

THEA1306

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Features

Plays

Huynh & Co.

Vienna, Virginia

Maggie Huynh

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Our Theme: Happiness in Tragedy

Why?

This season's theme is "Happiness in Tragedy". A common occurrence in the 4 productions we will be going over is the lack of a happy ending. All the protagonists face their own hardships and find some happiness throughout their experiences. Despite this, most find themselves succumbing to death and being unable to complete their goals. We wanted to emphasize the theme of "Happiness in Tragedy" to show that the most important leg of life is your journey.



Disruption of Patriarchy

Timeline of Ancient Chinese Opera to Modern Works

All of the pieces were written by the Chinese and encapsulate various parts of Chinese culture. The main protagonists of most of these pieces are all women who overcome an obstacle and work toward their end goal.

Actors of the Past

For the longest time, all Chinese operas were performed by men. Even if the main protagonist was a girl, they would wear the attire of a woman and perform with a higher pitched voice. Although women did not start acting in operas until a couple centuries ago, having female characters at all was a development that grew over time.

Fusion of Ideas

We will be having both men and women acting both parts of the piece just as do to this day. At Huynh & Co. we want to give everyone a chance and to audition for any role they desire.





The Injustice to Dou E

(感天动地窦娥冤)

Dou E was wrongfully blamed for a crime and sentenced to execution. After her death, a prophet claimed that strange occurrences, such as raining blood, would take place to prove her innocence. Eventually, her father manages to expose the corruption of the court and vindicate his daughter.

This piece perfectly fits the theme of Happiness in Tragedy because even though Dou E's name was cleared, her father could not bring her back to life.

Playwright:
Guan Hanqing

Ancient Play

The Injustice to Dou E

(感天动地窦娥冤)

Disruption of the Patriarchy

Since Dou E was a woman, no one defended her when she claimed she was falsely accused, and no one wanted to believe her. When her father proved to the people that the court used her as a scapegoat because of her gender, views of the men in the court started to change.



We will design the stage of our blackbox theatre to look similar to outdoor stages in Northern China.

The Injustice to Dou E

(感天动地窦娥冤)



Traditional hair and makeup of the Peking Opera (Jingju) will be done on the actors.



Traditional garment with lots of red and white will be worn to symbolize anger and death.



A fog machine will be used to symbolize the ghost of Dou E looking down at all of the chaos that is happening in wake of her death.



Red Plum Blossom

Li Huiniang was forced to be the concubine to a well-known minister named Jia Sidao. She absolutely refused because she had fallen for another man by the name of Pei Yu. Out of spite, Jia kills Li and holds Pei hostage, but the spirit of Li rescues her lover and gets revenge on Jia.

The recurring theme of a tragedy is seen when the two lovers cannot be together. They are separated by the death of Li. They were able to get a bittersweet ending as the ghost of Li saves the man she loves from certain death, and she never had to marry Jia Sidao.

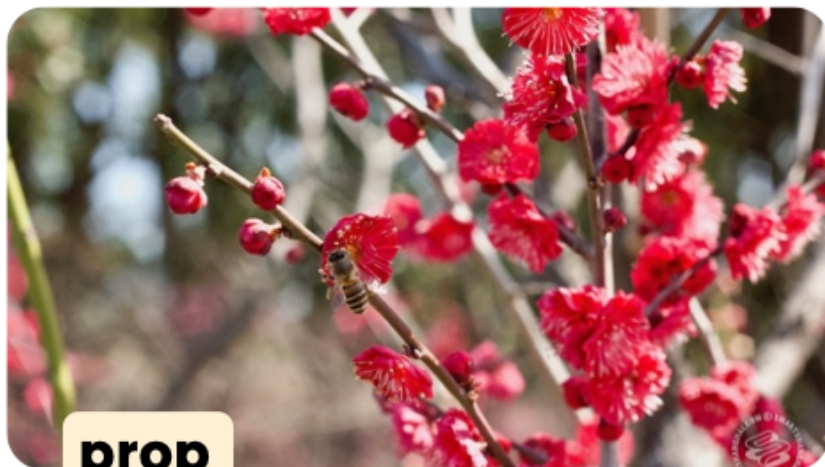
Playwright:
Zhou Chaojun

Early Modern
Play (1700s)

Red Plum Blossom

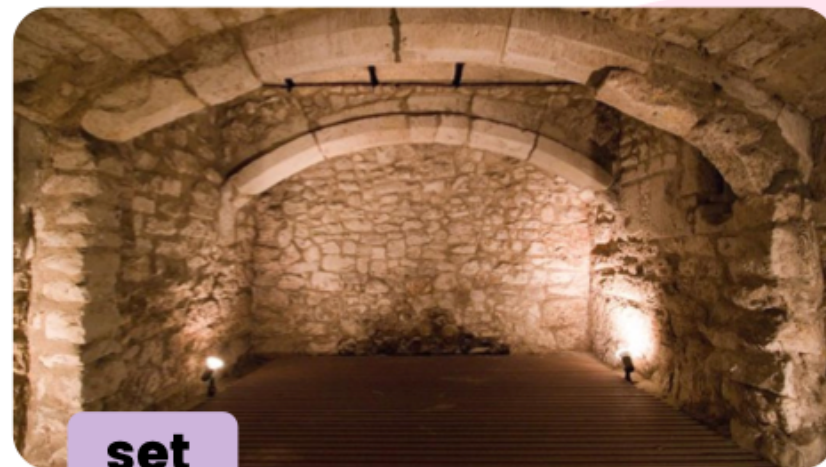
Disruption of the Patriarchy

Li Huiniang stood her ground about her refusal to become Jia's concubine. Her bravery to oppose such a powerful male figure clearly disrupts the patriarchy which was well-defined back in Sichuan.



prop

We will decorate the stage with red plum blossoms to represent the folktale the play originated from.



set

The stage will be set up like an ancient Chinese prison to show the murder of Li and the capture of Pei Yu.

Red Plum Blossom



Jia will be wearing clothing like the ones above to signify his power in his town. It will also be red to show he is about to be wedded, and also to represent the blood spilt in the piece.



The stage will be relatively dim with the spotlights shining on the characters who are talking. During death scenes, the light will fade completely.



The ghost of Li will be extremely pale and raggedy so the audience can tell her character apart from those who are living.



The Drunken Concubine

(贵妃醉酒)

Yang Guifei is known to be one of the most beautiful concubines in Chinese history. She was the favorite of the emperor, but one day she was stood up as he chose another concubine instead. As a result of jealousy and upset, she decides to drink all her problems away as the play walks us through her grief.

The recurring theme of a tragedy is seen when Yang, who is used to being the top priority, is pushed aside. As she grows intoxicated, no one is there to care for her and she realizes the lonely life she had been living. This brings her more anxiety, causing her to drink more, and creates an endless cycle.

Playwright:
Mei Lanfang

Modern/Contemporary
Play (1914)

The Drunken Concubine

(贵妃醉酒)

Disruption of the Patriarchy

Although she is upset over the emperor choosing someone else over her, Yang still shows a disruption to the patriarchy by voicing her disappointment. In the past, you are expected to endure feelings as a woman and move on, but she decided to drink her heart out and cause a scene.



The setting of the stage will be decorated to look like the architecture from the Tang Dynasty.

The Drunken Concubine

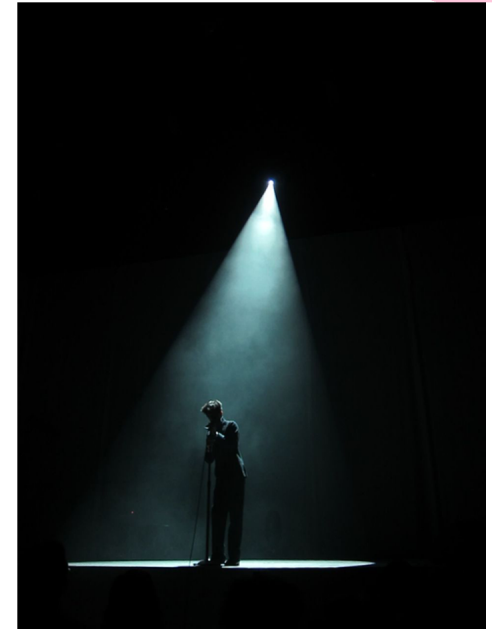
(贵妃醉酒)



Bottles of wine will be placed messily throughout the stage to show how much Yang had been drinking.



Since Yang was the most beautiful woman of her time, the actress will be wearing a red and yellow hanfu from the Tang Dynasty to symbolize luck and wealth.



Lighting will be very dim to show Yang's sadness and despair.



The Flower Princess

(帝女花)

Lastly, we will be showcasing Dai Nui Fa, one of the most popular Cantonese Operas.

Princess Changping falls in love with Zhou Shixian and are set up to have an arranged marriage. When night falls, her father, the emperor, is overthrown and she is forced to go into hiding. Unexpectedly, Zhou ends up finding her once again but their happiness is cut short by the new regime. The two end up drinking poison together in the house they got married in so that they would never be apart again.

Their happiness of finding each other was cut short by the fear they would be separated. Since they would rather die than live without each other, the former princess and Zhou spend one last day together and then die in each other's arms.

Playwright:
Tang Tisheng

Musical/Opera
1957

The Flower Princess

(帝女花)

Disruption of the Patriarchy

Rather than following orders and going into hiding, princess Changping disobeys for Zhou. The inseparable pair defied orders from both the former emperor and the new regime and committed suicide together.



prop

The stage will have plenty of red and wedding decorations since everything happened abruptly right after the couple got married.



set

Since the setting of their suicide is in their former house, the stage will be set up like an Ancient chinese bedroom.

The Flower Princess

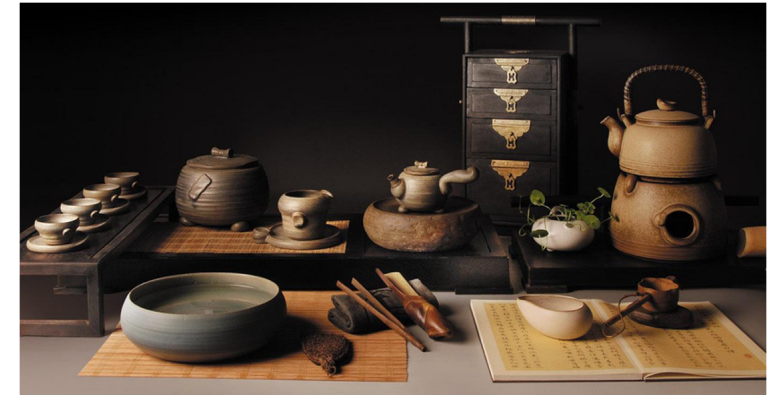
(帝女花)



Changping and Zhou will be dressed in their traditional wedding attire as they sing their songs.



Red drapes will cover the stage when the scene takes a turn at the emporer being overthrown. This represents both a new era and the couples new life.



A key prop will be the tea set in their room during the final scene. The cups will be how they take their poison before dying.