain Regional Theatre Contest.

February 1972. Third production at Kennedy Theatre, University of Hawaii, won "top ten" honor (out of 360 entries) at American College Theatre Festival.

April 1972. Hawaii production brought to Washington, D.C., for two performances at Eisenhower Theatre of Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

April 1972. Voice of America broadcast the whole play to Asia.

September 1972. 90 minutes of the show first telecast on Public Broadcast Service Network.

Entire 150-minute color film (made from KHET-TV Honolulu video-tape) is available for rental at Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80302, U.S.A.

From the reviews:

"... the flavor of something very foreign in understandable terms that made the foreign universal."—*Washington Post*. "What is astonishing is that the universal emotions of amusement, desire, hatred, pride and greed can announce themselves so clearly through a vehicle that is so alien to the Western observer."—*Boulder Daily Camera*. "The amazing thing about *Black Dragon Residence* ... is that it is so appealing and understandable to Western theatregoers."—*Honolulu Advertiser*.

Daniel S. P. Yang (楊世彭) is Associate Professor of Theatre at the Department of Theatre and Dance of the University of Colorado. He received his B.A. in Foreign Languages and Literature at National Taiwan University (1959), M.F.A. in Drama and Theatre at the University of Hawaii (1964), and Ph.D. in Theatre at the University of Wisconsin (1968). Born at Wuhsi, Kiangsu in 1935, Dr. Yang became interested in the Peking opera since childhood. He specialized in the role of *hsiao-sheng* 小生 (young-male) and performed in a number of amateur productions in Taiwan. He is a trained stage director for both oriental and occidental plays, having directed, among others, two traditional Peking operas in English, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, and Joseph Heller's *We Bombed in New Haven*. He is author of a book and several scholarly articles published in *Educational Theatre Journal*, *The Drama Review*, and *The Theatre Annual*.