

TARRAGON



Mr. Shi and His Lover

A Macau Experimental Theatre/Music Picnic/Point View Art Association Production

by Wong Teng Chi, Njo Kong Kie

directed by Tam Chi Chun

Nov 7 – Dec 17, 2017 in the **Mainspace**

Opens Wednesday, November 15, 2017

Education Resource Guide by EmmaRose MacDonald

Table of Contents

About the Play	3
Resources	4
• Opera	
• Gender Identity and Sexuality	
• Post-Colonial Theory	
• Intercultural Performance	
Discussion Questions	7
Activities	8

About the Play

Synopsis

Mr. Shi and His Lover is about a diplomat who falls in love with the performer Mr. Shi, who he believes to be a woman. The two characters reflect on their time together in the aftermath of an espionage scandal. They discuss love, belief, identity, fantasy, betrayal, and performativity. The play is performed in Mandarin with English subtitles and is inspired by Chinese opera and vintage pop music.

About the Creators

Njo Kong Kie is a pianist and musical director of the contemporary dance company La La La Human Steps, based in Montreal. Kong Kie was born in Indonesia, raised in Macau and studied at the Academia de Música São Pio X, as well as in Portugal and Canada. Kong Kie has written five chamber operas, each focusing on controversial issues such as same-sex marriage and human organ trafficking. His works include *knotty together* (with Anna Chatterton), *La Señorita Mundo* (with Kico Gonzalez-Risso), *The Futures Market* (with Douglas Rodger), *Mr. Shi and His Lover* (with Wong Teng Chi), and the non-text based concert theatre *Picnic in the Cemetery*.

For more information visit <http://www.playwrightscanada.com/index.php/njo-kong-kie.html> or <http://musicpicnic.com/kongkie.html>

Wong Teng Chi wrote the text for *Mr Shi and His Lover*. Wong Teng Chi received a Bachelor of Arts in Chinese Language and Literature from the University of Macau and a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting from Taipei National University of the Arts. His plays include: *Amsterdam Études* (2009) and *Mr. Shi and His Lover* (2015).

For more information visit http://www.mrshiandhislover.com/uploads/5/4/9/9/54992243/artist_bios.pdf

Resources

Opera

Madame Butterfly: An Opera by Giacomo Puccini

<http://www.theopera101.com/operas/butterfly/>

The characters in *Mr Shi and His Lover* refer to the opera *Madame Butterfly* as significant in forming Western perceptions of Eastern cultures. This website offers an overview of the opera, character descriptions, and audio and video clips of performances.

Madama Butterfly Synopsis

<https://www.thoughtco.com/madama-butterfly-synopsis-724315>

This website offers a synopsis of *Madame Butterfly* by Puccini.

History of Peking Opera

<http://www.pekingopera.eu/pekingopera-en.html>

This website provides an overview of the history of Peking Opera, including the venues, plays, props, instruments, roles, costuming, and training.

A New Gender Revolution in China: Beyond the Resumption of a Historical Authenticity

<http://www.ijssh.org/vol7/803-SC1001.pdf>

This academic article discusses the revival of *nandan* performances in *Jingju*, Beijing or Peking Opera. These are performances where men play female characters. A scholarly article, this resource is useful in providing context to notions of gender in this play.

Gender Identity and Sexuality

The play addresses the concepts of gender and sexuality as being complex and not easily defined. The following resources offer information about LGBTQ* experience, histories, and how to make spaces more inclusive and supportive of LGBTQ* people.

Send the Right Message

<http://sendtherightmessage.ca>

The website offers information specifically with the aim to encourage straight and cisgender youth to become allies for their LGBTQ* peers. The site is written in accessible language and covers a range of topics from privilege to allyship, definitions to what to do when you make a mistake as an ally.

Positive Space Take Action Toolkit: Ten Ways Educators can create safe, supportive school community environments for all students, in particular, for LGBT youth.

<http://www.etfo.ca/SupportingMembers/Resources/ForTeachersDocuments/ETFO%20LGBT%20Kit%20-%20English.pdf>

This document is part of an initiative to support educators in creating inclusive students environments for students, especially those that are LGBTQ*. The guide includes strategies, resources, and links to organizations working to support LGBTQ* youth.

Inside The Kaleidoscope: A Toolkit & Resource Guide Created by Members of Two-Spirit, Trans, & Queer Communities

<https://artreach2016.files.wordpress.com/2016/01/artreach-goaltoolkit-insidethekaleidoscope.pdf>

This extensive locally produced guide on LGBTQ* experience was prepared for the Toronto based organization ArtReach and offers definitions, history and culture, resources, and information on allyship.

Understanding Gender

<https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/>

This site discusses dimensions of gender including the body, identity, and expression. The difference between sex and gender is explained as well as various terms relating to the gender spectrum. The site is run by an organization working towards a gender inclusive world for children and youth.

Post-Colonial Theory

Post-colonial theory examines how cultures have been impacted by colonialism. How have cultures been understood in research, art, and literature due to colonialism?

An Introduction to Edward Said's Orientalism- A Macat Sociology Analysis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZiyXEF1Aas>

This video prepared by Macat is about 3 and a half minutes long and gives an overview of Edward Said's arguments on orientalism. The video uses accessible language to explain how stereotypes and myths articulated by European colonizers came to define how Eastern cultures were perceived and positioned them as inferior to Europeans.

An Introduction to Edward Said, Orientalism, and Postcolonial Literary Studies

<http://www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/2004/09/introduction-to-edward-said.html>

This site provides an introduction to Edward Said's theories, including orientalism. The author discusses how process of imperialism and colonialism have created myths and stereotypes of cultures in Asia and northern Africa.

An Introduction to Bhabha's The Location of Culture - A Macat Literature Analysis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mnh9mv8SGU

This video explains Homi Bhabha's discussion of postcolonial cultures and hybridity. To summarize, cultures that have experienced colonization become hybridized, influenced by several different sources to create contemporary identities. Useful theory to explore how *Mr Shi and His Lover* might be understood as a post-colonial or hybridized play.

Intercultural Performance

Intercultural Theatre Today

<http://www.jstr.org/project/images/02%20Pavis.pdf>

In this scholarly article, Patrice Pavis discusses how we might understand the term intercultural theatre in a context significantly impacted by globalization and colonization. They discuss common critiques of major intercultural theatre theorists and speculate on the purpose of intercultural theatre today.

Introduction: Performing Intercultural Canada

<http://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/tric/article/view/12451/13358>

In this article is the introduction to an issue of the journal *Theatre Research in Canada*. The article introduces the pieces in the issue and provides information on major conversations on intercultural theatre in Canada.

Recommended Books

Theatre and Interculturalism by Ric Knowles

The Intercultural Performance Reader edited by Patrice Pavis

Discussion Questions

Pre-Show

1. How do you think stories affect how we understand identity or culture?
2. In what ways can stories impact identity?
3. Why might someone believe an impossible story?
4. How does it feel when you realize that someone has lied to you?
5. What does it mean to perform your identity?
6. What do you think the term “intercultural performance” means?
7. Are there limits to the term “intercultural performance”?
8. Based on theatre or other performances you have experienced, what are conventions of Canadian performance?

Post-Show

1. What stood out for you from the play and why?
2. Mr. Shi talks about performing identity. What did you understand from his argument that we are always performing?
3. In what ways do humans perform in daily life? What roles do people perform?
4. Do you think the style of the play strengthened the story? Why or why not?
5. The characters in *Mr. Shi and His Lover* are influenced by the opera *Madame Butterfly*. How can art impact people’s actions?
6. Why might the artists have chosen to perform the play in Mandarin as opposed to translating the work into English? Why might this choice be significant?
7. Is this play an intercultural performance? Why or why not?

Activities

Performing Identities in Relationships

In this activity students explore how their identities their behaviour changes in different relationships.

1. Ask your class to form two circles, one inside of the other, and face each other.
2. Ask the students to think of a story about a time they went on a trip. It could be a trip to the grocery store, a holiday, a field trip, a trip to the dentist etc...
3. Tell the story to your partner as if they were your best friend.
4. Ask the outer circle to move to the right until everyone has a new partner. Tell the story again, this time as if your partner is a potential employer at a job interview.
5. Ask the outer circle to move to the right again until everyone has a new partner. Tell the story to another partner this time as if they were a child in your family. (Other potential identities for the partner could be: a celebrity, a local politician, your grandmother.)
6. As a group discuss how the way you told the story was different or similar depending on your relationship with the person you were talking to. Were there certain characteristics you wanted the person to associate with you? For instance responsible, fun, independent, adventurous... In what ways can your identity change over the course of a day depending on who you are with or where you are?

How do Stories Define Us? Talking Back to the Canon

How do we learn who we are? Who we are expected to be? In *Mr Shi and His Lover*, the opera *Madame Butterfly* is identified as a story that impacts notions of people in East Asia. The characters are effected in many ways by this story, as well as other stories, shaping who they say they are, how they understand their relationships and what they believe is possible.

This activity invites students to consider stories that make up “the canon.” How do stories teach culture or set up expectations of certain identities? What happens if we add different stories to the canon?

1. As a group discuss the concept of a canon of stories. “The Canon” refers to stories that over the years have been labeled important or as great literature and continue to be retold again and again. Discuss who decides what is included in the canon. How might these stories impact our culture including how we behave, what is considered “normal”, and what our values are?
2. Choose a story from the canon that relates to a part of your identity. You could choose something that speaks to your gender, race, class, religion, citizenship, age, relationships (i.e. being a daughter or son), occupation etc... They could be fables, fairytales, religious stories, well known movies, Shakespeare, literature. For example *Little Red Riding Hood* as a story that relates to being a girl.
3. Consider this story and what messages it says about your chosen identity group. On a loose piece of paper write down 4 to 6 qualities or statements about the identity that the story implies are true. It may be helpful to use the prompt “BLANK is ...” For instance, using *Little Red Riding Hood*, I might write down that:
 - Girls are little.
 - Girls are remembered by what they wear.
 - Girls are safest when they do what they are told, and even then may not be safe.
 - Girls need to be rescued.
4. Have students post their points on the wall. Look at each other’s works and using post -its or by writing on to the papers themselves, respond to those expectations. Is there anything that is not true? Are their expectations that are myths we want to challenge? Examples of talking back to the expectations from *Little Red Riding Hood* might include “Girls are EVERY size” or “Girls are brave.”
5. As a group discuss the posts. How did people feel about the messages from the stories? Are we comfortable with them? Or do they need to change? Are they stereotypical? Do they marginalize groups? What kinds of stories do we want to add to the canon?