

Stages, Theaters, Troupes, Actors, and Audiences

(A supplement to *Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera: Textualization and Performance, Authorship and Censorship of the “National Drama” of China from the Late Qing to the Present*)

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Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera concentrates on the transcription of *Jingju* plays with a particular focus on the first mass market printing of a major collection of them, *Xikao*, which was published in 40 installments from 1912-1925. The relationships between written and staged versions of plays are variable and complex even in theatrical traditions that privileged the work of the playwright and did their best to reproduce the playwright’s written work on stage as “faithfully” as possible.¹ In the case of *Jingju*, performance conditions and traditions were far more important than the desires and wishes of the playwright, who until the Republican period was typically anonymous and even in the PRC might be little more than a recorder of decisions made by the troupe working up the play. *Jingju* playscripts (as well as those for the majority of traditional Chinese theatrical traditions) have always tended to be very laconic, giving only the bare minimum of stage directions. Actors or readers who want to turn such a playscript into a real “play,” either on the stage or in their minds, have a lot of filling in to do. Whether the playscript was being transmitted to them orally or through written versions, Chinese actors, through their training, were well prepared to do precisely that with comparatively little need of direction from other troupe members. Competent readers of playscripts were typically long-time viewers of *Jingju* who could rely on that experience to fill in what was left off the page. The main job of this supplementary chapter is to help readers to become more competent readers of *Jingju* playscripts.

Stages

Stages ranged from the exceedingly simple, such as marking off an area on the floor of the main hall of a private residence, to the extravagant and complex, such as the imperial three-tier

¹ Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe*, p. 286, notes a developing distinction in the 18th century in Europe between “the ‘acting play’ and the ‘reading play.’” In *Inscribing* we see that although such a distinction was quite strong with regard to two earlier major theater genres in China, *zaju* and *chuanqi*, it was less so for *Jingju*, because *Jingju* playscripts were rarely produced to be or taken as reading material. Bibliographical details for short-form citations can be found in the bibliography to *Inscribing*.

stages with four different performance areas.² In the middle, between these two extremes, would be the stages of old-style commercial theaters, which were typically raised thrust stages with low railings on the three sides facing the audience, with pillars on the two forward-most corners holding up a roof that covered only the stage. There were no curtains to be drawn across the entire stage.³ Changes of scene were made clear by the words and actions of the actors⁴ and changes in the arrangement of stage props on the stage were done by the prop men (*jianchang de* 檢場的).⁵ Prop men were also

² The first level was divided into a lower stage front area and a raised area at the back of the stage. Tong Xu, "The Evolving Stage: Theater and Socio-Cultural Transformation in Early Modern China," doctoral thesis, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2006, p. 118, indicates that there was a three-tiered stage in a native place association in Sichuan, and Wang Qiang 王強, *Huiguan xitai yu xiju* 會館戲臺與戲劇 (Native place association stages and theater; Taipei: Wenjin, 2000), p. 175, mentions that there was one in Sigong, Sichuan. For a brief description and photo, see "Zigong Xiqin huiguan xilou" 子貢西秦會館戲樓 (Theater in the Western Qin native place association, Zigong), <http://www.jz5.cn/gdjz/ziliao/mingcheng/201604/105530.html>, accessed December 6, 2016.

³ Smaller curtains were sometimes used to do such things as to first obscure then reveal the presence of deities on stage. See Xu Lingxiao, *Gucheng fanzhao ji*, installment one in *Zhonghua xiqu* 22 (1999): 51-52. More elaborate curtains were used on palace stages to mark off separate performance areas on stage and to dramatically reveal hidden props or scenery, but not, as far as I have been able to find, to close off the entire performance area on stage. Modern, Westernized theaters, could have curtains. A 1920 color painting of Mei Lanfang performing at the Xinming Da Xiyuan 新明大戲院 reproduced in Yuan Yingming 袁英明, *Dongying pin Mei: Minguo shiqi Mei Lanfang fang Ri gongyan xulun* 東瀛品梅: 民國時期梅蘭芳訪日公演敘論 (Japan appreciates the plum: Mei Lanfang's public performances during his tours of Japan in the Republican era; Beijing: Beijing daxue, 2013), p. 312, shows a big curtain suspended from a railing so that it covers the half-moon extension of the stage that projects past what seems to be a proscenium arch. The curtain is in "closed position," visible at stage left. The ropes used to close and open this curtain are visible. Behind the orchestra, which is seated stage left so that it is half inside, half outside, the proscenium arch, there is a second curtain that runs on a visible railing that just clears a large awning hanging from the rafters. The theater, which was primarily built to perform *Jingju*, had just opened the previous year (see Duan Bingren, ed., *Beijing Jingju baike quanshu*, p. 517, where the name of the theater is given as Xinming Xiyuan).

⁴ There are two maxims that speak to this: "scenery exists on the body of the actor, and in the minds of the audience" 景在演員身上, 也在觀眾心裡, and "scenery is painted on the body of the actor" 布景是畫在演員身上的. See Xia Tian 夏天, *Xiyuan yiqian tiao* 戲諺一千條 (One hundred traditional drama maxims; Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1985), p. 140. Qi Rushan, *Guoju yishu huikao*, pp. 525-31 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 6: 3851-57), "Yong yanyuan shenduan biao xian zhe" 用演員身段表現者 ([Things] represented by the actor's motions), goes through 11 examples, including a variety of different doors, rivers and river banks, and windows. Wang Yuanhua 王元化, "Xulun: *Jingju* yu chuantong wenhua" 緒論: 京劇與傳統文化 (Introduction: *Jingju* and traditional culture), in Weng Sizai, *Jingju congtan bainian lu*, p. 23, quotes the most famous *jing* actor of the 20th century, Qiu Shengrong's 裘盛戎 (1915-1971) reaction to a production he was supposed to be in that was going to use realistic scenery and simulated snow: "What do you want me for? [can also be understood as: "what do you want me to do?"] 要我幹什麼?"

⁵ In some palace playscripts and official documents, prop men are called *zouchang ren* 走場人 or *zouchang* 走場. Regarding palace playscripts that use this alternate way of speaking of prop men, see Dai Yun 戴雲, *Quanshan jinke yanjiu* 勸善金科研究 (A study of *Golden Measures for Encouraging Goodness*; Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue, 2006), p. 170 n. 1. In the documents that theatre troupes submitted to the office in charge of overseeing theater in Beijing that have survived and are reprinted in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan xubian*, 3: 1-402, *zouchang* appears prior to 1868 (see pp. 23 and 25 [1863, different documents related to the same troupe's registration], 39 [1863], 92 [1865], and 106 and 107 [1865, different documents related to the same troupe's registration]), while *jianchang* is used after then. For photos of prop men on stage in a traditional play and from a late 20th century serial play influenced by Shanghai-style *Jingju*, see the item on *jianchang* in Ma Shaobo et al., eds., *Zhongguo Jingju baike quanshu*, pp. 261-62. For a photo of a prop man steadying a chair that Mei Lanfang is standing on taken during a performance in 1956, see Xie Boliang 謝柏梁, ed., *Mei yun*

responsible for helping actors adjust or change their costumes on stage⁶ as well as a variety of special effects. The latter included such things as lending their arms to help Guanyin look like she has more than the usual set of two,⁷ or throwing ignited inflammable powder (*sa huocai* 撒火彩) as a sign of the supernatural or of battle.⁸ Theoretically, the presence of the prop men on stage (sometimes they waited on stage until they had something to do) was supposed to be ignored by both the audience and other characters on stage.⁹

lan fang: Mei Lanfang bada jingdian jumu xiezhen 梅韻蘭芳: 梅蘭芳八大經典劇目寫真 (Style of plum and fragrance of orchid: Photos of Mei Lanfang's eight classic plays; Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2009), p. 159.

⁶ See Liao Canhui 廖燦輝, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu* 平(京)劇檢場研究 (A study of prop men in *Jingju*; Taipei: Wenhua daxue, 2002), pp. 59-60.

⁷ Li Dachun 李大椿, "Momo de fengxianzhe" 默默的奉獻者 (The silent contributor), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1995.5:49, recounts that in the play *Guanyin de dao* 觀音得道 (Guanyin reaches enlightenment; play #483 in *Xikao*), at one point a prop man goes behind Guanyin and sticks out his arms (so that they will look like they are Guanyin's). To cure her father's illness, Guanyin (known as Miaoshan 妙善 before she becomes a bodhisattva) donates her hands and eyes and is rewarded with plenty of each. There is no stage direction concerning the prop man in the *Xikao* version at the place where the transformed Guanyin is revealed (5353-54).

⁸ The traditional fireworks thrown by prop men have disappeared from the stage in Taiwan and the PRC, nor will you find stage directions for its use in playscripts published after 1949, whereas stage directions concerning it are quite common in *Xikao* playscripts (in scripts older than *Xikao*, a different word for fireworks, *yanhuo* 煙火, tends to be used, along with a different verb, *fang* 放). Xu Chengbei, *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 423, explains the disappearance of the practice as the result of no longer using prop men, but that would not explain its discontinuance in Taiwan (the main reason I heard there was that it was not safe and against the fire code; Zhou Licheng 周利成 and Zhou Yanan 周雅男, *Tianjin lao xiyuan* 天津老戲院 [Old theaters of Tianjin; Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 2005], p. 82, recounts an incident in which a prop man's timing was off and sparks fell on an actor's head, igniting his wig). The editor's remarks (*juantou yu* 卷頭語) at the beginning of *Xiju yuekan* 3.9 (July 1931) claims that at the time of writing the practice was already rare because of a lack of people who knew how to do it well. A different use of "pyrotechnics," one for which prop men are not needed, involves a character blowing on embers in a bamboo pipe in his mouth so that he appears to be spitting fire (*pen huo* 噴火). This effect is particularly associated with infernal judges (*panguan* 判官). Perhaps because prop men play no part and the risk of fire is less, this effect has continued to be used in both Taiwan and the PRC (in modern theaters it is possible to dim the lights and increase the effect). Liao Canhui, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu*, has an extensive section on *sa huocai* (pp. 137-87), which includes a discussion of its use in 12 different plays (pp. 151-59), and a section on its use in conjunction with supernatural creatures (pp. 146-50). Shen Dinglu 沈定廬, "Jianchang, sa huocai, jitai" 檢場, 撒火彩, 祭臺 (Prop men, throwing ignited phosphorus, anointing the stage), *Shanghai xiqu shiliao huicui* 5 (1988): 122-26, pp. 123-24 states that the salaries of prop men often depended on their level of skill at throwing fireworks. Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, pp. 10-11, speaking of water-route troupes, says that their audiences liked the fireworks so much that they would reward individual instances of its use with cash donations. Zucker, *The Chinese Theater*, p. 167, speaks of the use of "large flames emitted repeatedly from an oil lamp" but I have not been able to find corroboration of that description. *Huocai* might be similar to what was known as a "spirit wad." See Du Dingyu 杜定宇, *Ying Han xiju cidian* 英漢戲劇辭典 (English-Chinese dictionary of theatre; Shanghai: Shanghai yiwu, 2013), p. 735. On pyrotechnics on the early English and Scottish stage, see Philip Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1998).

⁹ Tong Jingxin, *Xin jiu xiqu zhi yanjiu*, p. 330, thinks it is most absurd that "for playgoers, the thing is to make them [the propmen] invisible" 看戲的人, 非要把他們看沒了, 才算程度. The presence of the prop men on the stage might suddenly be recognized by the actors on the stage, for comic effect. For instance, Wang Yuanfu 王元富, *Guoju yishu jilun* 國劇藝術輯論 (Collected essays on the art of national drama; Taipei: Liming wenhua, 1980 [revised edition]), p. 46, recounts how in the play *Shuang bei deng* 雙背凳 (Two bear benches on their backs; not in *Xikao*), a prop man has to come out on stage and tie a bench to the back of a *chou* actor. The *chou* actor looks at the prop man and asks his wife who the stranger is and the wife replies it is her maternal cousin. Wang says that this was sure to get a laugh. Xu Chengbei,

Traveling troupes had to keep down the number of props that they used, and make the most of those they used,¹⁰ since they had to be carried with the troupe and had to be sufficient to put on a very wide repertoire of plays at short notice at temple theaters or even just out in the open.¹¹

Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua, p. 542, discusses an early 1980s version of *Yipi bu* 一疋布 (A bolt of cloth; *Xikao* play #285) by Wang Zengqi 汪曾祺 (1920-1997) in which prop men not only appear but also get to speak. Having the prop men on stage was one of the most intriguing things for Western audiences who saw George C. Hazelton and Benrimo's *The Yellow Jacket: A Chinese Play Done in a Chinese Manner* (premiered 1912) and S. I. Hsiung's *Lady Precious Stream* (premiered 1935). Li Dachun, "Momo de fengxianzhe," p. 49, recounts seeing an entire audience yell in approval (*mantang hecai* 滿堂喝彩) when a prop man threw five pillows to exactly the right spots for five actors to kneel on. Biographies of two prop men are included in Wang Zhizhang 王芷章, "Jingju ming yiren zhuanlüe ji" 京劇名藝人傳略集 (Collected brief biographies of famous *Jingju* artists), appended to Wang Zhizhang 王芷章, *Zhongguo Jingju biannian shi* 中國京劇編年史 (Annalistic history of Chinese *Jingju*; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 2003), pp. 1129-30. For an account of what the prop men had to do through the course of one play (the example is *Changban po* 長坂坡 [Long slope; play #141 in *Xikao*], see Liao Canhui, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu*, pp. 165-87.

¹⁰ On the many uses tables and chairs were put to, see Qi Rushan, *Guoju yishu huikao*, pp. 531-43 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 6: 3857-69); Xiao Yikun 筱藝坤 and Wang Yiren 王佚人, "Zhuo yi zai chuantong xiqu wutai shang de yingyong" 桌椅在傳統戲曲舞臺上的應用 (The uses of tables and chairs on the stage of traditional Chinese theater), *Xiqu yishu* 戲曲藝術 (The art of traditional Chinese theater) 1982.1: 72-79, 104; and Zhao Zhenbang 趙振邦, Wu Xuefu 吳學富, and Li Shuping 李樹萍, *Zhongguo Jingju chuantong wutai meishu: Zhuoyi baiseshe* 中國京劇傳統舞臺美術: 桌椅擺設 (Traditional Chinese *Jingju* stage design: The placement of tables and chairs; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 2008). For a list of the technical names for commonly used *Jingju* props, see "Changyong qiemo shuyu biao" 常用砌末術語表, Wang Wenzhang, ed., *Zhongguo Jingju yishu baike quanshu*, pp. 658-64, which lists almost 150 terms, the majority of which are for weapons. Some of the items are really costumes (such as the costumes, *xing* 形, for dogs, sheep, tigers, and dragons), while others are scenery (such as the cloth used to simulate a city wall, *bucheng* 布城, or standup-paintings of mountains, *shanpian* 山片). All of the troupe's costumes and props would be carried in trunks. There was a separate trunk for weapons (*bazi xiang* 把子箱) and one for banners and miscellaneous items (*qibao xiang* 旗包箱). For an introduction to these two trunks and their typical contents, see Liu Yuemei 劉月美, *Zhongguo Jingju yixiang* 中國京劇衣箱 (The clothes trunks of Chinese *Jingju*; Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, 2003), pp. 194-210 and 204-10, respectively. On p. 204 she gives the names that might be given to trunks that are just for *qiemo*: *qiema xiang* 砌末箱 (*qiemo* trunk), *menxiang* 門箱 (door/category trunk), *qibao xiang* 奇寶箱 (wonderous treasure trunk) and *shiwu xiang* 什物箱 (miscellaneous item trunk). More recently, there has been a tendency to use *daoju* 道具 to refer to props and *bujing* 布景 to refer to scenery. Li Tianyin 李湣茵, "Jingju zhishi xingcheng, shangye xuanchuan yu yanyuan zhongxin xianxiang—You 1917 zhi 1983 Jingju baozhi qikan tantao Jingju de fazhan" 京劇知識形成、商業宣傳與演員中心現象—由 1917 至 1983 京劇報紙期刊探討京劇之發展 (The phenomena of the development of knowledge about *Jingju*, commercial propaganda, and taking actors as central—Looking into the development of *Jingju* from 1917 to 1983 in *Jingju* newspapers and periodicals), doctoral thesis, National Tsing Hua University, 2015, p. 65, discusses the distinctions that can be made between *qiemo* and *daoju*. Liao Canhui 廖燦輝, "Jingju jingwu zaoxing chansheng teshu xiaoneng de quanshi" 京劇景物造型產生特殊效能的詮釋 (Explication of the special effects produced by scenographic elements in *Jingju*), *Huagang yishu xuebao* 華岡藝術學報 (Huagang journal of the arts) 7 (2003): 348-71, uses the term *jingwu* 景物 (scenographic elements) in his title to encompass both props and scenery but he also uses the term *daoju*. He notes that another term for *qibao xiang* is just *zaxiang* 雜箱 (miscellaneous trunk).

¹¹ Ma Er xiansheng (Feng Shulan), "Zhongguo xiju zhi gaikuang," p. 259, posits as one of traditional Chinese theater's five main characteristics (*xingzhi* 性質) its "suppositionality" (*xuni xing* 虛擬性), which he does not define precisely but which seems to mean that its form of mimesis (*ni* 擬) aims not at filling in everything completely (*shi* 實) but at hinting through absence (*xu* 虛). Feng explains that since traditional Chinese drama had to be "easily performable in ordinary halls on the spur of the moment" (*bian yu tingtang linshi banyan* 便於廳堂臨時扮演), "great effort was taken to keep the material to be used on stage simple" (*taishang shebei, jili congjian* 臺上設備極力從簡). See Weihong Bao, "The Politics of

Transportation and storage was not a real concern for the palace, permitting the development and storage of large, complicated props.¹² In the case of urban, commercial troupes performing at a

Remediation: Mise-en-scène and the Subjunctive Body in Chinese Opera Film,” *Opera Quarterly* 26.2-3 (2010): 256-90, especially p. 257, on the use of the terms *xuni xing* and the related term *jiading xing* 假定性 to talk about *xiqu*.

¹² See, for instance, the illustration in Jin Yaozhang, ed., *Zhongguo Jingju shi tulu*, p. 28, of an approximately ten-foot long contraption on wheels in the shape of a fish that actors could get inside and propel about. Summarizing developments at court, Zhang Geng 張庚 and Guo Hancheng 郭漢城, eds., *Zhongguo xiqu tongshi* 中國戲曲通史 (Comprehensive history of traditional Chinese theater; Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu, 1992), p. 1169, say there were three tendencies: (1) increasing use of lanterns (*dengcai hua* 燈彩化), (2) increasing use of mechanical scenery and props (*jiquan' hua* 機關化), and (3) increasing realism (*xieshi hua* 寫實化). In Xu Lingxiao's *Gucheng fanzhao ji*, installment 5, *Zhonghua xiqu* 26 (2002): 314, a character says that palace plays were the first examples of Shanghai-style mechanical scenery. Princess Der Ling, *Two Years in the Forbidden City* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1917), “A Play at the Court,” pp. 24-38, presents a description of a play performed on the three-tiered stage Changyin ge 暢音閣 in the Forbidden Palace. Besides describing how the Empress Dowager Cixi had her apartments across from the stage set up for her theater-watching enjoyment, it also says, “Unlike most theatres in China it [Changyin ge] has a curtain which was closed between the acts, also wing slides and drop scenes. Her Majesty had never seen a foreign theatre and I could not understand where she got all her ideas from.” She also says, “Her Majesty told us that the scenery was painted by the eunuchs and that she had taught them about all they knew” (p. 35). In a novel that she later wrote, *Imperial Incense* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934), p. 149, Der Ling says that the three-tiered stage at the Summer Palace “had been designed by Her Majesty with elaborate movable stages, some of them worked like modern elevators—so that one stage, when an act closed, could be lifted out of sight and the one below with the actors already in place, brought even with the platform.” There are surviving palace playscripts for plays to be performed on complicated stages in the imperial palaces but although their stage directions can be very detailed, they do not present a very complete and concrete picture of how the plays were staged. For a look at what the stage descriptions in one particular manuscript can tell us about stage practice, see Lu Dawei 陸大偉, “Cong Daban cangben *Shengping baofa* zhong de wutai zhishi kan Qingchao gongting daxi de wutai yishu mouxie cengmian” 從大阪藏本昇平寶筏中的舞台指示看清朝宮廷大戲的舞台藝術某些層面 (Looking at some aspects of the theatrical art of the great plays of the Qing court from the point of view of the stage directions in the Osaka copy of Precious Raft of Ascending Peace), in Zhu Wanshu 朱萬曙 and Shang Wei 商偉, eds., *Qingdai xiqu yu gongting wenhua* 清代戲曲與宮廷文化 (Qing dynasty theater and palace culture; Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2018), pp. 106-28. I have not seen a palace playscript or other palace document used in staging performances that makes it clear that a curtain that could veil the entire stage was ever used, nor anything about movable stages (small platforms [*yundou* 雲兜, etc.] could be pulled up by ropes from trapdoors in the stage [*dijing* 地井] or lowered down from trapdoors in the ceiling [*tianjing* 天井]). Although she did spend a couple of years at court, Princess Der Ling (Yu Deling 裕德齡 [1885-1944]) was not really a princess and was somewhat given to exaggeration. For a popular biography of her, see Grant Hayter-Menzies, *Imperial Masquerade: The Legend of Princess Der Ling* (Hong Kong University Press, 2008). Her sister, Yu Rongling 裕容齡 (1888?-1973), studied modern dance with Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), was in the palace with Princess Der Ling, and was commissioned by Empress Dowager Cixi to develop a new type of modern/ancient Chinese dance modeled on what Isadora Duncan did. On Yu Rongling, see Nan Ma, “Dancing into Modernity: Kinesthesia, Narrative, and Revolutions in Modern China, 1900-1978,” doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2015, “Chapter 1: Traveling Princess and Dancing Diplomat: Corporeal Modernity, Evolution, and the Dance of Yu Rongling, 1900-1925.” The Yu family belonged to one of the Chinese banners but were not members of the Qing royal house. On how the two sisters got to be called “princesses” see p. 32 of Nan Ma’s thesis. Trapdoors were used at the Xin Wutai. See the ninth illustration for the Xin Wutai production of *Xin Chahua* 新茶花 (New version of the Lady of the Camelias; not in *Xikao*) in the “Shijie xinju” 世界新劇 (New plays of the world) series that typically ran on the sixth page of *Tuhua ribao* 圖畫日報 (Pictorial daily) published by Huanqiu she 環球社 of Shanghai from its first issue to its 341st (1909-1910) and reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 10: 255-329 (see pp. 20-21 for the illustration referenced). The illustration in question is from the September 2, 1909, issue. The play premiered June 12, 1909 (see Hong Peijun, “Huadeng chu shang: Shanghai Xin wutai [1908-1927] de biaoyan yu guankan,” p. 137). There is the claim that more than one thousand candles could be burned up in a commercial *dengcai*

relatively small number of designated theaters, or in Shanghai, where theaters had their own troupes, the number of props used in plays could increase dramatically even outside of Shanghai-style plays, which especially emphasized the use of props and scenery.¹³ According to Qi Rushan, a distinction was made (or should have been made) between regular props (*qiemo* 砌末) that would be packed away in the troupe's trunks and manipulated on stage by the prop men and those specially prepared either by specific actors or the troupe for use in specific plays (*caitou* 彩頭). He remarks that when he first arrived in Beijing, play notices (*xi baozi* 戲報子) pasted outside the theaters had language stressing the idea that the productions had newly prepared props of both categories.¹⁴ Certain props were associated with particular plays, and before the practice of posting notices in newspapers caught on in Beijing, the main way a theater would advertise an upcoming play would be to display props from the play outside its doors (*baimen* 擺門).¹⁵

performance in Shanghai. See Huang Shiquan 黃式權 (1852-1925), *Songnan mengying lu* 淞南夢影錄 (Record of dream-shadows of South of Wusong; 1883), *juan* 3, in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 8: 143. On the history and methods of construction of the kind of traditional Shanghai lanterns used on stage, see Kong Xiaomin 孔曉敏, ed., *Shanghai dengcai: Jiaoke shu* 上海燈彩: 教課書 (Shanghai-style lanterns: A textbook; Shanghai guji, 2013).

¹³ Based on material presented in Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, about the situation at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, p. 83, comes to the conclusion that the troupes would have to have made or make available to themselves around 700 items of props and costume and the theaters another 700 items of props and scenery. Books of costume plots for *Jingju* such as Zhang Yijuan, ed., *Chuantong Jingju renwu zaoxing huicui*, and Wang Peilin, *Jingju wutai fushi yingyong huibian*, contain prop lists for each play covered. Wu Yiwei 吳億偉, "Jindai Shanghai huabao xiju hua yanjiu (1884-1912)" 近代上海畫報戲劇畫研究 (1884-1912) (Research on theater illustrations in Shanghai pictorials of the early modern period [1884-1912]), master's thesis, Taibei National University of the Arts, 2006, p. 32, presents two theories on the first use of Western scenery in China; one claims that Tongqing Chayuan 同慶茶園 (Tongqing teahouse), in 1897, was the first; the other that Wang Zhongsheng's 王鐘聲 (1880-1911) Chunyang She 春陽社 was the first. The new scenic technique used at Tongqing Chayuan is described in a number of *Shenbao* ads, the first two lines for the header for one for December 14, 1897 is "Tongqing Chayuan Xingjiapo huajing xi yi dao" 同慶茶園星架坡畫景戲已到 (At Tongqing Chayuan the "Painted scenery play" from Singapore has arrived). For an ad for a Wang Zhongsheng production that stresses the use of scenery in it, see "Kaishe Da Riben zujie Tianxian chayuan Mingfeng ming ban tian bujing cai guanggao" 開設大日本租界天仙茶園鳴鳳名班添布景彩廣告 (Advertisement: Operating in the Japanese concession, the Mingfeng Troupe at Tianxian Teahouse has added colored scenery), *Jinbao* 津報 (Tianjin daily), issue 1229 (March 22, 1909), in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan xubian*, 4: 371-72, which is signed by the owner of the theater, begins by saying the traditional theatrics, which involve such things as using a whip to stand in for a horse, are disappointing, while Wang Zhongsheng has "invented a new approach that uses electric light to shine on painted flats" 獨創新法, 以電光照應各種畫山片, and is capable of creating "whatever is needed" (*ying you jin you* 應有盡有).

¹⁴ See Qi Rushan, *Guoju yishu huikao*, p. 391 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 6: 3717), where he also draws a distinction between *caitou* and *qiemo*. He gives examples of the former, pp. 392-95 (6: 3718-21) and of the latter, pp. 346-91 (6: 3672-3717). According to the chronology of his life given in Liang Yan, "Qi Rushan juxue yanjiu," p. 262, Qi Rushan went to Beijing to study in 1894. Zhen Guangjun 甄光俊, "Qing Tongguang nianjian Tianjin xiqu huodong shiyi" 清同光年間天津戲曲活動拾遺 (Overlooked aspects of Chinese indigenous theater activity in the Tongzhi and Guangxu reigns in Tianjin), in *Jingju yishu zai Tianjin*, pp. 349-50, says that in 1878, actors who became famous for using "new-style" (*xinshi* 新式) *qiemo* moved to Tianjin and did well there.

¹⁵ See Liao Canhui, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu*, pp. 56-57. He also explains how the props for specific plays were also put on display on the stage about an hour before the beginning of a performance (*xiao baitai* 小擺臺) and the troupe would also show off its props at the last performance of the season before New Year's (*da baitai* 大擺臺), after which the troupe's trunks were sealed (*fengxiang* 封箱) for the holidays. Some of the excitement and interest in the use of new and elaborate

Most of the traditional props used in *Jingju* were originally purposely artificial. As we have seen in the book, Qi Rushan put forward as a principle the idea that “real things are not permitted on stage” in “national drama.” In a discussion of the use of real props on stage, he acknowledges the contradiction, but then stresses that realistic props are used by *chou* actors to provoke laughter.¹⁶ Such an approach not only ignores what happened in Shanghai-style *Jingju*, where real weapons were brought on stage and then used in fights between characters in martial plays,¹⁷ but also developments in Beijing which included bringing a live mule up onto the stage.¹⁸ Typically, the presence of mules and horses on stage would be symbolized by the use of whips. Another category of live creatures

props in Beijing commercial theaters even earlier than Qi Rushan’s arrival there can be seen in the account of the premiere of the new production, *Pansi dong* 盤絲洞 (The spider sprites’ cave), by Mei Qiaoling 梅巧玲 (c. 1825-1882) and his troupe, in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, pp. 21.252-22.264. This section includes the idea that at that time there was “great interest in props” (*po zhong qiemo* 頗重砌末) and that the person making the props for the new production, Zhang Qi 張七 (Zhang the Seventh) has been long employed by the court to make props for them (pp. 252-53); a description of all of the props on display outside the theater prior to the performance and all the commotion that stirs up (p. 257); a description of how at the performance itself the orchestra was moved during the play preceding it to allow the props to be moved up onto the stage in readiness (p. 263); and a description of how the props allowed for the scenes to change suddenly from stone cave to lotus pond; and although the spectators were pleased, it was a regret that the light shed by the candles was not great enough (pp. 263-64). Zhang Qi is also mentioned in Chen Moxiang’s *Huoren daxi*, p. 20.121-22. For a brief biography of Zhang Qi, see Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 1: 599. On Mei Qiaoling, see Zhang Yifan 張一帆, “Yi wei zhide shenru yanjiu de zaoqi Jingju yiren—Mei Qiaoling” 一位值得深入研究的早期京劇藝人—梅巧玲 (A *Jingju* artist of the early period worth study—Mei Qiaoling), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua chuantong*, pp. 383-98. A later refinement to the practice of *baimen* was to write the surname of the most famous actor to be in the play by the props put on display. Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 208, notes that this was done for Tan Xinpei and the *wusheng* actor Yu Jusheng 俞菊笙 (1838-1914). Private productions of plays could involve tremendous expenditures, some of which surely went into scenery and props. For mention of a number of private productions of *chuanqi* plays that cost tens of thousands of taels of silver to mount, see Song Xizhi 宋希芝, *Xiqu hangye minsu yanjiu* 戲曲行業民俗研究 (Research on professional customs in Chinese indigenous theater; Jinan: Shandong renmin, 2015), pp. 210-11.

¹⁶ See Qi Rushan, *Guoju yishu huikao*, p. 378 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 6: 3704). He provides a short list of examples (pp. 378-81; 6: 3704-707).

¹⁷ On how things moved from just bringing the weapons on stage, as in *Tiegong ji* (*Xikao* play # 334; premiere 1893), to their use in simulated fight scenes, see the September 8, 1928, *Liyuan gongbao* piece, Luo Wo 羅我, “Li yi lian chi shi juhua” 禮義廉恥室劇話 (Talks on theater from the Studio of Four Virtues), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 626-27, which argues against common ideas about *Tiegong ji*’s place in this development. For early ads for *Tie gongji* that stressed how “real blades and real spears” were involved in the play, see Cai Peifen, “Wan Qing fushi hui: *Youxi bao* yu Shanghai wenren de wenhua xiangxiang,” p. 175. For descriptions of how spectators found the use of real weapons very realistic (*zai xiang mei you* 再像沒有) and scary enough to give them goosebumps, see *Haishang fanhua meng*, p. 15.149 (the play is *Tiegong ji*) and a January 5, 1924, *Shenbao* article, Kuibao 窺豹, “Erji Hui Qin er di” yuandan kaiyan (er) 二集‘徽欽二帝’元旦開演 (二) (The second installment of ‘Emperors Huizong and Qinzong’ performed on New Year’s Day [part two]), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 263-64. It would not be clear to a reader of the *Xikao* playscript for *Tiegong ji* that actors were holding real and not stage weapons.

¹⁸ The Beijing *chou* actor Liu Gansan was famous for riding a real mule onto the stage. For a picture of him and his mule, see Jin Yaozhang, ed., *Zhongguo Jingju shi tulu*, p. 22. The writer of the *shukao* for the play in which he did this (*Xikao* play #107; p. 963) says that he has heard that Liu would do this even at court or at a *tanghui*. In the introduction to the book, we noted that even live elephants could be part of palace sponsored performances. For a reproduction of a woodblock print of a horse on stage see Ma Shaobo et al., eds., *Zhongguo Jingju baike quanshu*, “Daguan chayuan” 大觀茶園 (Daguan teahouse; the name of the teahouse appears in the print), p. 91 (the writer of this item, Lin Mingmin 林明敏, identifies the teahouse depicted as the Tianjin one, and claims that the horse was added by the printmaker).

conventionally represented by a prop on stage was babies. The prop used for them was a typically not very realistic doll known as the *xishen* 喜神 (happiness deity), which was treated with reverence.¹⁹ Body parts and corpses were represented on stage but not generally in a realistic manner.²⁰ Blood and wounds, on the other hand, could be rendered quite graphically, although it is rare to see this done

¹⁹ Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 84, notes that since the actors were supposed to pay their respects to the doll whenever they saw its face, it was stored face down to save bother.

²⁰ Qi Rushan, *Guoju mantan*, “Guoju zhong ouyong zhi wu” 國劇中偶用之物 (Props used occasionally in *Jingju*), pp. 128-34 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 3: 1605-12), includes human heads (*rentou* 人頭), chunks of flesh (*rou* 肉), human legs (*rentui* 人腿), [full] corpses (*shishen* 屍身), half-body corpses (*banjie shi* 半截屍), and [dead] illegitimate babies (*siwa* 私娃). All of these involve using non-human material to represent human parts (or dead or about to be killed whole bodies). Going in the other direction, perhaps, there are in the *Kunqu* repertoire a number of scenes in which the main character describes looking at a collection of statues of the 500 arhats (*luohan* 羅漢). These include *Zuida shanmen* 醉打山門 (Drunkenly beating on the monastery gates) and *Sifan*. Aside from palace performances, the general practice would be for the individual statues to be made present only through the actor’s description of (or imitation of, in the case of *Zuida shanmen*) them, but Mei Lanfang, at the urging of Yu Zhenting 俞振庭 (1879-1939), had actors dress as the arhats and stay behind a curtain until their scene, when the curtain was opened. Mei Lanfang thought that this got in the way of his acting, as did the later substitution of a painting of them (revealed by opening a curtain). See Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 2: 135.

nowadays.²¹ Animals and monsters could be represented on stage by actors in full-body costumes, both in the palace and on commercial stages.²²

In traditional Chinese fiction in both the literary language and the vernacular, and in *zaju* and *chuanqi* drama, objects had important structural and thematic uses. Expanding from the common use of the exchange of objects as pledges (*dingwu* 定物) between couples who were to marry, popular literature used objects that were exchanged by “accident” to symbolize marriage affinities not initially sanctioned by the families of the couples. The idea that objects could be invested by and linked to characters because they were worn or used by that character or otherwise associated with them, and thus come to represent those characters in their absence, was very common. There was, after all, no absolute line between the sentient and insentient in traditional Chinese culture.²³ Significant objects or tokens (*wujian* 物件) was also used to tie together friends of the same sex²⁴ and to give structure to

²¹ Wounds and loss of blood could be represented by changing into clothes with blood stains already on them, having a prop man come out on stage and spurt red fluid from his mouth onto the wound (*pencai* 噴彩), or having the actor carry “blood” and/or body parts on his person that he reveals when he gets wounded. For an example of the first of these, see Jiang Xiwu 蔣錫武, *Jingju jingshen* 京劇精神 (The spirit of *Jingju*; Wuhan: Hubei jiaoyu, 1997), p. 152, on how Yu Jusheng would act *Changban po*. Liao Canhui, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu*, p. 60, describes how *pencai* is done by a prop man in two plays he uses as examples, *Wu Song sha sao* 武松殺嫂 (Wu Song kills his sister-in-law; play #194 in *Xikao*) and *Ma Siyuan* 馬思源 (the title is the name of a character who gets killed in the play; play #316 in *Xikao*). Chen Moxiang, “Guanju shenghuo sumiao,” part eight, in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 495, gives an even more detailed description of what used to be done in *Wu Song sha sao*. *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Beijing juan*, p. 782, explains how in performances of *Jiepai guan* 界牌關 (Jiepai pass; play #494 in *Xikao*, which has the more graphic alternate title of *Panchang zhan* 盤腸戰 [Fighting with intestines wrapped around one]), the actor used to reveal bloody false intestines hidden under his stage armor when he is speared in the stomach. According to Li Zigu, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 11, the water-route troupes did not perform “blood” (*xuecai* 血彩) plays often, but would get extra money when they did. *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Beijing juan*, p. 782, claims that the audience used to be greatly pleased (*guanzhong da kuai renxin* 觀眾大快人心) when the villain in *Zha Mei an* 劊美案 (The execution of [Chen Shi]mei; play #113 in *Xikao*), Chen Shimei 陳世/士美, is chopped in half onstage under the blade of the tiger-headed chopper (*hutou zha* 虎頭劊) by Judge Bao 包公, and “fresh blood comes flooding out, and it is extremely realistic” 鮮血直流, 甚為逼真). Under the PRC, these plays were either banned or performed without the blood. There are stage directions in *Xikao* involving blood (e.g., pp. 2233 and 2563), although not in the *Xikao* versions of the plays mentioned above. Xu Lingxiao’s *Gucheng fanzhao ji* describes how even the seasoned characters in the novel watching the murder scene in *Shazi bao* 殺子報 (Retribution for killing [her] son; *Xikao* play #469) in which the mother kills her son and then chops him up, and stage blood is spilled onstage (*dangchang chucai* 當場出彩; there are no explicit stage directions about this in the *Xikao* version [p. 5079], although the dialogue makes very clear what is going on) “constantly turned their heads away and could not bear to watch directly” 常常扭過頭去不敢正視). It is stated that such a reaction among these Beijing playgoers is why “all those plays with ‘real knives and spears, real blood and real props’ ‘真刀真槍, 真彩真切’ 一切的戲) have not been successful in Beijing. See the sixth installment, *Zhonghua xiqu* 27 (2002): 183.

²² For a photo from a 1937 production of *Zhuhen ji* 朱痕記 (The purple birthmark; a.k.a., *Muyang juan* 牧羊卷 [The sheep herding story], *Xikao* play #16) starring Cheng Yanqiu that features him and four actors in sheep costumes, see Ziyu 子輿, ed., *Jingju lao zhaopian* 京劇老照片 (Old *Jingju* photos), 2 vols. (Beijing: Xueyuan chuban she, 2013-2014), 1: 86.

²³ For a translation and discussion of a love story between a stone and an old man, “The Ethereal Rock” (“Shi Qingxu” 石清虛), see Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 203-207 and 74-78.

²⁴ An example would be the *chuanqi* play, *Mai jian ji* 埋劍記 (The burial of the sword), by Shen Jing, in which the sword that gets buried is given by the male lead to the secondary male lead, who in turn gives the male lead a coral whip. For summary information on this play, see Zhuang Yifu, *Gudian xiqu cunmu huikao*, p. 846.

fairly complex works that could not rely on narrators to hold them together. We see examples of this particularly in literary-language tales and *chuanqi* plays.²⁵ Tokens are less prominent in *Jingju* plays, which tend to be less ambitious in structure, but they still play a part.²⁶

If props were traditionally kept to a minimum, it is only natural that the same could be said about scenery. In fact, items kept in a troupe's traveling trunks with a scenic aspect to them, such as paintings of mountains on a flat surface that could be propped up on stage (*shanpian* 山片), tended to be small and portable and were treated the same way as props.²⁷ Originally, scenic backdrops were not used, the *shoujiu* 守舊 that began to be hung at the back of the stage were the property of the star actor and were primarily an advertisement for him. If an actor had more than one and used one for certain plays and others for other plays, it was so the colors on the *shoujiu* would not clash with those of the costumes of the main actors.²⁸ Scenery is particularly associated with Shanghai and theaters such as Xin Wutai, which changed the scenery for each scene in their new-style plays and imported scenery technicians from Japan.²⁹ Scenery began to be used in Beijing at the end of the Qing dynasty, first at Tianle Yuan 天樂園 (Garden of heavenly joy) and then at the first new-style theater in Beijing, Diyi Wutai 第一舞臺 (Number one stage), which opened in 1913.³⁰ Film was one of the media that

²⁵ For an analysis of how this works in the literary language tale, "Zhenzhu shan" 珍珠衫 (The pearl vest), see Patrick Hanan, "The Making of *The Pearl-sewn Shirt* and *The Courtesan's Jewel Box*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 33 (1973): 124-53, p. 134. A good example of how this works in a *chuanqi* play is Kong Shangren's *Taohua shan*, in which the fan of the title fulfills multiple functions. Kong Shangren himself, in the first item of his *fanli* for the play (p. 11), compares the relationship between the writing of the play and the fan to the dragon and the pearl (in dragon dances, the dragon's focus is always on the pearl). For an overview of the use of such objects in Ming dynasty fiction, see Shen Guangren 沈廣仁, "Mingdai xiaoshuo zhong zhuti wu de xiangzheng xing yu qingjie xing" 明代小說中主題物的象徵性與情節性 (The symbolic and structural uses of thematic objects in Ming dynasty fiction), *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 上海師範大學學報 2001.6: 49-54.

²⁶ In the first ten plays in *Xikao*, for instance, counting both the main names and alternate names for the plays, five of the plays have titles that highlight props that appear in them. Perhaps the most interesting is play #4, *Wupen ji* 烏盆計 (The black pot plot), in which a traveler is killed by a potter and ground up into the clay for the black pot of the title. The dead man's soul remains with the pot, and gets the old man who ends up with it to take his case to court (the second half of the story is handled in *Xikao* play #207, *Qiyuan bao* 奇冤報 [The righting of an extraordinary injustice]).

²⁷ For a list of such flat painted objects (*pianzi* 片子), see Liao Canhui, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu*, pp. 123-25.

²⁸ See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 182, on *shoujiu* owned and used by Mei Lanfang. George Kin Leung, "Hsin Ch'iao (New Tide): New Trends in the Traditional Chinese Theater," *Pacific Affairs* 4.4 (April 1929): 173-83, pp. 177-78, describes how, in a November 11, 1928 performance, when it came time for Cheng Yanqiu to take the stage, not only was the *shoujiu* (referred to by Leung as the "rear curtain") changed, but "the coverings on chairs and tables" were "replaced by others of richer satin and embroidery."

²⁹ *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Shanghai juan*, p. 801, claims that Xin Wutai was the first to use scenery, which does not sound like it could strictly be true. Ouyang Yuqian, who acted there for a spell, says in his "Zi wo yan xi yi lai," p. 80, that their plays were "exclusively concerned with changes in the scenery" 專注重布景的變化. He also mentions the importation by the theater of scenery craftsmen (*bujing shi* 布景師) and carpenters from Japan (p. 63).

³⁰ See the August 24, 1919, *Shenbao* article, Liu Dao 柳道, "Ying shijie xi ji xiju zhi bujing" 應時節戲及戲劇之布景 (Seasonal plays and scenery in theater), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p. 178. *Xikao* includes plays that were performed with scenery, but stage directions that mention scenery are rare and laconic when they do appear (see p. 2548 for one).

presented both a model and helped create a desire for scenery in theater,³¹ and there were productions of plays in which scenery was projected onto screens on the stage.³² This became possible only with the control of lighting. First candles, then oil lamps, then electric lights were used to create special effects,³³ but traditionalists held that a refusal to modulate lighting, together with use of an open and bare stage, was a necessary condition that had helped to produce what was best about *Jingju*.³⁴ *Jingju* is famous for plays which are performed in full light in such a way that the audience thinks the characters are in pitch darkness.³⁵ Changes in the weather were indicated either by sound effects from the percussion orchestra or the appearance of deities in charge of different kinds of

³¹ Film versions of plays included exterior shots at least as early as those Mei Lanfang made in 1920. See Su Donghua 蘇東花, “Mei Lanfang xiqu yingpian chuanguo jianlun” 梅蘭芳戲曲影片創作簡論 (A brief discussion of the creation of Mei Lanfang’s theatrical movies), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju biao yan lilun tixi jiangou—Disi jie Jingju xue guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji*, p. 723.

³² Qiliang He, “News about Killing, News that Killed: Media Culture and Identities in 1920s China,” doctoral thesis, University of Minnesota, 2006, pp. 147-48, describes in some detail how the Xin Wutai production of *Yan Ruisheng* 閻瑞生 (*Xikao* play #515) in 1921 used film to represent outdoor scenes, including the wheatfield where the climatic murder takes place, and notes that this genre of mixing film and stage performance was known as “lianhuan xi” 連環戲 (interlinked plays). Hong Peijun, “Huadeng chu shang: Shanghai Xin Wutai (1908-1927) de biao yan yu guankan,” pp. 37-38, notes how Xin Wutai used this technology to get male actors on the stage together with female actors on film. See also Li Fusheng, *Zhonghua guoju shi*, pp. 147-48.

³³ Yan Quanyi, *Qingdai Jingju wenxue shi*, p. 443, dates the use of electric lighting for scenic effects to an 1884 Shanghai theater. According to Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 2: 78, the first play of his with special electronic lighting effects was *Chang’e benyue* 嫦娥奔月 (Chang’e flees to the moon; *Xikao* play #489). One of the authors of the *shukao* in *Xikao*, Wuxia Jian’er 吳下健兒, does not seem to have had any animus against the use of special lighting effects on stage. In a September 11, 1912, *Shenbao* review, Jian’er 健兒, “Ping Jinqian bao Hua hudie deng” 評金錢豹花蝴蝶等 (Comments on ‘Gold-coin leopard’ [play #215 in *Xikao*] and ‘Patterned butterfly’ [play #221 in *Xikao*], etc.), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p. 65, he is quite appreciative of one particular lighting effect in the play that involved putting two lights on a prop taken out onto the stage.

³⁴ According to Li Fusheng, *Zhonghua Guoju shi*, p. 134, at one point it was the practice, when an important actor, regardless of role-type, was about to come out on stage, to dim the lights and then bring them up when he came out (*liang diandeng* 亮電燈). Li stresses that in the case of amateur actors, it was done no matter whether they were playing lead or secondary roles. Li is clearly happy that the practice ended. Jiang Xiwu, *Jingju jingshen*, p. 167, discusses Yang Xiaolou’s refusal to go along with this custom. Ren Erbai, ed., *Youyu ji*, item 353, p. 292, records the reason Yang gave for his refusal: “I only know to stick to what is due me, and don’t dare to imitate what is fashionable” 我只知安分, 不敢學時髦. Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 1: 130, records his surprise at how, when he first took the stage on his first trip to Shanghai, the footlights were turned on. He does not say that the lights had been turned down prior to that, and says that on inquiry he found out that it was something done when new actors took the stage. The use of colored lighting and manipulation of lighting levels was integral to the “stage magic” of Shanghai-style *Jingju*, which sometimes put portable lights on characters’ costumes or on props.

³⁵ Traditional theaters, in which the theater was not darkened, did not become associated with the kind of hankypanky (smooching and thievery) that was said to plague the darkened cinema theaters. For the latter, see Wang Dungen 王鈍根, *Baibi fangyan* 百弊放言 (Unrestrained speech on various [social] maladies; Beijing: Dazhong wenyi, 2003), “Dianying yuan” 電影院 (Cinemas), p. 354. This book is a repackaging of Wang’s *Baibi congshu* 百弊叢書 (Collectanea of the various [social] maladies), which he edited and was published by Zhonghua tushu jicheng gongsi 中華圖書集成公司 of Shanghai in 1919.

weather or meteorological phenomena or both at the same time.³⁶ On the other hand, new uses of lighting were crucial to Shanghai-style *Jingju*.³⁷

Most entrances were made from a door at the upper stage right corner, known as the “entrance door” (*shangchang men* 上場門) and most exits were made from a door at the upper stage left corner, known as the “exit door” (*xiachang men* 下場門).³⁸ The openings of these doors were covered with curtains, which would typically be drawn back for the actors’ entrances or exits by prop men.³⁹ Actors originally shared the stage with the orchestra, which would be seated at the back of the stage. To facilitate quick changes of scene and the representation of immense battles on stage, and for reasons of economy, props and stage scenery were generally kept at a minimum. Before entering the stage, important characters get the audience’s attention by coughing or singing a line. The boundaries between onstage and off were also crossed by the use of sound effects or set percussion patterns (*luogu dianzi/luogu jing* 鑼鼓點子/鑼鼓經) produced by the orchestra and meant to reference offstage happenings (executions, the announcement of the watches of the night, etc.), by song or dialogue from troupe members offstage (marked in playscripts by the stage direction *neiyun* 內云), or characters on stage describing what they see offstage.⁴⁰ Actors (particularly *chou* actors) would occasionally break the “frame” of the stage by addressing the audience directly during the course of the play,⁴¹ making specific references to members of the audience,⁴² current events,⁴³ actors (as

³⁶ See Zhang Daxia 張大夏, *Guoju zhong de feng lei yu xue* 國劇中的風雷雨雪 (Wind, thunder, rain and snow in National drama; Taipei: Taiwan sheng zhengfu jiaoyu ting, 1976). On the last page of this book, Zhang is sure to say weather is really a product of nature and that there are no deities or demons in charge of it. He proclaims: “The performance conventions of National drama are not a product of superstition, they are nothing but ‘symbolic methods’ and that’s all” 國劇的表現方式, 也並非出於迷信, 不過是一種‘象徵性’的手法而已。

³⁷ See Cai Peifen, “Wan Qing fushi hui: *Youxi bao yu* Shanghai wenren de wenhua xiangxiang,” pp. 170-71, on the effect new forms of theater lighting had on Shanghai playgoers, one of which was to focus their attention. Kenneth Pickering, *Key Concepts of Drama and Performance, Second Edition* (Basingstoke, UK: 2010), “Lighting,” pp. 199-201, dates the beginning of the use of gas lighting in British and European theaters to 1817 and its replacement by electric lighting to the 1880s.

³⁸ Unlike *nuoxi* 儺戲 (exorcistic plays), in which characters commonly go out into the audience, such things were rare in *Jingju*. For an exception, see the description of the version of *Huachun yuan* 畫春園 (Painting spring garden) by Yu Yuqin 余玉琴 (1868-1939) in Bai Zengrong, ed., *Jingju jumu cidian*, p. 999, in which actors somersaulted off the stage into the audience, ran throughout the theater, and jumped back on stage. This does not occur in the version of this play in *Xikao* (play #307). Qi Rushan bothered to write a separate work on entrances and exits in *Jingju, Shangxia chang* 上下場 (Entrances and exits), 51 pp. (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 291-345) in which he presents (pp. 3-5 [1: 297-99]) a complete listing and analysis of all of the entrances and exits in one play, *Changban po*.

³⁹ Shen Dinglu, “Jianchang, sa huocai, jitai,” p. 122, states that the *Jingju* theaters of old Shanghai would have five prop men, one to oversee the other four, one each to raise the curtains for the actors to enter and exit, and two to manage anything that had to be done on stage.

⁴⁰ Technically referred to as “teichoscopy.” See Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, Christine Shantz, tr. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 381.

⁴¹ The conventional self-introductions (*zibao jiamen* 自報家門) that important characters make directly to the audience and not to any characters already on stage were so common that it wasn’t until Chinese were exposed to western “realistic” drama that they were really thought of as breaking the theatrical frame. Min Tian, “‘Alienation-Effect’ for Whom? Brecht’s (Mis)Interpretation of the Classical Chinese Theater,” p. 205, claims that “when the actor is speaking directly to the audience to introduce his character . . . , the spectator is not expected to distinguish between the actor and the character portrayed. . . .” For a general look at the practice, see Hwang Mei-shu, “A Note on Characters’ Self-Descriptions in the Traditional Chinese Drama,” *Tamkang Review* 12.3 (1982): 295-313.

opposed to the roles they were playing),⁴⁴ or to the fact that what the audience was watching and the actors were doing was really “acting,”⁴⁵ or making purposely anachronistic statements.⁴⁶ This was called *zhuagen* 抓眼 (lit.: grab jokes) and its use to relieve or adjust dramatic tension by pulling audience members out of the play a bit was valorized.⁴⁷ But acting in order to gain applause without concern for what that did to the sense of the play, which was called *sa gouxue* 撒狗血 (lit.: splash dog’s blood), was looked down on.⁴⁸ Actors could signify that what they were saying was not heard by characters sharing the stage with them and perhaps only a few feet away by letting one sleeve hang down between themselves and the character(s) out of the conversation (*da beigong* 打背功/供/躬/弓).⁴⁹ They would occasionally freeze so the audience could admire them (*liangxiang* 亮相),⁵⁰ or physically exit the stage, unremarked upon by the percussion orchestra, and return to the stage later with the understanding that they never really left (*xuxia* 虛下 or *anxia* 暗下 for this kind of exit, *xushang* 虛上 or *anshang* 暗上 for the subsequent reentry), or turn their backs on the audience and remain motionless.⁵¹ Although commercial theaters did not have the multi-level stages of some of the

⁴² For instance, the famous *chou* actor Liu Gansan got into trouble for ad-libbed remarks referring to members of the imperial family in the audience. See Ren Erbei, *Youyu ji*, item 263, pp. 213-14.

⁴³ Liu Gansan was also famous for working references to the topics of recent civil service exams into his performances. See Ren Erbei, *Youyu ji*, item 251, pp. 200-203.

⁴⁴ Zhang Henshui was a *Jingju* fanatic (*ximi*) who also sometimes performed as an amateur. Once, when he was playing Zhang Wenyan 張文遠 in *Wulong yuan* 烏龍院 (Black dragon residence; play #20 in *Xikao*), the actor playing Yan Poxi 閻婆惜 introduced him to another character on stage as a famous novelist (*youming de xiaoshuo jia* 有名的小說家). See Huang Xunhua, “Liyuan yiwen yishu,” pp. 48-49.

⁴⁵ An example occurs in play #433 of *Xikao*, *Jia Zheng xun zi* 賈政訓子 (Jia Zheng admonishes his son), when the *chou* role Jia Huan 賈環 refers to the play he is in as “this new play” (*zhe kuai xinxi* 這塊新戲), p. 4528. For a more general overview, see Fan Xing 繁星, “Xizhe xi ye” 戲者戲也 (A play is a play), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2000.3: 24-25.

⁴⁶ For instance, in play #126 in *Xikao*, *Daming fu* 大名府 (Daming prefecture), a play based on the novel, *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Story of the water margin), a character in the play mentions that he has nothing to do and plans to buy a copy of the novel to read (p. 1187).

⁴⁷ See Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, p. 130.

⁴⁸ Fang Wenxi 方問溪 and Zhang Cixi 張次溪, eds., *Liyuan hua* 梨園話 (Theater talk; a.k.a., *Jingju cidian* 京劇詞典 [*Jingju* dictionary]; Beijing: Zhonghua yinshu ju, 1931), pp. 68-69 (pp. 102-103 in the *Pingju shiliao congkan* reprint and pp. 104-105 in the reprint in volume 8 of *Minguo Jing Kun shiliao congshu*).

⁴⁹ On asides in *Jingju* in general, see Qi Rushan, *Zhongguo ju zhi zuzhi*, pp. 11-13 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 23-25) and *Xijie xiao zhangu* 戲界小掌故 (Anecdotes from the world of theater), pp. 218-19 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 4: 2534-35).

⁵⁰ On *liangxiang* in general, see Lü Shuilin 呂水林, “Jingju ‘liangxiang’ chutan” 京劇‘亮相’初探 (A preliminary look at *liangxiang* in *Jingju*), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1999.6: 51-52.

⁵¹ A typical example of characters silently leaving the stage with the understanding that they are not really leaving the stage at all occurs with minor characters such as beves of palace attendants when the main character is going to sing a long aria that has nothing to do with them. This is similar to the way, in traditional jazz combo performance practice, instrumentalists who have no part in the solos performed by other members of the combo will temporarily leave the stage or at least the center of the stage until the solo is done, allowing greater audience concentration on the soloist and allowing a bit of rest for the non-soloists. Qi Rushan’s first contacts with Mei Lanfang, which were by letter, were first and foremost to persuade him to react physically to what Tan Xinpei was singing in his long aria in the play *Fenhe wan* 汾河灣 (Bend of the River Fen, plays #127 [*bangzi* version] and #324 in *Xikao*) after his character had returned from a long absence, rather than remain frozen and non-reactive, face toward the back of the stage, as was the standard practice of the day (in his *Guanju jianyan* [1914], pp. 2b-3a, Qi complains about the way Mei Lanfang’s character was typically played in this situation [along with similar sequences in two other plays] and speculates whose fault this is: laziness on the part of the

imperial stages, it was once the practice to have a metal bar (*zhougun/lan* 軸/紂棍 or *zhougan* 軸杆) stretch between the front pillars over the front of the stage, from which martial actors, particularly *wuchou* 武丑 (martial *chou*) actors, could do acrobatic feats. After one actor whose stage name was Xiao wutong 小梧桐 fell to his death, such performances were stopped.⁵²

actors? or the lack of attention of the audience to the character who is not singing in the scene?). Many have written about this epistolary exchange between Qi Rushan and Mei Lanfang about how Qi thought Mei should act. See, for instance, the accounts in Xu Chengbei 徐城北, *Mei Lanfang yu ershi shiji* 梅蘭芳與二十世紀 (Mei Lanfang and the 20th century; Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1990), p. 21, and in Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, pp. 187-88. An excerpt from the first letter, which was very long, is included in Qi Rushan, *Qi Rushan huiyi lu*, pp. 103-106 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 10: 6117-20). A letter from Qi to Mei several months later, in which he applauds Mei's progress and offers more suggestions, is reprinted in *Qi Rushan wencun*, pp. 10-13 (in it Qi complains that the character Tan Xinpei was playing in the play should really have been singing about things that both his and Mei Lanfang's characters knew about, since the goal is for him to prove who he is [p. 13]). Zhang Yifan, *Juxue' benwei de queli—20 shiji er sanshi niandai Zhongguo xiju yanjiu fanshi zhi zhuanxing*, p. 209, says the correspondence went on for two years and did not end until Mei Lanfang sent someone to arrange a face-to-face meeting. Qi Xiang 齊香, "Wo de fuqin Qi Rushan he Jingju" 我的父親齊如山和京劇 (My father, Qi Rushan, and *Jingju*), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1992.3: 24-27, p. 26, says that Qi sent more than one hundred of these letters and that Mei mounted them and bound them into a volume that was held by Beiping Guoju Xuehui but later lost. He Baotang 和寶堂, "Youguan Jingju de jiuda huangyan" 有關京劇的九大謊言 (Nine big myths concerning *Jingju*), in Fu Jin 傅謹, ed., *Jingju de wenxue, yinyue, bianyan: Diliu jie Jingju xue guoji xueshu yantao hui lunwen ji* 京劇的文學, 音樂, 表演—: 第六屆京劇學國際學術研討會論文集 (*Jingju's* literature, music, and performance—Collected essays from the sixth academic conference on *Jingju*-ology; Beijing: Wenhua yishu, 2017), pp. 121-31, item 6 (pp. 126-27), argues against the idea Mei Lanfang could get praise for acting while Tan Xinpei sang.

⁵² See Liao Canhui, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu*, p. 67. Reports of three such deaths in the April 24, 1880, July 11, 1882, and April 1, 1895, issues of *Shenbao* are reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 4: 173, 215, and 426, respectively. One can see illustrations of such performances at more fortunate moments in pictorials from the late Qing and early Republic (for example, an actor is depicted hanging from one foot in the regular column, *Jubu chunqiu* 鞠部春秋 [Chronicles of the theater; text by Zheng Zhengqiu] in *Minquan huabao* 民權畫報 [People's rights pictorial], October 20, 1912, reproduced in *Qingdai baokan tuhua jicheng* 清代報刊圖畫集成 [Compendium of illustrations from Qing dynasty periodicals], 13 vols. [Beijing: Quanguo tushu guan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2001], 11: 754 and Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 9: 826). Metal bars of the kind in this illustration can still be seen on the lowest level of the Changyin ge 暢音閣 three-tier stage imperial theater and the stage of the Guangdong native place association in Tianjin (because this stage does not have front pillars, the bar runs between extensions from the front ends of the cantilevered roof). For illustrations that show the bars on these two stages, see *Beijing de gudian xiqu yu xilou* 北京的古典戲曲與戲樓 (Classical drama and theaters in Beijing; Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2006), p. 52; and Zhou Licheng and Zhou Yanan, *Tianjin lao xi yuan*, p. 4. Dai Shen 戴申, *Zhongguo xiqu xisu* 中國戲曲習俗 (Indigenous Chinese theater customs; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 2009), "Zhougun" 軸棍, pp. 181-82, describes the metal bar as fixed and indicates it was also known as a *zhougan* 軸杆. An item in Ma Shaobo et al., eds., *Zhongguo Jingju baike quanshu*, pp. 1084-85, describes the bar, which it writes as *zhougun* 紂棍, as able to be raised or lowered for the purpose of practice or special effects, but the illustration it reproduces, a drawing of two actors performing on a bar from the "Sanshi nian lingjie zhi nashou xi" 三十年伶界之拿手戲 (Favorite plays of the acting world of the last thirty years; total of 186) series that appeared in the late Qing pictorial *Tuhua ribao* between issue 229 and issue 404 (see *Tuhua ribao*, 6: 224 [issue 269] for the illustration in question), does not show the ends of the bar and thus does not help one visualize how it could be lowered or raised. There is the same problem with woodblock prints that show the bar (for reproductions of two such prints, one from Suzhou and the other from Shanghai, both probably from the late Qing, see Zhu Hao 朱浩, "Nianhua: Zui shen ru minjian de xiqu tuxiang—Yi xiqu wei benwei dui nianhua de yanjiu" 年畫: 最深入民間的戲曲圖像—以戲曲為本位對年畫的研究 (New Year's prints: Visual images of Chinese indigenous theater that reach the deepest level among the people—Research into New Year's prints with Chinese indigenous theater as main object), *Quxue* 曲學 (Traditional theater studies) 4 (2016):

Traditional *Jingju* stage practice relied heavily on “conventions” (*chengshi* 程式) to represent the worlds of the plays in a flexible and “economical” fashion.⁵³ For instance, it is decidedly inconvenient to have a character who is supposed to be on horseback to actually ride a horse on stage. One can just forget about including scenes on stage that include horse riding, or the presence of the horse can be indicated in other ways than using a real horse. In *Jingju*, the convention of using a horse whip to signify the presence of the (invisible) horse was developed. Theoretically, conventions could have been developed to enable *Jingju* to represent on stage any imaginable or known world, but the conventions took time to build up and learn, on the parts of both actors and audiences, and had both “hardware” (props) and “software” components. Naturally, the conventions that grew to dominate *Jingju* were those developed to represent the world that most *Jingju* plays are about, the world of the Chinese past. This situation was self-reinforcing: it was easiest and most comfortable to put on plays representing worlds similar to those of the vast majority of the plays in the repertoire, and quite difficult to present different worlds, whether those worlds differed from that of the Chinese past in terms of chronology (modern China) or geography and culture (foreign or non-Chinese worlds).

As noted in the introduction to the book, the first “modern” theater for *Jingju* performance, the Xin Wutai in Shanghai, was opened in 1908. The stage there was a kind of compromise between the traditional thrust stage of China and the proscenium (*jingkuang shi* 鏡框式) stage of the West. The stage was described as “half-moon style” (*banyue shi* 半月式) or “horsehoof style” (*matishi* 馬蹄式) so that the front of the stage projected out farthest at its center.⁵⁴ While not completely recessed as with modern western stages and lacking the main curtain of the western stage, the stage did not project very far into the audience, lacked pillars and its own roof, and included a revolving stage using Japanese technology to speed up scene changes.⁵⁵ Illustrations of productions at this theater show a

349-409, Figures 32-33 (p. 403; the discussion uses the term *liangjia* 梁架 and associates its use with Shanghai [p. 402]). Actors also suspended themselves from tightropes. Also in the “Sanshi nian lingjie zhi nashou xi” series there is an illustration of actors doing acrobatics from a rope strung over the stage (*Tuhua ribao*, 8: 474 [issue 390]). *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Shanghai juan*, pp. 798-99, “Shuaisi Bianzi fei” 摔死辮子飛 (Flying Queue falls to his death), tells the story of how in the Guangxu period there was fierce competition between two Shanghai theaters using the aerial acrobatics of guest martial arts performers from tightropes strung in the middle of the theater instead of at the front of the stage. One of these performers, “Flying Queue,” performed while suspended from his queue in the middle of the theater, but fell to his death, which prompted the authorities to ban such performances. An illustration of his falling from *Dianshi zhai huabao* 點石齋畫報 (Nodding stone studio pictorial) is reproduced on p. 799. An illustration from another late Qing periodical, *Shishi bao tuhua xunbao* 時事報圖畫旬報 (Current affairs illustrated tri-monthly), entitled “Ouzhou zhi xiju—Feiren” 歐洲之戲劇—飛人 (European theater—Flying people), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, p. 7998, shows actors hoisted by winches over water.

⁵³ Li Ruru, *The Soul of Beijing Opera*, sees these conventions as the “soul” of *Jingju*. All theater, since it tries to represent worlds of different kinds despite the limitations of space and resources, relies on conventions. Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 83, speaking of the stage conventions of Shakespeare’s day, says, “‘Correct’ action and gestures continued to be taught for the next two centuries . . . Some of the gestures simply mimicked social behavior; others were contrived and required an audience capable of reading them.”

⁵⁴ Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 206.

⁵⁵ Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, p. 77, notes that the design for the theater as a whole came from Japan. According to Shen Dinghu, “Xin Wutai yanjiu xin lun,” p. 68, the revolving stage in Xin Wutai was not used very regularly and it was not the first one in China (the first one, also in Shanghai, dated back to 1888), however, Wang Dingjiu 王定九, *Shanghai menjing* 上海門徑 (Guides to Shanghai: Shanghai: Zhongyang shudian, 1935 [fourth printing, first was in 1932]), “Kan Pingju

preference for realistic props and stage settings.⁵⁶ By the time Xin Wutai opened, electric lighting had been used on stages for more than two decades in Shanghai, where evening performances were allowed even before the end of the Qing dynasty.⁵⁷

Eventually, new-style theaters with full proscenium-arch stages much wider than they were deep and provided with exterior curtains (so that the view of the main stage could be closed to the audience) and interior curtains (to allow scenes to be mounted in front of them while new scenes were set behind them), became the norm.⁵⁸ In the process the division between the stage and the rest of the world was made clearer and starker by moving the orchestra off the stage and keeping prop men out of sight.⁵⁹ Other practices, such as self-introductions and frame-breaking remarks, were also

menjing” 看平劇門徑 (Guide to watching *Pingju*), p. 8, after explaining that the essence of *Pingju* is in the singing and thus listening is most important, goes on to say that “Southerners only know how to watch” 南方人只知看, and that the use of the revolving stage at Xin Wutai in the production of *Yan Ruisheng* (*Xikao* play #515; premiered 1921), “caused a sensation at the time” (*hongdong yishi* 轟動一時). Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 39, describes a channel that could be filled with water and big enough to float boats on the stage of the Tianchan Wutai 天蟾舞臺 in Shanghai, but he only remembers it being used once. For illustrations of the mechanisms below stage to make platforms rise up through trapdoors and parts of the stage revolve in the *kabuki* theater of the early 19th century, see the Hathitrust scan of the 1806 reprint of Shiketsei Shinba 式亭三馬 (1776-1822), *Shibai kinmōzui* 戲場訓蒙圖彙 (Illustrated primer for the theater), fascicle 2, chapter 3, two half pages inserted after p. 7b (labeled 又七), and p. 8a. Pickering, *Key Concepts of Drama and Performance*, “Stage Machinery,” pp. 212-13, dates the appearance of revolving stages in both *kabuki* and the theaters of Western Europe to the 19th century.

⁵⁶ Photographs of the stage and productions on it are rather few and lacking in detail. The exception is the set of twenty-one used in Zheng Zhengqiu 鄭正秋, *Heiji yuanhun tushuo* 黑籍冤魂圖說 (Wronged spirit of an opium addict illustrated and explained; Shanghai: Wenming shuju, 1911) to show the scenery for the scenes of the play. This book is reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 9: 564-639. They can be compared to the set of thirty-seven drawings for the same play included in the “Shijie xinju” series in *Tuhua ribao*, reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 10: 255-329, but none of the photos give an idea of how the entire stage was used. There are the kind of differences between the photos and drawings that one might expect (for instance the photo for scene 20 shows clearly that the city scene at the back of the stage with its trolley is a painting because the line where the painted backdrop ends and the stage begins is very clear, whereas in the drawing for the same scene [number 18 in the series], there is no line between stage and backdrop [which, incidentally, has no trolley]). Some of the “Shijie xinju” drawings outside the ones for *Heiji yuanhun* do show a mixture of traditional and new practice, including both the representation of a carriage on stage by flags with wheels on them (4: 482 [issue 191]) and a real rickshaw on stage (3: 210 [issue 118]). For an illustrated notice of the opening of the theater, see *Shishi baoguan rongshen quanbian huabao* 時事報館戎申全年畫報 (Full year for 1908 of Current events pictorial; 1908), “Xin Wutai kaimu zhisheng” 新舞臺開幕誌盛 (A record of the festivities of the opening of the Xin Wutai), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, pp. 7566-67. The plays performed are listed—all were traditional plays.

⁵⁷ See Shen Dinghu, “Xin Wutai yanjiu xin lun,” p. 67. An illustration of Xin Wutai in *Shishi bao tuhua xunbao*, “Hubin baijing nian er: Wutai xinji” 滬濱百景廿二: 舞臺新機 (Number 22 of Scenes in Shanghai: New theater equipment), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, p. 8007, shows electric footlights rimming the stage and a large electric light above the stage. The prohibition on evening performances in Beijing was actually lifted a couple of years before the end of the dynasty. See Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 238.

⁵⁸ It is only in the last several decades or so, with the rise of “tourist *Jingju*” (see the introduction to the book) that “retro theaters” with more traditional stages have been opened.

⁵⁹ Use of prop men on stage was already restricted and the orchestra moved off the stage proper in the first modern *Jingju* theater in Beijing, Diyi Wutai 第一舞臺 (Number one stage), built in 1913. See Su Yi, *Jingju erbai nian gaiguan*, p. 196. Scenes were changed behind curtains and props moved about by actors who were already on stage. There were factors in the late Qing and early Republican period that made the “problem” of non-actors on the stage to seem to be getting worse

rather than better. Star actors would bring their own *Jinghu* players (*sifang qinshi* 私房琴師) and other instrumentalists with them, and there would be changes in the composition and seating of the orchestra as stars came on and left the stage. With the rise in status and income of actors, they also began to show off the number of attendants they could hire to hang about on stage ready to give them tea to drink (a practice called *yinchang* 飲場 [lit.: drinking on the stage]). Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 257, says the upper ranks of actors have their own servants to bring them tea to drink, while lesser actors have to rely on the prop men. Qi Rushan, *Guoju yishu huikao*, p. 521 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 6: 3847), speaks of Tan Xinpei having his own prop men (*sidai de jianchang ren* 私帶的檢場人) that he would have stand on stage to make him proud of his self (*yi ci zihao* 以此自豪), and after Tan's death, Yu Shuyan hired Tan's prop men to stand on the stage for him as proof that his art was as great as Tan's. For cartoon strips ridiculing *yinchang*, see Feng Jicai, *Lao fuzi chutu*, p. 20, "Suishi yinchang" 隨時飲場 (Continuous drinking on stage), and Ye Qianyu 葉淺予, *Wang xiansheng he Xiao Chen* 王先生和小陳 (Mr. Wang and Little Chen), Bi Keguan 畢克官, ed. (Beijing: Renmin meishu, 1986), "Changxi" 唱戲 (Performing opera), pp. 96-97, and Bi Keguan 畢克官, ed., *Ye Qianyu manhua xuan: Sanshi niandai dao sishi niandai* 葉淺予漫畫選: 三十年代到四十年代 (Selected cartoons by Ye Qianyu: From the thirties to the forties; Shanghai: Shanghai renmin weishu, 1985), p. 29, "Changxi" 唱戲 (Performing opera). For advice how to drink onstage "properly," see Weiwo 唯我, "Gao Liu Hongsheng" 告劉鴻升 (Some advice for Liu Hongsheng [a.k.a., Liu Hongsheng 劉鴻聲 (1875-1921)]), *Guanhua Jingdu ribao* 官話京都日報 (Mandarin Beijing daily), issue 863 (1910), in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan xubian*, 4: 395. A parenthetical note to Liu Juchan 劉菊禪, *Silang tanmu quanji* 四郎探母全集 (Complete *Silang tanmu*; Shanghai: Shanghai xibao she, 1938), p. 4 of the playscript itself (p. 82 of photo-reprint), explains how and when to drink tea on stage, if you need to do it. Strict division of the represented world on the stage and the world of the audience off of it has finally become tiresome in the PRC and recently there has been experimentation with more interactive ways of presenting *Jingju*. See, for instance, Zhang Yanying 張燕鷹, ed., "Xiao juchang Jingju 'Maqian poshui' yinfa relie taolun" 小劇場京劇'馬前潑水'引發熱烈討論 (The 'small theater' version of 'Spilling water in front of the horse' [play #313 in *Xikao*] is provoking excited debate), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2000.5: 8-11. Getting rid of propmen and moving the orchestra off the stage were talked of as a process of "purification" (*qingjie* 清潔) of the stage. See, for instance, Yiweng 怡翁, "Wutai shang zhi qingjie yundong" 舞臺上之清潔運動 (The movement to purify the stage), *Xiju yuekan* 3.9 (July 1931), ten-page article (there is no consecutive pagination in this issue). Credit for progress in this "movement" was often given to Mei Lanfang. For example, a comment signed by Xiang'an 蕪安 to Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳, "Xinbian Jun Xiren jucì" 新編俊襲人劇詞 (Text to the new play *Handsome Xiren* [not in *Xikao*]), *Xiju yuekan* 1.6 (November 1928), page 2 of this two-page article (there is no consecutive pagination in this issue), speaks of the lack of visible prop men in this particular play as opening a "new era in the world of Chinese theater" 開中國劇界之新紀元。Wu Xiaoling 吳曉鈴, "Shi ce Mei Lanfang jiehua wutai de niandai" 試測梅蘭芳潔化舞臺的年代 (A guess at the date of when Mei Lanfang cleaned up the stage), *Wu Xiaoling ji* 吳曉鈴集 (Collected writings of Wu Xiaoling), 5 vols. (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu, 2006), 3: 37-39, discusses the notion that Mei began to "clean up the stage" in 1924 when Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) visited China but concludes that the preparations for and trip to the U.S. in 1930 were most important. The idea that Mei Lanfang's form of *Jingju* was modern and advanced found international recognition. For instance, Nancy Runhwa Rao, "Racial Essences and Historical Invisibility: Chinese Opera in New York, 1930," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 12.2 (July 2000): 135-62, p. 153, quotes Grace Lynn, "Mr. Mei and the Local Chinese Drama," *New York Times*, April 6, 1930: "In Peiping [the Chinese theatre] has reached a modern stage of development. Mei Lanfang has banished his musicians from the stage to behind the setting. . . ." Back in 1913, in *Shuoxi*, Qi Rushan criticized the prop man system as unrealistic in that only rich people should have people move furniture or lay down kneeling mats for them and poor people would have to do this for themselves (p. 8b). The solution in the PRC was to have the propmen change scene settings behind a secondary curtain that cuts the stage in half center stage (*erdao mu* 二道幕). Chen Bin 陳彬, "Cong siben *Changsheng dian tan* 'jianchang'" 從四本長生殿談'檢場' (Talking about the prop men system from the point of view of the four-installment production of *Palace of Everlasting Life*), *Xiju xuekan* 12 (2010): 241-43, p. 241, says "and so there was someone who thought up using an *erdao mu* to cover up the work of the prop men, or having actors take the place of the prop men, but according to my playviewing experience, none of these are really satisfactory" 於是有人想出二道幕遮蓋檢場的工作, 或用演員取代了檢場人, 就我的觀劇經驗, 沒有一樣是完美無缺的。

criticized and reduced in performance and in new plays.⁶⁰ The new regime was presented as more modern and scientific than the old one, and just as with some of the reforms discussed in the introduction to the book, a major impetus was not to appear backward in the eyes of Westerners and Westernizing countries such as Japan.⁶¹ Ironically, it was often precisely such non-realistic elements as the use of prop men and self-introductions that intrigued Westerners.⁶² Such reforms went farther in

⁶⁰ Tong Jingxin, *Xin jiu xiqu zhi yanjiu*, p. 128, recommends using scenery because this would cut down “actor asides” (*beigong* 背弓[躬]), “monologues” (*dubai* 獨白), “addresses to the audience” (*xiang taixia shuohua* 向臺下說話), force the removal of the orchestra from the stage, cut down on prop men walking around on stage, and actors drinking tea on stage. Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 68, portrays the self-introductions as “leftover traces” (*yiji* 遺跡) of the supposed early influence of oral narrative on traditional Chinese drama in general and *Jingju* in particular, and notes that they were substantially reduced in adaptations of older plays in the 1917-1937 period. Qi Rushan, *Zhongguo ju zhi zuzhi*, p. 10 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 22) notes that traditional self-introductions greatly differ from the practice in Western drama and it is the thing that “those who have studied Western drama” 研究西洋劇之士 are “the most opposed to” (*zui fandui* 最反對). Some such reasoning was perhaps behind their removal in performances in New York City (see Jane Chun Djang, “*Jingju* at the Met 1980,” *CHINOPERL Papers* 9 [1979-1980]: 134). Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, pp. 28-29, has one of the voices in the dialogue the book consists of make the claim that today’s youth dislike these self-introductions and ask if they can be abolished. While *chou* actors continued to be granted wide latitude to make frame-breaking remarks in Taiwan, the practice was listed as the 16th of 17 problems to be abolished in 1951 in Ma Shaobo 馬少波, “Qingchu bingtai, chou’e, waiqu de wutai xingxiang” 清除病態, 醜惡, 歪曲的舞臺形象 (Get rid of abnormal pathological conditions, ugly customs, and slanderous stage imagery), in Ma Shaobo 馬少波, *Xiqu gaige sanlun* 戲曲改革散論 (Writings on the reform of traditional theater; Beijing: Yishu chubanshe, 1956), pp. 52-66, and pp. 62-63 in particular, and this basic point of view seems to have prevailed in the PRC until quite recently, even as scholars praised the daring of the topical remarks made by *chou* actors who flourished before 1949. As signs that this general attitude is changing, one can point to the appearance of books and articles such as Chen Jiansen 陳建森, *Xiqu yu yule* 戲曲與娛樂 (Traditional drama and entertainment; Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 2003), and Liao Fan 廖帆, “Wan zhi chu pan, mao bu fu pi—Cong Jingju ‘youxi’ jingshen de moluo kan Jingju de shiwei” 丸之出盤, 毛不附皮—從京劇遊戲精神的沒落看京劇的示威 (The pellet leaving the pan and the fur not attached to the skin—Looking at the decline of *Jingju* from the point of view of the falling off of the spirit of ‘play’ in *Jingju*), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju de lishi, xianzhuang yu weilai*, pp. 541-59.

⁶¹ Zucker, *Chinese Theater*, p. 189, notes that Mei Lanfang had the orchestra removed from the stage when he performed in Japan or in the “European theatre in Peking” but can’t yet (the book was published in 1925) do this in the “native theaters,” and, p. 104, applauds the fact that at “the annual benefit for the poor riksha-runners of Peking organized by that widely beloved American missionary, Mrs. Goodrich,” “given at the theater of the foreign community,” “the orchestra was not sitting on the stage and was muffled somewhat. . . .” Zhou Jinfu 周金福, “Guoju zhong de jianchang” 國劇中的檢場 (The prop men system in national drama), *Guoju yuekan* 國劇月刊 (National drama monthly) 7 (1977): 35, recounts an anecdote about a foreigner thinking that the man who came out to give an actor playing the part of a woman a drink on stage must be her lover (else why would he bring her something to drink?). Zhou was writing in Taiwan, where prop men continued to be used, but he congratulates the progress made in the last decades in Taiwan toward cutting down the unnecessary use of prop men or having them remain (*douliu* 逗留) on stage (*ibid.*). According to Liang Yan, “Qi Rushan juxue chutan,” p. 238, in preparations for Mei Lanfang’s trip to the U.S., Qi Rushan requested an end to such things as drinking tea on stage (*yinchang*) and prop men throwing pillows for actors to kneel on or hanging about on stage. In the book he wrote about the trip, *Mei Lanfang fu Mei ji*, Qi Rushan advocates only that, with regard to drinking on stage, actors go back to the old practice (*jiu guiju* 舊規矩) of drinking only when necessary and as inconspicuously as possible, and explains the reason for the cushions (the stages were quite dirty). See *juan* 2, pp. 50 and 45 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 2: 1112, 1107). Regarding the amount of dirt on stage, Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, p. 60.408, says that the advantage of sitting in the third row of seats from the stage rather than closer is that you don’t have to “eat dirt” (*chitu* 吃土) during military plays (*wuxi*).

⁶² See James Harbeck, “The Quaintness and Usefulness of the Old Chinese Traditions (*The Yellow Jacket* and *Lady Precious Stream*),” *Asian Theatre Journal* 13.2 (Fall 1996): 238-47, especially p. 241.

the PRC than on Taiwan, where the government was more concerned to present their version of *Jingju* as more traditional.⁶³

In Shanghai-style *Jingju*, mechanical scenery and visual tricks akin to magic became so important that Li Zigui says that one stage designer, Zhou Xiaoqing 周筱卿 would first design the sets and then get someone to write a play that would use them.⁶⁴ But even Qi Rushan's protege, Mei Lanfang, experimented a lot with scenery, first in contemporary dress plays, then in ancient-style dress plays,⁶⁵ but those with the most scenery dropped out of the roster of plays that he continued to perform. Traditional *Jingju* and the realistic stagecraft of nineteenth-century Western drama were not easy to meld together, and the question of whether there was some common ground on which they could meet or whether they should be isolated from each other has continued since the introduction of the latter into China.⁶⁶

⁶³ Yu Dagang 俞大綱, "Xifang ren kan 'Guoju' guan" 西方人看 '國劇' 觀 (Western views of 'National drama'), in *Yu Dagang quanji, lunshu juan*, 2: 319, claims that it is only when you get used to prop men coming and going and the orchestra being fully visible (in Taiwan the orchestra was moved to stage left, where it remained visible, while it ended up almost entirely in the wings at stage left in the PRC) that one "can really enjoy" (*zhen ke xiangshou* 真可享受) Chinese theater.

⁶⁴ Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 24. According to Qian Jiuyuan 錢久元, "Shilun Haipai Jingju wutai bujing" 試論海派京劇舞台布景 (On stage scenery in Shanghai-style *Jingju*), *Shanghai xiju* 上海戲劇 (Shanghai theater) 2004.2: 61, Zhou was known as the "King of Mechanized Scenery" (*Jiguan bujing dawang* 機關布景大王). The best article I have seen for getting a sense of how some of the mechanical scenery worked is Xu Xiangyun 徐翔雲, "Dangnian Shanghai Gong Wutai zhi jiguan bujing" 當年上海共舞臺之機關布景 (The mechanical scenery of the Gong Theater in Shanghai back then), *Shanghai xiqu shiliao huicui* 5 (1988): 104-21, which includes diagrams and schematic illustrations. Gong Wutai was a remodeled version of an older theater and took that name in 1933 (see *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Shanghai juan*, pp. 645-46). Xian Jiqing 賢驥清, *Minguo shiqi Shanghai wutai yanjiu* 民國時期上海舞臺研究 (Research on stage design in Shanghai during the Republican period; Shanghai renmin, 2016), "Xiqu wutai bujing shi" 戲曲舞臺布景師 (Designers of scenery for Chinese indigenous theater), pp. 283-97, introduces the most famous scenery designers in Shanghai in the Republican period (Zhou Xiaoqing is discussed on p. 295). Pickering, *Key Concepts of Drama and Performance*, "Decorating the Stage," pp. 184-64, speaking of Western theater, says, "By the middle of the nineteenth century . . . the decoration of the stage had become more important than the actors. Playbills from the period list the exotic scenes and locations . . . as if these were the major attractions" (p. 185).

⁶⁵ See *Mei Lanfang biao'yan yishu tuying* 梅蘭芳表演藝術圖影 (Photos of Mei Lanfang's performance art; Beijing: Waiwen chuban she, 2002), pp. 142-43, for a photograph of the stage during a performance by Mei of *Taizhen waizhuan* 太真外傳 (Unofficial history of Yang Taizhen; not in *Xikao*). The set looks like that for a Shanghai-style *Jingju* play and includes a seven-staired staircase up to a palace with carved pillars. The scene is from the third installment (*sanben* 三本) of the play, which premiered in 1926. See Yao Baolian and Yao Baoxuan, "Mei Lanfang juzuo biannian," p. 484, which notes that the play was not often performed. Rather "busy" sets can be seen in photographs of Mei Lanfang's *Jun Xiren* 俊襲人 (Fetching Xiren; play developed in 1915, photo dated to 1927; play not in *Xikao*) and *Chundeng mi* 春燈謎 (New Year's riddle; 1928; not in *Xikao*) in *Mei Lanfang zhencang lao xiangce*, pp. 88-89 and 92-93, respectively. Both fell out of his repertoire. The *Jun Xiren* photo is one of the stage set and five figures in plain clothes, including Mei Lanfang and Qi Rushan (who wrote all three of the plays), standing on the set. The *Chundeng mi* photo appears to have been taken during a performance from the balcony.

⁶⁶ In the last volume of Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, which covers 1949-1996, the topic comes up for extended discussion no less than five times (pp. 170, 266-67, 485-86, 626, and 674-76). The last of these quotes a comment made by a French theatrical authority to Cheng Yanqiu on his study tour of Europe to the effect that for *Jingju* to use realistic scenery is "no different from drinking poisoned wine and killing yourself" 無異於飲毒酒自殺. For the original context, see Cheng Yanqiu, "Fu Ou kaocha xiqu yinyue baogao shu," p. 207. Jian'er 健兒 (a penname; this person is identified in chapter three

Theaters

Theaters were only found in towns and cities. In the countryside, plays were performed in private dwellings (which might have permanent stages), temple compounds, or on open pieces of land (*guangchang* 廣場). Some troupes carried their stages with them, wooden or bamboo frames with cloth roofs and sides that could be assembled or broken down quickly. Except in the case of a private dwelling when the audience sat in a hall or in verandas surrounding a courtyard, the audiences for these performances were not covered by a roof, and for most of them it would have been impossible or very hard to charge for permission to watch the plays (it was standard for the cost of the performances to be borne by sponsors or a kind of tax). Audiences were very fluid, coming or going as they pleased, and could be very miscellaneous, with good and bad persons, and men and women, mixed all together.⁶⁷ Private performances (*tanghui* 堂會) were not covered by Qing dynasty laws prohibiting men and women acting together onstage, or women of good reputation going to be part of the audience in public theaters. Performances were given at temples periodically to honor the birthdays of deities associated with the temples, and more frequently for the temple fairs (*miaohui* 廟會) held at set intervals throughout the year.⁶⁸ The audience for temple fair performances could be very large,⁶⁹ and there were lots of temples and temple fairs.⁷⁰ Actors could also take part in religious processions connected with religious holidays.⁷¹ Typically, only subscribers or patrons of the

of the book), who played a big part in the early stages of the production of *Xikao*, in a June 28, 1912, *Shenbao* piece, “Ping Xinxin Wutai yanju” 評新新舞臺演劇 (A review of plays put on by Xinxin theater), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 46-47, is very appreciative of the scenery for a scene set in the snow, but points out the contradiction involved in having the executioners in the scene wear their traditional costume of thin clothes and bared chests.

⁶⁷ There was a lot of concern about women attending performances at temple fairs but no real attempt was made to completely outlaw the practice and it was basically up to individual households to try and keep their women from attending them. Some of the reporting in newspapers and pictorials in the late Qing of bad things happening to women who went to temple fair plays was probably designed to curb the practice. For an example of such a report, see “Yanxi yu zhaohuo xiang zhongshi” 演戲與肇禍相終始 (The performing of plays and bringing on of calamities go together), in *Tuhua ribao*, 2: 358 (issue 80). On attempts to ban women’s visits to temples in general, see Vincent Goossaert, “Irrepressible Female Piety: Late Imperial Bans on Women Visiting Temples,” *Nan Nü* 10 (2008): 212-41.

⁶⁸ Temple fairs were also held in Beijing. According to the Xuantong reign period edition of *Dumen jilüe*, *juan* 1, p. 50a (p. 339), temple fairs were held at Longfu si 隆福寺 (Longfu temple) every 9th, 10th, 19th, 20th, 29th, and 30th day of each lunar month.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Village Life in China*, p. 43, says that attendance on the first day of a temple fair “can frequently be safely estimated at more than 10,000 persons.”

⁷⁰ Su Guorong 蘇國容, “Jingju shengtai jiegou qianlun” 京劇生態結構淺論 (A shallow discussion of the structure of the ecology of *Jingju*), in *Zhengqu Jingju yishu de xin fanrong*, pp. 132-33, claims that in the countryside around Wuxi 無錫 there is a temple stage every mile or so. He also says that of the two theatrical traditions once popular in the Wuxi area, *Jingju* is the favorite among the farmers. According to Xu Jinxin 徐金心, “Guanzhong zai nali?” 觀眾在哪裡 (Where is the audience?), *Liyuan zhoukan*, April 10, 2000, p. 8, “temple fairs” have recently been revived in the Jiangsu countryside, but they are now called “Shangpin jiaoliu hui” 商品交流會 (commodity exchange fairs), and the provincial *Jingju* troupe performs at them.

⁷¹ The opening sequence of Huang Shuqin 黃蜀芹, dir., *Ren gui qing* 人鬼情 (Woman, human, demon; 1987), which is based on the life story of Pei Yanling 裴艷玲 (1947-), opens with a sequence in which the father and mother, after their performance on a small stage before a standing crowd, participate, in costume, in a New Year’s procession, and the father, who is in the costume of Zhong Kui 鍾馗, an infernal judge empowered to catch demons in the world above, is asked to ritually use a torch to ignite a sacrificial object. Such ritual processions were outlawed in Beijing during the Qing dynasty

performance, or other persons of status, got to watch seated on chairs or benches that they didn't have to bring with them.⁷² If the weather was bad, performances had to be called off.⁷³

In the cities, plays were also performed privately (but in the city there was the additional option of renting a public or private theater)⁷⁴ in open spaces (e.g., at markets), and on temple stages.⁷⁵ In the cities there were a variety of commercial establishments that had theaters and where *Jingju* troupes performed. These included restaurants (*fanzhuang* 飯莊), teahouses (*chaguan/chayuan/chalou* 茶館/茶園/茶樓) or traditional theaters, mat-shed theaters (*xipeng* 戲棚), modern free-standing theaters (*wutai/juchang/juyuan* 舞臺/劇場/劇院), and entertainment centers (游樂場).⁷⁶ Native place associations and guilds often had their own theaters, which could be rented

because of governmental concern that they could be used by seditious elements or otherwise present public security threats.

⁷² See Robert Fortune, *A Residence Among the Chinese* (London: John Murray, 1857), p. 256.

⁷³ Hou Yushan, *You Meng yiguan bashi nian*, p. 47, describes how on rainy days when his troupe had gone to a village to perform at an open air theater (*lutian xichang* 露天戲場) and there was no way to perform, farmers would invite troupe members to come to their houses, drink tea and take turns singing for each other.

⁷⁴ Besides being an important source of income for actors and troupes, they offered an opportunity for the wealthy to emulate the court and watch precisely the plays and actors that they wanted to see, provided they could afford it. *Tanghui* were also thought of as better than ordinary performances because those hiring the actors were in a position to be more demanding in terms of the quality of the performance, in that they were paying for it more directly than was the case in a theater, and actors of different troupes who ordinarily would not perform together would do so at private performances. *Tanghui* were quite frequent in Beijing even before the end of the nineteenth century (Goldman, *Opera and the City*, p. 102 cites Wu Tao 吳燾, *Liyuan jiu hua* 梨園舊話 [Old talk about theater; c. 1870-1900], reprinted in Zhang Cixi, ed., *Qingdai Yandu liyuan shiliao*, p. 827, about how he would have to attend 20-30 *tanghui* every year). The number of *tanghui* held in Beijing continued to increase until the capital was moved to Nanjing. For a Beijing pictorial item from the late Qing that held that all the money spent on *tanghui* was a diversion of money that should be better spent and that this trend was threatening the fate of the nation, see “Wanguo yuansu” 亡國原素 (A factor that will lead to the extinction of the nation), reproduced in Hou Jie 侯傑 and Wang Kunjiang 王昆江, eds., *Xingsu huabao jingxuan: Qingmo Minchu shehui fengqing* 醒俗畫報精選: 清末民初社會風情 (Careful selection from the Awakening Customs Pictorial; The social tenor of the late Qing and early Republic; Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 2005), p. 187. The item is about a Tianjin merchant who spent three hundred ounces of silver (exclusive of travel expenses) to have Tan Xinpei come sing for a three-day birthday celebration he was putting on. Some actors, such as the Xia brothers of Xin Wutai, thought *tanghui* too demeaning and refused to perform at them. See Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 73. With the rampant commodification of everything in the PRC recently, private performances have reappeared. See Liu Jingliang and Tan Jingbo, *Zhongguo xiqu guanzhong xue*, p. 403.

⁷⁵ Weng Ouhong, 翁偶虹, “Liyuan yehua” 梨園夜話 (Evening chats about theater), *Yitan* 3 (2004): 280-89, p. 282, stresses the importance and ubiquity in old Beijing of performances at the last two kinds of venues and lists the temple fairs and markets of Beijing early in the twentieth century. *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Beijing juan*, pp. 905-12, contains descriptions of twenty-one temple stages in Beijing, and provides a chart that gives summary information on thirty-seven of them (pp. 912-14). See Goldman, *Opera and the City*, pp. 87-97, on temple fair performances in the nineteenth century and Madeline Yue Dong, *Republican Beijing: The City and its Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 165, on them in the twentieth century.

⁷⁶ The first installment of *Yan Ruisheng* (play #515 in *Xikao*) includes a scene set in Xin Shijie in Shanghai that includes performances put on for an audience on the stage represented by actors (pp. 5863-64). The manager (*jingli* 經理) calls out “start the play” (*kaixi ya* 開戲呀), then there follows a selection of opera (the stage directions say “do the business of singing an opera, it is okay to add whatever scene you like” [*changxi jie suibian tian chu ke ye* 唱戲介隨便添齣可也; p. 5863]), followed by some variety acts (listed in a very laconic stage direction) and ends with a performance of a *dagu shu* 大鼓書 (big drum text; a kind of oral performing literature) version of *Changban po* for which the complete text is given.

for performances. In the restaurants, and originally in the teahouse theaters as well, theatrical performances were secondary to dining, drinking tea, and conversation. When restaurants were taken over for private parties, women could be included in the audience. Surprisingly, perhaps, all of these venues, despite having roofs of some sort, were at the mercy of bad weather. This was surely to be expected with the mat-shed theaters, whose roofs leaked badly, but it was true to a certain extent even of the more solid theaters. Bad weather could not only decrease attendance, it could shut down performances in certain theaters altogether. Rain and wind was a particular problem, as can be seen with how often theater programs (*xidan*) have the words “without impediment from wind or rain” (*feng yu wu zu* 風雨勿阻) printed on them.⁷⁷ Snow could cause theaters to shut down in Manchuria and winter could cause performance seasons to be cut short elsewhere.⁷⁸ Heat was the problem in Shanghai. Falling attendance because of the heat might force theaters to “shut down for a while in the summer” (*xiexia* 歇夏).⁷⁹ It took electric fans, more spacious and better ventilated theaters, and finally air conditioning, before theaters could be packed on the hottest days in Shanghai.⁸⁰

There were not that many holidays for which the theaters shut down. The longest of these was New Year's.⁸¹ In the Qing dynasty, during periods of national mourning (*guosang* 國喪) for the death of an emperor (three years) or an empress dowager or empress (one year), there were restrictions on dramatic performances.⁸² Although the rules seem to have changed slightly each time due to theater

At the end of this piece, a stage direction states that “various males and females together do the business of clapping their hands” 眾男女同拍掌介. The performer of *Changban po* is not named, but the text is exactly the same as the Pathé (Beikai 蓓開) recording made by Liu Baoquan 劉寶全 (1869-1942), whose art was influenced by *Jingju* and in turn influenced *Jingju*. The text of the recording is included in editions of *Da xikao* that include oral performing literature.

⁷⁷ Lou Yue and Du Guangpei, *Jiujing lao xidan*, pp. 40-44, 47, 51, 60, 68, 140-41, reproduces examples that date from 1923 to 1942. Hou Xisan 侯希三, *Beijing lao xiyuan* 北京老戲院子 (Old theaters of Beijing; Beijing: Zhongguo chengshi, 1996), p. 164, reproduces one with the words “No stopping for wind or rain” (*feng yu bu ting* 風雨不停). None of these are mat-shed theaters. Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, pp. 205-206, notes that in the old-style theaters the lighting was dim on bright days and got bad enough on rainy days that spectators farther away than the pit of the theater could not distinguish the features of the actors' faces. A December 2, 1912, *Shenbao* item, Zeng Yan 曾言, “Tan Xinpei zhi *Lianhuan tao* Qilin tong zhi *Tie lianhua*” 譚鑫培之連環套麒麟童之鐵蓮花 (Tan Xinpei's ‘Complex Plot’ and Zhou Xinfang's ‘Iron Lotus’ [play #124 in *Xikao*]), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 86-87, says that five years earlier when the writer saw Tan perform the same play in the Zhonghe 中和 theater, it was already dusk and although two large candles had been lit by the stage, he could not see Tan clearly.

⁷⁸ See Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” pp. 112 (Manchuria [Dalian 大連]) and 98 (how loss of attendance cuts the winter season short in Nantong 南通).

⁷⁹ See the June 12, 1913, *Shenbao* item, Xuanlang 玄郎, “Shengxia zhi yanchu” 盛夏之演出 (Performances in the hottest part of the summer), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p. 152, which notes that some famous actors refuse to perform in the worst of the heat.

⁸⁰ Bai Xue, “*Shenbao* Jingju guanggao yu Haipai Jingju,” p. 33, claims that the use of new stagecraft techniques such as mechanical scenery was also instrumental in enabling productions to perform in Shanghai with as good box office results in the offseason as in the prime season of autumn.

⁸¹ Lowe, *Adventures of Wu*, 2: 147, says the theaters shut down for New Year's because people are too busy with other things to “have the time to sit through the long performances in the Chinese theaters. . . .” Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 249, only lists two other holidays for which theaters were shut down, sacrifices made to the patron deity of theater (*ji zushiye* 祭祖師爺) and for the props for martial plays (*kaoxiang hui* 靠箱會). The latter is mentioned in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 5.68.

⁸² Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 49.

owner's petitions and depending on whether the theater was in a foreign concession or not, in general, for an initial one-hundred day period⁸³ no performances were permitted. After that, performances were allowed if no percussion instruments were used and the performers wore muted clothing and not regular costumes. That kind of performance was called *shuobai qingchang* 說白清唱 (lit.: dialogue and pure singing), and theater programs (*xidan*) and ads would inform audiences that that was the kind of performance that would be put on.⁸⁴ The periods of national mourning that most affected *Jingju* were those for the deaths of the Tongzhi emperor (1875), Empress Dowager Ci'an (1881), and those of the Guangxu emperor and Empress Dowager Cixi (1908).⁸⁵ It was often very difficult to keep troupes together during the periods when no or little income could be made from performance.⁸⁶

⁸³ The period for Empress Dowager Ci'an in Shanghai turned out to be 81 days. That figure was a compromise between the position of the local prefect, who insisted the period was traditionally 100 days, and the petitioner, a theater owner, who claimed that since the Daoguang and Xianfeng reigns it has only been 60 days. For the accounts of the petitions and the final decision, see the June 24, 1881; June 26, 1881; and June 30, 1881, *Shenbao* items "Chengqing zhun lingren qingchang" 呈請准伶人清唱 (Petition for permission for actors to perform out of costume), "Youling yaoqiu Ying gongtang zhun yan" 優伶要求英公堂准演 (Actors petition the British concession court to permit performances), and "Xian zhun qingchang" 先准清唱 (Performance without costume will be allowed first), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁴ Jiang Jianlan 蔣健蘭 and Liu Naochong 劉乃崇, "Shuobai qingchang" 說白清唱, *Zhongguo Jingju* 2005.5: 48-49, includes the reproduction of a Beijing theater *xidan* with these four characters on it from 1909. Interestingly enough, the lack of regular percussion does not seem to have influenced the plays picked for performance, which includes the name of a martial play, *Sizhou cheng* 泗洲/州城 (Sizhou city; play #339 in *Xikao*), modified by the words "[performed with] full martial cast (*quan wuhang* 全武行). Jiang and Liu quote the quotation in Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 1: 16, of Xiao Changhua describing how performances during national mourning involved the percussionists pretending to hold their gongs and "using their mouths to recite *luogu jing* in order to replace the sound of the gongs with their mouths" 嘴裡念著鑼經, 以口代鑼. Some details differ in descriptions of how *shuobai qingchang* plays were performed. See, for instance, Qi Rushan, *Jingju zhi bianqian*, p. 14a (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 2: 839); the May 20, 1881, *Shenbao* item, "Guozhi jinxi youling maiyi" 國制禁戲優伶賣藝 (Actors perform during period of mourning), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 14-15, and Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, pp. 11.141 and 12.152-54. The last mentions that placards (*zhaopai* 招牌) with the words *shuobai qingchang* were hung outside the theaters and that a male performer of female roles was very worried about having to go onstage without regular theatrical make-up. For an ad with *shuobai qingchang* on it, see the November 11, 1910, edition of the *Kaitong huabao* 開通畫報 (Enlightenment pictorial), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng xubian* 清末民初報刊圖畫集成續編 (Compendium of pictures from periodicals from the late Qing and early Republic, continuation; Beijing: Quanguo tushu guan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2003, p. 7028. The main performer is Tan Xinpei, and the ad includes the guarantee: "will definitely be performed, no lies" (*zhunyan bu huang* 准演不謊). Basically the same ad occurs in the next issue of the pictorial (*ibid.*, p. 7041) except *shuobai qingchang* does not appear and the guarantee about the performance is shortened to *zhunyan*. There were professional troupes who performed *Jingju* seated and without costume, called *dachang ban* 打唱班 (percussion and singing troupes) that were active in Suzhou and Shanghai. See the January 8, 1902, *Youxi bao* item, "Ge cheng yi tan" 歌成一嘆 (A sigh after the song is finished), reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 5: 259. These troupes seem similar in organization and performance practice to the *tangming* 堂名 ("Hall name") troupes who performed *Kunqu* in the same area in the same style. On them, see Wu Xinlei, ed., *Zhongguo Kunqu da cidian* 中國崑劇大辭典 (Great dictionary of Chinese Kunqu; Nanjing: Nanjing da xue chuban she, 2002), pp. 314-23.

⁸⁵ The dates they died were November 14 and 15, respectively. See Chen Kuili 陳旭麓 et al., *Zhongguo jindai shi cidian* 中國近代史詞典 (Dictionary of modern Chinese history; Shanghai: Shanghai cishu, 1982), "Fulu yi: Zhongguo jindai shi dashi ji" 附錄一: 中國近代史大事記 (Appendix 1: Record of major events in modern Chinese history), p. 795.

⁸⁶ Hou Yushan, *You Meng yiguan bashi nian*, pp. 25-27, describes how the national mourning for the Guangxu emperor brought about the end of the Qingchang troupe, which had been existence for almost half a century. Mei Qiaoling, head of

Enforcement was strictest in Beijing and Tianjin.⁸⁷ There was resistance and attempts to get around the restrictions in Shanghai, where so many of the theaters were in the foreign concessions,⁸⁸ and there were persons of status or wealth who found ways to get around bans on performance during periods of national mourning.⁸⁹ The practice of prohibiting plays on certain taboo days continued, at least briefly, even into the Republican period.⁹⁰

The traditional theaters were not set up so that all of the spectators' attention was focused on the stage. For instance, the benches placed in front of the stage in the "pit" (*chizi* 池子) were often placed at 90 degree angles to the stage so that the people sitting on them had to turn 90 degrees to see the stage,⁹¹ and the boxes (*baoxiang* 包廂) on the second floor could be separated from the second floor balcony railing by a walkway and the view of the stage obscured by the added distance, the railing, and the walls of the boxes.⁹² Some spectators' vision was blocked by pillars or ended up seated

the Sixi troupe, was famous for being able to keep that troupe together during the national mourning for the Tongzhi emperor. See Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 1: 481-82.

⁸⁷ See the August 26, 1882, *Shenbao* item, "Xizi jiajia" 戲資加價 (Rise in cost for plays), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 16-17, for differentiation in enforcement between Beijing and Tianjin and elsewhere. Sun Bo 孫柏, "Guangxu yuannian de Shanghai jutan—Cong Shenbao jizai kan jindai yanju de shangyehua jincheng" 光緒元年的上海劇壇—從申報記載看近代演劇的商業化進程 (Shanghai theater in the first year of the Guangxu reign [1875]—Looking at the evolution of the commercialization of theater in early modern period from the point of view of material in *Shenbao*), *Xiju yishu* 2009.1: 17-28, describes how the ban on performances after the death of the Tongzhi emperor was not strenuously or strictly enforced in Shanghai, which led to actors going there to perform. Li Hongchun, *Jingju changtan*, p. 24, explains that during the prohibitions against performances because of the mourning period for the Guangxu emperor, his father and he left Beijing to go perform in a variety of places outside Beijing.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, Lin Xinghui, "Shenbao xiqu guanggao de yiyi," pp. 159 and 159-60 n 11.

⁸⁹ Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 13.158, portray the family of Li Shizhong, a Taiping general who surrendered to the Qing and was given a high position, breaking the ban on performance with impunity. Li Shizhong published the first anthology of *Jingju* plays (see chapter 2). Items in pictorials from the late Qing report how operas are being put on for private occasions at which those putting them on just pay off the local police. See the *Shishi baoguan rongshen quannian huabao* 時事報館戊申全年畫報 (Current events news pictorial for the entire year of 1908) items "Guosang qian" 國喪錢 (National mourning money) and "Xunshi ju Qingyin ban" 巡士拘清音班 (Patrolman arrests the Clear note troupe), in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, pp. 7236 and 7242, respectively (the troupe in the second item gets off once a bribe is received). Theaters also presented themselves as teahouses to get around bans on performance. See Ye Xiaoping, *The Dianshizhao Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2003), p. 55.

⁹⁰ See Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 1, on a Beijing police order promulgated in February of 1912 stating that theaters wanting to perform on ritually taboo days (*zhaijie ri* 齋戒日 [fast days], *jichen ri* 忌辰日 [death anniversaries]) had to request permission first.

⁹¹ In the most widely circulated image of the interior of a Beijing theater, "Chalou yanju tu" 茶樓演劇圖 (Painting of the performance of a play in a theater), dated to the Guangxu period, the benches are perpendicular to the stage and few people are watching what is going on on it (only nineteen out of the sixty-two persons depicted, according to Luan Guanhua 樂冠樺, *Jiaose fuhao: Zhongguo xiqu lianpu* 角色符號: 中國戲曲臉譜 [The symbolism of roles: Chinese theater face patterns; Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2005], p. 105). The stage is packed with actors performing a tableau (*liangxiang*) with the orchestra behind them. For a reproduction, see the color plate in *Zhongguo baike quanshu: Xiqu quyue*, p. 15 of the color illustrations. For a photo of the interior of the Guangde lou that shows long benches and tables set perpendicularly to the stage (as well as a metal bar above the front of the stage), see George Soulié de Morant, *Theatre et musique modernes en Chine* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1926), Plate II.

⁹² This is the situation in the Zhengyi ci 正乙祠, one of the oldest of the theaters in Beijing, which was recently restored. When I asked the management why the boxes were set up without regard for being able to view the stage, I was told that

parallel with the back of the stage. There were a lot of distractions because different vendors were selling a lot of services to the theatergoers, ranging from different kinds of food to hot towels.⁹³ Ticket selling/taking was also farmed out to table tenders (*anmu* 案目), who favored their steady customers.

The construction of theaters with Western-style auditorium seating oriented toward the stage, along with the great efforts spent on “disciplining audiences,”⁹⁴ moved theater consumption toward a model in which the performance on stage was both more primary and kept more separate from the audience,⁹⁵ but it still took a long time before miscellaneous services (and the vendors selling them) were moved out of the space where the spectators sat and removed to the lobby and other places and

things such as talking business were more important than watching the stage for the kind of people who used the boxes. The second floor of the recently opened modern theater attached to the national *Jingju* troupe, Mei Lanfang da juyuan 梅蘭芳大劇院, is almost entirely given over to boxes with partition walls between them.

⁹³ Qi Rushan, *Xijie xiao zhanggu*, pp. 186-91 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 4: 2502-506), “Xiyuan de fuye” 戲院的副業 (Subsidiary enterprises in theaters), discusses many of these services offered for money in the traditional theaters. Liang Shiqiu, “Tingxi,” p. 78, mentions one not in Qi Rushan’s list: in his youth, before women were allowed in the Beijing theaters, men would strip to the waist in the heat of summer and there were attendants who would come and store your upper body garments for a fee. Liang stresses how noisy, distracting, and uncomfortable traditional theaters were, and how high a level of performance was needed to keep the audience’s attention, but also claims that the mere appearance of a famous actor on stage was enough to bring the hall to “silence” (*yaque wu sheng* 鴉雀無聲; p. 81). A March 18, 1913, *Shenbao* item, Xuanlang 玄郎, “Ji Nü Dangui zhi shou xiaofei” 紀女丹桂之收小費 (On the collection of fees in the Dangui theater with actresses), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p. 116, complains about how the vendors in the theater wait until famous actors are just about to mount the stage or during the most important part of a play to approach you about paying fees and try to extort more than the standard amount by making a fuss to prevent you paying attention to the stage. Xu Muyun, *Liyuan waiji*, “Dazhou xi qian xiuxi shi fen zhong de yiyi” 大軸戲前休息十分鐘的意義 (The idea of [proposing] a 10-minute break before the main play on the program), p. 136, describes the onslaught of the vendors right before the beginning of the most important piece on the program (*dazhou xi* 大軸戲) and argues that inserting an intermission at that point would improve matters.

⁹⁴ Restricting the number of seats, giving serial numbers to seats, and sitting according to the seat number on the ticket that you bought are reforms that began to be instituted in the first decade of the twentieth century. See, for instance, “Xianzhi xiuyuan xinzhang” 限制戲園新章 (New article restricting theaters), *Guanhua Jingdu ribao*, issue 789 (1910), in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan xubian*, 9: 388, about proposed regulations to restrict seating, number the seating, for the tickets to include seat numbers, and ticket buyers to sit in the seat indicated on the ticket bought.

⁹⁵ It was not unusual in traditional theaters for people not involved in the production of the plays to end up on stage, whether they were members of the audience who managed to sit on the stage or for young male actors put on display on the stage (male prostitution was not prohibited until the end of the Qing dynasty). For the former, see Xu Chengbei 徐城北, *Zuo zai taishang kanxi* 坐在臺上看戲 (Sitting on the stage watching plays; Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1997), pp. 1-8, and especially p. 2 (for the audience clapping when certain people took their seats on stage), and *Mei Lanfang zhencang lao xiangce*, pp. 90-91, for a photo of a 1928 Mei Lanfang performance at which the left side of the stage is packed with spectators (there are also prop men standing to the right of the stage entrance door). Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 228, quotes a Republican era Beijing police regulation (item 13) banning anyone beside the orchestra to stand on the stage and watch the play. On the relationship between clearing spectators off the stage and the separation of audience and spectacle in Europe, see Peters, *Theatre of the Book*, pp. 269-70 (see also p. 48, Figure 11, for the reproduction of a 1697 playbill with the words “NO PERSON TO STAND ON THE STAGE” [capitals in original]). There was also the practice, before it was abolished by Cheng Changgeng, of having the young male performers of female roles stand on the stage before performances (*zhan tai* 站臺) so that patrons could decide who they might like to wait on them, similar to the way women are displayed to customers in brothels. See Su Yi, *Jingju erbai nian gaiguan*, pp. 44 and 169-70. According to Xu Chengbei, *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 45, the practice was also called *zhan tiaozhi* 站條子 (lit.: stand in a line; but it is possible that *tiaozhi* here refers to the note that a patron used to summon a young actor to wait on him).

those vending them were paid by the theater rather than from the fees that they could extract from customers.⁹⁶ The situation in traditional theaters was thought to be a national scandal by those exposed to modern Western theaters.⁹⁷

While *Jingju* had developed by borrowing from other theatrical and performance genres, and there were extensive periods in which it was presented in programs that included performers from other traditions, the long range trend was toward specialization, both in terms of the troupes and performance venues. In places that included multiple venues and performance styles, such as the entertainment centers, certain theaters within those complexes became particularly associated with *Jingju*.⁹⁸ Different venues also became associated with different types of *Jingju*.⁹⁹

The price and quality of performances varied greatly among the different performance venues. As *Jingju* became the up and coming thing, ticket prices rose precipitously,¹⁰⁰ driven primarily by the

⁹⁶ The process was still not completed until the establishment of state theaters in the PRC. See Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2; 30, on the new regime for the first of these. Goldstein, "From Teahouse to Playhouse," and the corresponding sections in his *Drama Kings*, cover the transition from traditional to modern theaters in great detail (although he stops at 1937) and with much insight. There are some materials, however, that he doesn't make use of. For instance, one thing that many reformers complained of about traditional theaters is that although the ticket prices were modest, there was a host of fees for services that one was more or less bullied into paying for, and the amounts charged for the fees could vary a lot. One can monitor the concern and "progress" made in this state of affairs by looking at notices printed on theater programs (*xidan*). Lou Yue and Du Guangpei, *Jiu jing lao xidan*, reproduces programs with text on them that proclaims such things as "give tips as you wish" 小費隨意 (1917; p. 30), "if you do not want to drink tea, we will honor your wish" 如不用茶,聽客自便 (1930; p. 68); other than fees for tea and towels (which are listed) "others cannot be asked of you" 不得另索 (1930; pp. 64-65); the theater has a concession stand for items other than tea with set prices and "the charge for tea [in the theater itself] per person is 8 cents, if tea attendants try to force you to give more" 每位茶資八分,倘有茶役勒索, please come to the office to report them (1937; p. 108); and "the fee for tea is paid for at the same time as for the ticket. It is strictly forbidden to demand fees, if there are infractions, please report them to the office of the theater" 茶資隨票附收. 小費嚴禁勒索. 違者請告知本院公事房 (1938; p. 124). Jin Xiaomei 金嘯梅, *Beijing youlan zhinan* 北京游覽指南 (Guide to touring Beijing; Shanghai: Xinhua shuju, 1926), pp. 135-36, includes a list of police regulations for theaters. Item 6 stipulates that the ticket price and tea fee be indicated on theater tickets; item 7 prohibits asking for more money for tea, and sets the price for face towels and programs.

⁹⁷ Cheng Yanqiu, "Fu Ou kaocha xiqu yinyue baogao shu," pp. 199-200, compares the European, nationally subsidized theaters he has been visiting with those of China. Guides to Shanghai, such as *Shanghai zhinan* 上海指南 (A guide to Shanghai; Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1919), p. 5/17b, warns that in the foreign theaters (*waiguo xiyuan* 外國戲院) in the city, you can smoke or eat in the theater but have to wait till intermission and go to a special room. Another place that Chinese were introduced to foreign ways of being spectators was in the movie theaters run by and particularly catering to expatriates in Shanghai. On how Chinese cinema audiences went through a similar disciplining/"civilizing" process to that of the *Jingju* audiences, see Zhiwei Xiao, "Movie House Etiquette Reform in Early-Twentieth-Century China," *Modern China* 32.4 (October 2006): 513-36. Cinema and *Jingju* were sometimes shown in the same theaters.

⁹⁸ For instance, in the Tianjin entertainment center, Quanye Chang, *Jingju* was performed at the largest and best theater, Tianhua jing 天華景 (Heavenly view). See Peng Ge, *Luoye*, p. 75.

⁹⁹ It is noted in Peng Ge, *Luoye*, p. 77, that the audience at Tianhua Jing in Quanye Chang in Tianjin was not interested in static plays that featured singing such as *Sanniang jiao zi* 三娘教子 (Third Mistress teaches the son of the family; *Xikao* play #3) and *Hehou ma dian* (*Xikao* play #463).

¹⁰⁰ Lu Yingkun, "Chuantong Jingju yishu de 'jingji jichu,'" p. 627, estimates that the theater prices of the early Republic were more than ten times those of the middle of the Guangxu period, twenty times those of the Tongzhi period, and as much as one hundred times as those of the Daoguang period. He notes that in the same time period, the price of rice only quadrupled.

rise in the fees actors could command for their performances.¹⁰¹ In a book published in 1921, Sidney Gamble compared the prices of the different types of theaters in Beijing. He reports that at the high end were the regular theaters in which first class boxes went for four hundred coppers, a private table for two hundred coppers, a first class seat for forty coppers, a second class one for thirty coppers, and a third class one for twenty, while it cost five or six coppers to enter one of the mat-shed theaters and thirty coppers for one of the entertainment centers.¹⁰² For the latter, after you paid the entrance fee, you could spend the entire day and go and listen to a variety of forms of entertainment. The all-female troupes tended to perform in the mat-shed theaters and the entertainment centers.¹⁰³ Gamble records that the cheapest moving picture theater tickets were also six coppers,¹⁰⁴ but one was probably also less liable for miscellaneous fees there. Ticket prices at the same theater could be set higher or lower depending on which stars were performing and what kind of plays were performed.¹⁰⁵

In Beijing, the management and organization of the theaters and the acting troupes were separate and split a certain percentage of the take, while in Shanghai they were combined (with the exception of guest artists brought in from Beijing). In the early twentieth century, actors began to have enough money to invest in theaters. Xin Wutai in Shanghai was partially owned by and completely run by actors, while the biggest theater in Beijing, Diyi Wutai,¹⁰⁶ was partially owned by Yang Xiaolou.¹⁰⁷ The actor/managers/shareholders of Xin Wutai were very socially conscious and reformist, especially in the early days of the theater. Not all actors were cut out to manage theaters well, of course.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ A lot of people with power or influence watched for free because the theaters were afraid to get on the wrong side of them. See, for instance, the August 26, 1882, *Shenbao* piece, “Xizi jiajia,” p. 17 (on soldiers, official runners, local bullies, and underworld figures being let in for free in Tianjin), and Adolf Eduard Zucker, “The Business Side of the Chinese Theater,” *Trans-Pacific* 3.2 (1920): 61-63, p. 61 (on theater managers preferring to let soldiers in for free in Beijing rather than “having the door kicked in”). For a report on soldiers smashing up a theater after they were refused admission for free, see “Jing bing zishi” 京兵滋事 (Troops in the capital cause trouble), in *Shishi baoguan rongshen quanian huabao*, reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, p. 6613. A 1926 case of two soldiers causing a disturbance in a Beijing theater ended up in their execution and their heads being put on display outside the theater (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 94).

¹⁰² See Sidney D. Gamble, *Peking: A Social Survey*, pp. 226, for mat-shed theaters (he mentions that one of the mat-shed theaters charged ten coppers for a man and twelve for a woman) and 239 (concerning the Nancheng Youyi Yuan 南城游藝園 [South city amusement park/entertainment center]).

¹⁰³ Two of Mei Lanfang’s wives, Fu Zhifang 福芝芳 (1905-1980) and Meng Xiaodong, performed in the Nancheng Youyi Yuan. See Dong, *Republican Beijing*, p. 202.

¹⁰⁴ Sidney D. Gamble, *Peking: A Social Survey*, p. 235.

¹⁰⁵ The August 26, 1882, *Shenbao* piece, “Xizi jiajia,” p. 17, implies that the recent rise in theater tickets in Tianjin is related to the fact that the troupes are performing lewd plays (*yinxi* 淫戲).

¹⁰⁶ Some thought this theater was too big. A 1914 entry by Hun Yuding 惲毓鼎 (1862-1917) in his diary, *Hun Yunding Chengzhai riji* 惲毓鼎澄齋日記 (Hun Yuding diary from Clear Studio), reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 7: 648, says that because of the distance of his seat and the noise of the crowd, “the singing and dialogue on the stage was completely inaudible” 臺上唱白全不相聞.

¹⁰⁷ See Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, pp. 76 and 210, respectively. Ouyang Yuqian was a shareholder at Xin Wutai when he was acting there. See his “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 107. Bringing in actors as shareholders was also done when business was not very good. See Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 30, on the Da Wutai 大舞臺 (Big Stage Theater).

¹⁰⁸ Yu Yuqin was forced to sell his theater. See “Chayuan chu shou” 茶園出售 (Theater for sale), in *Qianshuo huabao* 淺說畫報 (Simple language pictorial), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu paokan tuhua jicheng xubian*, p. 279.

In Beijing, before the end of the nineteenth century, it was the theaters and not the troupes that took responsibility for whatever advertising for plays took place.¹⁰⁹ Theaters were also the main point at which the government tried to influence what was being performed, primarily by attempting to ban plays it did not like. In Beijing, the Anhui troupes were large and dominated the scene up until almost the end of the nineteenth century. Actors' salaries were set yearly in a *baoyin* 包銀 system whereby an actor's complete services were retained (*bao*) by the troupe for a certain amount of money (*yin*).¹¹⁰ Beginning a couple of decades before the end of the nineteenth century, this system gradually began to change to a *xifen* 戲分/份 system in which actors were paid per play (*xi*) at a rate (*fen*) that reflected their importance in the play and the troupe.¹¹¹ Troupes began to be smaller and were run by and featured a small number of important stars. These changes were greatly influenced by how things were done in Shanghai, and particularly the way that Shanghai theaters would contract for the short-term services of a small number of Beijing stars who would be backed up by actors and other personnel employed by the theater.¹¹² The *baoyin* system was paired with a rotation (*lun zhuanzi* 輪轉子, *huozhuan* 活轉, *lunyan* 輪演) system under which the major troupes took turns performing four-day stands in the most important theaters.¹¹³ The rotation schedules did not change very much, were well known among Beijing natives, were posted at the theaters and at a couple of important places in Beijing, and included in guides to Beijing such as *Dumen jilüe* 都門紀略 (Concise record of the capital).¹¹⁴

The rotation system did not give any information about what plays were being performed. For private performances the original model was that at the beginning of the performance, perhaps after a

¹⁰⁹ Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, "Guanggao fei" 廣告費 (Fees for advertising), p. 52a (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 245). He notes that as the venues for advertising increased and as advertising became more important, advertising has become more the responsibility of the troupe, and this is particularly the case for new troupes and when it comes to buying advertisements in major newspapers.

¹¹⁰ There has been the assumption that this system tied actors to the same troupe, but Andrea Goldman, in her review of Joshua Goldstein's *Drama Kings*, *Opera Quarterly* 26.2-3 (2010): 460-70, p. 466, points out that the *huapu* "reveal that actors frequently changed troupe affiliation, in spite of the *baoyin* system."

¹¹¹ Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, p. 46, translates *xifen* as "play-point."

¹¹² Troupes and actors will be looked at in more detail in a separate section below.

¹¹³ According to Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, pp. 68a-b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 277-78), the rotation schedules were set (*anzhuan* 安轉) every year at the end of the lunar year or on the birthday of the acting profession's patron deity (the 18th day of the third lunar month).

¹¹⁴ Li Chang 李暢, *Qingdai yi lai de Beijing juchang* 清代以來的北京劇場 (Theaters in Beijing since the Qing dynasty; Beijing: Beijing Yanshan, 1998), p. 123, lays out the rotation schedule as presented in the 1845 edition of *Dumen jilüe*. The scheme involves seven theaters (one idle) and six troupes. For the material on the rotation system in the 1864 edition of *Dumen jilüe*, see Chen Geng 陳庚, "Minguo Beijing xiju shichang yanjiu, 1912-1937" 民國北京戲劇市場研究, 1912-1937 (Research on the theater market in Beijing in the Republican era, 1912-1937), doctoral thesis, Wuhan University, 2011, p. 118. By the time of the 1880 edition of *Dumen jilüe*, the information on the rotation schedule is organized by the 14 theaters listed (but still only 6 troupes, however). A guidebook to Beijing first published in 1886, Li Hongruo 李虹若, *Chaoshi congzai* 朝市叢載 (Thicket of information on the capital; 1886; reprint: Beijing: Beijing guji, 1995), in the section on theaters, gives the names and addresses of seventeen theaters and eight troupes, with information on how those troupes fit into the rotation system at the different theaters (see the "Xiyuan" 戲園 [Theaters] section of chapter 6, pp. 119-27 of the modern reprint [Beijing: Beijing guji, 1995]). See also Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de bianqie*, pp. 321-22, which reproduces the rotation schedule for one theater.

ritual play such as *Tiao jiaguan* 跳加官 (Dance to ensure promotion),¹¹⁵ the troupe would present a list of the plays the troupe was prepared to play to the most important guests, who would take turns choosing the scenes (*dianxi* 點戲) that they wanted to see until a sufficiently long program (*xima* 戲碼) was made up. The plays might also be picked by lot to supposedly express the wish of deities. But the selecting of plays for a program was not an innocent matter. Plays could be selected cleverly to suck up to one's host, or clumsily and end up offending one's host. Plays could be purposely selected to make fun of someone because of similarities between events or characters in the play and that person.¹¹⁶ The titles of plays (or scenes) on the lists from which one had to pick were not a good guide to the content or connotations of the plays themselves, and there were both stories of play-selectors who inadvertently screwed up by picking the wrong play¹¹⁷ and reference works that were compiled to make the choosing easier by grouping scenes into categories that related to the kinds of occasions on which one would be asked to choose plays (birthdays, celebrations of promotions, etc.).¹¹⁸

By at least the end of the Qing dynasty, there was a change in that private performances (*tanghui*) got bigger and more complicated. The actors could be invited from different troupes. The program could not wait upon guests to pick what they wanted to hear but needed to be set in advance. A new "profession" evolved, the *xi tidiao* 戲提調 (play arranger), someone who knew plays and could make the necessary arrangements with the troupes and actors.¹¹⁹ Programs for private performances

¹¹⁵ This category of plays, which are short on plot and more "professional" than most (that is to say, they would be of no interest to amateur singers of *Jingju*), are completely absent in *Xikao*, but make up the first ten plays in Zhang Bojun, ed., *Guoju dacheng*, 1: 1-31, where they appear in a section labeled "auspicious and congratulatory plays" (*jiqing ju* 吉慶劇).

¹¹⁶ There are stories, for instance, about the strained relationship between Empress Dowager Cixi and her adopted nephew, the Guangxu emperor, to the effect that the latter had a play about proper transmission of the throne from one generation to the next, *Baidi cheng* 白帝城 (White Emperor City; not in *Xikao*) performed to try and get her to change her feelings toward him (see Wang Zhengyao, *Qingdai xiju wenhua shilun*, p. 85), while she made him watch the performance of play about a son who is stuck by lighting for turning his back on his foster parents, *Tianlei bao* 天雷報 (*Xikao* play #77), performed for him to chide him, as well as one about the death of an emperor, *Lianying zhai* 連營寨 (Encampment of linked camps; *Xikao* play #92). Yang Lianqi, *Jingzhong miao daixi dang kaolie*, p. 167, recounts that he once believed the historicity of Empress Dowager Cixi having these two plays performed for the Guangxu emperor, but later realized that the performance dates did not work out.

¹¹⁷ Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, pp. 29.355-56, relates the story of an official mistakenly asking for the performance of a play on account of its auspicious sounding title, *Ding Zhongyuan* 定中原 (Pacifying the Central Plain). What he does not know is that this is an alternate title for the play *Sima bi gong* 司馬逼宮 (Sima pressures the emperor; *Xikao* play #202), on the inauspicious topic of the usurpation of the throne by Sima Shi 司馬師 (d. 255 A.D.).

¹¹⁸ For how these matters were represented and evaluated in traditional Chinese fiction, see Rolston, "Oral Performing Literature in Traditional Chinese Fiction." See also Goldman, *Opera and the City*, pp. 98-104. An example of an anthology of *chuanqi* play scenes organized in categories useful for picking the right play for the right occasion would be the 1602 *Yuefu hongshan* 樂府紅珊 (Red coral [selections of] plays), on which see Patrick D. Hanan, "The Nature and Contents of the *Yüeh-fu hung-shan*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26.2 (1963): 346-61; Rolston, "Oral Performing Literature in Traditional Chinese Fiction," p. 22; and Zhu Chongzhi, *Zhongguo gudai xiqu xuanben yanjiu*, pp. 184-86 (the sixteen categories the scenes are divided into are listed on p. 184). Tanaka Issei 田中一成, *Ming Qing de xiqu: Jiangnan zongzu shehui de biaoxiang* 明清的戲曲: 江南宗族社會的表象 (The theatre of the Ming and Qing: Emblem of the patriarchal clan society of Jiangnan), Yun Guibin 雲貴彬 and Wang Wenxun 王文勛, trs. (Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan, 2004), pp. 229-303, is organized around the sixteen categories used in the work.

¹¹⁹ For an overview, see Chang Renchun 常人春 and Zhang Weidong 張衛東, *Xiqing tanghui* 喜慶堂會 (Private celebrations; Beijing: Xueyuan chuban she, 2001), pp. 122-24. Ma er xiansheng 馬二先生 (Feng Shuluan 馮叔鸞), "Xi

began to be printed beforehand.¹²⁰ It was the job of the *xi tidiao* to make sure that fiascos such as performing plays ridiculing doctors or blind persons are not performed when important members of the audience are blind or doctors.¹²¹ Because they were typically celebratory events, tragic plays were not performed at *tanghui* and instead there was a preference for lighter fare.¹²² In sum, then, there were certain subsets of plays that were more likely to be encountered in performance at *tanghui* than in commercial theaters, where the fare tended to be more varied. But both in the case of *tanghui* and commercial theaters, there were plays that were thought to be appropriate for certain seasons or holidays.¹²³

As for the programs for performances in the commercial theaters, in Beijing they were set by the troupes, particularly by the general manager (*zong guanshi ren* 總管事人), but not much in advance and not directly advertised, at least during the period in which the rotation system was in effect. The exact program was typically not set until the night before a performance,¹²⁴ and was liable

tidiao 戲提調,” in Zhou Jianyun, ed., *Jubu congkan*, “Pinju yuhua” 品菊餘話 (Leftover words after evaluating chrysanthemums [i.e., actors]) section, pp. 92-93 (*Pingju shiliao congkan* reprint, pp. 758-59), lists what a good *xi tidiao* needs to know. Xu Lingxiao’s *Gucheng fanzhao ji* includes an extended description of a private performance that includes as one of its foci the work of the *xi tidiao* who arranged the program for it. See the second through fourth installments, *Zhonghua xiqu* 23-25 (1999-2001). “*Xi tidiao ge*” 戲提調歌, an extended poem about the troubles involved in being a *xi tidiao* was included in the “Zayong” 雜詠 (Miscellaneous poems) section of the 1873 edition of *Dumen jilie* (reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 2: 934-35). An example of the inclusion of an inauspicious choice of a play that turns out to be a story “too good to be true” is one that is widely thought to have occurred in the 1922 private theatrical performances to celebrate Puyi’s wedding. According to an account by Pujia 溥佳 (1908-1949), one of Puyi’s relatives, the final piece on the program for one of the days was Mei Lanfang’s *Bawang bie ji* (which had premiered earlier in the year). That play ends tragically for both Xiang Yu and his consort. Pujia wrote that when Puyi was asked if he was worried about the choice of the play the latter supposedly said that it didn’t matter, but Pujia goes on to say that two years later, when Puyi was driven out of the palace, some thought that the inauspicious omen of performing such a play at a happy event had come true. It so happens that Mei performed the play for Puyi a year later as part of a program that almost duplicated the one that Pujia thought included it, and it seems that Pujia confused the two. See Zhang Shihong 張世宏, “Puyi da hunli shi zhende yanguo *Bawang bieji* ma?” 溥儀大婚禮時真的演過霸王別姬嗎 (Was *Bawang bie ji* really performed at the grand wedding ceremonies for Puyi?), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2004.12: 38-39.

¹²⁰ Chen Jiyong 陳紀澄, *Qi Rushan, Lin Yutang, Mushanokōji Saneatsu* 齊如山, 林雨堂, 武者小路實篤 (Qi Rushan, Lin Yutang, and Mushanokōji Saneatsu; Taibei: Zhongguang wenyi, 1977), pp. 31-32, describes the holdings of play programs for *tanghui* held in the collection of the Guoju Xuehui, and notes that they first began to be printed in the Republican period. See also Qi Rushan, *Qi Rushan huiyi lu*, “Tanghui xidan” 堂會戲單 (Programs for *tanghui*), pp. 223-27 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 10: 6237-41). For a reproduction of an example of a program for a *tanghui* (from around 1925), see Lou Yue and Du Guangpei, *Jiuqing lao xidan*, p. 50.

¹²¹ Chang Renchun and Zhang Weidong, *Xiqing tanghui*, p. 156.

¹²² See Chang Renchun and Zhang Weidong, *Xiqing tanghui*, on both the different kinds of private parties that would be held and the types of play programs that would be appropriate for each. Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 131, points out that the fashion for including auspicious words such as *zhu* 祝 and *qing* 慶 in troupe names was designed to help such troupes get *tanghui* performances.

¹²³ More detail on the different types of plays was given in chapter one of the book.

¹²⁴ According to Yuan Shihai in Yuan Shihai and Xu Chengbei, *Jingju jiazi hua yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 59, in the case of *keban* student plays, the program for the next day would be announced before the end of the performance the day before, while in the troupes the second and first rate actors would receive a slip of paper with their parts listed (*cuidan* 催單) in the morning of the day of the performance, while lesser actors would not know their parts until they arrived at the theater. The sending of *cuidan* to top-ranked actors is mentioned in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, pp. 2.23 and 27.326, and how the other actors won’t know their parts until they get backstage on p. 27.326. According to Ye Tao,

to some amount of change during the performance itself.¹²⁵ Notices indicating the troupe to be performing the next day as well as some extremely vague language about the kinds of plays to be performed would be posted outside the theater and perhaps on either side of the city wall gate, Qianmen, just north of the main theater district,¹²⁶ and sometimes within the theater itself.¹²⁷ About midway through the performance (which would typically consist of around 10 separate plays or extracts from plays) a vendor would come through the audience with a list on red paper of that day's plays (not the next day's) that you could buy a look at. A bit later, a slip of paper with that day's plays was offered for sale to members of the audience. There could be slippage between these lists (more so the first one than the second one) and what actually ended up getting performed.¹²⁸ Even less reliable was the news about what plays were to be performed by which theater that beggars would find out from backstage in the theaters. The beggars would wait near Qianmen for people headed for the theater district and “sell” their information to them.¹²⁹

The general manager kept a ledger of plays performed (*xibu* 戲簿) to help keep track of what was performed recently to avoid unwanted close repetition of the same plays or to try and boost attendance by scheduling on the next day plays that could be conceived as sequels to plays that were performed today.¹³⁰ Besides making the most of your own actors and coming up with programs that would compete well with the competition, things to be careful about in arranging the program for a performance included being sure not to have scenes from the same play or scenes set in the same

Zhongguo Jingju xisu, p. 169, one could ask the manager the night before, but would have to accompany the request with a present.

¹²⁵ Yuan Shihai, *Yihai wuya*, p. 144, notes that the programs for the performances put on by the Fuliancheng students at Guanghe lou 廣和樓 (Guanghe Theater), unlike those of regular troupes, were both liable to change and these changes were not announced to the audience.

¹²⁶ See Qi Rushan, *Xijie xiao zhanggu*, “Beiping xiyuan de guanggao” 北平戲園的廣告 (Advertising by Beijing theaters), p. 128 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 4: 2444).

¹²⁷ In the famous painting, “Chalou yanju tu” mentioned above, there are placards on either side of the stage that identify the troupe and one of the plays being performed that day (which is not the play presently on stage), and the troupe and one play that will “definitely” (*jun* 均; surely a mistake for *zhun* 准) be performed the next day. For discussion and the identification of the play depicted on the stage, see *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Beijing juan*, p. 928. Illustrations showing the interiors and exteriors of Shanghai theaters from only a couple of decades later at most show that notices of more than one play on the program are on display. See Wu Youru 吳友如, *Wu Youru huabao* 吳友如畫寶 (Treasury of Wu Youru's pictures; Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian, 1998), “Haishang baiyan tu” 海上百艷圖 (Illustrations of 100 Shanghai beauties), collection (*ji* 集) IIIa, fifth fascicle (*ce* 冊), picture 10 (interior); and a page from *Tuhua ribao* from 1909 reproduced as Figure 1.35 in Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, p. 78 (exterior). The information on the plaques inside and outside of the theater was easily erased so that new information could be put on them. There were similar tablets kept backstage on which the program for the day could be written. The former were called *shuipai/shui paizi* 水牌/水牌子 and the latter *xigui* 戲圭. See Dai Shen 戴申, “Xigui—Shui paizi” 戲圭—水牌子, *Zhongguo Jingju* 2004.3: 38.

¹²⁸ See Qi Rushan, *Xijie xiao guzhang*, “Congqian yanxi bu yu xuanbu” 從前演戲不預宣布 (Previously, plays were not announced ahead of time), p. 52 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 4: 2368).

¹²⁹ Qi Rushan, *Xijie xiao zhanggu*, “Beiping xiyuan de guanggao,” p. 128 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 4: 2444).

¹³⁰ Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, “Xibu” 戲簿 (Play registers), pp. 17b-18a (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 176-77). *Xibu* is the name of a curious manuscript collection of programs for what appear to be lists of plays for separate performances by a variety of Beijing troupes, some of which are dated (earliest being 1882 and the latest 1911), reproduced as the first section (*Qianbian* 前編) of Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Wushi nian lai Beiping xiju shiliao*.

dynastic period appear on the program out of their original or chronological order¹³¹; or having scenes that were too similar to each other or that had characters that looked too similar to each other, or scenes that duplicated those performed recently by other troupes.¹³²

Whereas variety was usually the guiding principle when it came to putting together a program, that principle was sometimes purposely broken in order to present something new or “catchy.” For instance, complete programs were put together that consisted only of plays performed in Manchu dress (*qizhuang* 旗裝),¹³³ or of plays about martial women, plays featuring *chou* or *hualian* actors, or plays that feature the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac (in the order that the animals appear in the zodiac).¹³⁴ Programs could also be put together so that the plays all feature the same role type,¹³⁵ so that the titles of the plays all begin with the same Chinese character,¹³⁶ or so that the first characters spell out a message¹³⁷ or are numerals in correct numerical order.¹³⁸ The existence of numerous alternate titles for many plays surely both facilitated and encouraged such “games.”

Another thing that needed to be avoided, or at least finessed, was the inclusion of prohibited plays in play programs, since that could lead to fines, and the closing down of a program or even a theater. Edicts and governmental directives either vaguely prohibited whole classes of plays (for instance, lewd plays) or listed individual plays that were prohibited. One way to “finesse” the problem of putting on prohibited plays was to perform them under an alternative or new name.¹³⁹

As can be seen in the introduction to the book, Chinese governments of all sorts were both convinced of the power of theater to affect behavior and the need to try and control that power. The main targets were plays that were thought to teach sexual immorality, political subversion or *lèse majesté*, disrespect to “sages and worthies” (*shengxian* 聖賢) such as Confucius or Guan Yu 關羽,¹⁴⁰ violence, or social disorder in general. The Qing dynasty is well known for the large scale “literary

¹³¹ Both of these infractions were called *fanchang* 翻場 (lit.: overturning the stage/scene; this term was also used to describe actors screwing up on stage). See Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, “Zong guanshi ren” 總管事人 (General managers), p. 4b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 150). The two examples given to illustrate reverse chronology between plays set in the same dynasty are Three Kingdoms plays that have the common source of the novel, *Sanguo yanyi*. A similar mistake would be in one program to have the same character appear in two different plays but wearing a beard in the first play but without one in the second one. See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 170.

¹³² Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, “Zong guanshi ren,” p. 4b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 150).

¹³³ Manchu dress was used not only for characters who were Manchu but also for all “northern barbarians.”

¹³⁴ See Weng Ouhong, *Weng Ouhong bianju shengya*, pp. 248-51, and Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 142.

¹³⁵ See the notice at the bottom of the page of *Zhongguo Jingju* 1997.2: 6 of a performance bringing together performers of the martial man (*wusheng* 武生) role type.

¹³⁶ On November 12, 1981, Fuxing Juxiao in Taiwan put on a program of four plays that all began with the character *shuang* 雙 (double).

¹³⁷ Once very popular in Taiwan, especially around the anniversary of the uprisings that led to the foundation of the Republic (October 10).

¹³⁸ The plays listed in the theater depicted in the illustration from Wu Youru, *Wu Youru huabao*, “Haishang baiyan tu,” picture 10, begin with the numerals 1, 2, and 3, in that order.

¹³⁹ See the 1885 proclamation from the Shanghai international concession government complaining about this practice, quoted in Zhao Shanlin et al., *Jindai Shanghai xiqu xinian chubian*, p. 110. *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Beijing juan*, pp. 1303-10, contains a 1944 Beijing municipal government proclamation with a list of “standard” play titles (produced on demand by the actors’ guild) to be followed in the future and an order forbidding “changing play titles whenever it pleases you” 隨意更改劇名.

¹⁴⁰ Confucius and Guan Yu were “deified” as ideal exemplars of civil and military men, respectively.

inquisitions” (*wenzi yu* 文字獄) it carried out, particularly in the Qianlong reign; one of these involved a campaign specifically aimed at drama with its headquarters in Yangzhou and Suzhou. The emphasis in that campaign was on the collection and revision of playscripts rather than directly concentrating on performance; like the massive campaign that produced the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Quadripartite Imperial Library)¹⁴¹ it also had the goal of wiping out perceived slurs against the Manchus and their ancestors.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ On that project, under which censorship was carried out under the guise of collecting and preserving valuable writings, see L. Carrington Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-Lung* (Baltimore, Waverley Press, 1935) and R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

¹⁴² For some of the documents related to this drama campaign, which began in 1780, and discussion of them, see Ding Shumei, *Qingdai jinhui xiqu shiliao biannian*, pp. 122-28 and her *Zhongguo gudai jinhui xiqu biannian shi*, pp. 413-19. One of them is translated in Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition*, pp. 194-95. The Qianlong emperor was concerned that the work on drama be done in a way that would stir up less concern and resistance than the recent *Siku quanshu* inquisition, but the shortness of the campaign (it was allowed to quietly fade away very quickly) is a testament to how much more difficult it was to police popular rather than literary culture (the latter being the main target of the *Siku quanshu* project). It is also clear from the documents how little officials knew about the local forms of theater in their jurisdictions and their unfounded expectation that control of playscripts would be adequate to control what was performed. As with the *Siku quanshu* project, the main concern behind the censorship of the drama campaign was to get rid of slights against the Jin dynasty (115-1234), which the Qing regarded as their ancestors. For more on the targets and goals of the campaign, which included the prohibition of characters on stage wearing Qing dynasty dress, see Fan Jinmin 范金民, “Qianlong houqi chaban xiju wei'ai ziju an shulüe” 乾隆後期查辦戲劇違礙字句案述略 (A succinct account of the case of the examination and prosecution of plays with prohibited language in the later part of the Qianlong reign), *Dang'an yanjiu* 檔案研究 (Archival research) 2012.4: 68-73, p. 72. Colin Mackerras, “Traditional Chinese Music Drama and China's Ruling Classes (1736-1911),” *Chinese Literature* 1988.1: 136-49, p. 138, says that the project lasted from 1777-1782 and involved scrutinizing over 1,000 items, but Yuan Xingyun 袁行雲, “Qing Qianlong jian Yangzhou guanxiu xiqu kao” 清乾隆間揚州官修戲曲考 (Research into the governmental revision of drama in Yangzhou during the Qianlong reign period in the Qing), *Xiqu yanjiu* 28 (1988): 225-44, p. 227, argues that the separate project in Yangzhou to revise dramatic texts was in operation for only about a year and a half (Yuan also notes that in the *Siku quanshu* campaign, only seven dramatic works were proscribed [p. 229]). Ye, *Ascendant Peace in the Four Seas*, pp. 4-6 and 182-97, discusses this campaign, which she calls, in a heading, “The National Censorship Campaign on Drama following the Literary Inquisition” (p. 182). Zhao Weiguo 趙維國, “Qianlong chao jinhui xiqu jumù kao” 乾隆朝禁毀戲曲劇目考 (Research into the repertoire of plays prohibited or destroyed during the Qianlong reign), *Wenxian* 文獻 (Documents) 2002.2: 185-99, lists and examines twenty proscribed dramatic works (there is a similar section in Zhao's *Jiaohua yu chengjie: Zhongguo gudai xiqu xiaoshuo jinhui wenti yanjiu* 教化與懲戒: 中國古代戲曲小說禁毀問題研究 [Conversion and punishment: Research on the question of the prohibition and suppression of drama and fiction in pre-modern China; Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2014], pp. 304-20). Imperial concern over the issues this campaign was to focus on decreased over time: see Ye, *Ascendant Peace in the Four Seas*, pp. 6 and 207-208 and Jibu Youzi (Isobe Yūko) 磯部祐子, “Ribensuocang Neifu chaoben *Rushi guan* sizhong jubenzhi yanjiu” 日本所藏內府鈔本如是觀四種劇本之研究 (Studies on four manuscript palace plays, including Let's Look at Things This Way, held in Japan), *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 (Literary heritage) 2012.4: 130-35; both authors express surprise that a play that allows Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103-1144) to be ahistorically triumphant over the Manchus' claimed ancestors would be performed at court. It is also interesting that there is an 1855 edict from the Xianfeng emperor stipulating that all characters but one in a play formerly banned for its use of Manchu costume, *Hongmen si* 紅門寺 (Red Door Temple; *Xikao* play #446) should wear Manchu costume (*benchao yiguan* 本朝衣冠). For the edict see Feng Biyun 馮碧雲, “*Qinggong Shengpingshu dang'an jicheng, Xianfeng chao yanju yanjiu*” 清宮昇平暑檔案集成, 咸豐朝演劇研究 (A study of the performance of theater in the Xianfeng court portion of Collected Documents of the Shengpingshu of the Qing palace), master's thesis, Shanxi Normal University, 2014, p. 89; for the earlier prohibition, see Fan Jinmin, “Qianlong houqi chaban xiju wei'ai ziju an shulüe,” p. 72. Later, when Japan set up the puppet state of Manchukuo in Manchuria with

Governmental prohibitions of texts generally mentioned the penalties that authors and book sellers could incur, but in the case of less textualized genres such as local opera (including *Jingju*), the person named as most culpable and liable to prosecution in government proclamations against the performance of specific types of plays or specific plays was typically the theater manager.¹⁴³ In Qing dynasty Beijing, what was being performed was monitored right in the theaters, from special seats, *guan-zuo* 官座 (official seats), set aside for censors to do just that and for eunuchs come to look for personnel worthy to be brought into the palace.¹⁴⁴ Notices that the head of the actors' guild was liable to be arrested if actors performed prohibited plays were pasted up at theaters.¹⁴⁵

During the Ming dynasty, prohibitions against portraying emperors and members of the imperial family on stage, while not universally respected, seem to have had a certain effect, especially on written drama.¹⁴⁶ By the time of *Jingju*, although such laws remained in the legal code,¹⁴⁷ it was no longer a problem to put emperors on stage (*Jingju* plays are full of them, and they are often treated rather roughly), but how to deal with certain "sages and worthies" was. The cases of Confucius and Guan Yu were handled very differently. Confucius does not appear prominently as a character in any *Jingju* play, while there is a whole category of Guan Yu plays despite the fact that plays about him

the last Qing emperor, Puyi, as its figurehead, plays about the Chinese resistance to the Jin dynasty and anti-Qing plays were also prohibited (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 161, on such prohibitions in Sanjiang 三江, a new province established by Manchukuo in 1934). The Manchukuo government (1932-1945) also produced *Jingju* plays as propaganda for itself (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 201). For a more detailed look at state censorship and use of theater in Manchukuo, see He Shuang 何爽, "Wei Manzhou guo xiju yanjiu" 偽滿洲國戲劇研究 (Research on theater in the puppet state Manchukuo), doctoral thesis, Jilin University, 2014.

¹⁴³ See, for instance, Wang Liqi, *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao*, p. 77, "Xianfeng er nian zhengyue yushi Zhang Hui zou qing yanjin yanxi" 咸豐二年正月御史張煒奏請嚴禁演戲 (First month of 1852 Censor Zhang memorializes that the performance of plays be strictly prohibited), and Mackerras, *The Rise of Peking Opera*, p. 217.

¹⁴⁴ See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, pp. 148 and 206, and Ye, "Imperial Institutions and Drama in the Qing Court," p. 356. One of the major concerns of Ye's article is to show how Qing imperial institutions that were originally organized primarily to provide theatrical performances for use in the palace ended up taking on the task of monitoring theater in the capital. This is also a theme of Andrea Goldman, *Opera in the City*.

¹⁴⁵ Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, pp. 65b-66b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 272-74), quotes a document from 1863 to this effect and the list of theaters where it was supposed to be posted. See also Ye, "Imperial Institutions and Drama in the Qing Court," p. 355. When troupes registered with the actors' guild, they were supposed to report their repertoire at the same time. The programs for *tanghui* and guild performances were also supposed to be reported officially, but that was to be done by the organizers of the events and not by the troupes or actors. See Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, p. 65b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 272).

¹⁴⁶ See Tian Yuan Tan (Chen Tianyuan), "Prohibition of *Jiatou Zaju* in the Ming Dynasty and the Portrayal of the Emperor on the Stage," *Ming Studies* 49 (Spring 2004): 82-111 and its revised version as "The Sovereign and the Theater: Reconsidering the Impact of Ming Taizu's Prohibitions," in Sarah Schneewind, ed., *Long Live the Emperor! Uses of the Ming Founder Across Six Centuries of East Asian History* (Minneapolis: Society for Ming Studies, 2008), pp. 149-69; and Patricia Sieber, *Theaters of Desire: Authors, Readers, and the Reproduction of Early Chinese Song-Drama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 88-89. On prohibitions of theater in general, see Wang Liqi, ed., *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao*; Fan Pen Chen's "Forbidden Fruits: Ethnicity and Gender in Prohibitions Related to the Performing Arts in Late Imperial China" and her "Ritual Roots of the Theatrical Prohibitions of Late-Imperial China," *Asia Major*, third series, 20.1 (2007): 25-44; and Ding Shumei's *Gudai jinhui xiju shilun*, *Qingdai jinhui xiqu shiliao biannian*, and *Zhongguo gudai jinhui xiju biannian shi*.

¹⁴⁷ See Tian Yuan 田原, "Qingdai youling falü wenti yanjiu" 清代優伶法律問題研究 (Research on the legal problems connected to actors in the Qing dynasty), master's thesis, Suzhou University, 2012, p. 44.

were twice banned.¹⁴⁸ The explanation for the disparity in the treatment of these two figures might be connected to the fact that Guan Yu is both more theatrical and more dangerous (he is supposed to have kept his rather bad temper even after death) than Confucius.

The fact that Qing edicts monitoring theater tend to repeat themselves, outlawing things that their predecessors already outlawed, is pretty good evidence that enforcement was variable and not very efficient or deep, even within the capital. There also seems to have been quite a bit of latitude with regards to the policies local officials could adopt with regard to theater, with some officials being stricter than the throne.¹⁴⁹ The situation in Shanghai, with its multiple spheres of jurisdiction, was naturally complex, but it seems that non-Chinese involved in the running of the foreign concessions were as concerned with controlling the performance of “bad plays” as the imperial government.¹⁵⁰

Theater censorship in China did not end with the Qing dynasty, of course. Under the Republic, troupes registered directly with the police rather than with the actors’ guild.¹⁵¹ There were the additional requirements that play programs had to be reported to the police before the performance began and new plays had to be submitted for review.¹⁵² Although individual lewd plays that had been

¹⁴⁸ There are only three plays featuring Confucius listed in Bai Zengrong, ed., *Jingju jumu cidian* (see pp. 63-64; Tao Junqi, ed., *Jingju jumu chutan*, p. 31, lists only one of the three), and almost no information is given about their circulation or influence. I have never seen evidence that they were performed. Putting Confucius on the stage was explicitly banned under the Kangxi emperor (Wang Liqi, *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao*, “Jinyan shengxian zhi shi” 禁演聖賢之事 [Prohibition against portraying sages and worthies], p. 35). Plays featuring Guan Yu (*Laoye xi* 老爺戲) are discussed in chapter one of the book. On the two bans of such plays during the days of *Jingju* in the Qing, the second of which came about after a theater in which a play about Guan Yu’s death had been performed burned down, see Guo Jingrui, *Che wangfu quben yu Jingju de xingcheng*, p. 138.

¹⁴⁹ Smith, *Village Life in China*, pp. 59-60, mentions that local administrators can be strict when it comes to the performance of plays, but he also says that they can be gotten around through bribery.

¹⁵⁰ See, for instance, the January 10, 1903, *Shenbao* item, “Ying zujie shijin yinxi” 英租界示禁淫戲 (British concession bans lewd plays), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p. 29. Two theater owners were arrested and taken to court. Public opinion, as expressed in newspapers, however, was more conservative in Beijing than in Shanghai. It is fairly common to find items in Beijing newspapers from the late Qing complaining about immoral performances and requesting that something be done about them. For an example, see the item “You shang fenghua” 有傷風化 (Damaging to common morality), in the Beijing newspaper, *Baihua huatu ribao* 白話畫圖日報 (Vernacular pictorial newspaper), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, p. 8983.

¹⁵¹ Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 95.

¹⁵² See items 11 and 10 of the Beijing municipal police regulations quoted in Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 228, and Gamble, *Peking: A Social Survey*, p. 227. There was the additional requirement that troupes inform the police of every venue they performed in, including *tanghui*. See item 6 of the regulations quoted by Tsuji Chōka and also Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, pp. 62a-b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 265-67). Zucker, *Chinese Theater*, writing in the early 1920s, says that he was given a copy of the police regulations and list of prohibited plays but only summarizes their content. Weikun Cheng, “The Challenge of the Actresses: Female Performers and Cultural Alternatives in Early Twentieth Century Beijing and Tianjin,” *Modern China* 22.2 (April 1996): 197-233, p. 221, says that “officials in the Ministry of Education, with the assistance of the police, attempted to examine all [play] scripts, in order to cultivate healthy trends.” The idea that new plays be submitted for review by the police had already surfaced in the last decade of the Qing dynasty. This is proposed, for instance, in “Tianjin shishen shang Yuan gongbao gailiang xiqu bing” 天津士紳上袁宮保改良戲曲稟 (Petition submitted to Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent Yuan [Shikai] by Tianjin gentry to reform Chinese theater), *Guangyi congbao* 廣益叢報 (Paper for extending benefit), issue 118 (1906), pp. 1-3, in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan: Xubian*, 4: 559-62 (see especially p. 562).

prohibited under the Qing reappeared in the Republic,¹⁵³ Qi Rushan claims that there had been an increase in lewd plays in the late Qing that the government had been unable to suppress, and that

it was only in the Republic that they were completely suppressed; there were forty-some plays, mostly *huadan* plays, which were completely suppressed, which made things so bad for *bangzi* and *huadan* actors that they almost had no plays to put on. 到了民國,才完全一概禁止,有四十幾齣,大多是花旦戲;全被禁演,鬧的梆子,花旦,幾乎無戲可演。¹⁵⁴

Considering the prevalence of warlordism and other problems in the Republican era, one can, of course, be skeptical about such a claim. Especially in the early Republic, efforts to ban “bad” plays or to encourage the performance of “good” plays tended to be local measures as, for instance, the 1913 prohibition of more than thirty plays in Tianjin¹⁵⁵ and the program instituted in Jilin Province to get thirty-three newly composed plays widely circulated and performed by troupes “in order to aid in reform” (*yi zi gailiang* 以資改良).¹⁵⁶

In the Nanjing decade of the Republic, a greater disparity opened up between the plays performed in Shanghai and in the capital, now Nanjing.¹⁵⁷ The censorship policies of the ruling Nationalist party added a new category not explicitly targeted before, superstition (*mixin* 迷信).¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ An example is *Huachun yuan* 畫春園 (Painting spring garden). See Bai Zengrong, ed., *Jingju jumu cidian*, p. 999. This work treats this play and *Miren guan* 迷人館 (House that bewilders; *Xikao* play #307) as separate plays while *Xikao* equates them.

¹⁵⁴ Qi Rushan, *Wushi nian lai de Guojia*, p. 116 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 5: 2788).

¹⁵⁵ See Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 11. The categories of banned plays were *yinxi* 淫戲 (lewd plays; twenty-eight titles), *canren xi* 殘忍戲 (cruel and ruthless plays; four titles), and *weibei Guoti xi* 違背國體戲 (plays detrimental to national prestige; one title [*Tie gongji*, *Xikao* #334]).

¹⁵⁶ See Chen Jie, ed., *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 11. Six of these plays had been composed by the Zhili Sheng Xiqu Gailiang She 直隸省戲曲改良社 (Zhi Province [Hebei] bureau for the reform of indigenous theater). In the previous year, the Jilin Tongsu Jiaoyu She 吉林通俗教育社 (Jilin Province popular education bureau) had given plays to actors to perform (Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 1). In 1922, the same province established a Tongsu Jiaoyu Guan 吉林通俗教育館 (Popular education bureau) with a Xiqu Bu 戲曲部 (Indigenous theater bureau) in charge of overseeing theater (Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 68). The national Tongsu Jiaoyu Yanjiu Hui is discussed chapter four of the book.

¹⁵⁷ For instance, *Xin Fang mianhua* 新紡棉花 (New Spinning cotton; see play #125 in *Xikao*, *Fang mianhua* 紡棉花), had racy content and was wildly popular in Shanghai but prohibited in Nanjing. See Huang Shang, *Jiuxi xintan*, p. 84. Only *Fang mianhua* is listed in Bai Zengrong, ed., *Jingju jumu cidian*, p. 1186. In the play, a wife has been left alone at home for three years sings to herself of her longing. When her husband does show up he doubts her chastity and, pretending to be another man, flirts with her. There are reports of later versions involving adultery, murder, and punishment by decapitation. The version by the name of *Xin Fang mianhua* in *Xixue zhinan* 戲學指南 (Guide to studying plays; Shanghai: Dadong shuju, 1931), reproduced in *Su wenxue congkan*, volume 27, pp. 375-79, is not particularly racy.

¹⁵⁸ Regulations promulgated by the Nanjing municipal government in 1929 called for the prohibition of all plays that went against the “ideology of the party” (*dangyi* 黨義), harmed social “customs and security” (*fenghua gong'an* 風化公安), or promoted “feudal superstition” (*fengjian mixin* 封建迷信), and the following year their rules were approved by the national government (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, pp. 115 and 123). A list of 67 plays that should not be performed, seven that could be performed after revision, and 270 that could be performed as is was sent out (see Chen Jie, *Minguo*

When a Shanghai theater petitioned in 1934 to be permitted to perform their version of the *Xiyou ji* 西游記 (Journey to the West) story in Nanjing, they were denied with the excuse “the content involves deities and demons, there is the problem of promoting superstition” 內容設計神怪, 有提倡迷信之嫌.¹⁵⁹ Lists of prohibited plays were also sent out in the years of the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945).¹⁶⁰ The same basic censorship policy was continued by the Nationalists after they moved to Taiwan, with the addition that they also banned new plays created in the PRC.¹⁶¹ Reform of *Jingju* during the theater reform campaign (*xigai* 戲改) in the early years of the PRC was an even bigger deal because the CCP was critical of the vast majority of *Jingju* plays. While the Nationalists on Taiwan were supportive of the values conveyed by most *Jingju* plays, the opposite was true for the CCP, which thought of those very values as feudalistic.¹⁶² Both sides did agree, in the past, that *Silang tanmu* 四郎探母 (Fourth son visits his mother; play #22 in *Xikao*), one of the most popular and famous of all *Jingju* plays, should be banned because the male lead surrenders to the enemy,¹⁶³ and agree now that it is the time to revive plays once thought too racy or superstitious so as to stir up audience interest.

xiqu shi nianpu, p. 124, on this list being promulgated by the Police Department of Ningxi in November of 1930). In October of 1929, the Changsha municipal government established a committee to monitor (*shencha* 審查) theater (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 116). See Jones, *Yellow Music*, p. 118, on 1936 rules for radio programming, and *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Beijing juan*, p. 1312-13, for the set of reasons for rejecting new plays according to a 1948 Beijing municipal government document.

¹⁵⁹ See Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 158.

¹⁶⁰ For a list of twenty-nine prohibited *Jingju* plays sent out by the Propaganda Ministry (Xuanchuan bu 宣傳部), see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, pp. 221-22.

¹⁶¹ For Nationalist censorship of *Jingju* in Taiwan, see Guy, *Peking Opera and Politics in Taiwan*, “Chapter 4: The State Regulation of Repertoire,” pp. 81-108; Wang Anqi, ed., *Taiwan Jingju wushi nian*, pp. 94-95; and Shen Kechang 申克常, “Guoju jinxi zhi duoshao?” 國劇禁戲之多少? (How much do you know about prohibited *Guoju* plays?), *Guoju yuekan* 48 (1980): 48 (which includes in the proscribed plays thirteen plays “adapted by the bandits [Communists]” [*feifang cuangai juben* 匪方竄改劇本] and fifteen new plays).

¹⁶² See Ma Shaobo, et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 517, for lists of beneficial and harmful types of plays published in a 1948 *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 (People’s Daily) editorial. There is no open talk of prohibiting harmful plays in that editorial but it soon came to that. Besides being anti-feudal, anti-superstitious, anti-horrific violence, anti-polygamy, and anti-sex, PRC drama censorship was also concerned about slights to ethnic minorities, to the proletariat, and to farmers (their main base of support). Censorship was so tight in the first five years or so of the PRC that the troupes didn’t have any plays to perform and things had to be relaxed in 1957 (see *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Beijing juan*, p. 1439, for the official announcement of the change in policy; see also Liu Yi-fang, “Old Plays: A Treasury Reopened”). The strongest critique of PRC theater policy published in the PRC that I am aware of is Fu Jin 傅謹, “Xigai’ yu zhengfu gongneng de zai sikao—Da Ankui xiansheng” 戲改與政府功能的再思考—答安葵先生 (A re-evaluation of ‘drama reform’ governmental functions—In response to Mr. [Wang] Ankui), *Xiqu yanjiu* 62 (2003): 184-96. For a less polemic and more chronological overview, see his *Ershi shiji Zhongguo xiqu de xiandai xing yu bentu hua*, “Jin wushi nian ‘jinxi’ lüelun” 近五十年‘禁戲’略論 (An overview of the last fifty years of ‘banning plays’), pp. 199-251. Censorship is a major topic of chapter four of the book.

¹⁶³ On why *Silang tanmu* was banned in Taiwan and why the addition of 91-characters worth of text raised the ban, see Wang Anqi, ed., *Taiwan Jingju wushi nian*, pp. 95-96. Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, p. 156, has a different explanation for the Taiwan ban (perhaps offered tongue in cheek): the Nationalists were worried that the play would make Mainlanders in Taiwan homesick. In one of the texts in MacFarquhar, ed., *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*, p. 244, Mao Zedong says: “Is ‘Silang Visits his Mother’ still being performed? Was the Empress Xiao [mother-in-law of Silang in the play] of the frontier tribe of the Khitan nationality? More likely Manchu. Probably that’s embarrassing to the Han. Ha ha. Silang was a traitor to the Han, was he [not]?” In the play, Empress Dowager Xiao wears Manchu dress (*qizhuang*), as is conventional for northern non-Han characters. For a more developed presentation of what leftists in the PRC disliked about *Silang tan*

By the time *Jingju* came along, there was already in China a long history of reading seemingly innocent works of literature allegorically to find their “real” political meaning.¹⁶⁴ There was also an equally venerable tradition of the “ventriloquism” of folk media by literati to present literati concerns.¹⁶⁵ But those kinds of uses of *Jingju* did not make much sense until literati began to participate in the writing of *Jingju* plays and *Jingju* plays began to be written and performed for political purposes. Ever since that first began to happen (or was noticed to be happening), around the end of the nineteenth century, the authorities often saw the point and banned the play, or thought they saw a point that was perhaps not there, and banned the play just to be sure.

Because of curfews in Beijing and the fact that plays were not performed after 5 pm in the palace,¹⁶⁶ Beijing theaters were not officially permitted during the Qing dynasty to put on plays after dark, or to use candles, gas, or electric illumination when the theater got dark before 5 pm,¹⁶⁷ until the final years of the dynasty, when charity plays first got around the prohibition.¹⁶⁸ Evening performances had been permitted in Shanghai even before the appearance of the word *Jingju* in the *Shenbao*.¹⁶⁹ Private performances could go right through the night to the next day,¹⁷⁰ but daytime performances

mu, see Li Xifan 李希凡, “Ping *Silang tan mu* de sixiang qingxiang” 評四郎探母的思想傾向 (On the ideological slant of *Silang tan mu*), originally published in 1963 and reproduced in Weng Sizai, ed., *Jingju congtao bainian lu*, pp. 277-83. Concerning the banning of the play before 1957, Liu Yi-fang, “Old Plays: A Treasury Reopened,” pp. 6-7, notes the revival of the play and tries to finesse things by saying the play “was not banned. It was just deliberately dropped from the repertory. . . .”

¹⁶⁴ See, for instance, Laurence A. Schneider, *A Madman of Ch'u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) and Pauline Yu, *Reading of Imagery in Chinese Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

¹⁶⁵ See Shuhui Yang, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1998).

¹⁶⁶ Ye, “Ascendant Peace in the Four Seas,” p. 90 n. 6, gives the hours during which plays were performed in the palace as 5 am to 5 pm, and notes that this was maintained under Puyi in the Forbidden Palace even after the fall of the dynasty.

¹⁶⁷ Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, p. 17.97, describes how, on a certain day, by the time Tan Xinpei took the stage the day was already “dark” (*hunhei* 昏黑), but fortunately young bannermen (*qixia ge'er men* 旗下哥兒們) seated in the second floor shined electric lights (*diandeng* 點燈) that they had brought with them onto the stage so that they “illuminated the entire stage as bright as if it was the middle of the day” 照得滿臺亮如白晝. On a different occasion (p. 18.107), he describes how spectators brought electric lights to shine on Wang Yaoqing. Both of these incidents occur before he describes Yu Zhenting, in Guangde lou, being the first to stage plays in the evening (a note from the editor, Li Shiqiang, dates this to 1910).

¹⁶⁸ The third listing in Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Wushi nian lai Beijing xiju shiliao Houbian*, p. 576, which is dated to the second year of the Xuantong period, is for a charity performance at night (*yiwu yexi* 義務夜戲). Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 136, gives the impression that the theater schedules in Beijing were set up to accommodate the secondary industry of male prostitution: “The round of daily performances reflected the role *dan* performed as catamites, freeing them for most of the afternoon and the evening and making them available to literati and other well connected men. . . .”

¹⁶⁹ The November 23, 1872, theater listings in *Shenbao* lists evening performances (*yexi* 夜戲) for two different theaters. See Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 5. A June 16, 1877, *Shenbao* item, “Kanding xiyuan fanghuo zhangcheng” 戲定戲園防火章程 (Regulations for the prevention of fire in theaters), in *ibid.*, pp. 11-12, says that more people in Shanghai go to evening performances than to those in the daytime (*rixu* 日戲).

¹⁷⁰ In his reminiscences, *Yihai wuya*, pp. 95-96, Yuan Shihai gives details about a *tanghui* performance that lasted from 8 am one day to 8 am the next. Yu Dafu 郁達夫, 郁達夫 (1896-1945) “Kan Jingxi de huiyi” 看京戲的回憶 (A memoir of watching *Jingju*; originally published in Singapore in 1941), in Weng Sizai, ed., *Jingju congtao bainian lu*, pp. 73-74, says that the best performance he ever saw was a private performance at the presidential palace that lasted from 6 pm of the first

would start around 11 am and go to around 6 pm,¹⁷¹ while evening performances carried on long past midnight.¹⁷² Day or night, the earliest slots on the program were given to the lesser actors while the best actors and plays were carefully put in the next to last or the last slot on the playbill.¹⁷³ Many people, including reporters and theater critics, skipped the earlier plays and tried to arrive not too long before the most important items on the program, taking care to either come early enough to get a seat or sending servants to reserve one.¹⁷⁴ There were a lot of complaints that the best plays didn't make it onto the stage until very late at night.¹⁷⁵

Even if a substantial proportion of the audience did not sit through the entire performance when the program went for more than six hours and included as many as ten plays, such long programs were the products of a society that was changing into something else. To match the schedules of busy, modern urbanites, performances were gradually shrunk down to an average of about three hours in the evening or afternoon.¹⁷⁶ The running time of individual plays also tended to be cut down over time, even when the later form of the play was not considered to be an extract of the play and was still considered equivalent to the whole play in that the name of the play did not change.

day until 9 am in the morning of the second day. As proof of how good it was, he says that although he needed to urinate very badly, he was afraid to leave his seat from fear that he would lose it to someone else or miss any part of the plays.

¹⁷¹ These are the hours for Guanghe lou in Beijing, as given in Tang Baitao, *Fuliancheng sanshi nian shi*, p. 59, who says the start time was comparatively early, but 11 am is not very different from the start hours stipulated by the municipal police as quoted by Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, pp. 229-30 (the starting and closing times were adjusted slightly according to season).

¹⁷² Ouyang Yuqian, "Zi wo yan xi yi lai," p. 133, relates how when he was acting for the Da Wutai in Shanghai, because they were afraid that the audiences would complain if the programs were too short, they acted every night from 6 pm to 1 am.

¹⁷³ According to Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 37, there was a change from earlier practice in the 1917-1937 period and the next to last play on a playbill was called the *yazhou* 壓軸, while the last one was called the *dazhou*/*da zhouzi* 大軸/大軸子. During that time period the *dazhou* play was generally but not always the most important item on the program. See Wu Xiaoru, *Wu Xiaoru xiqu wenlu*, "Haoxi bu yiding lie 'dazhou'" 好戲不一定列大軸 (The best play is not necessarily placed at the end of the program), pp. 721-23. Earlier, the last item on the program was either a piece to send the audience off (*songke xi* 送客戲), typically a martial play with a straightforward plot but a lot of skill display (Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 160), or a kind of ritual ceremony (see *ibid.*, and Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, pp. 253-54). The plays and actors chosen for *songke xi* were of middling quality and many members of the audience did not stay to see them performed to the end. See chapter one of the book for more detail on types of *Jingju* plays.

¹⁷⁴ *Shanghai zhinan* (1919), p. 5/17a, asserts that evening performances are better than day time ones and advises one not to go too early (around eight is said to be best) but to reserve seats ahead of time. A *xidan* from 1919 reproduced in Lou Yue and Du Guangpei, *Jiujing lao xidan*, p. 34, has the words "we especially invite the various gentlemen to arrive early for their refined viewing pleasure, performances begin promptly at 5:30" 特請諸君早臨雅觀准五鐘二刻開演) and "no reservations by phone" 點號不定座.

¹⁷⁵ A typical review of an evening performance in the *Shenbao* begins with an announcement of the time the writer arrived at the theater, how full the theater was, and complaints about how late it was before the main play was performed.

¹⁷⁶ Writing in 1924 under the penname Ma Er xiansheng, Feng Shuluan, "Zhongguo ju zhi gaikuang," pp. 259-60, pointed out that since everyone's "social obligations were many and time consuming" (*shehui zhong zhiwu rongmang* 社會中職務冗忙), play programs should be reduced to an average of three or four hours. One influence was certainly the average length of films. In the Cultural Revolution, Jiang Qing insisted that the filmed versions of the Model Revolutionary Operas be kept under two hours in length, and this in turn influenced how long the performance versions ended up being. See Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 443, and Chen Rutao 陳汝陶, "Tan Jingju 'yangban xi' de yishu jingyan yu qishi—Cezhong yu yinyue fangmian de tantao" 談京劇 '樣板戲' 的藝術經驗與啟示—側重於音樂方面的探討 (On the lessons from the artistic experience and legacy of the model revolutionary operas—With an emphasis on musical aspects), in *Zhengqu Jingju yishu de xin fanrong*, p. 421.

For instance, Mei Lanfang's *Bawang bie ji* was originally a two-installment play performed over two consecutive days. Audiences found that too long and the play was condensed so that it was half as long and performed on one day rather than two.¹⁷⁷ But things did not remain there. The “halved” version was published in the PRC in nine scenes,¹⁷⁸ but for a long time now, when the play appears on a program it is only scene 8 of that version that is performed.¹⁷⁹

There were a number of different kinds of plays.¹⁸⁰ *Zhezi xi* 折子戲 were highlight scenes extracted from longer plays that might run for as short as half an hour and as long as more than an hour.¹⁸¹ *Quanbenxi/benxi* 全本戲/本戲 were plays that told a complete story, and they could be as long as five and one half hours.¹⁸² *Liantai ben xi* 連臺本戲 were long, loose stories or story-cycles performed in installments (*ben* 本) each of which could be as long as a *benxi*. Programs were made up of mixes of these different kinds of plays, with *zhezi xi* perhaps the major form in late nineteenth-century Beijing and switching to *benxi* with the rise of the National opera stars who competed against each other by staging new productions, and with *liantai benxi* characteristic of Shanghai-style *Jingju* in its maturity.¹⁸³ Programs were put together of mixes of these different kinds of plays.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁷ For this process, see Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 3: 195-97.

¹⁷⁸ See *Mei Lanfang yanchu juben xuanji* (1959), pp. 102-25.

¹⁷⁹ There are even shorter versions prepared for foreign audiences.

¹⁸⁰ See chapter one of the book for more detail than is given here.

¹⁸¹ On the development of *zhezi xi* in *chuanqi* drama and particularly *Kunqu*, see Lu Eting 陸萼庭, “Chuanqi ‘diaochang’ de yanbian yu *Kunju zhezi xi*” 傳奇‘吊場’的演變與崑劇折子戲 (The development of ‘hanging scenes’ in *chuanqi* drama and *zhezi xi* in *Kunju*), *Xiju xuekan* 戲劇學刊 (Theatre Journal) 1 (2005): 27-39, and Li Hui, “Zhezi xi yanjiu.” Theoretically, the theatregoer was supposed to keep the entire play in mind while watching these extracted scenes, but this, of course, became less and less the case as time went on. There was concern, for instance, that the performance of extracts rather than entire plays would tend to isolate the extracts from the moral framework of the entire play. In 1913, for example, the municipal government of Fengtian (Mukden) issued an order that, besides banning twenty plays, stipulated that certain plays needed to be performed in their entirety so as make clear the “prohibition of evil and punishment of lewdness” (*jie'e chengyin* 戒惡懲淫) in the complete versions. See Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 11. A survey of *Jingju* plays completed in 1933 in Fengtian concluded that over four hundred plays were okay to be performed but that thirty-plus plays should not (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 149).

¹⁸² See the June 4, 1928, *Shenbao* item, “Dangui Diyi Tai kaiyan *Kaitian pidi zhi shengkuang*” 丹桂第一臺開演‘開天辟地’之盛況 (The grand occasion of the opening of The Beginning of Heaven and Earth at the Dangui number one theater), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 385-86. This is a Shanghai-style play. For a running time of four hours for a traditional Beijing-style play, the complete version of *Huangjin tai* 黃金臺 (The golden terrace; an “incomplete” version is play #10 in *Xikao*), see the March 8, 1927, *Shenbao* piece, “Ma Lianliang linbie jinian xiaoxi” 馬連良臨別紀念小戲 (The short play for the send off of Ma Lianliang), *ibid.*, p. 373. Ma Lianliang 馬連良 (1901-1966) was arguably the most famous *laosheng* actor born in the twentieth century.

¹⁸³ Chu Qiuyan 褚秋艷, “Ershi shiji zaoqi Shanghai Jingju shichang yingxiao yanjiu” 二十世紀早期上海京劇市場營銷研究 (Research on the commercial market for *Jingju* in Shanghai in the early part of the twentieth century), master's thesis, *Zhongguo yishu yanjiu yuan*, 2009, p. 17, presents a pie chart that shows the proportions among types of plays in the Shanghai performance repertoire in the early part of the twentieth century: traditional plays (16%), newly composed plays set in the past (17%), *liantai benxi* (62%), and contemporary dress plays (5%).

¹⁸⁴ The most accessible collection of play programs is Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Wushi nian lai Beiping xiju shiliao Houbian*, but it reflects Beijing practice only. If we look at the 85 play programs (*xima*) included in that work for the year 1921, for instance, there are a total of 457 play titles involved, for an average of 5.38 play titles per program, with only one item (number 480) consisting of only one play title. The number of items per year in this collection ranges from a low of one (1907 and 1908) to a high of 85 (1921). In the continuation of this work by Zhou, *Liushi nian lai Jingju shicai mobian* 六十年來京劇史材末

The copies of the theatrical program (*xidan*) sold to members of the audience included more and more information as time went on.¹⁸⁵ Beyond the names of the plays and the actors, there were experiments with doing such things as including plot summaries of the plays¹⁸⁶ or including the text for important arias, especially in the case of new plays.¹⁸⁷

Despite the complaints about the planning out of programs that one comes across in newspaper accounts of performances,¹⁸⁸ theater and troupe managers were actually quite good at keeping track of the time necessary for the programs they put together.¹⁸⁹ They had ways to speed up

編 (Last segment of historical material for the last sixty years of *Jingju*; Hong Kong, n. p., n. d.), the number of programs per year ranges from a low of 2 (1942) to a high of 72 (1937). The average number of play titles per program for that year is 3.58.

¹⁸⁵ Printed *xidan* date to the early 1890s (although none are extant now) in Shanghai and 1906 in Tianjin. See *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Shanghai juan*, p. 729, and *Tianjin juan*, pp. 363-64. As for the West, according to Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, “Program,” pp. 287-88, “Actual programs handed out or sold to the audience before a show date back to the late nineteenth century.”

¹⁸⁶ In China, the idea of providing plot summaries in play programs to be read at a performance seems to have begun with Mei Lanfang and his supporters. According to a January 16, 1939, *Shenbao* item, Meihuaguan zhu 梅花館主, “Mei Lanfang chuyan *Daiyu zanghua* 梅蘭芳初演黛玉葬花 (The premiere of Mei Lanfang’s *Daiyu zang hua*), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 462-63, for the premiere of his *Daiyu zang hua* in 1916, a supporter of Mei’s printed up 10,000 copies of a special booklet to be given out in the theater. The booklet included an introduction to the play as well as the text of the play. The following year, an English synopsis of *Chang’e benyue* was distributed at a performance of that play by Mei Lanfang for the American College Club in Beijing on November 17, 1917 (see Zucker, *The Chinese Theater*, pp. 105-107, for the synopsis, which includes translations of some of the arias). The idea of including plot summaries and selected texts of the arias caught on as competition grew among the “four great male performers of female roles” and the producers of new multi-installment plays (*liantai ben xi*) in Shanghai. Prior to what appears to be their first use in play programs, plot summaries were published in newspapers such as the *Shenbao* (in the case of some plays, these plot summaries are all that we know about them) and also along with play-texts in periodicals focusing on theater and in anthologies of plays such as *Xikao* (see chapter three of the book).

¹⁸⁷ Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 651, credits Cheng Yanqiu, on his second trip to Shanghai, in 1923, for being the first to include the texts of arias in a performance program (*jiemu dan* 節目單). Xu Chengbei, *Mei Lanfang yu ershi shiji*, p. 31, mentions that Mei Lanfang also started to include aria texts in his programs.

¹⁸⁸ For example, see the June 9, 1921, *Shenbao* piece, [Liu] Huogong [劉]豁公 (c. 1890-1969+), “Fengji Tianchan Wutai guanju (shang)” 鳳記天蟾舞臺觀劇(上) (Record of play watching at the Tianchan Theater [part one]), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p. 204, who complains that the play he wanted to see had already been performed when he arrived (he talks of the “absurdity” [*miu* 謬] of the way this theater orders its plays), and the November 28, 1912, *Shenbao* piece, Xuanlang 玄郎, “Ji Lao Tan zhi *Daohun ling*” 紀老譚之盜魂靈[鈴] (A record of Tan Xinpei’s ‘Soul Stealing Bell’ [play #253 in *Xikao*]), *ibid.*, p. 85, complains that the theater in question puts too many items (*mazi* 碼子) on its program (eleven or twelve) and Tan Xinpei’s play, which was put in the next to last slot (*yazhuo*[zhou] 壓桌[軸]), didn’t start till midnight.

¹⁸⁹ The running time of the different plays on imperial theatrical programs was always carefully annotated and monitored so that the emperor could arrive for the performance of particular items. Ding Ruqin 丁汝芹, *Qingdai neiting yanxi shihua* 清代內廷演戲史話 (The history of play performances at the Qing court; Beijing: Zijin cheng, 1999), p. 17, quotes palace records on a Daoguang era performance where the total duration of the program is given. Qi Rushan 齊如山, *Tan sijiao* 談四腳 (On four actors), p. 40 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 4: 2216), talks about how in the palace the duration of the plays on the programs was carefully recorded beforehand and deviation by more than several minutes could bring trouble. When outside performers began to perform for the court in the late nineteenth century, the list of plays that they could perform that they were required to submit had to indicate their running time. For the list for Yang Xiaolou, with running times, see Liu Zengfu, *Jingju xinxi*, pp. 174-75. Commercial troupes also wrote down the running times on the plaques that they used to write out programs on backstage. See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 149.

or slow down the speed with which a troupe was making its way through a program.¹⁹⁰ The prop man would tell the performers on stage “maqian” 馬前 (lit.: horse before) to pick up the pace and “mahou” 馬後 (lit.: horse after) to slow things down.¹⁹¹ If the time discrepancy was too great for that to work, to say “maqu” 馬去 (lit.: horse gone) signaled that it was necessary to delete part of the play being performed. If the next play was not ready yet, a percussion pattern could be repeated until it was ready (*dahuan* 大緩), a segment of the play not originally planned to be performed could be performed (expressed as *dai* XXX 帶□□□ [name of the segment]), or a skit or short play could be inserted as a “pillow” (*dian* 墊) into the lineup to fill time until the next play could begin.¹⁹² The stage was supposed to be never allowed to fall dead and silent at any point during the program. It was only later that the idea of adding intermissions was adopted.¹⁹³

Originally, play programs were open to a fair amount of last minute change and this was accepted by audiences. Chen Moxiang, for instance, claims that in 1911, for the announced play to be performed by Mei Lanfang to be switched at the last minute would not trouble those who had come to hear the first play, even if the two plays were quite different in character, and they would “with calm hearts and settled spirits listen to the end of the play and even go home in high spirits” 心平靜氣的聽完, 還高興而去.¹⁹⁴ But in the Republican period, if there was a change in the program in

¹⁹⁰ According to Jing Xin 晶心, “Jianchang—Yu jianchang yiyi bu tong” 剪場—與檢場意義不同 (Cutting scenes—The meaning is different from prop men), *Xiju xunkan* 2.7 (1939): 4, theater performances that went on too long were liable to fines.

¹⁹¹ Xu Chengbei, *Mingzi jiu you xi*, p. 11, gives the example of padding the section of Yang Yanhui’s first aria in *Silang tan mu* in which there are eight lines that begin “Wo hao bi” 我好比 (I am just like) to more than one hundred of the same type. Xu Muyun, *Liyuan waiji*, p. 136, recounts an anecdote about Yu Sansheng having to sing 60-70 lines beginning “Wo hao bi . . .” 我好比 . . . [I am just like . . .] when the actor playing the female lead was late in getting to the theater. Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 80, talks about how plays could be stretched (*lachang* 拉長) when he was performing at the Xin Wutai.

¹⁹² See Liao Canhui, *Ping (Jing) ju jianchang yanjiu*, p. 50, for all but *dian*, for which see Xu Muyun, *Liyuan waiji*, “Dazhou xi qian xiuxi shi fen zhong de yiyi,” p. 136, and Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 30.368. Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, pp. 158-59, discusses what kinds of plays were used as *dianxi* 墊戲, and explains that the main causes for having to pad the program with an extra play is that an actor in the next play is not ready yet or important guests have not yet arrived and it would not be a good idea to start the featured plays before they did. In Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, p. 30.203, there is a description about the decisions made to lengthen out a program of plays that was too short. Another use of *dai* 帶/代 was in expanded play titles, to mean “play X including segment Y.” For an example of this usage in *Xikao*, see play #264, *Dandao fu hui dai Xunzi* 單刀赴會帶訓子 (A single blade [wielder] attends the meeting, including Instructing the Son). In some cases this was used to indicate that the usual performance version of the play would be expanded by the inclusion of that segment, but a January 8, 1913, *Shenbao* item, Xuanlang 玄郎, “Lun gailiang jiuju (xuzuo)” 論改良舊劇 (續昨) (On reforming old plays [continued from yesterday]), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p. 99, complains that *dai* ___ was being used by theaters on the plaques announcing plays (*xipai* 戲牌) for segments that would very rarely be left out and that this was “both cheating the customer and a breach of faith” 既欺座客, 又失信用.

¹⁹³ The ideas of having an intermission and running a separate concession stand in the theater are two things that go together, as can be seen by the mention of both on a *xidan* from 1937 reproduced in Lou Yue and Du Guangpei, *Jiuqing lao xidan*, p. 108.

¹⁹⁴ Chen Moxiang, “Guanju shenghuo sumiao,” part 3, in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 410. Chen does not date the anecdote, but says it was when Mei Lanfang was performing at the Wenming Yuan 文明園 (Enlightened theater), and Wang Changfa and Liu Hua, “Mei Lanfang nianpu,” p. 273, gives 1911 as the year he was performing there. Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Wushi nian lai Beiping xiju shiliao Houbian*, pp. 569-70, records three programs for performances at Wenming Yuan

terms of either the play or the actors, you were supposed to report the change to the police by 11 am of the day of the performance.¹⁹⁵

As advertising through posters (*haibao* 海報) and newspaper ads that listed plays to be performed increased, beginning in Shanghai and then even in Beijing,¹⁹⁶ programs began to become more fixed. The forms of advertising (*guanggao* 廣告) listed by Tsuji Chōka 辻聽花 (1868-1931) for the early twenties included *haibao* (a.k.a., *xi baozi* 戲報子 [announcements of plays]), posted every morning on the city gates and other places with lots of traffic; *menbao* 門報 (door announcements) put up outside the theater itself; *tangbao* 堂報 (hall announcements) put up inside the theater; newspaper (*xinwen* 新聞) ads/announcements (Tsuji himself was a newspaper man); and handbills (*chuandan* 傳單) that were printed up for distribution to special clients and to be distributed in busy parts of town such as markets.¹⁹⁷ Especially in Shanghai, table tenders (*anmu*) were important in getting advance news of programs into the hands of their regular clients and to places where their targeted clientele tended to gather, such as the better opium dens and brothels.¹⁹⁸

The first advance announcement of a program of plays to appear in a newspaper in China appeared on August 6, 1872 in *Shenbao*. It included only the date, the list of plays (nine), the name of the theater, and the descriptor *xidan*. The next day, three programs for two different theaters were posted. By November 23 of the same year, the names of some of the actors were included in the posting of theater programs in *Shenbao*.¹⁹⁹ As stars became more important, advertisements and announcements of theater programs displayed the names of those stars more and more prominently. Most actors' names had three characters. For the biggest stars, their names were given horizontally "as if lying down" in the biggest characters that would fit, the next highest grade of stars would have the

including Mei Lanfang (items 11-12, and 14), none of these involve the two plays mentioned by Chen Moxiang: *Yutang chun* 玉堂春 (Spring in Jade Hall; play #82 in *Xikao*), which Chen says spectators come to "hear the singing" (*ting chang* 聽唱) and *Po Hongzhou* 破洪州 (Capturing Hongzhou; play #275 in *Xikao*), which Chen says spectators come to "watch the acting" (*qiao shenduan* 瞧身段). In the last part of the imperial period in Beijing, Empress Dowager Cixi's bringing in commercial actors and troupes into the palace to perform, often with little notice, increased the possibility that play programs in the commercial theaters would have last minute changes in the plays to be performed or the actors performing them. See Yeh, "Where is the Center of Cultural Production," pp. 104-105.

¹⁹⁵ See the item from the Beijing police regulations quoted in Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 227.

¹⁹⁶ A March 2, 1907, item in *Shuntian ribao*, "Qing kan Wenming xiyuan" 請看文明戲院 (Look at Wenming Theater), reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 5: 333-34, complains that although in such places as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Hankou theater programs are sent a day ahead of time to the newspapers to publish and "you definitely haven't heard anyone talk of even one play being changed..." 斷沒有說是更改一齣的..., *Shuntian ribao* (located in Beijing) had to give up their policy of publishing the programs of Beijing theaters because they kept getting changed and it "was the same as not publishing them" 跟不登一樣.

¹⁹⁷ Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, pp. 243-44. Soulié de Morant, *Theatre et musique modernes en Chine*, plates 1 and 2 (following p. xvi) reproduce *haibao*.

¹⁹⁸ Yeh, "Where is the Center of Cultural Production," p. 94.

¹⁹⁹ Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 3 and 5. On the advertising of *Jingju* in the *Shenbao* in general, see Bai Xue, "Shenbao, Jingju guanggao yu Haipai Jingju," which notes, p. 9, that *Shenbao* established a separate office to handle advertisements in 1913. For other articles on theater advertising in *Shenbao*, see the introduction to the book. It doesn't seem that theater advertisements begin to appear in Beijing newspapers before the first decade of the twentieth century. Chen Moxiang, "Guanju shenghuo sumiao," part 2, in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 388, notes that in the Beijing of around 1900, notices of theater programs in Beijing did not include the names of actors, with the exception of Tan Xinpei, and three particular theaters.

first character above and the other two characters of their names on the same line below as if they were “sitting” or in the shape of the character *pin* 品, while for the lowest grade, their names would be listed vertically as if “standing” in smaller type-size than the other two.²⁰⁰ An entertainment press began to develop in the last decade of the nineteenth century in Shanghai. Periodicals devoted to theater began to appear in 1904 with *Ershi shiji da wutai* 二十世紀大舞臺 (The big stage of the 20th century), and by 1916, beginning with the entertainment centers, theaters began to publish their own periodicals in which they disseminated information about upcoming performances.²⁰¹

There was thus a wide range of types of theaters in China in the late Qing and early Republican periods, some big, some small, some very conservative, some very modern. In Beijing, prices ranged from the extravagant for performances by top ranked stars at fine theaters, to quite cheap, at temple fairs, in the mat-shed theaters, and in the entertainment centers.

Troupes

We noted in the introduction to the book that the Anhui troupes that in Beijing developed what we now call *Jingju* were very large. According to Qi Rushan, the troupes needed the following categories of persons carrying out specific functions: proprietor(s) (*chengban ren* 承班人) who put up the necessary money to establish the troupe; the troupe head (*lingban ren* 領班人) who took on the legal responsibility and liability of running the troupe; the general manager (*zong guanshi ren* 總管事人) and his four to eight assistant managers (*xiao guanshi* 小管事); the stage manager (*cuichang ren* 催場人) in charge of keeping the performance running on schedule; the presenter of the list of plays (*bao yahu ren* 抱牙笏人), eleven to fourteen first-class actors (*toudeng jiao* 頭等腳), seventeen to twenty-four second-class actors (*erlu jiao* 二路腳), thirty-four to forty-four third-class actors (*sanlu jiao* 三路腳), minor actors with acrobatic and martial ability (*shang xia shou* 上下手), lesser warriors (*wuhang* 武行), extras (*longtao* 龍套), sixteen to eighteen orchestra members (*changmian* 場面), prop men (*jianchang ren* 監/檢場人), six or more keepers of the costume trunks (*guan yixiang ren* 管衣箱人), two keepers of the headgear trunks (*guan kuixiang ren* 管盔箱人), a keeper of the properties trunk (*guan qibao xiang ren* 管旗包箱人), two entrance curtain openers (*da menlian ren* 打門簾人), the keeper of make-up (*guan caixia ren* 管彩匣人), and two runners to summon actors

²⁰⁰ Gao Jianzhong 高建中, “Shoucang shi yi zhong wenhua jilei” 收藏是一種文化積累 (Collecting is a kind of sedimentation of culture), in Zhang Daoyi 張道一, ed., *Lao xiqu nianhua* 老戲曲年畫 (Old theater *nianhua*; Shanghai: Shanghai huabao, 1999), p. 164. Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, pp. 613-21, contains selected examples of theater advertisements or listings printed in *Shenbao*. Pages 617-18 are from Mei Lanfang’s first tour of Shanghai (1913). The characters for Mei and the other main actor’s names are enormous, although they are in the “sitting” style (surname on top and personal name below). On how Mei Lanfang courted the press, see, for instance, Joshua Goldstein, “Mei Lanfang and the Nationalization of Peking Opera, p. 404. On the shift in *Shenbao* ads from emphasis on the names of the plays to the names of the actors, see Lin Xinghui, “*Shenbao* xiqu guanggao de yiyi,” p. 166.

²⁰¹ For information on some of the earliest of these newspapers published by theaters, see *Zhongguo jindai wenxue daxi—Shiliao suoyin*, 2: 251-52 (*Xin Shijie bao* 新世界報; started in 1916); 257-59 (*Quanye Chang ribao* 勸業場日報; 1917); 259-60 (*Da Wutai* 大舞臺; 1917); 260-61 (*Xin Wutai ribao* 新舞臺日報; 1917); 262-64 (*Xiao Wutai bao* 笑舞臺報; 1918); and 266-67 (*Xin Danqui bi wutai ribao* 新丹桂筆舞臺日報; 1918).

to come to performances (*cuixi ren* 催戲人).²⁰² The troupes were so big so that they could put on the lengthy programs that were conventional and so that they could put on plays in more than one location at once.²⁰³

The Anhui troupes settled in the Xuanwu district in the western part of the outer city of Beijing (basically the closest part of the city to Marco Polo Bridge, the main approach to Beijing for both the troupes and metropolitan civil service examination candidates). Members of the troupes carried on two different but linked occupations, both governed by the actors' guild²⁰⁴: performing plays in the theaters and for private performances on the one hand, and providing male prostitutes (*xianggong* 相公)²⁰⁵ who would wait on men who came to see them at their master's quarters

²⁰² See Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, pp. 3a-12a, and the presentation of Qi's information in summary form in Hsü, *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre*, pp. 78-81. Qi also lists other personnel/functions such as boilers of hot water for tea and washing (*guan shuigu ren* 管水鍋人), managers of certain categories of stage props (*da qiemo ren* 打切末人), assistants to the leader of the troupe (*chatang ren* 查堂人), bookkeepers (*sizhang ren* 司帳人), apprentice actors who don't get paid (*xiaoli zhi jiao* 效力之腳), actors temporarily hired from other troupes (*waizhe jiao* 外折腳), and students (*xuesheng* 學生). As the main actors began to become more independent from around the Tongzhi reign period on, they began to hire their own personal servants, including their own managers (*tou'er* 頭兒), runners (*genbao ren* 跟包人), and make-up and costume assistants (*huazhuang ren* 化裝人). The personnel and functions of a troupe, exclusive of the actors themselves, were also spoken of as belonging to seven sections (*ke* 科): one for music (*yinyue ke* 音樂科), one for headgear (*kuixiang ke* 盔箱科), one for costume (*juzhuang ke* 劇裝科), one for make-up (*rongzhuang ke* 容妝科), one for stage management (*jutong ke* 劇通科), one for extra-troupe liaison (*jingli ke* 經勵科), and one for communications (*jiaotong ke* 交通科). See Wang Yuanfu, *Guoju yishu jilun*, pp. 44-47.

²⁰³ See Gong Hede, "Shilun Huiban jin Jing yu Jingju xingcheng," p. 169, citing a source saying that the Sanqing Troupe could "as one troupe perform in several different places" 以一班分唱數處). According to Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, pp. 74a-b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 289-90), for one troupe to perform in two or more different places at once was called *fenbao* 分包 (lit.: separate engagements).

²⁰⁴ See Wang Zhaoyu, "Qingdai zhong hou qi 'pinyou' wenhua yanjiu," p. 161.

²⁰⁵ Known also as *gelang* 歌郎 (song-lads), *mingtong* 明僮 (handsome youth), *chuling* 雛伶 (fledgling actors), *xiaoyou* 小友 (little friends), and more colloquially and disrespectfully as *tuzi* 兔子 (rabbits). See, for instance, "Xin zhishi zhi zahuo dian: Datong shijie zhi nannü" 新知識只雜貨店: 大同世界之男女 (The general store of new knowledge: Men and women in the World of the Great Unity), *Tuhua ribao*, 2: 189 (issue 66), which complains that women in Beijing are now dressing like men and look like the "rabbits" of Hanjia Tan 韓家潭, the location of many of the Anhui troupes and affiliated *xianggong tangzi*. *Xianggong* was originally used to refer to persons of high status and much effort has been taken ever since the rise of the *xianggong* industry in Beijing to try and explain how *xianggong* got to be used for persons of such low legal status. Some of the explanations involved the argument that *xianggong* was a corruption of *xianggu* 像姑 (lit.: like a maiden) but the strained nature of that explanation is better used as proof of the difficulty of the project. On the term *xianggong*, see Wu Cuncun 吳存存, "Qingdai xianggong kaolie" 清代相公考略 (An investigation into the *xianggong* of the Qing dynasty), *Zhongguo wenhua* 中國文化 (Chinese culture) 14 (1996): 182-93; her *Homerothic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*, "Xianggong, dan and the appellations of Qing boy-actors," pp. 119-23; and Wang Zhaoyu, "Qingdai zhong hou qi Beijing 'pinyou' wenhua yanjiu," "Siyu de lishi yu fazhan" 私寓的歷史與發展 (The history and development of private residences), pp. 79-105 and "Siyu jingying zhuangkuang" 私寓經營狀況 (The operation of private residences), pp. 107-62. Wu Cuncun traces the earliest uses of *xianggong* to refer to actors to the early Qing. I am not convinced by her claim at that point (she has since changed her mind) that all *xianggong* had to be *dan* actors (e.g., *Homerothic Sensibilities*, p. 122). Such an idea does not agree with the repertoire of the *tangzi* associated with the Chuntai Troupe (see below), which includes plays with *xiaosheng* roles, or the roles specialized in by *xianggong* listed in the 1886 Beijing guidebook, Li Hongruo, *Chaoshi congzai* (pp. 163-97). Wang Zhaoyu is also not convinced (see her "Qingdai zhong hou qi Beijing 'pinyou' wenhua yanjiu," pp. 81 [specifically addresses Wu's claim] and 117). On the general subject of *xianggong* and literati interest in them, Wu Cuncun has also published, "Qingdai shiren xia you xu tong fengqi xulüe" 清代

(*xianggong tangzi/sifang/siyu* 相公堂子/私房/私寓) or who summoned them to wait on them in restaurants, theaters, and other public places.²⁰⁶ A popular explanation for the popularity of such male

士人狎優蓄童風氣敘略 (A brief account of the vogue for playing around with and raising actors among literati of the Qing dynasty), *Zhongguo wenhua* 15-16 (1997): 231-43; “Ruan hongchen li zhu xinshu’: Xiangxi yuyin ‘Fengcheng pinhua ji’ yu wan Qing de ‘huapu’” 軟紅塵裡著新書：香溪漁隱‘鳳城品花記’與晚清的花譜 (“New book written in the soft red dust”: Fisherman hermit of Xiangxi’s “Record of Flower Evaluations in the Imperial City” and the flower registers of the late Qing), *Zhongguo wenhua* 23 (2006): 73-85; “Jiu ran wusu, yun yi xian yu weixin’: Ershi shiji chu guanyu siyu, changyou bingti de taolun yu Zhongguo xingshi de Xihua” 舊染污俗，允宜咸與維新：二十世紀初關於私公寓，倡優並提的討論與中國性史的西化 (“The old disgraceful habits all need to be reformed’: The debate over private residences and the mentioning together of prostitutes and actors and the Westernization of the history of sex in China), *Zhongguo wenhua* 28 (2008): 98-111; “Official Homoerotic Self-Representation and Theater in Li Ciming’s *Yuemantang Riji*,” *Frontiers of Historical Research in China* 9.2 (2014): 202-24; and, most recently, *Xi wai zhi xi: Qing zhong wan qi Jingcheng de Xiyuan wenhua yu Liyuan siyu zhi*. Mark Stevenson has published “One as Form and Shadow: Theater and the Space of Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century Beijing,” *Frontiers of Historical Research in China* 9.2 (2014): 225-46, in which he proposes using the word “epitheatre” to refer to the world of theater off stage. He and Wu Cuncun edited and translated *Homoeroticism in Imperial China: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2012), which includes a lot of material relating to *xianggong*. Literati patronage of *xianggong* is also the subject of Roger Darrobers, *Opéra de Pékin: Théâtre et société à la fin de l’Empire sino-mandchou* and Liu Deming 劉德明, “Qingchao nanse fengqi zhi yanjiu” 清朝男色風氣之研究 (Research on the vogue for male love in the Qing dynasty), master’s thesis, Danjiang University (Tamkang University), 2007, “Jingshi de youling wenhua” 京師的優伶文化 (The culture of actors in the capital), pp. 91-102. Wu Xinmiao 吳新苗, who has published articles on the *xianggong* industry such as “Cong xiayou dao pengjue—Shuntian ribao zhong tangzi shiliao ji wenren yu ‘xianggong’ de guanxi” 從狎優到捧角—順天時報中堂子史料及文人與‘相公’的關係 (From dallying with actors to supporting stars—Historical material on private studios and the relationship between literati and *xianggong*), *Wenyi yanjiu* 2013.7: 111-18, has just published a book on this topic: *Liyuan siyu kaolun*. A number of master’s and doctoral theses have been written on *huapu* and/or *xianggong*, including master’s theses by Wang Zhaoyu 王照瓊 (Jinan International University, 2009), Liu Deming 劉德明 (Tamkang University, 2009), and Liu Ping 劉萍 (Taipei National University of the Arts, 2011) and a doctoral thesis by Yue Lisong 岳立松 (Nankai University, 2010). Many of those scholars have since published journal articles.

²⁰⁶ The more popular terms for hiring the services of *xianggong* include *da cha wei* 打茶圍, *guang tangzi* 逛堂子, and *chuan menzi* 串門子. See Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de bianqie*, p. 156. For two instances in a novel in which newcomers to Beijing are introduced to the *xianggong* system, see Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, pp. 2.21 and 8.109. For information on the costs of patronizing *xianggong*, see Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*, pp. 145-46. A list of *xianggong tangzi* takes up an entire chapter in a popular guide to Beijing first published in 1886, Li Hongruo’s *Chaoshi congzai*. The eighth chapter is devoted to listing *xianggong tangzi* and the young actors available in them, *hutong* 衚衕 (alley) by *hutong* (with Hanjia Tan being given the most space), but gives no information about prostitutes or courtesans, as is often the case for local gazetteers or guidebooks for other cities. Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*, pp. 112-13, claims that the modern reprint (Beijing: Beijing guji, 1995) of this book lacks the *xianggong tangzi* chapter, but that is not true (the chapter is entitled “Jutai jixiu lu” 鞠臺集秀錄 [A record of the gathered beauties of the stage] and takes up pp. 162-76 of the 1995 reprint). It would be better to say that some of the older reprints lack the chapter. There were a number of works that presented lists of *xianggong* by their locations in Beijing. The appendix to Xu Wei 徐蔚, “Nandan: xingbie fanchuan—Zhongguo xiqu wenhua teshu xianxiang kaolun” 男旦：性別反串—中國戲曲文化特殊現象考論 (*Nandan: Cross-Gender Performance—Research on a unique phenomenon in Chinese indigenous theatrical culture*), doctoral thesis, Xiamen University, 2007, pp. 164-77, lists in chart form the data presented in three such works. Whereas earlier guides to the *sitang* of Beijing such as the 1873 *Jubu qunying* 鞠部群英 (Gathered flowers of the acting world) might indicate in their *fanli* that *sitang* “not in the business of receiving guests” 不事應酬者 might be left out (see the reproduction of this work in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 1: 753), as the *xianggong* industry went into decline after the Boxer Rebellion, works that listed the locations of *sitang* and the *xianggong* in them such as *Yanlan xupu* 燕蘭續譜 (A continuation of the roster of orchids of the capital; reproduced in Fu Jin, ed.,

prostitutes in Beijing is the fact that female prostitution was officially outlawed.²⁰⁷ The way that *xianggong* serviced their patrons could be physically sexual, or limited to flirtation, although in both cases the money they earned for their “owners” was dependent on giving their patrons what they wanted.²⁰⁸ These two enterprises, commercial theater performed in commercial and private venues

Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan, 2: 497-501) take care to indicate which are not “receiving guests” (*yingchou* 應酬).

²⁰⁷ See Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, pp. 125-26, for the original edicts, and Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, pp. 13-14 and 21, on the differing degrees of enforcement of the prohibitions. Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*, is rightly critical of the simplistic use of a “substitution model” to explain the importance of male prostitution in Beijing (pp. 162-63 and elsewhere). She also points out (p. 31) that there were laws against patronizing male prostitutes in Beijing in the Ming and Qing but they were focused on official overindulgence and were rarely enforced. For historical and fictional examples of officials getting into trouble for patronizing *xianggong*, and for sources stressing the resurgence of female prostitution after the Boxer Rebellion, see Zhao Zhaoyu, “Qingdai zhong hou qi ‘pinyou’ wenhua yanjiu,” pp. 141-42 and 97-101, respectively. Besides the resurgence of female prostitution, Zhao also stresses the abolition of the civil service examination system and changes in social attitudes for the decline of the *xianggong* system (pp. 97-105). Tong Xu, “The Evolving Stage: Theater and Socio-Cultural Transformation in Early Modern China,” pp. 139-41, criticizes Wu Cuncun, but the main objection is that to that writer the *xianggong* are more similar to courtesans than prostitutes, in that both sold culture and sophistication more than simple sex. According to Ye, “The Legal and Social Status of Theatrical Performers in Beijing during the Qing,” p. 75, and Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 8, because there was no way to change their status for the better, actors had an even lower status than prostitutes, whom they were expected to bow to. Muiyou sheng, *Shanghai liyuan zazhi*, p. 8/1, contains a mock proclamation prohibiting actors from patronizing brothels (“Yanjin xizi zhi jiyuan yeyou shi” 嚴禁子至妓院冶游示) that associates the practice of actors having to salute (*qing'an* 請安) prostitutes and call them “Miss” (*gu nainai* 姑奶奶) with Beijing-style actors (*Jingpai xizi* 京派戲子) and asserts that they are very strict about this. Su Yi, *Jingju erbai nian gaiguan*, p. 169, quotes the common saying: “yi ji er gai san xizi” 一妓二丐三戲子 (first prostitutes, second beggars, third actors). The *xianggong* were also disadvantaged vis-à-vis prostitutes in that their careers as *xianggong* were very short (see Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*, “The life outcomes of the *xianggong*,” pp. 153-58). On love affairs between actors and courtesans, see Yeh, “Playing with the Public” and Xu Jianxiong 徐劍雄, *Jingju yu Shanghai dushi shehui, 1867-1949* 京劇與上海都市社會, 1867-1949 (*Jingju* and Shanghai urban society, 1867-1949; Shanghai: Shanghai Sanlian shudian, 2012), p. 349, has a chart that lists 48 pairs of actor-courtesan lovers.

²⁰⁸ There is a distinct lack of detailed and concrete description of the sexual relations between *xianggong* and their patrons. This is largely explained by the poetic reticence of pre-Republican writing on actors as exemplified in the *huapu*, and the defensive silence of PRC scholarship on *Jingju*, the vast majority of which is trying very hard to raise *Jingju* to or justify it as a high status art. See Goldman, *Opera and the City*, p. 285 n. 132, where she says that Zhang Jiliang 張際亮 was the only one of the *huapu* authors “to explicitly acknowledge a sexual dimension to his own friendship with an actor,” while Yao Shuyi 么書儀, “Xiqu shi xushu zhong de Beijing ‘tangzi’” 戲曲史敘述中的北京‘堂子’ (The *tangzi* of Beijing in the narration of the history of traditional Chinese theater), *Da xiju luntan* 2 (2004): 47-60, is very good at contrasting the PRC silence on the issue as compared to the relative frankness about it in Republican and Taiwan writing. The most graphic portrait I have come across of the sexual lives of *xianggong* actually occurs in a French novel originally published in 1925 under the title *Bijou-de-ceinture* by George Soulié de Morant and translated into English as *Pei Yu: Boy Actress*, Gerald Fabian and Guy Wernham, trs. (San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 1981). The translators consulted the author’s son, Nevile, and provide an essay on de Morant (1878-1955), who spent the years 1901-1918 in China. Besides a number of other novels, de Morant also wrote a book on Chinese music (cited above), on whose cover he is identified as “Consul de France, Chargé de Mission en Chine.” There is a fair amount of overlap between that book and *Pei Yu* in the examples of *Jingju* cited in both. There is an “Author’s Introduction” to the novel that claims “This is not a purely imaginary account. . . . Rather it is the story of real lives and adventures to which I was witness” (p. 5), and he claims that *Pei Yu* was a real person and explains that he has used the real names and writings of two figures in the novel out of respect for their heroism. But the bulk of the novel is set before 1900 and de Morant’s own arrival in China, so the experiences of the European “I” who tells the story cannot all be based on his own. There is a scene set in a kind of training school for *xianggong* run by the proprietor of a string of

and male prostitution, were in large part separate,²⁰⁹ even though both the actors and the male prostitutes went through somewhat similar training and both sang and performed for their patrons. The kinds of plays they performed were quite different, with the former tending to act in large-scale plays dominated by historical and martial themes while the latter specialized in plays requiring only a couple of parts or that provided arias that could be sung without acting. The troupes lived together in a large compound (*gongyu/da xiachu* 公寓/大下處), while the male prostitutes lived in separate, private residences (*siyu/sifang* 私寓/私房) run by a more senior member of the troupe.²¹⁰ There was some overlap or interchange between the actors and the *xianggong*. Mei Lanfang, for instance, got his start as a *xianggong*, although much effort has been expended to cover up that fact.²¹¹ It has been

restaurants that have *xianggong* to wait on the guests and go with them to sleeping quarters nearby. One detail that one only hopes was indeed invented, is the idea that their training involves sitting (being impaled) by “pointed sticks of graduated size” that the teacher explains, “Well, it just has to be done progressively. Things would be too difficult otherwise; the customers would shy off . . .” (p. 141). This idea of a progressive dilation of the anus by this means had already appeared in French in Jean Jacques Matignon, *Superstition, crime et misère en Chine* (Superstition, crime, and misery in China; Lyon: A. Storck et cie, 1899), in a chapter entitled “Deux mots sur la pederasty” (A few words on pederasty), pp. 255-80, which also includes figure 38, a photograph of a young man in female dress labeled as “un ‘Sian-Kón.’” Morant is actually best known for his writings on acupuncture. For an introduction to him, see Jeannine Jacquemin, “George Soulié de Morant, Sa vie, son oeuvre d’écrivain et de sinologue,” *Histoire des sciences médicales* 20 (1986): 31-40. D. E. Mungello, *Western Queers in China: Flight to the Land of Oz* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), discusses de Morant and his book, pp. 25 and 32-34, states, with regard to the book, that it is “difficult to discern the exact dividing line between reality and art” (p. 25), but concludes, with regard to de Morant, “detailed knowledge indicates a fascination with boy-actors that would have been based on some degree of contact with them during his stay in Beijing” (p. 35). The Redlight District in which male and female prostitution was located in Beijing was indeed a destination for foreigners. For another, later, example, see David Kidd, *Peking Story: The Last Days of Old China* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2003), pp. 110-11. Edmund Backhouse’s *Décadence Mandchoue* (recently published as: *Décadence Mandchoue: The China Memoirs of Sir Edmund Trelawny Backhouse*, Derek Sandhaus, ed. [Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2011]), presents himself as both knowledgeable about male-male sex in the world of male prostitution in Beijing in the period of 1898-1908 and able to perform female roles in traditional Chinese theater (for instance, pp. 67-68, has Empress Dowager Cixi ask him about his reputation as an amateur performer).

²⁰⁹ Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 42, makes the separateness more a matter of skill, with the ordinary *xianggong* lacking the acting skills necessary to become actors. Yan Changke 顏長珂, “Chuntai ban ximu bianzheng” 春臺班戲目辯證 (On the repertoire of the Chuntai troupe), *Zhongguo xiqu* 26 (2002): 121-53, which concerns the Anhui troupe known for its “youngsters” (*haizi* 孩子), stresses the ties between the troupes and the *tangzi* run by its members, but distinguishes very clearly the most representative elements of the plays performed by the two groups (pp. 136-37). Their separateness was especially stressed by regular actors. For a fictional example that insists on their separateness, see Qin Shou’ou, *Qiu Haitang*, p. 1.6, where the main character’s teacher tells him that he is within his rights to reject the advances of a warlord because even in the Qing dynasty, “us students in opera schools were students in opera schools, and those *xianggong* were *xianggong*” 咱們科班是科班，他們相公是相公。Neither of the two *Jingju* professions up until the Republican period, neither the world on the stage dominated by *laosheng* actors, nor that of the young *dan* actors who waited on patrons off the stage, can be neglected. It is possible that with the ban in 1912, the *xianggong* industry continued but under cover. This is the point of view presented in Mu Rugai’s 1919 novel, *Mei Lanfang* (this novel is mentioned in the notes to the introduction to the book).

²¹⁰ The *xianggong* industry is particularly associated with *Jingju*, first with the Anhui troupes that came to Beijing and then with the *Jingju* troupes that flourished in Beijing, but Wang Zhaoyu, “Qingdai zhong hou qi ‘pinyou’ wenhua yanjiu,” p. 148, concludes that an embryonic *xianggong* industry was already established in Beijing before the Anhui troupes arrived.

²¹¹ In 1902, when he was nine, Mei Lanfang was indentured (*dian* 典) to a *xianggong tangzi* 相公堂子 named Yunhe Tang 雲和堂 run by his elder sister’s husband, Zhu Xiaofen 朱小芬 (dates not known) (see Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*,

206). The fact that Mei was sent to a *xianggong tangzi* is elided in Wang Changfa and Liu Hua, “Mei Lanfang nianpu,” pp. 263-64, but openly acknowledged in Chen Jiying 陳紀滢, *Qi Ru lao yu Mei Lanfang* 齊如老與梅蘭芳 (Qi Rushan and Mei Lanfang; Taibei: Zhuanji wenxue, 1967), p. 27. An often published photo of Mei and his fellow *xianggong* of Yunhe Tang originally captioned when first published in 1928 as “Niannian qian Beijing Yunhe Tang shi'er jincai zhi heyong” 廿年前北京雲和堂十二金釵之合影 (Joint photograph of the 12 golden hairpins of the Yunhe Tang of Beijing from 20 years ago), was captioned in various misleading ways in later works such as Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, inserted page before 1: 23. See Yao Shuyi, “Xiqu shi xushu zhong de Beijing ‘tangzi,’” pp. 51, and 54-58, and her “Yizhen zhaopian de wuzhong shuoming” 一幀照片的五種說明 (Five explanations for one photo), *Hainan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 海南師範學院學報 (Journal of Hainan Normal College) 2004.6: 11-14. Mei Lanfang was eventually bought out of service in Yunhe Tang by one of his most loyal patrons (*laodou* 老斗) while he was there, Feng Gengguang 馮耿光 (1882-1966). See Yao Shuyi, “Xiqu shi xushu zhong de Beijing ‘tangzi,’” p. 49 and John Zou, “Cross-Dressed Nation,” in Fran Martin and Larissa Henricks, eds., *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2006), p. 81. Zucker, *The Chinese Theater*, p. 174, says of Mei Lanfang, “His youth was tainted also by his being subjected to unspeakable immoral practices which were openly tolerated in Peking until the Revolution in 1911.” Mu Rugai's *Mei Lanfang*, which began to be serialized in 1915 and went through a total of three newspapers (the first two newspapers were pressured to stop carrying the serialization), and finally appeared as a book published in 1919 in 15 chapters by Shengjing Shibao She 盛京時報社 (the publishers of the third newspaper, for whom Mu worked as an editor for many years) of Shenyang (known as Fengtian [Mukden] at the time). In his preface to the novel, Mu explains how the serialization of the novel was twice stopped by Feng Gengguang (referred to in the novel as Ma Youwei 馬幼偉). Feng also did his best to destroy the book version, which was almost entirely inaccessible to Chinese readers until it was recently reprinted in Taiwan by Niang Chuban 釀出版 in 2012 and included in Gu Shuguang, ed., *Mei Lanfang zhenxi shiliao huikan*, 1: 27-169 (this volume also contains a 1917 short work of fiction entitled “Xuanju lingwang ji” 選舉伶王記 [Record of the election of the king of actors], about Mei Lanfang's backer supposedly buying the title of king of the actors for him whose main content was worked into the novel, pp. 3-17, and an undated farcical playlet about Mei abusing his “power” as “king” by agreeing to suppress negative press about him, pp. 21-25, and an unfinished, anonymous novel about Mei Lanfang influenced by Mu's novel, pp. 171-91). Feng comes off worse in Mu's novel than Mei Lanfang does, although the latter is shown to choose the Feng character because of his money over a more intellectual and sympathetic patron, named Guo Sanxiang in the novel. We are told early on that exclusive of fees for wine, a visit to a *tangzi* costs between four and twenty ounces of silver, and buying out a *xianggong's* contract costs between several thousand ounces of silver on the cheap side and several tens of thousands of ounces on the expensive side (p. 1.39 of the reprint). It is not said how much the Feng character has to pay to buy off Mei's contract. Mu also wrote a collection of biographies of actors, *Lingshi* 伶史 (Histories of actors; Beijing: Xuanyuan ge, 1917), which has been reproduced in volume one of *Minguo Jing Kun shiliao congshu*. The segment on Mei Lanfang in the section entitled “The Hereditary House of Mei Qiaoling” (“Mei Qiaoling shijia” 梅巧玲世家), includes a lot of the same kind of material as shows up in the novel, sometimes with personal names changed. The popular novelist Bao Tianxiao 包天笑 (1876-1973) published a novel, *Liufang ji* 留芳記 (Record of leftover fragrance; Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1922), in two sections (*ji* 集) with a total of 21 chapters that was originally planned to be from eighty to one hundred chapters and to use Mei Lanfang's life to tell the story of the end of the Qing and the beginning of the Republic, and that was going to include a lot of detail on his life in Yunhe Tang. This idea of using the life of Mei Lanfang as an organizing principle was also discussed and even justified at the very end of Xu Lingxiao's *Gucheng fanzhao ji*, which ended up focusing more on Yuan Shikai (the novel ends with a comparison between the lengthy stage career of Mei Lanfang [in opposition to the idea that “a *dan* actor can only remain popular for five years” 旦角不能五年紅] and the shortness of Yuan Shikai's imperial aspirations, *Gucheng fanzhao ji*, installment six, p. 230). Bao's novel, as we have it, only has one even fairly detailed description of Mei receiving guests at the Yunhe Tang (in chapter three; this sequence marks the Feng Gengguang figure's decision to abandon a different young actor in favor of Mei Lanfang). The difficulty of writing about people still alive seems to have forced the change in Bao's original plans. The novel as it was published is available in Luan Meijian 樂梅健, ed., *Xiandai tongshu wenxue de wumian zhi wang—Bao Tianxiao* 現代通俗文學的無冕之王—包天笑 (The uncrowned king of popular modern literature—Bao Tianxiao; Nanjing: Nanjing chuban she, 1994), pp. 33-215 and Gu Shuguang, ed., *Mei Lanfang zhenxi shiliao huikan*, 1: 193-392. On the original plan for the novel and the difficulties with completing that plan, see the essay on Bao in the Luan volume, Fan Boqun 范伯群, “Xiandai tongshu

estimated by Yao Shuyi 么書儀 that for actors born between 1813 to those who died by 1932, over 70% were trained in *sifang*.²¹² It should be kept in mind, however, that the *dan* and *xiaosheng* 小生 (young dignified male role) actors produced by that system had short stage lives and the stages themselves

wenxue de wumian zhi wang—Bao Tianxiao pingzhuan” 現代通俗文學的無冕之王—包天笑評傳 (The uncrowned king of popular modern literature—A critical biography of Bao Tianxiao), p. 25. For Bao’s own reminiscences about the novel, written near the end of his life, see Bao Tianxiao, *Chuanying lou huiyi lu* 鈎影樓回憶錄 (Reminiscences from Chuanying studio; Beijing: Zhongguo dabai ke quanshu, 2009), “Guanyu *Liufang ji*” 關於留芳記 (Concerning *Liufang ji*), pp. 451-56 (part one) and 457-62 (part two). He describes how the idea of using Mei Lanfang in the novel was suggested to him and how he first met Mei when Mei first toured Shanghai and Bao was with one of the Shanghai papers Mei and his people contacted (p. 451). After his plans for the novel became known, two of Mei Lanfang’s supporters told him that while Mei Lanfang had “emerged from filth without being affected by that” 出污泥而不染, as for Mei’s time at Yunhe Tang, “everyone thinks it best not mentioned” 大家以為不提最好. They go on to say that Mei Lanfang had risen to prominence through the backing of Feng Gengguang and others, and that this had caused those that this made jealous spread “filthy stories” (*zanghua* 髒話) that should not be lightly believed (pp. 452-53). Bao’s preface for the novel, “Yuanqi” 緣起 (The origin [of the novel]), still claims that Mei Lanfang is its central figure (pp. 34-35). Bao’s “Guanyu *Liufang ji*” is also reprinted in Gu Shuguang, ed., *Mei Lanfang zhenxi shiliao huikan*, 1: 393-404 (pp. 405-419 reprints other material related to the novel). The biography of Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳傳 (Mei Lanfang zhuan) by Liaoliao 了了 in the beginning of [Liu 劉] Huogong 豁公, ed., *Meilangji* 梅郎集 (Collection for Master Mei [Lanfang]; Shanghai: Zhongguo tushu jicheng gongsi, 1920), p. 2, describes Mei Lanfang’s reaction to the serialization of the Mu Rugai’s novel in the first newspaper: “Lanfang thought that the private matters of his life were full of dark things, and that for them to be revealed by others was a great shame. Because he was so ashamed he became ill” 蘭芳以隱情多暗昧, 被人揭曉, 引為大辱. 因羞成病. The biography says that when Mei Lanfang did not eat for several days, the leader of the troupe he was performing with, Yu Zhenting, got very worried and entrusted someone to go speak to Mu about the situation. After the further intervention of an unnamed “famous person” (*mingshi* 名士), Mu is said to have agreed to their requests. The biography itself begins by describing how the prohibition of male prostitution (*longyang* 龍陽) and Mei’s looks and voice allowed “this besmirched lotus to gradually break through the mud and offer his art on the stage” 於是此一朵污蓮花, 漸漸破泥而出, 獻藝於舞臺之上矣. Yeh, “A Public Love Affair,” in a subsection entitled “Mei Lanfang vs. *The Crystal*,” pp. 42-48, recounts an attempt to ruin Mei’s reputation by bringing up his past in 1920, but it does not appear that either Bao Tianxiao or Mu Rugai had any such motive. Mu says that he is just trying to be true to history. His 1917 *Lingshi* biography of the Mei family of actors that did not cover up over their connections to the *xianggong* industry (Mei Qiaoling as owner of a *xianggong tang*, Mei Lanfang’s father as someone who died from being overworked as a *xianggong*, and Mei Lanfang himself as a young *xianggong*). There is the possibility that elements of the presentation of Pei Yu in Soulié de Morant, *Pei Yu: Boy Actress*, are based on the life of Mei Lanfang, although the chronology would have had to be scrambled. At the end of the novel, which is set some time after the revolution of 1911, Pei Yu claims, with the element of exaggeration that seems to be part and parcel of the novel: “My photograph is in all the shop windows, beside that of the Chief of State. I earn more than all the ministers put together and am given more honors than a viceroy in his own province” (p. 144). Before its appearance, it was rumored that Chen Kaige’s recent movie, *Mei Lanfang* 梅蘭芳 (2008), would explore in detail Mei Lanfang’s life as a *xianggong*, but the movie as released only has brief scenes reflecting that period in his life. For a comparison between that movie and “history,” see Meinü jintian mei xilian 美女今天沒洗臉, “Ba chu da gai: Dianyng *Mei Lanfang* zhong de lishi bing fei zhen lishi” 八處大改: 電影梅蘭芳中的歷史並非真歷史 (Eight major changes: The history in the movie *Mei Lanfang* is not really history), <http://books.sina.com/artbook/drink/2008-12-23/ba17318.shtml>, accessed May 5, 2010. The fourth section of this article includes this claim: “according to sources, all of the brief biographies available at that time on the market describing Mei’s life before he became famous were bought up and destroyed by Feng [Gengguang]” 據說, 當時市面上寫梅出名前事跡的小傳, 全部為馮買下銷毀, with the exceptions of two accounts, one of which stresses how grateful Mei was to Feng and both of which stress all the money Feng spent on Mei.

²¹² See Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, pp. 193-94, who also comes to the conclusion that there were at least 154 *tangzi* in Beijing during the period covered by the Daoguang, Xianfeng, Tongzhi, and Guangxu reigns (p. 202) and that the *xianggong* had their own festival named the *xianggong hui* 相公會 (*xianggong* festival; p. 305).

were dominated during that time period by *laosheng* actors who sometimes were themselves trained in *sifang* but did not participate in the *xianggong* industry beyond sometimes running *sifang* themselves.²¹³ The male prostitution of the *xianggong* industry in Beijing was outlawed in 1912 after persistent requests over a number of years by leaders of the *Jingju* community such as Tian Jiyun 田際雲 (1864-1925).²¹⁴ Some have linked the widespread denigration of traditional Chinese theater by many of the May Fourth intellectuals to what had become an unsavory link between male prostitution and the theater world in Beijing.²¹⁵

²¹³ See Wang Zhaoyu, “Qingdai zhong hou qi ‘pinyou’ wenhua yanjiu,” pp. 134-36. She also points out the disparity between the public presence of the *laosheng* actors on the stage and their near invisibility in the nineteenth-century literature devoted to evaluating actors (p. 133).

²¹⁴ For an approving notice of Tian Jiyun’s initial petition, see “Qing jin sifang” 請禁私房 (A petition to abolish catamite brothels), from *Qianshuo huabao* 淺說畫報 (Simple language pictorial), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng xubian*, p. 1901. Xia Xiaohong 夏曉虹, “Jiu xitai shang de wenming xi—Tian Jiyun yu Beijing Funü Kuangxue Hui” 舊戲臺上的文明戲—田際雲與北京婦女匡學會 (*Wenming xi* on the old stage—Tian Jiyun and the Beijing Association for the Education of Women), in Chen Pingyuan 陳平原 and Wang Dewei 王德威, eds., *Beijing: Dushi xiangxiang yu wenhua jiyi* 北京: 都市想像與文化記憶 (Beijing: Urban Imaginary and Cultural Memory; Beijing: Beijing daxue, 2005), p. 96, dates that first petition to 1909 and also notes the proposal passed in the actors’ guild in the same year that “any actors who, besides acting, receive quests [i.e., *xianggong*], are not permitted to mount the stage and act” 凡伶人外作應酬, 即不准登臺唱戲. That last proposal also involved the prohibition of *xianggong* from attending the school run by the actors’ guild. See the 1909 *Zhengzong aiguo bao* 正宗愛國報 (True patriotic journal) issue number 1095 item, “Liyuan hang ni ronghe changyuan zhuomian’er” 梨園行擬融合長圓桌面兒 (Actors propose to eliminate the difference between long and round tables [long tables were used in the theaters and thus represent regular actors while round tables are used in *sifang* and represent *xianggong*]), reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 6: 159-61. Tian Jiyun’s 1909 petition, with the signature of the leaders of 12 troupes, was also published in *Zhengzong aiguo bao*; it is reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan xubian*, 4: 539-40. The idea of restricting *xianggong* from the guild-run school (and in effect separating the two trades, acting and male prostitution) had been first broached several years earlier. See the 1905 *Jinghua ribao* issue number 421 item, “Zhengyue xuetang de zongzhi” 正樂學堂的宗旨 (The constitution of the Rectifying Music Academy), reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 6: 120-21. Yao Shuyi, “Xiqu shi xushu zhong de Beijing ‘tangzi,’” pp. 47-48, quotes the police proclamation announcing the decision to abolish the practice, which it says has “besmirched the entire nation and made us a laughing stock abroad” 玷污全國, 貽笑外邦). The text of the proclamation can also be found in Zhang Cixi 張次溪, “Yan gui lai yi suibi” 燕歸來箴隨筆 (Random notes from Returning swallow studio), in Zhang Cixi, ed., *Qingdai Yandu liyuan shiliao*, p. 1243. Translations of the proclamation or portions of it can be found in Ye, “The Legal and Social Status of Theatrical Performers in Beijing during the Qing,” p. 83; Wu Cuncun, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*, pp. 156-57; Cuncun Wu and Mark Stevenson, “Male Love Lost: The Fate of Male Same-Sex Prostitution in Beijing in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in Fran Martin and Larissa Henricks, eds., *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006), p. 51; Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, p. 107; Li, *The Soul of Beijing Opera*, pp. 89-90, and Kang, *Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900-1950* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), p. 115. Yao Shuyi, “Xiqu shi xushu zhong de Beijing ‘tangzi,’” appears in substantially the same form in the third section of chapter four of her *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, pp. 208-30.

²¹⁵ See, for instance, Wu Cuncun, “Jiu ran wusu, yun yi xian yu weixin,” “Er, You piping changyou bingti de yanyuan tizhi dao quanpan fouding Zhongguo chuantong xiqu” 二, 由批評倡優並提的演員體制到全盤否定中國傳統戲曲 (2, From criticizing the system in which actors were both prostitutes and actors to the complete negation of traditional Chinese theater), pp. 102-106.

Some of the Anhui troupes were very long-lived, staying together for more than a century.²¹⁶ Actors with smaller troupes had more freedom, but less security.²¹⁷ As mentioned above, in the big troupes, according to the *baoyin* system, the actors and other troupe personnel contracted yearly to work for the troupe. Their yearly salaries were set when the contract was made, with major actors getting higher salaries than minor ones, but the differential not as great as it became later. Actors also received, also differentially according to their ranking, a rather small amount of money for each performance known as “cart money” (*cheqian* 車錢).²¹⁸ Even if the troupe had no income from performances because of being in a period of national mourning, there was still the expectation that the troupe leaders would and should do their best to hold the troupe together and to look after everyone. The majority of the troupe members lived, ate, and worked together in a fashion similar to the case in the work units (*danwei* 單位) of the early decades of the PRC. Unlike later times, the troupes did not see themselves as locked in competition with each other, but instead were integrated into a rotation system in force at that time in which all of the major troupes took their turn in the same theaters and those theaters charged pretty much the same price for attendance no matter which troupe or actor was acting. If one troupe developed a successful play of their own, the other troupes would generally not try and mount their own versions, and they were known to lend each other money.²¹⁹ According to Catherine Yeh, the troupe, during this period, “was not really regarded as a business enterprise that could be bought or sold.”²²⁰

The leaders of the troupes had great authority and great responsibilities. They were the ones the government would come looking for in case of any trouble with the troupe or its activities. They were the ones whose names were on the documentation filed with the actors’ guild. Some troupe leaders, such as Cheng Changgeng, were known for being strict, while others, such as Mei Qiaoling, were known for their benevolence, but the best evidence of good leadership was the fact that the troupe prospered under your tenure as the head of it. The vast majority of troupe leaders during the *baoyin* period, and particularly after 1845, were *laosheng* actors such as Cheng Changgeng—as a *huadan* actor and leader of a troupe Mei Qiaoling was an exception.²²¹ For the sake of the troupe, famous actors were expected to be willing to also play minor roles.²²²

²¹⁶ Colin Mackerras, “Peking Opera before the Twentieth Century,” *Comparative Drama* 28.1 (1994): 19-42, p. 40, says that the longevity of two of the troupes, Sanxi and Chuntai, “is, as far as I know, unique in the history of Chinese theater.”

²¹⁷ Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 17.207, has Tan Xinpei speak of the difference between being with one of the big Anhui troupes and one of the smaller ones.

²¹⁸ Lu Yingkun, “Chuantong Jingju yishu de ‘jingji jichu,’” pp. 619-20.

²¹⁹ See Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, p. 27.

²²⁰ Yeh, “Where is the Center of Cultural Production,” p. 78.

²²¹ Gao Langting 高朗亭 (1774-1827), a *huadan* actor, might be taken as an example of the relative importance of *dan* actors pre-1845. Although the common notion that he led the Sanqing Troupe into Beijing in 1790 is incorrect, he did become the leader of the troupe no later than 1803. See Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, “Guanyu ‘Gao Langting’ 關於‘高朗亭’ (Concerning ‘Gao Lanting’),” pp. 106-109, where she concludes that Gao was only 17 years old when Sanqing entered the capital and its leader at that time was a Yu Laosi 余老四 (Yu the Fourth). The plays Gao was known for tended to be *zhezi xi* with smaller casts and more of an emphasis on romance than those of the period of the near absolute dominance of *laosheng* actors, dated from 1845 to 1875 by Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, p. 135.

²²² Cheng Changgeng was exemplary in this. When someone asked him why he bothered to act in plays not starring himself, he is supposed to have said: “To play the primary roles is to act, how could playing secondary roles alone not also be acting? They are both acting, where is there any difference between them as to high vs. low, or honored vs. lowly?” 正角唱戲, 配

Under the *baoyin* system, actors were not supposed to leave the service of the troupe nor perform with other troupes without permission.²²³ Liu Gansan, whose stage name of Gansan 趕三 (lit.: rush to three [places]) referred to the fact that one day, after finishing a performance with his own Sanqing troupe, he rushed to take part in two other venues with other troupes, was punished for doing that by being expelled from Sanqing.²²⁴ Cheng Changgeng, on the other hand, was famous for refusing to perform with another troupe even after the powerful officials organizing the performance had him arrested and handcuffed to one of the stage pillars.²²⁵

Troupes had it in common that they worshipped the same patron deity (*zushiye* 祖師爺), although there were different stories about the deity's origins or what his name was.²²⁶ His birthday (the eighteenth of the third lunar month) was honored every year by, among other things, taking a break from performing plays publicly.²²⁷

The actors in Beijing had their own guild, generally known in the Qing dynasty after the temple within which it was located, Jingzhong Miao 精忠廟 (Temple for complete loyalty), a temple to the memory of Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103-1144).²²⁸ The guild was a semi-governmental organization, composed of a governmental yamen²²⁹ and the actors organization, with each new leader of the latter

角亦何獨不唱戲耶? 同一唱戲, 又何高低之分, 貴賤之別耶?). See Ren Erbei, *Youyu ji*, item 242, p. 193. Cheng was also known for being willing to act in the plays at the beginning of the program (*kaichang xi* 開場戲). See Liu Songkun, *Liyuan yiwén*, p. 320.

²²³ Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 26.317, has Cheng Changgeng punish Tan Xinpei forty strokes with a ruler and He Guishan 何桂山 (1846-1917) twenty for running away from the Sanqing Troupe. Earlier in the novel, p. 18.214, when Cheng first heard that Tan and He had run away, he rejected the idea of turning them in to the guild because he expected them to eventually return.

²²⁴ See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 190. Not only was Liu expelled from his own troupe, he was also prevented from acting for any of the other big troupes. He was not able to return to Sanqing until a new leader took over the troupe.

²²⁵ See Ren Erbei, *Youyu ji*, item 243, pp. 194-95. The term used for performing outside one's own troupe is *waichuan* 外串 (lit.: external acting). Here, as elsewhere, Cheng's position was more strict and his actions more exemplary than general practice might be. Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, pp. 25.294-96, discusses the organization of a joint Sanqing/Sixi private performance and whether it will be considered a Sanqing or Sixi performance.

²²⁶ See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, pp. 80-85, for the names and origin stories for these four different traditions: Erlang shen 二郎神, Laolang shen 老郎神, Xishen 喜神, and Yuhou zushi 御後祖師, and pp. 85-92 for other deities honored by troupes or segments of them.

²²⁷ Liu Gansan got into trouble because he agreed to do a private performance on the birthday of the patron deity (Ma Shaobo et al., eds., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 1: 550).

²²⁸ See Shen Yubin 沈玉斌 and Chen Guoqing 陳國卿, "Jingju hanghui zhi yange gaikuang" 京劇行會之沿革概況 (An overview of the evolution of the *Jingju* actors' guild), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua chuantong*, p. 340. The words *jingzhong* are associated with Yue Fei because of the story that his mother tattooed *jingzhong baoguo* 精忠報國 (completely loyal, repay the country) on his back (see *Xikao* play #447, *Bie mu ci bei* 別母刺背 [Parting from mother and tattooing the back]). For brief information on the murals on the walls of the guild and reproductions of them, see Che Wenming, *Ershi shiji xiqu wenwu de faxian yu quxue yanjiu*, p. 281 (item H 75), which dates the murals to the earlier part of the Qing dynasty, and for more detail see Zhou Huabin 周華斌, "Beijing Jingzhong miao ji xiqu bihua kaoshu" 北京精忠廟及戲曲壁畫考述 (A description and investigation of Jingzhong Miao and its theater wall paintings), *Zhonghua xiqu* 41 (2010): 1-17. Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 3: 647-54, collects some documents on the guild.

²²⁹ Ye, *Ascendant Peace in the Four Seas*, pp. 35-36, notes that while the temple dates back to the Ming dynasty, the earliest records from the yamen only date from after the Xianfeng reign. Yang Lianqi 楊連啟, *Jingzhong miao daixi dang kaolüe*, pp. 1-55, while tracing the origins of the Jingzhong Miao yamen, shows how many of its functions were earlier undertaken by the Imperial Textile Commission (*Zhizao fu* 製造府) in Suzhou, which hosted emperors on their tours of

needing to be approved by the government and the guild itself serving as a conduit for the gathering of information for, and dissemination of policy by, the government. The guild also facilitated the selection of actors and other personnel for use in the palace. The guild carried out a number of activities designed to improve living conditions of actors or take care of the poorest members of the acting community such as charity performances to feed and bury poor actors, and was charged with arbitrating quarrels and punishing offenders in the community.²³⁰ In what seems to be the only example of a strike action called by actors, the guild does not seem to have played a big part.²³¹ While there was the example of a *dan* actor, Gao Lanting, heading the guild not long after the first Anhui troupe entered the capital, and two *dan* actors, one of whom was Tian Jiyun and the other Yu Yuqin 余玉琴 (1867-1939), were among its heads toward the end of the Qing dynasty, almost all of the other heads of the guild were *laosheng* actors.²³² Tian and Yu were interested in reforming *Jingju* and traditional theater.²³³

The old rotation/*baoyin* system began to break down as some actors began to become famous and to assert their independence in a number of ways.²³⁴ One trend was the “privatization” of what

Jiangnan and selected actors to send to court, besides making props and costumes to imperial specification (in which it was helped out by the commissions in Nanjing and Hangzhou; a task that all three continued to do for some time after the Jingzhong Miao yamen was established). See also Yang's *Qingmo gongting chengying xi* 清末宫廷承應戲 (Ritual plays in the palace during the late Qing; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 2012), pp. 25-36, which also stresses the importance, in Suzhou, of the temple to the theater deity, Laolang Miao 老郎廟.

²³⁰ There is a rather wide difference of opinion on when the actors' guild in Beijing came into existence, with some tracing its origins back to the Ming or the early Qing. It seems that regardless of what was in existence before the middle of the nineteenth century, and what its activities and duties were, the activities of the guild and its interactions with the state reached a different level of complexity during the period of the existence of the Shengpingshu. The earliest troupe registrations now extant date from 1863, and thus it is perhaps to some extent justified for Yan Quanyi, *Qingdai Jingju wenxue shi*, pp. 270-71, and Yeh, “Where is the Center of Cultural Production,” p. 84, to speak of the guild being established at the beginning of the Tongzhi reign period. It was certainly during that period that the court began to bring in *Jingju* actors for performances for the court.

²³¹ The strike occurred in 1889, when the servants of governmental officials provoked an incident in a Beijing theater that led to the closing of the theater. The actors called a strike that got the support of a well-connected amateur actor and then Dowager Empress Cixi herself. See Ye, “The Legal and Social Status of Theatrical Performers in Beijing during the Qing,” p. 79.

²³² By the time of Tian Jiyun, it had become such an expectation that the head would be a *Jingju laosheng* actor that before Tian could become head he had to symbolically perform as a *Jingju laosheng*. See Jing Guxue 景孤血, “Jingzhong miao shou suotan” 景孤血精忠廟首瑣談, *Jingju tanwang lu*, pp. 524-25. Another *dan* actor, Shi Xiaofu 時小福 (1846-1900), shared the responsibilities of running the guild with Tan Xinpei and the *wusheng* actor Yu Jusheng. See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 66.

²³³ As noted above, Tian Jiyun was instrumental in the abolition of the *xianggong* system. Pei Yanling starred in a *Jingju* play about Tian entitled *Xiang jiuxiao* 響九霄 (Tian's stage name). The playscript, which doesn't adhere very closely to history, was written by Yang Shutang 楊舒棠 and is available in *Juben* 劇本 (Playscripts) 2008.4: 31-44. A 1905 item that appeared in issue 291 of *Jinghua ribao* 京話日報 (Pekingese news), “Gaixi” 改戲 (Reforming plays), reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 6: 116-18, relates that Yu came to the newspaper to talk about a call for theatrical reform published by the paper and was instrumental in getting an amateur *Jingju* actor to write up a “lecture” (*yanshuo* 演說) on the subject.

²³⁴ Fang Wenxi 方問溪, *Liyuan hua* 梨園話 (Pear Garden talk), quoted in Chen Yimin 陳義民 et al., eds., “Jingju shiliao xuankan” 京劇史料選刊 (Selected historical material on *Jingju*), *Yitan* 5 (2007): 297-98, sees the disruption to the

formerly would be considered the common property of the troupe, such as costumes or the right to the best musicians of the troupe.²³⁵ One of the major factors breaking down the solidarity of the old troupes was the increasing practice of hiring the individual services of stars by the court, by patrons putting on private performances, and by Shanghai theaters. Shanghai did not have a rotation system but instead troupes would be associated with particular theaters²³⁶ and star actors performed under contracts that might guarantee them some proportion of the receipts for their performances (also known as *xifen*). It seems the first Beijing actor to succeed in negotiating a *xifen*-type contract with a Beijing troupe was Yang Yuelou, who was able to achieve this right after a very successful performance trip to Shanghai in 1876.²³⁷ In 1887, Tan Xinpei took the next step and established his own troupe, Tongchun Ban 同春班 (lit.: Shared Spring Troupe), and ended up signing a long-term contract to perform in one specific Beijing theater.²³⁸ After the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the model of individual troupes contracting to perform for fairly long periods in specific theaters became established,²³⁹ and the old Anhui troupes gave way to troupes that were basically vehicles for the individual stars. The differential between the income of the stars and the rest of the troupe increased to unprecedented degrees,²⁴⁰ and actors became more like free agents who, if lucky enough to become stars, could live very well,²⁴¹ or if not so lucky, had to chase around and take part in as many performances as

theatrical world caused by the periods of mourning for the Guangxu emperor and Dowager Empress Cixi as instrumental in the change from the *baoyin* to the *xifen* system.

²³⁵ See Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, p. 28, for the beginnings of these two trends. Perhaps the major expense for putting on *Jingju* plays is the cost of providing sets of costumes adequate for mounting a fairly wide repertoire of plays. Originally, the costumes were the possession of the troupe, but beginning around the 1860s actors began to build up their own wardrobes. The relationship between star performers and their favorite musicians (especially the *qinshi* 琴師 or main spike fiddle [*Jinghu*] player) became closer and closer and morphed into a contractual relationship between the stars and their own musicians. Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩, “Wo zenyang xuehui le yan Jingxi” 我怎樣學會了演京戲 (How I learned to perform *Jingju*; 1953), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, 6: 245, explains how when he would travel to Shanghai he would only need to take his *qinshi*, while on tour elsewhere he would take an orchestra (*changmian* 場面) of seven members, while a *wusheng* performer would be sure to take his own master drummer. He explains this as necessitated by the development of private repertoires. Stars might also have their own prop men, costume, and headgear managers, such as was the case with Yang Xiaolou. See Su Yi, *Jingju erbai nian gaiguan*, p. 260.

²³⁶ Beijing theaters and troupes were prohibited from being run by the same people. The guarantees filed by the troupes contained explicit language about this. See Qi Rushan, *Xiban*, p. 59b (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 1: 260). In Shanghai, the early practice of troupes having long-term associations with specific theaters changed to theaters having their own troupes, the first of which opened in 1891. See Zhao Shanlin et al., *Jindai Shanghai xiqu xinian chubian*, p. 132.

²³⁷ See Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, pp. 44-45 and Yeh, “Where is the Center of Cultural Production,” p. 92.

²³⁸ The date of the founding of Tan’s troupe is commonly given as 1895 and sometimes as 1884, but Dai Yun, “Liyuan ge ban huaming ce de shiliao jiazhi,” p. 307, has shown that the official registration of the troupe was in 1887. This was also the date given for the formation of the troupe by Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Liushi nian lai Jingju shicai mopian*, p. 125.

²³⁹ See Chen Moxiang, *Guanju shenghuo sumiao*, part two, in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, p. 388, and Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, pp. 117-18.

²⁴⁰ Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 38, notes that for a 1917 performance, Mei Lanfang got 80 *yuan* but the lowest paid actor got .60 *yuan*.

²⁴¹ Xu Chengbei, *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 483, says that by the 1920s, the star would get to pocket more than three quarters of the proceeds from the money his troupe got from a performance.

possible.²⁴² As competition increased, stars and troupes did their best to differentiate themselves from other actors and troupes.²⁴³

Jingzhong Miao was the actors' guild only for Beijing. Tianjin did not have a comparable guild until 1903.²⁴⁴ Shanghai did not see the establishment of an actors' organization until 1912, the same year that the old actors' guild in Beijing and its relationship with the state became a thing of the past and a new organization, encompassing both *Jingju* and *bangzi* actors, Zhengyue Yuhua Hui 正樂育化會 (Society for the rectification of music and the spread of [moral] education and transformation), was established.²⁴⁵ It put more emphasis on education, holding lectures, and establishing an elementary school to increase literacy in the theater world. It did not last more than ten years. In 1923, several famous *Jingju* actors established a new organization exclusively for *Jingju* personnel, Liyuan Gongyi Zonghui 梨園公益總會 (The general committee for the welfare of actors), which later changed its name to Jingju Gonghui 京劇公會 (*Jingju* guild association).²⁴⁶ These were all private associations, whose main activities were concerned with looking after and improving the lot of actors, the legal functions of the old guild having been taken over by the police.²⁴⁷

The Shanghai Lingjie Lianhe Hui 上海伶界聯合會 (Shanghai association of actors), established in 1912, was organized by reformers such as the Xia brothers of Xin Wutai. It eventually

²⁴² Depending on the contracts an actor signed, he could belong to more than one troupe. See Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 36-37.

²⁴³ Xu Chengbei, *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 102, distinguishes between earlier troupe leaders such as Tan Xinpei and Yang Xiaolou, on the one hand, and Mei Lanfang and the other "four great male performers of female roles," on the other, with the former being more conservative than the latter. The "star system" (*ju'er zhi* 角兒制) has both been criticised as a cause of some of the problematic features of *Jingju* in the Republican period and as a possible way out of the problems *Jingju* faces today. One problem was that few of the new troupes could have more than one star in them (the troupe run by Mei Lanfang and Yang Xiaolou, for instance didn't last long after it became apparent that they were no longer equal in drawing power). On the imbalances that the star system created in the plays produced for the stars, see Zhang Xiaocang 張肖倉 (1890-1978), "Pihuang de jianglai" 皮黃的將來 (The future of *Jingju*), *Yitan* 3 (2004): 16-18 (this article was originally published in 1935), and Wei Ming 衛明, "Erbai nian de qishi" 二百年的啟示 (Lessons from the last two hundred years), in *Zhengqu Jingju yishu de xin fanrong* p. 272. On the proposal to revive the star system today as one of the solutions to *Jingju*'s problems, see Cui Changwu, ed., *Jingju xianzhuang yanjiu*, pp. 147-48.

²⁴⁴ Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 69.

²⁴⁵ The Shanghai Zhengyue Yuhua Hui was established June 18, 1912. A similar organization was established in Tianjin the same year (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, pp. 3 and 6) and in Jilin Province the following year (Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 10). The first such organization established with Chinese Communist Party (CCP) support was the Liyuan Gonghui 梨園工會 (Theatrical workers' union) of Ganxian in Jiangxi in 1926 (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 96).

²⁴⁶ Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, pp. 66-68. According to Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 1928, Zhengyue Yuhua Hui did not go out of existence until 1928. Another change in the Republican period is that the government ordered that all troupes whose names ended in the word *ban* to change that word to *she* 社. The reasons for the change were to distinguish the troupes from organizations of prostitutes that used the word *ban*, and to express the general idea that a new regime was in place. See *ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁴⁷ There seems to have been an organization composed only of *jing* (painted-face roles) actors. See Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 98.

had its own publication, *Liyuan gongbao* 梨園公報 (Theater bulletin).²⁴⁸ Like the Republican era institutions in Beijing mentioned above, the primary emphasis was on the welfare of actors. They organized charity performances and their goals included establishing a free school for actors, a retirement home for older or indigent actors, a communal burial plot for those who could not otherwise afford burial, a research organization, and a lecture series.²⁴⁹ Members were tithed a certain percentage of their income and over seven hundred members turned out to vote in the preliminary election to select the officers of the association in 1924.²⁵⁰ Besides charitable work, the association also ruled on the conduct of actors,²⁵¹ but doesn't seem to have played a role in the settling of the strike of 1947²⁵² or to have been able to challenge the influence of the underworld in the Shanghai entertainment industry.²⁵³

One of the major changes in *Jingju*, beginning in the late Qing and coming into fruition in the twentieth century, was the re-emergence of the public actress with the development of all-female troupes and mixed male and female troupes. Actresses had been fundamental in Yuan public theater and Ming private theater, but the Qing banned female prostitution, hereditary female performers (*nüyue* 女樂), and public performances by women with men.²⁵⁴ These prohibitions were carried out

²⁴⁸ Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 625-718, contains material selected from the years it was published, 1928-1931. See particularly the September 5, 1928, *Shenbao* article, “*Liyuan gongbao* diyi qi jinyue chuban” 梨園公報第一期今月出版 (The first issue of Theater bulletin appears this month), in *ibid.*, p. 389.

²⁴⁹ See the May 7, 1921, *Shenbao* item, Yeli 野驢, “Shanghai lingjie lianhe hui diyi ci baban da huichuan (shang)” 上海伶界聯合會第一次八班大會串 (上) (The first eight-troupe grand combined performance organized by the Shanghai lingjie lianhe hui), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 199. The goal was to raise 100,000 *yuan* through the performance mentioned in the title of the piece.

²⁵⁰ See the April 18, 1924, *Shenbao* item, “Lingjie hui zuo juxing zhiyuan chuxuan” 伶界會昨舉行職員初選 (Actors' association holds preliminary election for officers yesterday), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 289. Of the twenty-four persons receiving votes, Xia Yuerun 夏月潤 (1878-1931) received the most with 746.

²⁵¹ The March 8, 1924, *Shenbao* item, Meihuaguan zhu 梅花館主, “Jubu yaowen” 菊不要聞 (Concise news of the theater), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 278-29, reports on the business conducted at a meeting of the entire association, which included a decision to prohibit one actor from performing in Shanghai because of conduct demeaning to the honor of himself and actors as a group, and a report of the settlement of a dispute that arose over the issue of who would get top billing. The punished actor was Xu Biyun 徐碧雲 (1904-1967). Xu got involved in a morals case (*fengliu an* 風流案) in Beijing that led to his incarceration. The association ruled that because of this no Shanghai theater should invite him to perform, but this decision was not successful in either keeping theaters from inviting him or from playgoers going to see him perform (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, pp. 78-79).

²⁵² The strike was called by the supporting personnel (*bandi* 班底) of five theaters because their monthly wages had been badly cut. The strikers had to pay a small fine for going on strike but did get a slight raise in salary. For reports on the strike see the October 5 and October 7, 1947, *Shenbao* items, “Wu Pingju yuan yin bandi bagong tingyan” 五平劇院因班底罷工停演 (Five *Jingju* theaters forced to close by strike of supporting personnel) and “Bandi daiyu, zhishu jixin” 班底待遇指數計薪 (As for the treatment of the supporting personnel, it is fixed according to salary), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 606-608.

²⁵³ Chang Chunheng 常春恆, who was a big draw and tried to switch theaters was shot on January 27, 1928 and died three days later. See Han Xibai, “*Jingju* yu Shanghai banghui,” pp. 77-78 and Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 26.

²⁵⁴ On these prohibitions, see Wu Cuncun and Mark Stevenson, “Speaking of Flowers: Theatre, Public Culture, and Homoerotic Writing in Nineteenth-Century Beijing,” p. 123 n. 3.

most completely in Beijing, where there were pretty successful with regard to the last two. Troupes and theaters had strict rules against women even going backstage.²⁵⁵

Although there were prohibitions against having private opera troupes in the Qing, wealthy households did teach women to perform opera, or bought women who already knew how. But real troupes of actresses did not begin to appear in the Qing until the last half of the nineteenth century. These troupes were known at first as *mao'er ban* 毛/髦/貓兒班 (the first *mao'er* as in Li Mao'er 李毛兒, the second as in “hair,” the third as in “kitten”),²⁵⁶ and later also as *kunban* 坤班 (female troupes). These troupes appeared first in Shanghai, where they first performed for private performances but then began to also perform in teahouse theaters.²⁵⁷ The first theater in Shanghai to specialize in putting on all-female troupe performances was opened in 1894.²⁵⁸ Opening two years later, more famous and of longer duration, was the Qunxian Chayuan 群仙茶園 (Gathered immortals

²⁵⁵ See Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 75. Luo Suwen, “Gender on Stage: Actresses in an Actors’ World (1895-1930),” in Byrna Goodman and Wendy Larson, eds. *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial China* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 83, recounts an anecdote about Yu Sansheng’s wife going backstage and being punished by being forced to drink wine.

²⁵⁶ Li Mao’er was a second-rate *chou* actor who decided to train women to sing *Jingju* and started to have them perform for private performances in 1874. See the April 23, 1929, *Liyuan gongbao* item, Soushi 嗽石 (Sun Yusheng), “Haishang bai mingling—Li Mao’er” 上海百名伶—李毛兒 (One hundred famous Shanghai actors—Li Mao’er), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 656. Lu Eting 陸萼庭, *Qingdai xiqu yu Kunju* 清代戲曲與崑劇 (Qing dynasty drama and Kunqu; Taipei: Guojia chuban she, 2005), “Mao (mao) er xi xiaokao” 貓(髦)兒戲小考 (A brief look into all-female troupes), pp. 333-34, rejects the Li Mao’er origin story. According to Ye Xiaoqing, *The Dianshi zhai Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2003), p. 63, calling the troupes “kitten” troupes was supposed to refer to the way that their singing sounded like kitten mewing. “Kitten” plays (*mao'er xi* 貓兒戲) originally referred to having very young girls perform plays. There is a poem by Yao Xie (1805-1864) on “kitten” plays that glosses the term to mean “when 6-7 year-old young girls perform plays” 謂六、七齡女童演劇者. For the poem and the gloss, see Zhao Shanlin, ed., *Lidai yongju shige xuanzhu*, p. 509. Lu Eting, *Qingdai xiqu yu Kunju*, pp. 334-35, dates this poem to 1837; on pp. 335-36 she comes to the conclusion that “kitten” plays had been performed from 1820-1870 with very young girls but then switched to using young women, and on pp. 333-34, explains the term *mao'er ban* (lit.: hairy troupe) as referring to short hair on the forehead as well as punning with *shimao* 時髦 (fashionable). The alternate orthographies for *mao'er* and the multiple origin stories speak to the complicated and not well documented nature of the tradition. Public actresses were preceded by courtesans performing in storytelling halls and teahouses in the 1870s. See Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, p. 102. Gong Hede 龔和德, “Kunban xiaozhi” 坤班小識 (A short note on all-female troupes), *Zhonghua xiqu* 2006.2: 329-33, p. 330, presents another idea yet, that “mao” comes from *mao'er xi* 帽兒戲 (a.k.a., *mao'er pai* 帽兒排), a simplified style of performance or rehearsal used in the palace by eunuch actors.

²⁵⁷ Chen Boxi, *Shanghai yishi faguan*, “Shanghai mao'er xi zhi yuanshi” 上海髦兒戲之原始 (The beginning of all-female troupes in Shanghai), p. 485, agrees with the idea that Li Mao’er’s was the first troupe (see above), but claims they were so bad that they could only perform for private performances. The main complaint is that the actresses could not clearly distinguish the various role-types.

²⁵⁸ This was the Meixian Chayuan 美仙茶園 (Beautiful immortal teagarden). See Zhao Shanlin et al., *Jindai Shanghai xiqu xinian chubian*, p. 138. See also *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Shanghai juan*, pp. 636-37. Qiu Guoming 邱國明, “Shanghai ‘mao'er xi’ chutan” 上海‘髦兒戲’初探 (A preliminary investigation of *mao'er* troupes), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju biaoyan lilun tixi jiangou*, pp. 1077-92, after noting that this is the common opinion (p. 1081), goes on to argue that the theater did not open until 1899 (pp. 1083-84).

teagarden).²⁵⁹ After it closed in 1916, the all-female troupes only performed publicly in the entertainment centers.²⁶⁰

Although one story of the origin of the all-female troupes credits a man, Li Mao'er 李毛兒, for coming up with the idea, other versions would have him either share credit with a brothel madam²⁶¹ or have his reportedly untalented troupe soon surpassed by that organized by a madam.²⁶² In any case there was (and had been for a long time) a persistent connection between actresses and prostitution; actresses were generally assumed to also be prostitutes or just as bad as them.²⁶³ Of course, when it was found that there was money to be had from putting women on the stage, brothels certainly began to train their girls to perform plays,²⁶⁴ and already famous courtesans began to appear on stage for the same reason.²⁶⁵ Public performances by actresses were banned from time to time in the different legal regimes that made up Shanghai before the Republic, with the excuse that they were a threat to morality.²⁶⁶

The Shanghai all-female troupes did not originally have much influence on Beijing. When Mei Lanfang made his first performance trip to Shanghai in 1913, he did not understand the term *mao'er*

²⁵⁹ See *Zhongguo xiqu zhi: Shanghai juan*, pp. 636-37.

²⁶⁰ See Lu Eting, *Qingdai xiqu yu Kunju*, p. 334.

²⁶¹ See, for instance, Sun Yusheng 孫玉聲, “Sanshi nian lai lingjie zhi nashou xi—Li Mao'er zhi Songnian yanli” 三十年來伶界之拿手戲—李毛兒之送年演禮 (The most famous plays of actors from the last thirty years—Li Mao'er's Seeing off the Old Year and Doing the Rites), *Tuhua ribao*, 5: 572 (issue 248).

²⁶² Chen Boxi, *Shanghai yishi daguan*, “Shanghai mao'er xi zhi yuanshi,” p. 485.

²⁶³ For what is probably a Kangxi era record of a law that equates actresses and prostitutes, see Wang Liqi, ed., *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao*, “Jin zhi xinü jin cheng” 禁止戲女進城 (Prohibition against actresses entering the city), p. 29. Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 176, after claiming that male actors take care not to over-indulge in sex because it hurts the quality of the sound of one's voice, goes on to claim that actresses are as wanton as prostitutes. Among the photos printed in the first edition of *Xikao*, there is one of a Cheng Yuhong 程玉紅, who is labeled as a courtesan (*nü jiaoshu* 女校書) who performs (*kechuan* 客串) proper female roles (*qingyi* 青衣). See *Xikao*, 11: 169 (originally appeared in the photo section of installment 29). Muiyou sheng, *Shanghai liyuan zazhi*, “Mao'er xi gailiang zhi nan” 髦兒戲改良之難 (The difficulty in reforming all-actress troupes), p. 5/7, lists three reasons for the difficulty: (1) actresses are also prostitutes and thus have no time to rehearse plays, (2) since they are mostly illiterate they don't have the knowledge needed to rehearse plays, and (3) as soon as they get famous they marry or get bogged down with “vulgar affairs” (*suwu* 俗務). In 1929, the Xiju Ye Gailiang Yanjiu Suo 戲劇業改良研究所 (Institute for the reform of the profession of theater) felt the need to publish a document, “Gao nü yanyuan shu” 告女演員書 (A letter to actresses) exhorting actresses to swear off assignations with clients (*chuju* 出局). See Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 116.

²⁶⁴ For a late Qing report on this, see “Shanghai shehui zhi xianxiang—Jiyuan jiao quji yanxi zhi canku” 上海社會之現象—妓院教雛姬演戲之殘酷 (Social phenomena of Shanghai—The ruthlessness of the teaching in brothels of young girls to perform plays), *Tuhua ribao*, 3: 283 (issue 124).

²⁶⁵ In the description of the performance by the famous courtesan Lin Daiyu 林黛玉 (1864-1924) at the Qunxian Chayuan in Sun Yuting, *Haishang fanhua meng*, p. 10.799 (third part of original novel), it is said that “from below the stage the silver dollar tips fell down like rain, with packet after packet being thrown up onto the stage” 臺下邊賞洋如雨，一封一封的擲將上去。In turn, “Shanghai quyuan zhi xianxiang (ershi er)” 上海曲院之現象 (二十二) (Phenomena in the singing houses [no. 22]), *Tuhua ribao*, 6: 7 (issue 251), says “The courtesans in Shanghai, after Lin Daiyu and Hua Sibao [花四寶] and the like were able to earn huge amounts of money each month by acting, all rushed to learn how to act” 滬妓自林黛玉花四寶等，以唱戲月得包銀甚鉅後，紛紛皆學串戲。

²⁶⁶ See, for instance, the January 27, 1890, *Shenbao* item, “Ying zujie yu jin nüling” 英租界論禁女伶 (The English Concession issues a proclamation banning actresses), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 25.

xi.²⁶⁷ In Beijing, instead of first appearing in public as part of all-female troupes, actresses first appeared on the public stage in combined male-female performances. Just before that happened, there had been an experiment in Shanghai with the presenting of programs in which some of the plays were acted by female actors and some by male actors but none with both that does not seem to have had much immediate influence in Shanghai, let alone Beijing.²⁶⁸ The first public mixed-sex performances of *Jingju* in Beijing were put on in 1912 by a troupe led by Yu Zhengting 俞振庭 (1879-1939) and featured an actress brought in from Tianjin.²⁶⁹ These performances were a big hit,²⁷⁰ but only

²⁶⁷ See Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 1: 142. However, according to Cheng Weikun, “Women in Public Spaces: Theater, Modernity, Actresses in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing,” female actresses had been performing for private functions in Beijing since as early as the 1870s, and according to Luo Suwen, “Gender on Stage: Actresses in an Actors’ World (1895-1930),” p. 79, there were mixed sex performances of a local form of opera (*huagu xi* 花鼓戲) in the 1870s. Zhao Shanlin et al., *Jindai Shanghai xiqu xinian chubian*, pp. 142-43, records that a Cantonese troupe mounted mixed-sex performances in 1896 in the International Concession in Shanghai. There was a request that the performances be prohibited, but they were allowed to go on for two months so that the actors and actresses could earn enough money to return to Guangdong. According to this same book, in 1909 a Shanghai all-female *Jingju* troupe was able to successfully morph into a mixed-sex troupe.

²⁶⁸ See the January 20, 1929, *Liyuan gongbao* piece, Soushi 漱石 (Sun Yusheng 孫玉聲), “Shanghai zhi nannü heyuan” 上海之男女合演 (Mixed sex performance in Shanghai), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, 635-36, which also claims that mixed sex public performances occurred first in Manchuria and then in Tianjin, but that Shanghai was “restrained by old Confucianism” (*shou jiu lijiao jushu* 受舊禮教拘束), and while foreigners and Japanese were allowed to put on mixed sex performances, the Chinese alone were not. A March 18, 1889, item in *Shenbao*, “Guanju xiaoji” 觀劇小記 (A brief record of play-going), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 23-24, describes how performances in the Dangu Theater would be split between a first half featuring four or five *Jingju* or *Kunqu zhezi xi* (highlight extracts) followed by western plays interspersed with mixed-sex dancing on the stage, with the western theatricals featuring a western actress whose name is romanized as Gela 閣臘. Xu Yali 徐雅麗, “Shenyang zaoqi Jingju piaoshe zhilitie” 瀋陽早期京劇票舍志略 (A brief record of amateur *Jingju* clubs early on in Shenyang), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1995.6: 18-19, records that in 1906 officials in Shenyang began to allow women to publicly take the stage and within eight years, over two hundred different actresses took the stage and performed.

²⁶⁹ See Liu Songkun, *Liyuan yiwen*, p. 4 and Weikun Cheng, “The Challenge of the Actresses: Female Performers and the Cultural Alternatives in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing and Tianjin,” *Modern China* 22.2 (April 1996): 192-233, p. 203. While it has been claimed that Yu Zhengting first included actresses in his troupe in performances in Tianqiao (see Dong, *Republican Beijing*, p. 181), the earliest play program with both male and female actors included in Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Wushi nian lai Beiping xiju shicai Houbian*, is one by Yu Zhengting’s troupe (p. 571, item 17) at Guanghe lou from May 22, 1912 (Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, pp. 2-3, also lists this date as the first of his mixed-sex performances [it is most likely the case that Zhou did not include programs performed at Tianqiao]). The names of twenty different actors are listed, with five of them marked as female. Two of the twelve plays on the program feature both female and male actors. Tianjin, like Shanghai but unlike Beijing, had foreign concessions and it was there that actresses first began to perform in public, around 1886. Mixed troupes began to perform openly there not long after 1900 and there were attempts to control them in 1903-1905 that came to nothing with the fall of the dynasty, when Tianjin became well known for its mixed-sex performances. See Cheng, “The Challenge of the Actresses,” pp. 203 and 219-20. Tianjin actresses of the period differed from southern actresses in that they typically performed both *Jingju* and *bangzi* opera and might actually be better known as performers of the latter. See Xingshi 醒石, “Shinian qian Pingshi kunling timing lu” 十年前平市坤伶題名錄 (A register of the names of actresses of Beijing for the last ten years), *Xiju xuekan* 2.11 (July 1930), reproduced in *Su wenxue congkan*, 16: 363-77, which gives names and information for 193 actresses, 97 of which are identified as specializing in *Qinqiang* (here = *bangzi*), and Ma Longwen 馬龍文 and Mao Dazhi 毛達志, *Hebei bangzi jianshi* 河北梆子簡史 (A brief history of Hebei *bangzi* opera; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1982), “Nü yanyuan de chansheng ji kunban de chuxian” 女演員的

lasted about year before they were prohibited,²⁷¹ reportedly at the instigation of other male actors who were losing their audiences in the competition with the actresses.²⁷² According to Qi Rushan, the expectation of the male actors was that there were just not enough actresses to mount all-female troupes and that the actresses would be thus forced from the stage entirely.²⁷³ They were wrong on that count. Qi Rushan claims that in the middle of the teens, among the all-male troupes, only Mei Lanfang's was able to compete with the all-female troupes in Beijing, but by the middle of the next decade the popularity of those same all-female troupes began to decline.²⁷⁴ It was not until around 1930 that mixed sex troupes were allowed to perform in Beijing again.²⁷⁵ During those same years in Shanghai, it was typically only in the French Concession that mixed-sex troupes were allowed to perform in public. Although the main reason for restricting women from performing onstage was always to protect public morals, there was also the contradictory idea that the presence on stage of women prevented male actors from taking the kind of liberties in speech and movement that they supposedly had no discomfort with when there were only men onstage (and in the audience).²⁷⁶

For most of the period in which mixed-sex troupes were outlawed in Beijing during the Republic, the all-female troupes performed in the entertainment centers and spectators paid less to see them perform than for the all-male troupes. The performance style of the all-female troupes tended to be more vernacular than the men's troupes. Both of these factors, lower ticket prices and more popular subject matter and presentation, made women's troupes popular among commoners in Beijing.²⁷⁷ It was only toward the end of this period that the general attitude that women "could not

產生及坤班的出現 (The birth of actresses and the appearance of female troupes), pp. 55-60. In Shanghai, all-female troupes mostly sang *Jingju*, with some *bangzi* and *Huidiao*. See Lu Eting, *Qingdai xiqu yu Kunju*, pp. 331-32.

²⁷⁰ According to Tang Botao, *Fuliancheng sanshi nian shi*, p. 224, even Fuliancheng, very conservative when it came to allowing women into the theater in which they gave performances (see below), went to hire actresses from Tianjin and Shanghai. Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Wushi nian lai Beiping xiju shicai Houbian*, p. 572, item 18, is a mixed-sex performance by Fuliancheng in 1912.

²⁷¹ The order re-prohibiting mixed-sex performances in Beijing was promulgated on January 1, 1913 (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 9).

²⁷² It is also easy to find items in the Beijing newspapers of the time that are opposed to the idea of allowing men and women to perform on stage. See, for instance, the 1912 *Qianshuo huabao* item, "Yu Zhenting jisheng xiude" 俞振庭幾生修得 (Over how many generations did Yu Zhenting build up his good luck?), reproduced in *Qingmo Mingchu baokan tuhua jicheng xubian*, p. 1996, whose author claims to have heard that all the actresses sleep with Yu and requests that "those in charge of local administration should carefully check it out" 有地方之責者, 仔細調查.

²⁷³ See Qi Rushan, *Jingju zhi bianqian*, pp. 48b-49a (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 2: 908-909).

²⁷⁴ Qi Rushan, *Jingju zhi bianqian*, pp. 48b-49a (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 2: 908-909). Regulations against males and females performing together and watching plays together were rescinded in Yunnan as early as 1916 (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 25).

²⁷⁵ It is common to date the repeal of the prohibition to 1930 or 1931, but Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 215, declares that Yang Xiaolou got permission to stage a mixed sex performance in 1928. In Zhou Mingtai, ed., *Wushi nian lai Beiping xiju shicai houbian*, the next mention of mixed-sex performances after the ban (see note on p. 577 to item 31) in Beijing is not until 1930 (p. 947, item 1098). The one intervening 1923 mixed-sex performance (p. 798, item 667), took place in Tianjin.

²⁷⁶ See Huang Yufu 黃育馥, *Jingju, qiao he Zhongguo de xingbie guanxi (1902-1937)* 京劇, 蹺和中國的性別關係 (*Jingju*, [boundfoot imitating] stilts, and Chinese sexual relations [1902-1937]; Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1998), p. 122.

²⁷⁷ Cheng, "The Challenge of the Actresses," p. 216.

act” began to change.²⁷⁸ The popularity of actresses when they first took to the public stages was generally explained as a matter of novelty and sex. Actresses, many of whom had been, continued to be, or who would return to being, prostitutes, were seen as primarily sexual objects who were almost by definition sexually available (male actors were now somewhat, even if not completely, protected from that fate by the outlawing of the male prostitution industry of actors of the *xianggong tangzi* in 1912). Many actresses became the trophy wives of powerful males who then insisted that they stop or severely restrict their public acting careers.²⁷⁹ The majority opinion at the time was that when it came

²⁷⁸ In 1934, for instance, the actress Zhang E'yun 章遏雲 (1912-2003) organized her own troupe and invited Mei Lanfang to perform with her. See A. C. Scott, *Mei Lanfang: Leader of the Pear Garden* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1959), p. 114. In 1931, *Xiju yuekan*, which already had published special issues devoted to Mei Lanfang, Shang Xiaoyun, and Cheng Yanqiu (volume 1, issue 6 [December 1928]; volume 1, issue 8 [February 1929]; and volume 3, issue 2 [November 1930], respectively), devoted a special issue (volume 3, issue 5 [February 1931]) to an actress, Xin Yanqiu 新艷秋 (1910-2008), even though it was appended to an issue devoted to Yang Xiaolou and the editor praised her for being able to imitate Cheng Yanqiu while at the same time noting that as a “girl” (*nü hai'er jia* 女孩兒家) she didn't have enough strength (*qili* 氣力) to do the job properly. For those comments see the editor's comments prefacing the issue (*Juantou yu* 卷頭語), reproduced in *Su wenxue congkan*, 19: 284. Comparing the special issues for Xin Yanqiu and the male actors so honored before her in this publication, hers contains far more poetry written about her. She did get almost twice as many votes as anyone else in a newspaper competition held in June 1930. See Zhang Kai 張開, “Beiping jubu dashi ji” 北平菊部大事記 (Record of important events in the Beijing theatrical world), item 79, *Xiju yuekan* 3.1 (October 1930), reproduced in *Su wenxue congkan*, 17: 508. The idea that the physiology of the female body makes things difficult for actresses persists even today. For a maxim that argues that menstruation has to be handled carefully to avoid damage to the throat and voice, see Yang Fei 楊飛, *Liyuan yanjue jiyao* 梨園諺訣輯要 (Selective collection of maxims and sayings about theater; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 2002), pp. 149 and 152. For a summary of the resistance to the idea that actresses could represent more than sex, see Xu Muyun 徐慕雲, *Zhongguo xiju shi* 中國戲劇史 (History of Chinese theater; Shanghai guji, 2001; originally published 1938), p. 202. For Xu, things began to change with the appearance and rise to stardom of Xue Yanqin 雪艷琴 (1906-1986).

²⁷⁹ See, for instance, Huang Shang, *Jiuxi xintan*, “Shiwan chunhua ru meng li” 十萬春花如夢裡 (One hundred thousand spring flowers as if in a dream), pp. 13-15, who, writing in the late forties on the history of *Jingju* actresses, says “This truly is the tragedy of the world of *Jingju* in China, there is not a single actress whose stage career extends beyond ten years” 這真是中國京戲界的悲哀。沒有一個能有十年以上壽命的女伶。He blames this on men whom he characterizes as sex-crazed (*seqing kuang* 色情狂). Liu Naichong 劉乃崇, “Mantan Jingju kunling” 漫談京劇坤伶 (A leisurely talk on *Jingju* actresses), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1995.4: 9-11 (part 1), 1995.5: 38-40 (part 2), gives many examples of actresses marrying and quitting the stage no sooner than they begin to become famous, including Mei Lanfang's wife, Fu Zhifang (part 2, p. 38). Zucker, *The Chinese Theater*, p. 137, recounts a “remarkable” wedding of an actress to the son of a high official that is remarkable because although she stopped acting after her marriage, she “acted several plays on her wedding day” and married the man as first wife rather than concubine. Zucker says her becoming the main wife is remarkable “for that an actress becomes the concubine of a rich official is almost an everyday occurrence in Peking.” In her first volume of reminiscences, *Xin Fengxia huiyi lu* 新鳳霞回憶錄 (Xin Fengxia's memoirs; Tianjin: Baihua wenyi, 1980; translated by Gladys Yang, *Reminiscences* [Beijing: Panda Books, 1981]), describing conditions in the forties and in a slightly lower theatrical world than *Jingju* tended to be, the famous *pingju* actress Xin Fengxia 新鳳霞 (1932-1998) recounted the story of a fellow actress who had to keep her marriage to her lover a secret since she knows that if the audience becomes aware that she is no longer sexually available (even if only theoretically) that would kill her career, as indeed happens when the truth comes out (see the section entitled “Dixia fuqi” 地下夫妻 [Secret man and wife], pp. 162-66; *Reminiscences*, pp. 104-108). She also describes an actress who becomes so worn out by the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood that she ages quickly and can no longer act lead roles (*Xin Fengxia huiyi lu*, p. 168; *Reminiscences*, p. 118). The former story is featured in the play and film made from Xin Fengxia's reminiscences by her husband, Wu Zuguang 吳祖光, under the title *Chuang jianghu* 闖江湖 (lit.: Making one's way on the rivers and lakes). For background on the rather tortured

to actresses, they did nothing really worth listening to, it was all visual entertainment.²⁸⁰ Even after the sight of actresses on public stages became common, there was still resistance or even taboos against them performing certain important roles such as that of Guan Yu.²⁸¹

The all-female troupes that were quite important during the period in which there were legal prohibitions against mixed sex performances had to find actresses who could play not only female characters but male characters as well. As we have seen above, the notion that women would not be able to do that successfully was supposedly part of the plan on the part of male actors to eliminate competition from actresses altogether by reinstating prohibitions against mixed-sex troupes in the early Republican period in Beijing. Contrary to those males' expectations, the all-female troupes gradually became able to mount plays with important male roles in them, with many actresses specializing in performing male roles and some even becoming famous for doing that (Meng Xiaodong, the *laosheng* actress whose marriage to Mei Lanfang was mentioned in the introduction to the book, would be a good example of this²⁸²), while even women who primarily performed female roles could often perform male roles as well.²⁸³ This last phenomenon was typically seen as a lack,

relationship between traditional male literati and actresses, see Li Zhenlin 厲震林, "Lun nanxing wenshi duidai nüxing youling de shuangchong renge" 論男性文士對待女性優伶的雙重人格 (On the split personality of the treatment of female actresses by male literati), *Xiqu yanjiu* 72 (2007): 188-202. Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, pp. 109-110 ff., effectively uses the concept of "the body problem" (borrowed from Faye Dudden, *Women in the American Theater: Actresses and Audiences, 1790-1870* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994]) to discuss some of the differences in social status and perception of actresses and male performers of female roles in the Republican period. On the associations of actresses and prostitutes in modern Western culture and the importance of acting to both, see Kirsten Pullen, *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁸⁰ On actresses and the shift from the aural toward the visual in the consumption of *Jingju* in Beijing, see Xu Chengbei, *Mei Lanfang yu ershi shiji*, p. 165.

²⁸¹ Li Yuanhao, "Ting dao Taiwan lishi de shengyin," p. 235, notes the absence of any recordings of women playing Guan Yu in *Da xikao* and argues that the recording of a Taiwan actress playing Guan Yu was the first. According to George Kin Leung (Liang Sheqian 梁社乾), "The Chinese Actress: The Woman who Rivals on the Stage the 'Tan' or Female Impersonator," *Asia* 27.12 (December 1927): 1028-34, 1040-42, p. 1034, Lin Shusen 林樹森 (1897-1947), otherwise willing enough to act on stage with women, will not do so when he is acting the part of Guan Yu. Gu Shuguang 谷曙光, "Minguo wunian Beijing Jingju tan yanchu zhuangkuang fenxi—Yi 'Yanchang ximu cishu diaocha biao' wei zhongxin" 民國五年北京京劇壇演出狀況分析—以'演唱戲目次數調查表'為中心 (Analysis of the situation concerning performances in *Jingju* in 1916 in Beijing—Taking the "Survey of the Frequency of the Performance of Plays" as a focus), *Xiqu yishu* 2009.1: 72-75 and the corresponding section in his *Liyuan wenxian yu youling yanju—Jingju Kunqu wenxian shiliao kaolun*, pp. 94-103, looks at a very unusual lithographed but not published survey that covers the months of March through December of 1916 that seems to have been done by the Ministry of Education. What makes the survey unique is that it indicates which plays were performed by male and which by female troupes and the number of times individual plays were performed, which allows Gu to draw some conclusions about differences between the repertoires of the two kinds of troupes.

²⁸² According to Li Lingling 李伶伶, *Mei Lanfang quanzhuan* 梅蘭芳全傳 (A complete biography of Mei Lanfang; Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian, 2001), p. 316, Meng Xiaodong was being given top billing over Ma Lianliang and Xun Huisheng.

²⁸³ In fact, according to Luo Suwen, "Gender on Stage: Actresses in an Actors' World (1895-1930)," p. 90, because at the time male character roles were considered more prestigious, many actresses focused on such roles. Chen Fang, *Qingdai xiqu yanjiu wuti*, "Fubiao yi—Qingmo Shanghai zhi zhongyao Jingju kunling ji qi shanchang jumu" 附表一—清末上海之重要京劇坤伶及其擅場劇目 (Appended chart one—Important actresses of the late Qing Shanghai and their signature plays), pp. 217-19, gives information on twenty-six actresses. Almost 54% of them specialized in *sheng* roles while only about 40% specialized in *dan* roles. The cross-dressing these actresses did to perform male roles onstage often continued offstage. See,

since it differed from the kind of role-type specialization generally expected of male actors of the Beijing tradition. This looser attitude towards the traditional role-types was generally seen as a serious defect of the all-female troupes and of actresses in general.²⁸⁴ All-female troupes often had to skimp when it came to putting on large, complex plays, not offering martial plays at all in the beginning and cutting corners when they did get around to mounting them,²⁸⁵ and had special conventions to help women play roles particularly perceived as macho, such as *jing* roles.²⁸⁶

After mixed sex troupes became the rule, the idea that it was “natural” for men to act male parts and women to act female parts gained more and more social currency, even if the actresses acting female parts were generally expected to base their performances on the models of male predecessors.²⁸⁷ Today, except for comic female roles, where dressing a man up as a woman is for comic effect, it is more common to see actresses cross-dressing to play male parts than it is to see the opposite, despite the recent resurgence in interest in male performers of female roles.²⁸⁸

for instance, the photo of Qin Qiufang 琴秋芳 in male dress among the photos in the front of *Xiju yuekan* 1.7 (January 1929), reproduced in *Su wenxue congkan*, 8: 204.

²⁸⁴ Of the twenty-six actresses included in Chen Fang, *Qingdai xiqu yanjiu wuti*, “Fubiao yi—Qingmo Shanghai zhi zhongyao Jingju kunling ji qi shanchang jumu,” pp. 217-19, four are listed as specializing in more than one role-type. Shanghai-style *Jingju* was also criticized for this kind of “disrespect” for tradition.

²⁸⁵ Zhao Shanlin et al., *Jindai Shanghai xiqu xinian chubian*, p. 153, dates the first appearance of the performance of martial plays by an all-female troupe to 1899. Qi Rushan, *Jingju zhi bianqian*, pp. 48b-49a (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 2: 908-909), notes that all-female troupes of the Republican period would cut down on the number of actors ordinarily used to perform a play, giving the example of instead of providing Cao Cao eight generals, only giving him two or four.

²⁸⁶ According to Lu Eting, *Qingdai xiqu yu Kunju*, pp. 331-32, the *Kunqu* all-female troupes of the late Qing continued traditions developed in the Ming and earlier in the Qing for female representation of men. Actresses did not paint their faces for *jing* roles, for instance. Actresses also had to develop strategies to play roles that involved stripping to the waist. One late Qing actress, Zhou Chu 周處, was offered a substantial amount of money to perform Yuchi Gong 尉遲恭 in the play *Yu guoyuan* 御果園 (The imperial fruit orchard; not in *Xikao*), in which Yuchi Gong bares his breast. She played the role but covered her breasts with her false beard. See Xu Ke, comp., *Qingbai leichao*, “Zhou Chu yan Yu guoyuan” 周處演御果園 (Zhou Chu performs *Yu guoyuan*), p. 5145. This anecdote is mentioned in Chou Hui-ling (周慧玲), “Striking Their Own Poses: The History of Cross-Dressing on the Chinese Stage,” *The Drama Review* 41.2 (1997): 130-52, p. 139 (where, however, Yuchi Gong’s name is transliterated as Yu Chigong). This article has a nice, compact chronological chart on p. 132. Foreigners writing about theater in Beijing in the 1910s and 1920s often say of their first experience of watching an all-female troupe perform that they did not realize that all the parts were played by women. See, for example, Allen, *Chinese Theatres Handbook*, pp. 22-23, and Franck, *Wandering in North China*, p. 217. This either argues for their obtuseness or the actresses’ skill.

²⁸⁷ Wang Anqi 王安祈, “Jingju yu xingbie” 京劇與性別 (*Jingju* and sex), *Dushu* 讀書 (Reading) 2005.10: 108-15, p. 108, tells an anecdote about spectators convinced that someone on stage in a *Jingju* production was a man because of the particular quality of the actor’s voice, but the truth was that it was an actress who had figured out a way to imitate the rather “unfeminine” voice of the famous Cheng Yanqiu. The same article seems to have been published as “Xingbie, biaoyan, wenben: Jingju yishu yanjiu de yi ge fangxiang” 性別, 表演, 文本: 京劇藝術研究的一個方向 (Sex, performance, text: A direction for research into the art of *Jingju*), *Fuyan zongheng* 婦研縱橫 (Forum in Women’s and Gender Studies) 72 (2004): 1-8.

²⁸⁸ This trend is related to the increasing marginalization of *Jingju* as a career choice for actors brought about by the increasing difficulty of becoming famous and rich in that profession. In the biographies of actors and actresses prominent on the PRC stage in the 1950s, Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju*, 3: 951-1068, no actresses specializing in the *wusheng*, *jing*, or *chou* role-types are given biographies. More surprisingly, none are listed for the *xiaosheng* role either. But twenty-nine of the thirty-five *zhengdan* 正旦 (proper young or mature female roles) and two of the five *wudan* 武旦 (hand-to-hand martial female role) are actresses. Today, however, with the prominence of Pei Yanling, it is increasingly common for

Initially, not many famous male actors were willing to perform with actresses. Tan Xinpei refused outright.²⁸⁹ Actors were also, at first, unwilling to take female disciples. In 1912, Wang Yaoqing 王瑤卿 (1881-1954), teacher of all of the “four great male performers of female roles,” strongly opposed the introduction of actresses onto the stages of Beijing.²⁹⁰ It was not until 1927 that he took a female disciple.²⁹¹ The first traditional opera school (*keban*) for women in Beijing was established in 1916, and was only for women.²⁹² The first modern opera school that was co-ed was established in 1930.²⁹³ Even in the 1950s and 1960s, women were only a small proportion of the students formally studying

women to play *wusheng* roles, especially when the characters performed are young male deities such as Nezha 哪吒. Pei Yanling also became famous for performing the *jing* role Zhong Kui 鐘馗. Female *xiaosheng* have also become quite common, both in Taiwan and the PRC. Female actresses are also the first choice now to play young male children or pages.²⁸⁹ Chuiyun gezhu 垂雲閣主, “Nüling jiuhua” 女伶舊話 (Old talk about actresses), *Xiju yuekan* 3.12 (October 1932), reproduced in *Su wenxue congkan*, 23: 165-66, quotes him as saying “I have gotten so old, and performed all my life. Now you want me to sing with an actress? This is impossible” 老夫偌大年紀, 唱了一輩子的戲, 到如今, 還叫我跟女角唱戲嗎. 這是斷斷作不到的.

²⁹⁰ Liu Naichong, “Mantan Jingju kunling,” part 2, p. 39.

²⁹¹ Huang Yufu 黃育馥, “Jingju—Nüxing diwei” 京劇—觀察中國女性地位變化的窗口 (1790—1937) (*Jingju—A window for examining changes in the status of women [1790-1937]*), *Funi yanjiu luncong* 婦女研究論叢 (Collection of women’s studies) 1995.3: 31-34, and Min Tian, “Male *Dan*, the Paradox of Sex, Acting, and Perception of Female Impersonators in Traditional Chinese Theatre,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 17.1 (Spring 2000): 78-97, p. 91, take Wang Yaoqing as the first *Jingju* actor to take a woman as his disciple. Huang’s article has also appeared in English: “Peking Opera: A Window on Changes in Chinese Women’s Social Status (1790-1937),” in Min Jiayin, ed., *The Chalice and the Blade in Chinese Culture: Gender Relations and Social Models* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House, 1995), pp. 454-78 (see p. 464 on Wang Yaoqing being the “first actor to formally accept actresses as his students” in 1927).

²⁹² Liu Songkun, *Liyuan yiwen*, p. 3 and Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 27. The opera school was called Chongya She 崇雅社, was established by Tian Jiyun, and taught both *Jingju* and *bangzi* opera. Although not an opera school, the Beijing all-female troupe Kuide She 奎德社, founded in 1914 and in existence until 1937, also performed both *Jingju* and *bangzi* opera, and was responsible for training many actresses. The proclaimed purpose of the troupe was “to use reformed indigenous theater to transform social customs” 以改良戲曲移風易俗. The main figure in the establishment of the troupe was Yang Yunpu 楊韻譜 (1882-1957), who often spoke of himself as a “director” (*daoyan* 導演). See Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 18. On Kuide She in general, see the chapter in Dong Hong 董虹, “Chengshi, xiqu yu xingbie: Jindai Jing Jin diqu nüling qunti yanjiu (1900-1937)” 城市、戲曲與性別: 近代京津地區女伶群體研究 (1900-1937) (Chinese indigenous theater, and sexual difference: Research on the collectivity of female actresses in Beijing and Tianjin in the modern era [1900-1937]), doctoral thesis, Nankai University, 2012, pp. 166-92.

²⁹³ Liu Songkun, *Liyuan yiwen*, pp. 11-12. The school, Zhonghua Xiqu Zhuanke Xuexiao 中華戲曲專科學校 (The China traditional theater professional school), was located in Beijing. According to Luo Suwen, “Gender on Stage: Actresses in an Actors’ World (1895-1930),” p. 83, Liu Xikui studied opera in an establishment in Dalian that accepted both male and female students. For a list of *Jingju keban* and opera schools from the nineteenth century to the 1940s, see Ma Shaobo et al., eds., *Zhongguo Jingju baike quanshu*, pp. 325-28 (the earliest dates back to the Daoguang era [1821-1850]).

Jingju.²⁹⁴ The rather sketchy training that most of the early actresses got (many learned “on the job”) is surely one of the major reasons for the generally low opinion of their artistic ability.²⁹⁵

The first woman to appear in a Chinese feature film did so in 1913. She was the wife of the director, who himself played the most important female role in the film, while she played the female lead’s maid.²⁹⁶ Spoken drama troupes did not begin to decisively reject the use of male performers of female roles until the 1920s.²⁹⁷ The policy in the PRC, up until the Cultural Revolution, was to allow the senior and famous male performers of female roles such as Mei Lanfang to continue to perform, but to prevent them from openly training male disciples. The bulk of these senior actors were no longer physically or emotionally inclined to perform female roles that were very sexual.²⁹⁸

There were also troupes of young male actors (*tongling* 童伶), or troupes which included such child actors. Their stage careers as child actors might range from the age of nine or ten²⁹⁹ to when their voices changed.³⁰⁰ There were theaters that featured these child actors, and their ticket prices were especially cheap.³⁰¹ Tickets for student performances, such as those put on at the Guanghe lou 廣和樓 (Guanghe Theater) in Beijing by Fuliancheng students were also quite modestly priced. It was well enough understood that such young children had not had the time to become accomplished actors, but they were popular anyway.³⁰² It was not illegal to contract from their parents or guardians for the services of such children actors, but Republican authorities did try, at least a little bit, to keep them

²⁹⁴ Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 3: 296, gives a ratio of five boys for every girl. One of the female students, Wu Suqiu 吳素秋 (1922-2016), was kicked out because she fell in love with a male student, Wang Helin 王和霖 (1920-1999) there. See Su Shaoqing 蘇少卿, “Nanbei ge xiaoban bijiao” 南北個小班比較 (A comparison of opera schools in the north and south), *Xiju chunqiu* 戲劇春秋 (Annals of theater) 14 (1943), in *Su Shaoqing xiqu chuqiu*, 85. Wang Helin was allowed to continue as a student.

²⁹⁵ For a comparison of things said about female vs. male actors, see Zhang Yuan 張遠, “Minchu Jingju juping zhong de nannü you bie” 民初京劇評中的男女有別 (Sexual difference in theater criticism of *Jingju* in the early Republican era), *Nüxue xuezhì* 女學學志 (Chronicle of women’s studies) 26 (2010): 1-31.

²⁹⁶ Yingjin Zhang, *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 187. The film was *Zhuangzi shi qi* 莊子試妻 (Zhuangzi tests his wife), no copy of which survives.

²⁹⁷ See Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 107. For information on a spoken drama written to dramatize early attempts to stage mixed-sex productions of spoken drama, see the item on *Xiju chunqiu* 戲劇春秋 (Annals of theater) by Edward Gunn, in Bernd Eberstein, ed., *Selective Guide to Chinese Literature, 1900-1949, Volume 4, Drama* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), pp. 218-21. The play, which premiered in 1943, has sections set in 1921, 1926, 1936, and 1937. On Hong Sheng’s opposition to males playing female roles, see Megan Ammirati, “Hong Shen and the ‘Natural Death’ of Female Impersonation: Rethinking the History of Gender-Appropriate Performance in Huaju,” *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 27.2 (Fall 2015): 172-207.

²⁹⁸ Xiao Cuihua was a *huadan* actor who specialized in “racy” parts. On the suppression of him and his repertoire on the stage after 1949, see Siyuan Liu, “Theatre Reform as Censorship: Theatre Reform in China in the Early 1950s,” pp. 387, and 399-401.

²⁹⁹ In a January 20, 1929, *Liyuan gongbao* piece, Soushi 漱石 (Sun Yusheng 孫玉聲), “Tongchuan” 童串 (Child acting), in Cao Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 635, the author says that the child actor who became famous at the earliest age he knows of first began to act when he was eight or nine and was so little that he had to be helped up onto the chairs on stage.

³⁰⁰ See Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 178.

³⁰¹ Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 247.

³⁰² Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, pp. 167-68, writes that Beijingers prefer child actors to actresses and Shanghai’ers are the opposite.

from being too abused by their masters.³⁰³ There were periodic newspaper competitions to pick the best child actors, and some of these actors became quite famous,³⁰⁴ but those who were not able to weather the change in their voices were soon forgotten.³⁰⁵

Before the innovations of the twentieth century, *Jingju* was a system of interlocking parts which could be put together in a number of ways without creating a lot of conflict between the different parts. Actors of different generations trained by different teachers still had a common vocabulary or tool box, both in terms of the general repertoire and in terms of how types of characters and scenes were to be represented on stage. This lessened the need for rehearsals or for directors. Seasoned actors who had not performed the same play together could just say “see you onstage” (*taishang jian* 臺上見) and dispense with any kind of joint preparation before their performance together.³⁰⁶ If there was any concern that there might be places that might be rough or hard to coordinate, actors would compare their versions (*duixi* 對戲; working out the blocking on stage would be called “stand in the (correct) places [*zhan difang* 站地方]; actors would also “compare [the content of] stage directions” [*dui jiekou* 對介口]³⁰⁷), a process that could be done very quickly, if necessary.³⁰⁸ There was also the idea that minor changes would be made in the course of performances, either for the purpose of speeding up or slowing things down, as mentioned above, or for more aesthetic reasons.³⁰⁹ New plays that were written out and produced conventionally still relied

³⁰³ Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 232, quotes the Beijing municipal police regulation banning such abuse.

³⁰⁴ As mentioned in the notes to the introduction to the book, Shang Xiaoyun won such a competition in 1917. Li Shifang 李世芳 (1921-1947), whose career held great promise before he died, won one in 1937. See Liu Songkun, *Liyuan yiwen*, p. 326.

³⁰⁵ Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 168, says that the fame of the child actor Wu Tie'an 吳鐵菴 shook north and south (*ming zhen nanbei* 名震南北), but he can't be found in most reference books on *Jingju*. *Xikao* includes photos of young actors labeled as *tongling* (童伶: 131) and *youling* (幼伶: young actor; 11: 95).

³⁰⁶ See, for instance, He Baotang 和寶堂, *Wei Jingju haomai: He Baotang xiqu zawen ji* 為京劇號脈: 和寶堂戲曲雜文集 (Taking the pulse of *Jingju*: Collected short essays on traditional Chinese theater by He Baotang; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 2005), “Huashuo ‘taishang jian’” 話說‘臺上見’ (On “see you on stage”), pp. 41-42. Cheng Yanqiu, “Fu Ou kaocha xiqu yinyue baogao shu,” p. 198, says: “Talking about the question of directors, that makes us all the more ashamed! When we put together a play, all we do is sloppily rehearse once or twice, at the most three times, till everyone says it won't be a complete disaster, thereupon the play is put on stage, and despite everything is able to pull in audiences” 說到導演問題, 更使我們慚愧! 我們排一個戲, 只要胡亂排一兩次, 至多三次, 大家就說不會砸了, 於是乎便上演, 也居然就召座。For a discussion of how this was possible, see Zou Yuanjiang 鄒元江, *Zhong Xi xiju shenmei mosheng hua siwei yanjiu* 中西戲劇審美陌生化思維研究 (Research into the concept of alienation in the aesthetics of theater of China and the West; Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2009), p. 359, item 7.

³⁰⁷ For examples of usage, see Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, p. 50.342. In this passage these processes are described as part of “the set method for rehearsing new plays” (*pai xinxi de laoli* 排新戲的老例).

³⁰⁸ See Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 127. Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 3: 142, recounts that once when he was going to perform a certain play with Tan Xinpei for the first time, he asked to compare versions (*duixi* 對戲) with Tan. Tan said, “My version is the same as everyone's, there's no need to compare. When you get on stage, don't worry about anything. My shoulders are broad enough to make sure everything will come across okay, there won't be any mistakes” 我的戲都是同大陸的, 不用對, 你到臺上放大了膽, 我都有肩膀交代清楚, 不會出錯。

³⁰⁹ As an example of the latter, Yuan Shihai, *Yihai wuya*, pp. 115-16, recounts how he was told that when Yang Xiaolou premiered *Yezhu lin* 野猪林 (Wild boar forest; not in *Xikao*), on stage he suddenly decided to drop a scene and just signaled his change of mind to the master drummer, who followed his cue. Gu Qun 顧群, Gu Pengfei 顧鵬飛, and Yuan Dawei 原大偉, *Zhongguo Jingju guanshang* 中國京劇觀賞 (The appreciation of Chinese *Jingju*; Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin, 1998), “Xi jianbang” 戲肩膀 (lit.: play shoulder), p. 399, explains the system of cues used on stage by actors to

largely on the individual actors to flesh out their parts themselves, after being given the script and a minimal introduction to the play as a whole and their characters in particular.³¹⁰

Things were different in the case of the radically new plays that Mei Lanfang and his competition were forced to produce in order to keep up with one another, beginning with the contemporary dress (*shizhuang*) plays that he and others put on in the early twentieth century.³¹¹ Because of time pressure, dress rehearsals (*caipai* 彩排) might get skipped, but “walk throughs”

communicate with the orchestra or other actors. Yuan Shihai, in Yuan Shihai and Xu Chengbei, *Jingju jiazi hua yu Zhongguo wenhua*, pp. 87-88, said that the point of performing *Jingju* was to, on stage, “give shocks” (*chudian* 觸電) to each other. It was, of course, not considered good form to purposely make changes in order to embarrass those on stage with you. See Liu Si 劉嗣, *Guoju jiaose he renwu* 國劇角色和人物 (Role-types and characters in *guoju*; Taipei: Liming wenhua, 1972), “Lao Tan guyi shi Li Qi de daohao” 老譚故意使李七得倒好 (Tan Xinpei purposely caused Li Qi to be booed), pp. 350-51, for an instance of the latter.

³¹⁰ Wang Xiaonong, while revolutionary in some respects, worked within *Jingju* conventions. A contemporary description of his rehearsal process goes like this: “Xiaonong would gather the supporting actors [he always starred in his own plays] together in one place and take the structure of the arias, the text, and the movements of the play, and explain them by mouth and gesture. [The process] would be finished in a short space of time. The next day it would be performed and there would really be no mistakes . . .” 笑儂則集各配角於一處，將戲中腔調節奏，詞句身段，口講指畫，移時而就。翌日即演，竟能無誤 . . . Quoted from Luchang 露廠, “Shuo paixi zhi nan” 說排戲之難 (On the difficulties of rehearsing plays), *Chunliu* 春柳 (Spring willow) 1.6 (1919): 6-7, p. 6, in Fu Qiumin 傅秋敏, “Lun Wang Xiaonong de xiqu gailiang huodong” 論王笑儂的戲曲改良活動 (On Wang Xiaonong’s theater reform activities), *Xiju yishu* 戲劇藝術 (Theater arts) 1988.3: 45-54, p. 50. This description is very similar to one of traditional practice in Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 110, where it is said that “the active [i.e., non-passive] nature of [traditional] actors was comparatively great” 演員的主動性較大, a statement that appears to still be true today, if the experience of Chinese actors who have participated in intercultural theater productions is evidence. See, for example, Zhang Dongmei 張冬梅, “Helan Kunqiang” 荷蘭崑腔 (*Kunqu* in Holland), *Liuyan zhoukan*, March 13, 2000, p. 8. On the other hand, other descriptions of Wang Xiaonong seem to stress what was different about his approach. For instance, in “Paiyan renzhen” 排演認真 (Conscientious rehearsal), *Xiaoxian bao* 消閑報 (Leisure daily), issue 351 (April 26, 1901), “conscientious” appears not only in the title but also in this short 70-odd character description of the reporter’s observation of the rehearsal for Wang’s *Dangren bei* 黨人碑 (The stele recording the names of the proscribed faction; *Xikao* play #453). The fact that the entire company (including the stars) is in attendance is also emphasized. In a report in the same paper on the postponement of the premiere of the next installment of the play, “*Dangren bei* di’er ben gaiqi” 黨人碑第二本改期, issue 358 (May 3, 1901), the reason given is that the actors think that the “rehearsals have not yet reached a state of completion” 排演未曾純熟. Both items are reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai jian xubian*, 4: 22 and 25, respectively. Lin Huizhen 林慧真, “Cong Zhou Xinfang kan jin xian dai Shanghai Jingju zhi fazhan (1895-1949)” 從周信芳看近現代上海京劇之發展 (1895-1949) (Looking at the development of *Jingju* in Shanghai in modern times [1895-1949] from the point of view of Zhou Xinfang), master’s thesis, Chengong University, 2012, p. 164, figure 11, reproduces a *Banyue xiju* 半月戲劇 (Theater bi-monthly) 1.9 (1938), ad that includes a list of four plays prefaced by “These famous plays below are in the midst of rehearsal, once each has been rehearsed to a state of completion, then a lucky date will be picked for performance” 下列各名劇現在正從事排練，一俟排練純熟，即行擇吉開演. After a list of Zhou Xinfang and other important actors in the troupe, the ad says “Performances are done conscientiously, absolutely no sloppiness, absolutely no secret skimping on labor or materials” 演劇認真，絕對不馬虎，絕對不偷減工料.

³¹¹ Chen Moxiang, *Guanju shenghuo sumiao*, part 3, p. 408, says: “Once the Republic was established, . . . it is strange when you speak of it, but if you performed old plays, the attendance would be poor, but if the name of the play was just a little bit fresh and new, you could fill the seats. [Li] Xinfu [1883-c.1923] recognized that old plays were no good, and constantly entreated me to make up a few” 入了民國 . . . , 說也奇怪, 只要唱舊戲, 座兒便微, 戲名稍有一點新鮮, 也能滿座. [李] 鑫甫認定舊戲不成, 常託墨香幫他謔上幾齣.

(*chuanpai* 串排) and rehearsals with orchestra (*xiangpai* 響排) were done.³¹² Shanghai-style plays, although not very complicated in terms of their texts, which like *wenming xi* might not always get written out in the first place,³¹³ were complicated in terms of their staging, and could require extended preparation and rehearsal time.³¹⁴ Although there had been people such as troupe owners, troupe leaders, teachers, main actors, or the main percussionist (*sigu* 司鼓) who carried out directorial functions from early on,³¹⁵ the concept of one person whose job is precisely the development and staging of a dramatic production the way a modern director does was probably first brought into China by returning foreign students from Japan.³¹⁶

The term “director” (*daoyan* 導演) begins to appear in ads for and newspaper accounts of Shanghai-style *Jingju* performances in the 1920s,³¹⁷ and Beijing-style plays of the 1930s.³¹⁸ As people

³¹² Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 3: 87. He says that the lack of dress rehearsals made it very difficult for there not to be rough places (*cucuo zhi difang* 粗糙之地方) when the plays premiered. He is talking in particular about his production of *Tongnü zhanshe* (*Xikao* #405) in 1917-1918 and the other contemporary dress plays he was involved in at that time. Some of his later plays were rehearsed and workshopped quite extensively. Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 40, dates large-scale rehearsals from Mei Lanfang's *Chang'e benyue* (*Xikao* #489) and his other ancient costume (*guzhuang*) plays.

³¹³ Gu Wenxun 顧文勛, “Wenming xi jumu huilan” 文明戲劇目匯覽 (An overview charting of the repertoire of *wenming xi*), *Zhongguo huaqu yanjiu* 2 (1991): 186-217 (part 1), 3 (1991): 181-217 (part 2), 4 (1991): 180-209 (part 3), 7 (1991): 221-25 (corregienda), lists information on 864 plays (no plays after May Fourth, 1919, are recorded). For only 134 of these plays do “complete playscripts” (*wanzheng juben* 完整劇本) or even “scene scenarios” (*mubiao* 幕表) exist (part 1, p. 186).

³¹⁴ An August 29, 1925, review in *Shenbao*, Qiu Miaoqia 邱妙嘉, “Ji Gong Wutai zhi Dongfang Shuo” 記共舞臺之東方朔 (A record of Gong theater's *Dongfang Shuo*), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 353-54, stresses that the play had been in development for as long as three to four months (*san si yue zhi jiu* 三四月之久). This is play that makes a lot of use of mechanical scenery.

³¹⁵ In the description of the rehearsals of a play being put on by amateurs in Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, pp. 48, 322 and 326, the idea that other actors have to yield to the main actor (*zhengjiao* 正腳) is brought up; in the second instance cited, this practice is explicitly identified as the same as with professional troupes. In traditional rehearsals, the person in charge was often someone who “embraced the entire script” (*bao zongben* 抱總本; actors were typically only given scripts that contained their own dialogue, *danchuan* 單片). For an instance of the use of *bao zongben*, see Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, p. 59.400.

³¹⁶ Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” pp. 6-7, speaks of a Japanese theater specialist coming to “direct” (*zhidao* 指導) the performance of *Chahua nü* 茶花女 (La Dame aux camélias) by the foreign students of Chunliu She in Japan. See also Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 3: 159.

³¹⁷ See Huang Zaimin 黃在敏, “Jingju daoyan wushi nian” 京劇導演五十年 (Fifty years of *Jingju* directing), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1999.5: 11-12, p. 11, on the importance of a 1925 ad for the play *Han Liu Bang* 漢劉邦 (Liu Bang of the Han) that has the text “Mr. Zhou Xinfang, main composer and director (*Zhou Xinfang jun zhubian daoyan* 周信芳君主編導演), and Yao Xufeng 姚旭峰, *Liyuan Haishang hua* 梨園海上花 (Theater flowers in Shanghai; Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 2003), Figure 21, p. 83, for a reproduction of the ad. The October 7, 1926, *Shenbao* item, “Tianchan yan xinxi jiu、shi ben Sui Yang di kan qionghua” 天蟾演新戲九、十本隋煬帝看瓊花 (Tianchan theater performs the ninth and tenth installments of the new play, Emperor Yang of the Sui Inspects the Jasper Flowers), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 363, says the play was written and directed (*biandao* 編導) by Chang Chunheng 常春恆, director of dramatic affairs (*juwu zhuren* 劇務主任) of the theater. The notice also says that the play was in production for two to three months.

³¹⁸ At the beginning of the printing of Chen Moxiang's play, *Kongque dongnan fei* 孔雀東南飛 (Southeast fly the peacocks) in *Juxue yuekan* 1.2 (1932), Wang Yaoqing and Cheng Yanqiu are listed as the directors. Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, p. 71.486, describes how, for the program (*xidan*) for a version of *Tieshan gongzhu* 鐵扇公主 (same basic content as *Huoyan shan* 火焰山 [Fiery Mountain; *Xikao* play #499]) starring Hua Huilin 華慧麟 (1913-1964), Hua's adopted father says, “It has

became more conscious of the importance of directors in Western theater, there was an increasing tendency for *Jingju* stars to become interested in direction,³¹⁹ to talk of themselves as also being directors, and for scholars to identify earlier and earlier figures as “directors.”³²⁰ Because we have edicts from some of the Qing emperors containing imperial orders about such matters as the casting of certain actors in certain roles, those emperors have also been talked about as “directors.”³²¹ Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩 (1889-1962), who insisted on the entire cast showing up for rehearsals when he was the head of the new drama school in Nantong, Linggong Xueshe 伶工學社 (he served as the first head of this school, which was established 1919, for three years),³²² and directed some films,³²³ in 1937

always been the case that when a new play is performed, only the [main] actor’s name is written [on the program], the teacher’s and the playwright’s are not. That does not seem right. This time they should be included” 向來新戲亮臺，只寫唱戲人名姓，不寫教師與原編人，似乎不合，今番都要寫出來的。Because of this, at the top of the printed program “Director: Wang Yaoqing” 導演王瑤卿 gets included. The premiere is not explicitly dated in the novel, nor have I been able to date it from other sources, but it is clear that it happened in the early 1930s. An ad for a program of Peking-style plays at the Huangjin Da Xiyuan 黃金大戲院 (Crystal Palace) in Shanghai in *Xiju xunkan* 2.7 (1939): 15, proclaims that Wang Yaoqing has especially come to “oversee and direct” (*jianchang daoyan* 監場導演) the performance of his “female disciple” (*nü dizi* 女弟子) Wang Yurong 王玉蓉 (1913-1994). This is mostly likely a case of using new terminology to describe the older practice of having a teacher watch his pupil from the wings (*bachang* 把場), which was supposedly a help to the disciple but in practice was mainly used to stir up audience interest. See Huang Jun and Xu Xibo, *Jingju wenhua cidian*, “Bachang” 把場, p. 7. For an example of the use of this same term to describe a professional actor, Xun Huisheng, coming in to oversee the rehearsals of his students, and another, Wang Yaoqing, to oversee his nephew perform, see Chen Moxiang, *Huoren daxi*, pp. 65.447 and 57.388. See the same work, p. 69.473, on the use of the term to describe the equivalent of stage managers.

³¹⁹ For instance, Cheng Yanqiu, after returning from his study trip to Europe, dictated (*koushu* 口述) an extended piece on *huaju* directors and direction: “Huaju daoyan guanrui” 話劇導演管窺 (A limited view of *huaju* direction/directors), that was published in three parts in issues 2.7, 2.8, and 2.10 of 1933 of *Jue yuekan* (the article is reprinted in Cheng Yongjiang 程永江, ed., *Cheng Yanqiu xiju wenji* 程硯秋戲劇文集 [Collected writings by Cheng Yanqiu on theater; Beijing: Huayi chuban she, 2010], pp. 74-131; this same volume includes a 1935 reporter’s account of a lecture Cheng gave on direction in old-style plays, pp. 142-44). Du Yingtao 杜穎陶, who did a lot of work on Cheng Yanqiu’s collection of playscripts and published bibliographic descriptions of some of them, in his “Daoyan yu juben” 導演與劇本 (Directors and playscripts), *Juxue yuekan* 4.3 (1935): 9-10, does not really write of playscripts at all, but instead of the need for a central and unifying vision for theater productions, something he feels is lacking in traditional practice.

³²⁰ The most sustained attempt to find directors and identify persons carrying out directorial functions in classical Chinese theater is probably Gao Yu 高宇, *Gudian xiqu daoyan xue lunji* 古典戲曲導演學論集 (Essays on directing in classical Chinese theater; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1985). Some of the Qing emperors have been talked about as directors of *Jingju* performances. This is precisely how the Xianfeng emperor is described in Guan Jialu, “Manzu yu Jingju shulun,” p. 283. Zou Yuanjiang 鄒元江, “Dui xiqu daoyan zhi cunzai genju de zhiyi” 對戲曲導演制存在根據的質疑 (Doubts about the evidence for the existence for a tradition of directing in Chinese indigenous theater), *Xiju* 2005.1: 18-28, objects to the idea of using directors in Chinese indigenous theater, which he claims “smothers the latent creative power of the actors” 扼殺了演員的潛在創造力 (p. 27).

³²¹ For instance, Ding Ruqin, *Qingdai neiting yanxi shihua*, pp. 166-71, discusses the Jiaqing Emperor, many of whose edicts concerning imperial performances have been preserved, in these terms. On the edicts involved, see also Wang Zhengyao, *Qingdai xiju wenhua shilun*, pp. 34-52.

³²² Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 89. On Ouyang Yuqian’s tenure in Nantong, see Qin Shao, “The Mismatch: Ouyang Yuqian and Theater Reform in Nantong, 1919-1922,” *CHINOPERL Papers* 18 (1996): 39-65.

³²³ See Su Guanxin 蘇關鑫, “Ouyang Yuqian nianbiao” 歐陽予倩年表 (Chronological biography of Ouyang Yuqian), in Su Guanxin 蘇關鑫, ed., *Ouyang Yuqian yanjiu ziliao* 歐陽予倩研究資料 (Research material on Ouyang Yuqian; Beijing:

published an article on his directing in which he said he had only directed spoken dramas.³²⁴ But after 1949, he spoke of himself and Mei Lanfang as being actor-directors with assistant directors (*fu daoyan* 副導演) to transmit their instructions in the Republican period.³²⁵ Although some hold that Mei Lanfang himself thought that his 1959 *Mu Guiying guashuai* 穆桂英掛帥 (Mu Guiying takes command) was the first new play of his to have a director,³²⁶ and there are many who see Mei himself as essentially a director,³²⁷ more seem to think that P. C. Chang (Zhang Pengchun, 1892-1957), the advisor for Mei's 1930 tour of the U.S., should be seen as the first *Jingju* director.³²⁸ In any case, it was not until after the establishment of the PRC that it became common for *Jingju* plays to have directors (often borrowed from spoken drama troupes and/or made to study Stanislavsky and other Western dramatists brought in with the Russians).³²⁹

Zhongguo xiju, 1989), pp. 27-28 (1927-1928), and Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩, "Dianying banlu chujia ji" 電影半路出家記 (A record of my mid-career involvement in film), in *Ouyang Yuqian quanji*, 6: 356-414.

³²⁴ See Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩, "Daoyan jingyan tan" 導演經驗談 (On my experiences as a director), *Xiju shidai* 戲劇時代 (Theater age) 1.2 (1937): 276-82, p. 276, reprinted in Su Guanxin, ed., *Ouyang Yuqian yanjiu ziliao*, pp. 31-17 (see p. 31).

³²⁵ See Wang Yuanhua 王元化 and Jiang Xiwu 蔣錫武, "Guanyu jixing biaoyan de duihua" 關於即興表演的對話 (A dialogue on improvisation), *Yitan* 3 (2004): 1-7, p. 3 (Jiang Xiwu comment).

³²⁶ See Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 3: 94.

³²⁷ See, for instance, Xu Chengbei, *Mei Lanfang yu ershi shiji*, p. 96. Huang Jun and Xu Xibo, *Jingju wenhua cidian*, p. 775, credits Mei Lanfang as the director of the 1920 film versions of his *Tiannü sanhua* and *Chunxiang naoxue*.

³²⁸ See, for example, Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 3: 40 and Xu Chengbei, *Liyuan jiu zong*, "Zhang Pengchun: Diyi wei daoyan" 張彭春第一位導演 (Zhang Pengchun, the first director), pp. 63-64. In the introduction to the book, it was noted that it seems that the Hollywood producer F. C. Kapakas was responsible for producing the successful programs of Mei Lanfang's tour of the U.S. Liang Yan 梁燕 has argued that Qi Rushan, Mei's longtime advisor, was a prototypical director. See her "Qi Rushan juxue chutan," pp. 182-230, especially p. 201 (which lists examples of Qi Rushan being referred to as a director in the 1920s) and her "Xiandai xiqu daoyan de xianqu—Qi Rushan" 現代戲曲導演的先驅—齊如山 (The prototype of a modern traditional Chinese theater director—Qi Rushan), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju de lishi, xiandai yu jianglai*, pp. 254-65. Zhang Pengchun's writings on education and theater have been collected and published: Cui Guoliang 崔國良 and Cui Hong 崔紅, eds., *Zhang Pengchun lun jiaoyu yu xiju yishu* 張彭春論教育與戲劇藝術 (Zhang Pengchun on education and theater arts: Tianjin: Nankai daxue, 2003). Xu Jichuan's preface to Mei Lanfang, "Mei Lanfang you E ji," p. 93, speaks of Zhang Pengchun and Yu Shangyuan as the "main and assistant directors" (*zheng fu daoyan* 正副導演) of Mei's Soviet Union tour.

³²⁹ According to Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 3: 164, eight of the seventeen *Jingju* plays that were part of the first national traditional theater festival (Quanguo xiqu guanmo yanchu dahui 全國戲曲觀摩演出大會) in 1952 had a director. On the kind of conflicts produced by trying to use Stanislavsky's method cookie-cutter fashion to direct *Jingju*, see Xu Chengbei, *Mei Lanfang yu ershi shiji*, p. 229. Later on, it became common to bring in film and TV directors to direct *Jingju* plays. Zhu Wenxiang 朱文相, "Guanyu Jingju xue yanjiu de jijian jianyi" 關於京劇學研究的機件建議 (Some proposals regarding the the study of *Jingju*), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju de lishi, xianzhuang yu weilai*, p. 11, complains that such people have championed a slogan of "three don't wants" 三不要; the three things to be done away with are "convention" (*chengshi* 程式), "percussion" (*luogu* 鑼鼓), and "suppositional impressionism" (*xuni xieyi* 虛擬寫意), precisely the characteristics long thought essential to *Jingju*. Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, "Daoyan gongzuo zhe" 導演工作者 (Directors), 3: 1079-1090, gives short biographies of fourteen directors and mentions the names of nine others active in the PRC. The oldest was born in 1900 but the first directorial credit given him is from 1954. There are a couple of names that are conspicuously missing, such as that of Ajia 阿甲 (1907-1994) and Li Ziguai 李紫貴 (1915-1999). For the former's problems with applying Stanislavsky to traditional Chinese theater, see his "Shenghuo de zhenshi he xiqu biaoyan yishu de zhenshi" 生活的真實和戲曲表演藝術的真實 (Truth in life and truth in the art of traditional Chinese theater), in Ajia 阿甲, *Zhongguo xiqu lilun yanjiu wenxuan* 中國戲曲理論研究文選 (Selected writings on the theory and research of traditional Chinese theater; Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi, 1985), pp. 45-69; and the translated excerpts in Fei, ed., *Chinese*

Prior to the nationalization of the drama troupes in the PRC, there were no troupes in China performing for general audiences that received any real governmental subsidies. Cheng Yanqiu was clearly envious of the national theaters he visited on his tour of Europe in the 1930s. Now the tide is going the other way, with severe reductions of the subsidies for *Jingju* troupes both in the PRC and Taiwan and great efforts being made to make the government troupes generate their own income amid increasing experimentation with the creation of private troupes.³³⁰

Actors

During the rather short history of *Jingju*, the status of its actors rose from the dregs of society, from a position even lower than female prostitutes,³³¹ to such heights that one of them, Mei Lanfang, became one of the best known and most influential members of Chinese society. As with arguments about the importance of theater that we looked at in the introduction to the book, one of the factors in that process was a notion that things were different and better in the West and Japan than in China.³³²

For the bulk of the Ming and Qing dynasties, actors formed a special caste. In the Ming, enemies of the state and their families were often punished by being registered as “entertainers” (*yuehu* 樂戶; *yueji* 樂籍), a status passed on to their descendants. The category of *yuehu* was formally abolished during the Yongzheng emperor’s reign (1723-1735),³³³ but aspects of the system, such as the

Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present, pp. 146-53. For an overview in English that focuses especially on Li Zigui, Ouyang Yuqian, and Ajia, see Megan Evans, “The Emerging Role of the Director in Chinese *Xiqu*,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 24.2 (Fall 2007): 470-504. Her University of Hawai’i doctoral thesis, “The Evolving Role of the Director in *Xiqu* Innovation” (2003), covers the history of *xiqu* directing but gives particular attention to the training and practice of *xiqu* directors when field research was done for the thesis. Zhu Hengfu 朱恆夫, *Chengshihua jincheng zhong xiqu chuancheng yu fazhan yanjiu* 城市化進程中戲曲傳承與發展研究 (Research on the transmission and development of Chinese indigenous theater in the midst of urbanization; Shanghai: Shanghai renmin, 2013), p. 166, points out that since the same group of *huaju* directors are used to direct a variety of types of *xiqu*, those originally quite distinct theatrical forms are losing some of their distinctness.

³³⁰ On the troupe that claims to be the first private *Jingju* troupe in Beijing of the Reform Period, see Jin Mei 金梅, “Gan yu Jingcheng dapai yuantuan zheng shichang—Xiaoji Beijing Fengshan Gujin Yishu Juyuan” 敢與京城大牌院團爭市場—小記北京鳳山古今藝術劇院 (Daring to take on the big troupes in the Beijing market—A brief record of the Beijing [Zhang] Fengshan Old and New Arts Company), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2000.5: 56. For a more general survey of commercialization and privatization of traditional Chinese theater, see Li Xianglin 李祥林, “Chunfeng chui you sheng, jingse zhebian hao” 春風吹又生景色這邊好 (The spring breeze is blowing and things look good here), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2000.6: 4-6.

³³¹ We have noted above that actors were once expected to bow to prostitutes as their social superiors.

³³² A December 5, 1907, item in *Shuntian ribao*, “Jiang Huibo wenming jinbu” 姜慧波文明進步 (Jiang Huibo makes progress in his enlightenment), signed Yang Ge Yee, reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 5: 492, describes how Jiang (better known as Jiang Miaoxiang; longtime stage collaborator with Mei Lanfang) was so moved by the news that actors are respected in the West that he began think on his own and ask enlightened people about how to reform theater “in the hope of becoming equal in status with European actors” 以期與歐洲優人立於同等之地位.

³³³ See Ye, “The Legal and Social Status of Theatrical Performers in Beijing during the Qing,” pp. 70-71. Anders Hansson, *Chinese Outcasts: Discrimination and Emancipation in Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), chapter 3, “Musicians’ Households,” pp. 55-75, and Ding Shumei, *Gudai jinhui xiju shilun*, 238-43, both discuss the *yuehu* at some length, but Ye (p. 74) is critical of Hansson with regard to some points. Vestiges of the *yuehu* system persisted in certain localities, such as

prohibition of actors or their descendants from taking the all-important civil service examinations,³³⁴ persisted till the end of the Qing.³³⁵ *Jingju* actors of the Qing dynasty not only had to perform at court at the whim of the emperor or his surrogates,³³⁶ actors often had to provide sexual as well as theatrical services for their patrons. The prostitution of male actors, as we have seen, was only legally forbidden with the fall of the Qing and the establishment of the Republic. In the Qing, male actors were considered sexually attractive not only to males but also to the females who first began to get better access to commercial public theater performances in the late nineteenth century, first in Shanghai, and then, gradually, elsewhere. Shanghai courtesans, the first category of women to patronize the commercial theaters, were notorious for their affairs with actors,³³⁷ but as “good women” also began to go to these theaters they also engaged in such affairs.³³⁸ As we have seen above, actresses were also often equated with prostitutes, as also happened in the West.³³⁹

Shanxi (see David Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice: The Ritual Foundations of Village Life in North China* [Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009], pp. 197-201 and 219-34).

³³⁴ Pan Guangdan 潘光旦, *Zhongguo lingren xueyuan zhi yanjiu* 中國伶人血緣之研究 (Studies on the blood relationships between Chinese actors; Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1980; first published in 1941), p. 237, discusses the exceptional case of the actor Hao Jinguan 郝金官, who retired and did good works but refused the offer of an official post, saying that would only cause trouble because of the social disparity between himself and his official colleagues. He asks instead that his grandson be allowed to take the civil service exams. After his wish was granted, the grandson passed the highest exams, and had a successful official career. For a summary list of Qing edicts and regulations concerning actors, see Yao Shuyi, *Wanqing de xiqu biange*, p. 287-88.

³³⁵ Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, p. 297, argues that the restrictions preventing actors and their descendants from becoming officials began to loosen up in the latter part of the reign of the Guangxu emperor.

³³⁶ Empress Dowager Cixi greatly increased the number of outside performers brought into the court to perform (*neiting gongfeng* 內廷供奉). This was both an honor and a burden, a chance to earn financial rewards from both the monthly retainer (*yuefeng* 月俸) and rewards given for specific performances, as well as an opportunity to get punished if you screwed up or were considered to have done so. See *Xiju xunkan* 2.7 (1939): 15, for a theater ad in which Wang Yaoqing is given the title of *neiting gongfeng*. For a chronological list of the names of private individuals brought in to perform for the court (*minji xuesheng* 民籍學生) from 1856 to the end of the dynasty, see Wang Zhizhang 王芷章, *Qing Shengpingshu zhilüe* 清昇平署志略 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1991; reprint of 1937 original), pp. 533-83.

³³⁷ See Yeh, “Playing with the Public: Late Qing Courtesans and their Opera Singer Lovers.” In her *Shanghai Love*, pp. 50, 80-81, 143, 193, 233, 260-61, and 264-65, she looks at both historical and fictional cases. See Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” on why prostitutes were drawn to actors (p. 69) and how male actors were not able to openly patronize prostitutes (p. 125) even in the Republican period.

³³⁸ The most notorious case was that of the marriage (her family and the courts decided it was elopement) of the actor Yang Yuelou and Wei Abao 韋阿寶, the daughter of a Guangdong merchant who had become infatuated with him while watching him perform. See Xiaoqing Ye, “Unacceptable Marriage and the Qing Legal Code: The Case of Yang Yuelou,” *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 27-28 (1995-1996): 195-212; Catherine Vance Yeh, “Where is the Center of Cultural Production,” pp. 74-77; and Natascha Vittinghoff, “Readers, Publishers and Officials in the Contest for a Public Voice and the Rise of a Modern Press in Late Qing China (1860-80),” *T'oung Pao* 87 (2001): 393-453. All three authors stress the importance of the *Shenbao* in the amount of attention the case got. In the notes to the introduction to the book, it was noted that rumors about an affair between Yang and Empress Dowager Cixi circulated widely enough to get into English books on her, regardless of how impossible such an affair was. For descriptions of how seductions took place in the theaters, see Xu Mozhen 許墨珍, “Jiushi liyuan fengguang” 舊時梨園風光 (The ways of the old theater) (part 2), *Xiju xunkan* 2.3 (1939): 8 and *Tuhua ribao*, 2: 163 (issue 64), “Shanghai shehui zhi xianxiang: Xiyuan guanju diaobangzi zhi wuchi” 上海社會之現象: 戲院觀劇吊膀子之無恥 (Social phenomenon in Shanghai: The shamelessness of flirtation in the theater). Muiyong sheng, *Shanghai liyuan zazhi*, devotes an entire chapter, chapter six, to “Intercourse between lewd actors and loose women” (Yinling yu dangfu zhi jiaoshe 淫伶與蕩婦之交涉). Thirty-three separate items are included in

As their status rose, the terms used to refer to actors changed, moving from terms that tended to link them with prostitution (e.g., *you* 優/侑, *chang* 倡/娼)³⁴⁰ or that were derogatory or used so as to be so (e.g., *xizi* 戲子),³⁴¹ to terms that stressed their art (*yiren* 藝人, *yiyuan* 藝員)³⁴² or were more neutral (*yanyuan* 演員).³⁴³ Some wanted to get rid of the custom of calling actors “students of the Pear Garden” (*Liyuan zidi* 梨園子弟) because that term gave the idea that actors were slaves.³⁴⁴ At the same time, the names by which actors were known changed from stage names that did not look at all like ordinary names (i.e., they did not break up into surname and personal name)³⁴⁵ to names indicating their training, and then to their own names.³⁴⁶ As a mark of respect, some actors began to

the chapter. One, about Gai Jiaotian and an unnamed young woman, ends with the admonition “we trust that actor Gai will yet look within and reform himself” 寄語蓋伶尚祈自省之 (p. 6/5). The same book contains a made-up proclamation banning actors from going to brothels (p. 8/1), a mock judicial judgment on “lewd actor Li Chunlai seducing the concubine of an official” (“Xi zuo yinling Li Chunlai jianzhan guan qie pan” 戲作淫伶李春來奸佔官妾判; pp. 8/27-28), and a made-up apology by a courtesan for having an affair with an actor (“Xi wei xia you zhi jinü zuo jiechao shuo” 戲為狎優之妓女作解嘲說; pp. 8/29-30). Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 4: 571-625, reproduces twenty-four *Shenbao* items on the Li Chunlai case, 1907-1911.

³³⁹ See, for instance, Pullen, *Actresses and Whores*.

³⁴⁰ Although less a general term for actors than a term of address used when writing to a specific actor, *xiaoyou* (little friend) was originally a term used by patrons of *xianggong* that began to be used more generally and whose use was objected to by actors. See Chen Jiying, *Qi Ru lao yu Mei Lanfang*, “Lingren jihui cheng ‘xiaoyou’” 伶人忌諱稱‘小友’ (Actors hate being called “little friend”), pp. 57-59.

³⁴¹ For a general list of terms used to refer to actors, separated as to whether actors or actresses were involved, see Liu Shuiyun 劉水雲, *Ming Qing jiaoyue yanjiu* 明清家樂研究 (Research on private troupes in the Ming and Qing dynasties; Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2005), p. 212.

³⁴² For an example of an author explaining in 1935 the use of the term *yiyuan* as related to the respect given to *Jingju*, see Jin Jiyun, *Xuexi baijia*, pp. 4-5. For an example of a *Shenbao* article whose author thinks *Jingju* actors are not yet fit to be called *yiyuan*, see the November 25, 1926, piece, Fo 佛, “Xianzai Zhongguo yishuhua de Mei Lanfang” 現在中國藝術化的梅蘭芳 (The aestheticized Mei Lanfang of modern China), and for one that is willing to put the title behind Zhang Yipeng’s 張翼鵬 (1912-1956) name (Zhang was the son of Zhang Yingjie, stage name Gai Jiaotian, and like him a *wusheng* actor in the Shanghai-style *Jingju* tradition), see the June 20, 1935, *Shenbao* piece, “Da Wutai xinpin mingling paiyan *Xiyouji* 大舞臺新聘名伶排演西游記 (Big theater has newly hired famous actors to put on The Journey to the West), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 365 and 425, respectively.

³⁴³ Chen Dabeai 陳大悲, “Yanju ren di mingcheng wenti” 演劇人底名稱問題 (The problem of the terms used to designate actors), *Xiju* 戲劇 (Theater) 2 (June 30, 1921), pp. 5-6, of the first section (there is no running pagination for the whole issue), recounts the history of past terms and rejects them all in favor of *yanju ren* 演劇人 or *juren* 劇人 (I expect he is aiming for something similar to the English term “actor,” which he cites; he does not mention the term *yanyuan* 演員 but I expect he would not have minded it much). Chen was prominent in the early development of spoken drama in China.

³⁴⁴ See Qi Rushan 齊如山, “Tan si jiao” 談四腳 (On four stars), pp. 119-20 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 6: 2295-96) and Su Yi, *Jingju erbai nian gaiguan*, pp. 194-95.

³⁴⁵ Qi Rushan, *Jingju zhi bianqian*, pp. 59a-b (2: 929-30), actually points out that *Jingju* actors generally used their own names (*zhenming* 真名) until about the middle of the nineteenth century, when stage names (he uses the term *waihao* 外號) became popular.

³⁴⁶ An early example of dropping one’s stage name is Pan Yueqiao, who in 1908 had printed a newspaper notice that he was dropping his stage name (Xiao Liansheng 小連生) in favor of his own name. See Yan Quanyi, *Qingdai Jingju wenxue shi*, p. 444. Pan later worked together with the Xia brothers at Xin Wutai. According to Joshua Goldstein, “From Teahouse to Playhouse: Theaters as Social Texts in Early Twentieth-Century China,” p. 771, “They [the Xia brothers] insisted that the public and the press stop referring to actors with deprecating terms such as *xizi* (player) and *lingren* (drama performer). For these, the Xias substituted the word *yiren*, or ‘artist.’” The practice of taking stage names that either identified your

be referred to by their courtesy names (*zi/biaozi* 字/表字) or cognomens (*hao/biehao/waihao* 號/別號/外號). Actors went from being liable to being beaten to death for asking a question concerning official affairs³⁴⁷ to being able to make officials bow to them³⁴⁸ and being brought in to mediate disputes,³⁴⁹ and finally, to being appointed to official consultative bodies (as has been the case in the PRC, as noted in the introduction to the book).

Jingju actors and other personnel learned their trade by becoming apprentices to individual performers/teachers, entering a traditional *Jingju* school (*keban*)³⁵⁰ or, later, modern opera schools. A comparatively small number of amateur performers decided to become professionals.³⁵¹ Since many of the more physically demanding routines required a body that had been trained to be flexible when it was quite young, amateurs turned professionals tended to be limited in the kinds of parts they could play, relying more on their voices than their bodies. Apprentices and traditional opera school students came from two main sources: (1) the rather insular, especially in Beijing,³⁵² community of actors³⁵³ and

teacher or placed you as a member of a certain class graduating from a traditional opera school (*keban*) or modern opera school continued longer than the more personalized stage names. Although abandoned in the PRC after 1949, it was used after that by Fuxing Juxiao in Taiwan, whose students were given stage names that class by class took for their middle character a character from the following poem/motto: “Revive Chinese traditional culture, develop Chinese morals and ethics” 復興中華傳統文化，發揚民族倫理道德. For an overview of the changes in actors’ names, see Su Yi, *Jingju erbai nian gaiguan*, “Feiyong yiming” 廢用藝名 (Dropping stage names), pp. 194-95. On *Jingju* stage names and the way that actors were referred to in general, see Li Zhijie 李志傑, “Yiming jijin hua liyuan—Jingju jie renshi yiming qutan” 藝名集錦話梨園—京劇界人士藝名趣談 (Talking about theater through the variety of stage names—Amusing chats on the stage names of people from the *Jingju* world), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1995.4: 38-39, and Zhang Yanhua 張延華, “Jingju mingling meicheng shicui” 京劇名伶美稱拾萃 (Gleanings on the fine appellations of famous *Jingju* actors), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1996.3: 52-53 (part 1) and 1996.4: 50-51 (part 2). Some traditional opera schools required students to take the surnames of the owner of the school. See Ma Shaobo et al., eds., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 3: 489.

³⁴⁷ Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, p. 290, cites the case of the Yongzheng emperor having an actor beaten to death for asking who presently held a certain official post. The widely circulated story that Cheng Changgeng was made an official of the sixth rank cannot be verified. See Ye, “The Legal and Social Status of Theatrical Performers in Beijing during the Qing,” p. 73.

³⁴⁸ On the story that Tan Xinpei in 1908 got an official to bow to him before agreeing to perform, see Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, p. 55.

³⁴⁹ Sun Juxian was brought in to mediate a dispute over the estate of his friend, the novelist and journal editor, Li Boyuan. See Ye, *The Dianshizhao Pictorial: Shanghai Urban Life, 1884-1898*, p. 152.

³⁵⁰ For a list of the more important *keban*, see Wang Wenzhang, ed., *Zhongguo Jingju yishu baike quanshu*, p. 428.

³⁵¹ Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, p. 193, presents figures on actors born between 1813 and 1896 recorded in Zhou Mingtai 周明泰, comp., *Dao Xian yi lai Liyuan xianian xiaolu* 道咸以來梨園繫年小錄 (A small annalistic record of theater from the Daoguang and Xianfeng reign periods to the present; privately published, 1932). Of the 215 actors in that sample, only eight were originally amateurs (*piaofang chusheng* 票房出生). Covering a less restricted time period, Liu Songkun, *Liyuan yiwen*, pp. 342-45, gives the names of eighteen *laosheng* 老生, two *xiaosheng* 小生, six *danhang* 旦行, two *laodan* 老旦, seven *jing* 淨, and three *chou* 丑 professional actors who were originally amateurs. Amateurs who turned professional still had to persuade an actor of some stature to accept them as disciples before they could be accepted as a professional performer (see *ibid.*, p. 342). On bannermen amateur performers who decided to become professionals, see Yao Shuyi, *Cheng Changgeng, Tan Xinpei, Mei Lanfang—Qingdai Minchu Jingshi huihuang*, pp. 182-89.

³⁵² On the insularity and conservative nature of the community of actors in Beijing, see Liang Yan, “Qi Rushan juxue chutan,” p. 233; Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p. 57; Huang Yufu, *Jingju, qiao he Zhongguo de xingbie guanxi (1902-1937)*, p. 92; Xu Chengbei, *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 723; and Joshua Goldstein, “Mei Lanfang and the Nationalization of Peking Opera, 1912-1930,” pp. 400-401. Xu Chengbei, *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 110, speaks of two networks of influence that

(2) children from families so poor that they were willing to “sell” them into the acting profession.³⁵⁴ When children become apprentices or joined a traditional opera school, their guardians typically signed an agreement (*xiezi[ju]* 寫字[據]) for the former and a contract (*guanshu dafa* 關書大發) for the latter basically relinquishing any right to interfere in their treatment or training.³⁵⁵ Actors trained in traditional opera schools were beaten so often that the process of teaching plays was called *daxi* 打戲 (beat plays).³⁵⁶ Student could be beaten singly for their own faults or all of the students could be beaten collectively for the faults of one or more of their fellow students, which was called “beat the entire hall” (*da tongtang* 打通堂).³⁵⁷

Actors and acting originally had a very bad reputation. This was even true among Westerners in China. One of the latter described the situation this way:

are very strong in the acting community: the *xueyuan guanzi wang* 血緣關子網 (blood relationship network) and the *shicheng guanxi wang* 師承關係網 (the master-disciple relationship network).

³⁵³ Pan Guangdan, *Zhongguo lingren xueyuan zhi yanjiu*, is an early attempt (1941) to work out the family relationships of actors from a social science point of view. He presents the family trees of forty-three actor families (pp. 103-62). In his data, he was only able to identify ninety-three actors whose class origin was other than the acting profession (pp. 224-27). In the cases of people moving to Beijing from elsewhere (the majority coming from Jiangsu, Anhui, and Hebei [see pp. 95-96]) and becoming actors there, the largest single reason he was able to identify for the move was the Taiping Rebellion (p. 98). Pan also points out the tendency for the acting families to tend to produce actors who specialize in the same role-types (pp. 211-23). Perhaps the best known example of this is the seven generations of Tan Xinpei's lineage who have performed the role-type of *laosheng*. See Liu Songkun 劉松昆, “Tanmen qidai xianyi liyuan” 譚門七代獻藝梨園 (Seven generations of the Tan's have performed in the Pear Garden), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2001.3: 41-44 (part 1) and 2001.4.41-43 (part 2). For a look at Chinese actors' family and social relationships over a longer period of time and wider geographically, see Li Zhenlin 厲震林, *Zhongguo lingren jiazu wenhua yanjiu* 中國伶人家族文化研究 (Research on the family and clan culture of Chinese actors; Beijing: Wenhua yishu, 2012).

³⁵⁴ Mei Lanfang's grandfather, Mei Qiaoling, is an example. See Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 1: 480.

³⁵⁵ According to Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, pp. 29, 26-27, the former would contain language to the effect that during the period of study the master could beat or curse the apprentice as he liked (*renda renma* 任打任罵), and the master “would not be held responsible if the apprentice got sick, committed suicide, or ran away” 生老病死, 覓井逃亡, 師門概不負責, and the latter could have phrases such as “in the event of death through disaster or illness, that is all up to fate” 倘有天災疾病, 個由天命. Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, pp. 162-63, reproduces Tan Fuying's contract from when he entered Fuliancheng in 1917 (compared to the last quoted phrase, the only difference is that *jibing* [illness] becomes the basically synonymous *bingzheng* 病癥). Ma Shaobo, et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 485, claims that the Rongchun She 榮春社 opera school, founded in 1937 by Shang Xiaoyun, was the first whose contracts to not include language absolving the opera school of legal responsibility for the suicide or beating to death of students (*xuanliang xijin, touhe mijing, dasi wulun* 懸梁自盡, 投河覓井, 打死無論).

³⁵⁶ See, for instance, Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, pp. 31-31. Goldstein does not note, however, that the term was also used to talk about the process of putting a play together. For both meanings, see the entry on the term in Wu Tongbin 吳同賓 and Zhou Yaxun 周亞勛, eds., *Jingju zhishi cidian (zengding ban)* 京劇知識詞典 (增訂版) (Dictionary of knowledge about *Jingju* [revised edition]; Tianjin: Tianjin renmin, 2007), p. 179. Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, p., 28, claims that in the past the elders in the world of *Jingju* thought that only beating could produce the needed results in the training of students (*bu da bu chugong* 不打不出功), and this certainly accords with my experience. The older teachers at Fuxing Juxiao when I worked there in 1982 generally regretted not being allowed to beat their students and thought that this contributed to the decline in standards of performance on stage.

³⁵⁷ Li Hongchun, *Jingju changtan*, introduces how, at the age of seven, he was sent to study at a *keban* established by Chen Huayun 陳華雲 named Changchun 長春 in 1904, the same year Chen began to perform in the palace (p. 8). He relates how, on one day alone, the *keban* students suffered sixteen *da tongtang*.

... there is no question that play-acting has a decidedly bad moral effect upon the men who get their living by it. They are generally opium-smokers, gamblers, and prodigals of the lowest type. A look at their faces is enough to convince one that they are men who have no character to lose. . . . The circumstances in which they live are, no doubt, largely responsible for the vices into which they have fallen.³⁵⁸

For acting, officials could get cashiered or disowned by their families.³⁵⁹ Because of the bad reputation of acting and actors, according to Xiao Changhua 蕭長華 (1878-1967), the lead instructor at Fuliancheng for decades, opera schools could not afford to be overly picky as to whom they accepted as students.³⁶⁰

In the traditional training of actors the goal was to get the students performing plays and earning money for the master or the opera school as soon as possible. The idea that students should be taught to read and write took a long time to catch on, since there was (and in many cases still is) the idea that teaching such things to the students takes away from the time in which they could be learning plays and performing them, which was thought to only require them to memorize their lines.³⁶¹ The consequence of this was that many actors remained illiterate³⁶² and well-educated actors

³⁵⁸ J. MacGowan, *Men and Manners of Modern China* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912), p. 203. Lest his words be discounted as that of an outsider, here are similar comments from Hsü, *The Chinese Conception of the Theatre*, p. 86: "It is difficult to believe that the actors are by nature any worse than the rest of the Chinese people. Their hard life must have made what is called respectability appear unimportant to them. They do not know how to choose vices which are less disapproved by society and their work makes their vices as well as their merits more conspicuous. There can be little doubt, however, that many of them are drug addicts and some of them catamites, and that most of them are by character more artisans than artists." Fo, "Xianzai Zhongguo yishuhua de Mei Lanfang," p. 365, also, while describing the depraved state of actors, blames the environment: "Actors of the past, since society looked down on them, did not take themselves as...people. Therefore, everything they did was crude and filthy, and they did not see themselves as being up to the standards of humans" 從前的伶人, 因為社會瞧他們不起, 他們自己也就不當人...看待。故其所做所為, 亦多卑鄙齷齪, 自認不在人類水平線之上。

³⁵⁹ For an example of the former, see Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 30 (on the late Qing official Li Jifu 李吉甫), and of the latter, see *ibid.*, 1: 473 (on De Junru 德珺如 [1852-1925]). Ren Erbei, ed., *Youyu ji*, pp. 210-11 (item 260), quotes De Junru's defense of his decision to his uncle.

³⁶⁰ In "Dang peiyang le xiqu de xia yi dai" 黨培養了戲曲的下一代 (The party has trained the next generation of traditional theater workers), *Xiao Changhua xiqu tancong* 蕭長華戲曲談叢 (Gathered talks by Xiao Changhua; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1980), p. 15, Xiao says that in the old society (*jiu shehui* 舊社會) "no one was willing to take up this line of work. If children came to enter the opera school, of course this was something most welcome, and of every ten we would take nine" 沒有人願意幹這行。有小孩子來報科班, 當然是求之不得, 也就十來九收。

³⁶¹ The first opera school to introduce "culture courses" (*wenhua ke* 文化課) was the first modern opera school, Zhonghua Xixiao, established in 1930 (see Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 2: 50). On the four founders of the school, see Li Ruru 李如茹, "Beiping shi sili Zhongguo gaoji xiqu zhiye xuexiao si wei chuangan ren ji qi duiyu Jingju jiaoyu xiang xiandai zhuanxing de jianshu" 北平市私立中國高級戲曲職業學校四位創辦人及其對於京劇教育向現代轉型的建樹 (Four founders of the Beiping privately established secondary level Chinese indigenous theater professional school and their contributions to the shift towards modernity in *Jingju* education), in Fu Jin, ed., *Mei Lanfang yu Jingju de chuanbo*, pp. 547-81. The four founders are Li Shizeng, Cheng Yanqiu, Jiao Juyin 焦菊隱 (1905-1975), and Jin Zhongsun 金仲蓀 (1879-

were considered anomalous and in need of explanation. Some actors were well-educated because they were originally amateurs of fairly high social standing before they became professionals.³⁶³ Others, once they began to get famous, were “adopted” by literati and other social elites who saw to it that they received a traditional elite education (which could include such literati arts as calligraphy,

1945). Li Ruru is the daughter of a graduate of the school, Li Yiru 李玉茹. She is working on a book-length study of the school. Fuliancheng followed suit by offering culture classes in 1931 (see Tang Botao, *Fuliancheng sanshi nian [xiuding ban]*, pp. 52-53). Hu Hung-yen, a professional *Jingju* actress who emigrated to the U.S., in Donald Chang et al., “How the Chinese Actor Trains,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 26.2 (1974): 183-91, p. 185, is quoted as saying that when she studied *Jingju* in Nanjing thirty years before the interview, no scripts were used. For an example of an illiterate actor who “besides his own name, was unable to read a single character, but who nonetheless was able to remember the lines of more than one hundred plays” 自己的名字以外，一個大字不識的人卻能記住一百多齣劇目的臺詞，see Jin Mei 金梅, “Xingjiapo yishu jia Pan Yuehong lai Jing xianyi” 星家波藝術家潘月紅來京獻藝 (Singapore artist Pan Yuehong has come to the capital to perform), *Zhongguo Jingju* 1999.6: 53. *Laosheng* actor Li Baochun 李寶春 (1950-), son of the famous *laosheng* actor 李少春 (1919-1975), has noted that while modern students with their superior cultural education can pick up a script and quickly memorize and perform it, they forget it in two months. See Zheng Peikai 鄭培凱 and Ma Jiahui 馬家輝, *Wenhua chao xiandai* 文化超現代 (Cultural postmodernism [or: Culture surpassing the modern]; Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2000), “Jingju yishu zongheng tan (Jiabin: Li Baochun) 京劇藝術縱橫談 (嘉賓: 李寶春) (A wide-ranging discussion of the art of *Jingju* [featured guest: Li Baochun]), p. 209. More general principles of how to act were transmitted through formulaic and easily memorizable sayings (*yanjue* 諺訣). On these, see, for instance, Xia Tian, *Xiyan yiqian tiao*; Yu Xuejian 于學劍, *Xiyan shangxi* 戲諺賞析 (Appreciation and explication of theater sayings; Jinan: Shandong wenyi, 1989); Su Yi 蘇移, *Zhongguo Jingju juyan xuanzhu* 中國京劇劇諺選注 (Selected and annotated sayings on performance from Chinese *Jingju*; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 1998); Yang Fei 楊飛, *Liyuan yanjue jiyao* 梨園諺訣輯要 (An overview of theatrical sayings and formula; Beijing: Zhongguo xiju, 2002), and Yu Jiangang 于建剛, “Lun Jingju hanghua zhong de xiyan” 論京劇行話中的戲諺 (On sayings about theater in the professional speech of *Jingju*), in Du Changsheng, ed., *Jingju yu xiandai Zhongguo shehui*, pp. 688-94, and *idem*, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu gailun* 中國京劇習俗概論 (An overview of the customs of Chinese *Jingju*; Beijing: Wenhua yishu, 2015), pp. 137-44 and 251-59. The one longer text that would seem to have had a pretty strong influence on traditional *Jingju* actors was *Liyuan yuan* 梨園原 (The origins of theater), preface 1819, which was compiled more for *Kunqu* actors. For a copy of the text (with a critical introduction), see *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, 9: 1-28. A photo-reprint of the 1918 edition can be found in the 12th volume of *Mingguo Jing Kun shiliao congshu*, pp. 199-271. Liu Zengfu 劉曾復, “Xianxian yuzhu—Xuexi, huixi, dongxi” 先賢語注—學戲，會戲，懂戲 (Annotations to the words of former worthies—Learning plays, being competent at plays, understanding plays), in Weng Sizai, ed., *Jingju congtan bainian lu*, p. 231, quotes an anecdote about Xu Xiaoxiang 徐小香 (1832-1900) correcting an aspect of a performance by consulting this text. However, the text does not seem to have circulated that widely. According to a 1917 preface to the text, precisely because of the value of the text to actors, it was kept “secret and not shown to others” (*mi bu shi ren* 秘不示人), and the person whom Xu Xiaoxiang borrowed it from, Lu Shengkui 盧勝奎 (1822-1899), was said to be the sole possessor of a copy (*ducang ciben* 獨藏此本). See Mengju jushi 夢菊居士, “Chongxiu Liyuan yuan xu” 重修梨園原序 (Preface to the re-edited edition of *Liyuan yuan*), *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, 9: 27. *Liyuan yuan* itself was written for people literate enough to read scripts but who might have trouble with reading particular characters (see the section in it labeled “Cuozi” 錯字 [Incorrect characters], *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* edition, 9: 14-15).

³⁶² Pamela C. White, “Peking Opera Today: Some Views of Performers,” *CHINOPERL Papers* 11 (1982): 99, quotes a comment from a 1980 interview with a member of a PRC *Jingju* troupe visiting the U.S.: “Well, people in our profession are mostly illiterate, but we can all recognize some words.”

³⁶³ Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, p. 182, identifies former amateurs such as Wang Xiaonong (who had a *ju ren* 舉人 degree and was a district magistrate before becoming an actor) as the only actors with *xuewen* 學問 (learning, literary ability). In his collection of actors’ poems (pp. 182-88), the poet he quotes most is Wang Xiaonong.

painting, and writing poetry).³⁶⁴ As time went by, and especially with the growth of the idea that theater was the way to reform the country and with the establishment of the Republic in 1912, the “illiteracy” of actors was taken as a problem both by the acting community and by society at large.³⁶⁵ There was concern that China was way behind the West in this regard.³⁶⁶ Some actors learned or at least studied foreign languages, but those actors were almost entirely amateurs who later turned professional.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ This happened, for instance, with all four of the *si da mingdan* (four great performers of female roles). Their education could also include studying Western music (see the July 22, 1919, *Shenbao* item, Liu Yi 劉遺, “Zizi bu juan zhi Mei Lanfang” 孜孜不倦之梅蘭芳 [The always hard at work Mei Lanfang], in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 177-78). They were all very careful to give credit to the “social support circles” (*shejiao tuan* 社交團), “brain trusts” (*zhinang tuan* 智囊團), or “general headquarters” (*cannou bu* 參謀部) who groomed and planned for them. It is possible to take this kind of grooming as in a sense a continuation of the kind of polite education given to the *xianggong*, some of whom inhabited elegant quarters and were groomed to be fit companions for men of society and whose training and expected abilities could overlap with that of high-class courtesans. On how the *tangzi* where *xianggong* greeted their patrons resembled scholars’ studios, see Yao Shuyi, *Wan Qing xiqu de biange*, pp. 158-59. For an example of an actress who claimed that she realized on her own what a mistake it was not to be literate and took steps to correct that herself, see the September 29, 1939, *Shenbao* article, Lengfang 冷芳, recorder (*bilu* 筆錄), “Jin Suqin zishu: Yanju shisi nian (shang)” 金素琴自述: 演劇十四年(上) (Jin Suqin’s self-narrative: Fourteen years performing plays [part 1]), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 503-504. She explains that she started learning plays when she was seven and spent all her effort on that, but that when she grew up she realized what a mistake that was and worked hard on learning to read so that now she daily reads the newspapers. Jin Suqin was an actress who in her contract with the Gengxin Wutai 更新舞臺 (Even newer theater) in Shanghai held out for the right to first inspect the scripts for new plays and to agree or not to participate in the production. See the November 2, 1938, *Shenbao* article, Xiao Fang 筱舫, “Gengxin Wutai yao kundun Jin Suqin” 更新舞臺邀坤旦金素琴 (Even Newer Theater hires female actress of female parts Jin Suqin), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 434-35. It is interesting to note that her “self-narration” was written up but by someone else and not herself. Many of the reminiscences of older figures in the *Jingju* world (including Mei Lanfang) were produced in the same fashion as this article (with the subject dictating to someone else who puts the material into proper written form).

³⁶⁵ See the January 21, 1913, *Shenbao* article on a school for actors established by Pan Yueqiao and the Xia brothers in Shanghai and other developments, Xuanlang 玄郎, “Banxue jingzheng wei jiaoyu zhi fu” 辦學競爭為教育之福 (Competition in running schools brings educational good fortune), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 101-102. For an illustration of the school, see Hong Peijun, “Huadeng chu shang: Shanghai Xin Wutai (1908-1927) de biaoyan yu guankan,” p. 45. In 1921, the Shanghai actors’ association staged a series of performances combining actors from different troupes (*baban da huichuan* 八班大會串) to raise money for a variety of projects, including improving actors’ elementary education (see Chen Jie, *Minguo xiqu shi nianpu*, p. 59). In the following year the actor Feng Zihe 馮子和 (1888-1942) established a school for actors because he was concerned about all the wrong characters (*baizi* 白字) in plays. See Ma Shaobo et al., *Zhongguo Jingju shi*, 1: 503-504. Actors’ associations would periodically perform plays to raise money to support schools for actors.

³⁶⁶ Chen Duxiu said that in the West, because of their importance, actors were treated the same as “literati and scholars” (*wenren xueshi* 文人學士). See San’ai, “Lun xiqu,” p. 577. Going even further yet in this direction is an actress in *Xi yinyuan* 戲姻緣 (*Xikao* play #512, p. 5796), who says, “In the various nations of the West, actors are all graduates of college, and they are the most esteemed in society” 泰西各國, 唱戲的都是大學畢業生, 社會上最尊貴的. This play is an example of a *wenmingxi* play produced by Yisu She and performed in *bangzi* opera style. Mei Lanfang, of course, was given two honorary doctoral degrees in the U.S. in 1930.

³⁶⁷ Examples would be Gui Junqing 貴俊卿 (?-1939) (see Soushi 漱石, “Haishang bailing zhuan—Gui Junqing” 海上百伶傳—貴俊卿 [The biographies of 100 Shanghai actors—Gui Junqing], September 5, 1929, *Liyuan gongbao* item, in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, pp. 672-73), Ouyang Yuqian (see his “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 75), and Zhu

Traditional *Jingju* education stressed the reproduction or transmission of the art of one's teacher(s). It was common for teachers only to be willing to teach the "secrets" of their skills to students whom they did not see as in competition with themselves, such as their most intimate disciples or amateur actors.³⁶⁸ Actors were generally expected to professionally perform only those role-types they had been trained in. You had to earn the right to cross such boundaries or to be "creative," but what you had to do to get that right differed depending on the type of *Jingju* you were performing (experimentation was more welcome in *Haipai Jingju*, for instance), and was progressively lowered as time went on even in Beijing. Although they often met with resistance in the beginning, the majority of the most famous actors eventually moved beyond their teachers and the role-types they had trained in to synthesize a variety of influences, some from outside *Jingju* entirely, and their fame both permitted to them to do this and, to a large extent, was founded on precisely that kind of creativity. Many of them were able to have their achievements valorized by the recognition of other actors and the public that they had created a new acting style (*liupai* 流派) for the role-types they specialized in.³⁶⁹ The continuous production of new styles of acting instead of the preservation of older styles has been taken as one way to measure the health of *Jingju*. Factors such as intense competition between stars and the fact that being a *Jingju* star really meant something insured that the Republican era produced the majority of (*liupai*) recognized today.³⁷⁰ Conversely, the fact that so few new *liupai* have been produced and recognized in the last several decades has been taken as a bad sign.³⁷¹

The switch from the *baoyin* system, in which the actors were more equal in terms of income and the troupes were paternalistic organizations, to the *xifen* system in which actors were primarily paid according to the importance of the roles they played, created huge disparities in wealth in the

Qinxin 朱琴心 (1901-1961) (see Su Yi, *Jingju erbai nian gaiguan*, p. 298). Feng Zihe, who was never an amateur, would seem to be the exception (on him, see the April 17, 1913, *Shenbao* article Xuanlang 玄郎, "Ji xiao Zihe" 紀小子和 [A record of little (Feng) Zihe], in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 126).

³⁶⁸ In his memoirs, *Yihai wuya*, p. 255, Yuan Shihai says: "The older generations would always say: 'I would rather give you a dollar than teach you a sentence [from a play].' Back then, art was your own possession. Art was your rice bowl, you had to protect your rice bowl, art was not lightly transmitted [to others]" 老前輩們常說: '寧給一元錢, 不教一句詞.' 那時, 藝術是自己的私有財產. 藝術是飯碗, 保住飯碗, 藝不輕傳. For several sayings similar in intent to the one quoted by Yuan, see Yu Xuejian, *Xiyang shangxi*, p. 354. Hou Yushan, *You Meng bashi nian*, p. 231, quotes an even stronger one: "teaching to disciples starves to death the teacher" 教給徒弟, 餓死師傅. On professionals being willing to teach amateurs, see Yuan Shihai's comments in Xu Chengbei, *Jiazi hua yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 36, and Lu Yingkun, "Chuantong Jingju yishu de 'jingji jichu'—Lüeshuo Qingmo Minchu Beijing Jingju yiren de shouru," p. 624.

³⁶⁹ It is necessary to distinguish between styles of acting (*pai* 派) that were geographically oriented (*Jingpai* vs. *Haipai*) and styles thought to have been created by individuals (*liupai*), although both types tended to produce variations in the way specific plays were performed, whether that was a matter of small details or a substantial proportion of plays performed under the same name.

³⁷⁰ Xu Chengbei, *Mei Lanfang yu ershi shiji*, p. 223, argues that before Mei Lanfang (who flourished in the Republican era), there were no true *liupai*.

³⁷¹ See, for instance, Zhang Xiaochen 張曉晨, "Jingju xin liupai heyi nanchan?" 京劇新流派何以難產? (Why are new acting styles in *Jingju* so hard to produce?), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2000.4: 14-15.

community of actors. The stars at the top of the heap earned fantastic amounts of money,³⁷² even as they might limit the amount of times they mounted the stage,³⁷³ while less favored actors earned very small amounts for their performances and had to squeeze in as many of them as possible³⁷⁴ to make ends meet.³⁷⁵ It became more and more the case that plays were written specifically for the performance of star actors. As one might expect, actors could make more money performing well-known favorites than for new, experimental plays, although new plays that were not so experimental became very welcome.³⁷⁶

Audiences

The idea that *Jingju* theater audiences differed greatly over time and depending on the venue and location of performance should not come as a surprise at this point.³⁷⁷ Until the Chinese audience was “disciplined” into watching theater after the modern Western model (including the idea of sitting in assigned seats and watching the performance silently³⁷⁸), spectators in theater audiences interacted

³⁷² Stars also had big expenses, such as producing new, expensive costumes for new plays. Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 60, estimated that the monthly expenses incurred by an actor earning one thousand *yuan* a month would be 720 *yuan* and lists the kinds of expenses involved.

³⁷³ They could also earn money from making phonograph recordings.

³⁷⁴ Hurrying from one theater to another in order to participate in more than one performance in the same day was called *ganchang* 趕場 (rush [from one stage] to the [next] stage). It was done by actors of all levels but it was only the lowest level of actors who had to do it to maintain even subsistence income. Chen Moxiang, *Guanju shenghua sumiao*, part 3, p. 410, recounts the story of an actor performing the same play in three different venues on the same day and being so tired during the third performance that he dropped his weapon on stage.

³⁷⁵ Jiazi 甲子, “Guanyu chipin lingren tongji de ganxiang” 關於赤貧伶人統計的感想 (Thoughts concerning the survey of destitute actors), *Shiri xiju* 1.3 (1937): 5, reports the results of a recent survey by the Beijing actor’s association that found over a thousand *Jingju* performers living in dire poverty.

³⁷⁶ Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 62, describing an offer to perform new plays (xinxi 新戲 [here, experimental new plays]) for which his salary was to match that for performing old plays (*jiuxi* 舊戲), notes how unusual that was. On actor income in general, see Lu Yingkun, “Chuantong Jingju yishu de ‘jingji jichu.’”

³⁷⁷ Audience here refers to those who come to the theater (or other physical venue) to consume performances. There was, of course, a much larger “audience” that consumed *Jingju* at a distance through the print media, phonograph records, radio broadcasts, etc. On the other hand, we know that some proportion of the audience that went to theaters during performances were not primarily interested in the actors and plays but just saw the theater as a place to meet friends, host visitors, etc.

³⁷⁸ A photo of a performance of *Yuzhou feng* 宇宙鋒 (Sword of the universe; *Xikao* play #34) in *Mei Lanfang biao yan yishu tuying* 梅蘭芳表演藝術圖影 (Illustrations of Mei Lanfang’s performance art; Beijing: Waiwen chubanshe, 2002), p. 66, shows that there is a notice to the side of the stage that includes the words “While you are watching the play, please sit quietly, and please do not stand up” 諸君觀劇，務宜靜坐，祈勿站起。Muyou sheng, *Haishang liyuan zazhi* (1911), pp. 10/14-20, includes an item copied from *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 小說月報 (Fiction monthly) 1.2 (1910), pp. 2-3 of the “Yicong” 譯叢 (Collected translations) column entitled “Lundun guanju ji” 倫敦觀劇記 (An account of play watching in London) that includes a section on how tickets are sold and seats assigned. The prices for all the different classes of seating are given. Xu Lingxiao’s *Gucheng fanzhao ji* includes a scene supposedly set before the fall of the Qing in which the talking among themselves of a group of college students provokes an audience member to stare fiercely at them for disrupting the performance. See the first installment, *Zhonghua xiqu* 22 (1999): 13. Tong Jingxin, *Xin jiu xiqu zhi yanjiu*, pp. 160-61, tries to shame Chinese audiences into being quiet during performances by claiming that when a woman’s hairpin falls to the floor in a Western theater the entire audience can hear it fall.

very intimately with the performances and performers in front of them. Contrary to Bertolt Brecht, Chinese theater audiences both evaluated performances as performances and identified with the characters represented in the plays,³⁷⁹ and they had a variety of ways to express their evaluations as the performance unfolded. Actors did not have to wait until theater reviews began to be written or even for the end of a scene to know how well their efforts on stage were being received.³⁸⁰ Actors might be driven off the stage because their performances were not up to snuff or even because they were not thought as good as the play scheduled to appear after them.³⁸¹ Audiences rewarded what they thought good by calling out shouts of approval (*jiaohao* 叫好, *hecai* 喝彩)³⁸² or throwing money

³⁷⁹ Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, p. 155, shows how this works in the case of applause for how an actor portrays the death of Liu Shichang 劉世昌 in *Wupen ji* (*Xikao* play #4).

³⁸⁰ Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*, “Applause,” p. 28, states that while “today” middle-class French audiences clap during scenes, “a more intellectual and ‘avant-garde’ audience will show its enthusiasm only after the curtain has fallen, in order to not single out specific actors or production effects, but to thank the performers collectively after the show is over.” Tsuji Chōka, *Zhongguo ju*, quotes the police regulations for theaters in Beijing, the 16th item of which (p. 229) “prohibits calling out approval in order to avoid this affecting the listening and viewing of others” 禁止叫好, 以免礙人聽觀. Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin, “Introduction,” in Richard Dellamora and Daniel Fischlin, eds., *The Work of Opera: Genre, Nationhood, and Sexual Difference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 5, however, note the “gradual movement in [Western] operatic performance away from an active audience . . . to the gradual ‘silencing of talk’ . . . that is now customary” and quote Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 25, “The etiquette of physical passivity . . . reflects the achievement of social hegemony in part through cultural practice.”

³⁸¹ For an example, see the June 7, 1913, *Shenbao* piece, Xuanlang 玄郎, “Ji chuwu ye zhi Zhong Wutai” 紀初五夜之中舞臺 (A record of the evening performance at Central Stage), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingku ziliao xuanbian*, p. 150. Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, p. 17, recounts examples of audience members crying uncontrollably during *Jingju* performances.

³⁸² Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, pp. 122-23, recounts how when the 1964 film version of *Zha Mei an* 劊美案 (The case of the execution of Chen Shimei; *Xikao* play #113) was first shown, and the actor playing Judge Bao, Qiu Shengrong, appeared on the screen, the spectators clapped and yelled *hao* before they realized that such behavior was not appropriate to watching a film. Xu Chengbei, *Mingzi jiushi xi*, reports that he has not been able to find any Qing dynasty record of audience members clapping (*guzhang* 鼓掌) at performances. Huang Shang, *Jiuxi xintan*, mentions an anecdote from when Yuan Shikai was in power in which an actor imitated clapping and called it “calling out approval with your hands” (*he shou cai* 喝手彩). Clapping did eventually become the sanctioned way to express approval, under the influence of the West, although Rulan Chao Pian, “The Function of Rhythm in the Peking Opera,” in Joseph Maceda, ed., *The Musics of Asia* (Manila: the National Music Council of the Philippines with the UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, 1971), p. 122, argues that applause breaks the “rhythmic flow” of performances in a way that *jiaohao* did not. Some expressed the idea that contemporary audiences no longer know how to *jiaohao*, as in the case of Weiwo 唯我, “Gao Liu Hongsheng (xuzuo) 告劉鴻升 (續昨) (Some advice for Liu Hongsheng [continued from yesterday]), *Guanhua Jingdu ribao*, issue 864 (1910), in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan xubian*, 4: 397. Xu Chengbei, *Jingju yu Zhongguo wenhua*, p. 334, asserts that *Jingju* “hopes for” (*xiwang* 希望), even “requires” (*yaoqiu* 要求) called out responses (*hecai*) from the audience. Cheng Changgeng, however, like Glen Gould, did not want members of the audience to express approval while he was performing. He even insisted on this from the Guangxu emperor. See Ren Erbei, ed., *Youyu ji*, pp. 206-207 (item 256). Ye Tao, *Zhongguo Jingju xisu*, pp. 133-34, however, asserts that calling out approval was not done in the palace. Xu Chengbei, *Mingzi jiu shi xi*, p. 54, notes that Yu Shuyan strongly cautioned his disciple, Li Shaochun, to never “request tea from the audience” 向臺底下要茶 (i.e., perform for the sake of getting the audience to shout approval). Li Hongchun, *Jingju changtan*, p. 99, on the other hand, speaks of the version of *Hanjin kou* 漢津口 (Hanjin ferry crossing; not in *Xikao*) taught him as having “several places designed to draw forth shouts of approval” 幾個固定的要‘好’的地方.

on the stage³⁸³ and rewarded the bad with ironic approval (*daohao* 倒好, *daocai* 倒彩)³⁸⁴ or worse, which included “catcalls” (*guaisheng* 怪聲; *guaijiao* 怪叫)³⁸⁵ and being pelted with chunks of sugar cane.³⁸⁶ Certain role-types, on the other hand, were allowed to speak directly to the audience, and even make remarks about the audience, but direct references could get you in trouble.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ See Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 10, and Colin Mackerras, “Commercialization and Chinese Traditional Theater and Storytelling in the Reform Period,” *CHINOPEARL Papers* 27 (2007): 243-67, pp. 249-50. Throwing the money badly could result in becoming the focus of audience disapproval. See *Haishang fanhua meng*, p. 20.1715 (part 2 of the sequel). “Audience performance” (*guanzhong de yanji* 觀眾的演技) has become a subject of interest. See Liu Jingliang and Tan Jingbo, *Zhongguo xiqu guanzhong xue*, p. 396.

³⁸⁴ Tian Han 田漢, *Mingyou zhi si* 名優之死 (Death of a famous actor; 1927), *Tian Han juzuo xuan* 田漢劇作選 (Selected plays of Tian Han; Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1981), p. 166, describes the verbal uproar in the audience in response to an actor’s voice breaking on stage. In the PRC, efforts have been made to suppress such behavior, but Zhang Xuejin 張學津 (1941-2012), “Sheng zheng feng shi—Wo de zishu (jiexuan)” 生正逢時—我的自述 (節選) (My life indeed met up with the times—My self-narrative [abridged]), *Zhongguo Jingju* 2007.4: 50-51, p. 50, recounts two times he was the subject of *daohao*. Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, associates the decline of *daohao* (which he claims to have never witnessed) to the switch from looking down on actors to looking upon them as equals. Liu Si, *Guoju jiaose he renwu*, p. 68, claims to have never encountered *daohao* at a performance in Taiwan, and associates that with a desire to “protect the art of this national treasure and revitalize *Guoju*, fearing only that it would receive the least harm” 保持國粹藝術, 振興國劇, 惟恐她受著半點傷害. Li Fusheng, *Zhongguo guoju shi*, explains the lack of *daohao* (he was also writing in Taiwan) as a matter of the audience no longer being as “serious” (*renzhen* 認真) as it once was.

³⁸⁵ Actresses and male performers of female roles were the prime subjects of catcalls. See, for instance, Wang Yuyi 王羽儀 and Duanmu Hongliang 端木蕻良, *Jiujing fengsu baitu* 舊京風俗百圖 (One hundred pictures illustrating the customs of old Beijing; Hong Kong Sanlian shudian, 1984), p. 80, fig. 67, picture entitled “Tingxi” 聽戲 (Listening to plays), that shows a *huadan* actress on stage with the words “It is not permitted to shout approval using catcalls” 不準怪聲叫好 posted on one of the stage pillars. Huang Shang, *Juxi xintan*, p. 11, says that he saw such notices in Tianjin and Beijing. A stage direction in Wu Zuguang 吳祖光, *Fengxue ye guiren* 風雪夜歸人 (The returning person on a windy and snowy night; 1942), *Fengxue ye guiren*, *Chuang jianghu* 風雪夜歸人, 闖江湖 (The returning person on a windy and snowy night and Making a living onstage; Beijing: Renmin wenxue, 1996), p. 32, says that every day when the male performer of female roles who is at the center of the play entered or left the stage he was always accompanied by *guaisheng jiaohao*.

³⁸⁶ See George Kin Leung, “The Enjoyment of Chinese Drama,” *China Journal* 6.1 (1926): 1-11, p. 11 and Li Zigui, *Yi Jiangnan*, p. 13. Zhang Guowei, *Ximi yehua*, p. 15, describes how at the end of *Fengbo ting* 風波亭 (Pavilion of wind and waves, *Xikao* play #280), when the edict condemning the patriotic hero Yue Fei is read, the audience would so pelt the reader of the edict with miscellaneous objects that the actor would take the precaution of providing himself with special padding before reading it. Wu Youru 吳友如 (? – c. 1893) depicted an incident that occurred while a *Jingju* troupe was performing in Ningbo. The actor playing Jiang Shang 姜尚 in the play *Weishui he* 渭水河 (The Wei River; play #156 in *Xikao*) came on stage wearing the wrong headdress. The audience insisted he change it and start again. When the actor refused, he was beaten. See *Wu Youru huabao*, *Fengsu zhi tushuo shang*, *Di shi ji shang* 第十集上 (Collection ten part one), volume 19, picture number 46. For audience interaction with stage performance in the late Qing in general, see Zeng Fan’an 曾凡安, “Lun guanzhong dui wan Qing yanju de canyu” 論觀眾對晚清演劇的參與 (On spectator participation in performances in the late Qing), *Sanxia luntan* 三峽論壇 (Three Gorges forum) 2010.3: 121-26, and for a detailed analysis of different kinds of *hecai*, see Ma Er xiangsheng (Feng Shuluan), “Shuo hecai” 說喝彩 (On yelling bravo), in Zhou Jianyun, ed., *Jubu congkan*, “Pinju yuhua” section, pp. 94-95 (*Pingju shiliao congkan* reprint pp. 760-61).

³⁸⁷ As an example that would presumably not get the actor in trouble we can look to a remark by a *chou* actor in *Beideng* 背凳 (Carrying the bench on his back; *Xikao* play #414). When he is teaching his wife to play a proper submissive wife he tells her that she should “make eyes” (*feiyan* 飛眼) at the fancy floor (*hualou* 花樓 [i.e., balcony]) and the main floor (*zhenglou* 正樓) of the theater since that is where the “old gentlemen who spend a lot of money” 花錢的老爺們 sit.

As we have seen in the introduction to the book, at one time many Chinese grew up listening to *Jingju*. We can imagine that perhaps a majority of a traditional audience for a *Jingju* performance could sing at least some of the arias on their own, and there was also a very good chance that members of the audience could sing very well indeed. To be able to judge the quality of a performance through accurate and adept comparison to past performances of both the particular performer in question and other performers of the role was an important form of social capital.³⁸⁸

Although *Jingju* won out over *Kunqu* at least in part because it was much easier to understand in performance, as time passed it also came to be thought of by some as not easy to understand.³⁸⁹ There were also audiences that writers and performers expected not to be able to understand the fine points of *Jingju*. These included Shanghainese, women, and foreigners. Plays were written and performed to appeal to specific audiences, but because of the variety worked into any single full-length play or entertainment program, both were typically able to speak to more than one kind of taste or constituency.

Under the rotation system, in Beijing theater goers were focused primarily on which troupe was playing in which theater, and secondarily on what plays might be performed (which they could tell depending on what props were on display outside the theater), but less on which actors would be performing. This changed once the rotation system and the *baoyin* systems went into decline in favor of the *xifen* and star system. Audience attention became strongly focused on the star actors, with supporters of particular actors joining together to form clubs or acting individually to express their support for their favorites in the form of flower baskets and congratulatory calligraphy for display in the theater,³⁹⁰ expensive presents such as theater costumes,³⁹¹ dedicated literary or journalistic collections

³⁸⁸ Knowledgeable members of the audience were said to concentrate on such details, while their counterparts only concentrated on the spectacle as in the sayings “those who know how to watch plays concentrate on detail, those who don’t watch plays look for excitement” 會看戲的看門道，不看戲的看熱鬧 and “professionals concentrate on details, non-professionals pay attention to what is exciting” 內行看門道，外行看熱鬧. See Xia Tian, *Xiyang yiqian tiao*, p. 22.

³⁸⁹ Qian Mu 錢穆, “Zhongguo Jingju zhi wenxue yiwei” 中國京劇之文學意味 (The literary flavor of Chinese *Jingju*), in Weng Zaisi, ed., *Jingju congfan bainian lu*, p. 90, argues that the “extremely simple plots and sharply defined characters of Chinese theater [he is really talking about *Jingju*] made it easy for the audience to understand” 中國戲劇情節極簡單，人物個性極顯豁，使人易於了解，which in turn allowed the audience to concentrate on the aesthetics of the performance. However, Li Ruihuan 李瑞環, “Zai jinian Huiban jin Jing 200 zhounian zhenxing Jingju xueshu taolun hui shang jianghua” 在紀念徽班進京 200 周年振興京劇學術討論會上講話 (Speech given at the conference to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the entry of Anhui troupes into Beijing and to revitalize *Jingju*), in *Zhengqu Jingju yishu de xin fanrong*, p. 12, claims that as for *Jingju*, “without a certain level of knowledge about traditional Chinese theater and history, it can’t be appreciated” 沒有一定的戲曲和歷史知識是欣賞不了的. Many claimed that the new plays written for Mei Lanfang by Qi Rushan and others were too hard to understand. For a strong statement of this idea, see the 1934 piece by Lu Xun, “Lun Mei Lanfang ji qi ta,” already referenced in the introduction to the book. He claims that Mei Lanfang was originally the object of affection (*chong'er* 寵兒) of vulgar people (*suren* 俗人) but was appropriated by the literati (*shidafu* 士大夫). He says the difference between Mei Lanfang and Shisan dan 十三旦 (Thirteenth *dan*; stage name of Hou Junshan 侯俊山 [1854-1935]), who can still command a popular audience despite the fact that he is now seventy years old, is that Mei has been “put under a glass cover” 罩進玻璃罩 by the literati (pp. 579-80).

³⁹⁰ A September 10, 1926, *Shenbao* piece, Jiyun 寄雲, “Ji Gong Wutai Cheng Yanqiu zhi shengkuang” 記共舞臺程硯秋之盛況 (A record of the splendid showing of Cheng Yanqiu at the Gong Theater), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 362, records that an estimated fifty-plus flower baskets filled both sides of the stage. The other presents mentioned include objects made of silver and a large quantity of calligraphic scrolls and paintings.

³⁹¹ See Lu Yingkun, “Chuantong Jingju yishu de ‘jingji jichu,’” p. 625, for an example.

(*zhuanji* 專集),³⁹² acting as advocates in society and in the new media such as newspapers,³⁹³ or shouting out their approval during performances.³⁹⁴ Fights could break out between supporters of different actors.³⁹⁵

The major change in the audience for commercial *Jingju* performances was the gradual integration of women. Although apparently not codified by law or edict,³⁹⁶ women were effectively

³⁹² In 1913 the supporters of Feng Zihe and Jia Biyun 賈璧雲 (1890-1941) produced rival collections of poetry and prose about their favorite actors. See Yeh, “A Public Love Affair,” pp. 36-41. A November 21, 1920, *Shenbao* piece, Yeli 野驢, “Lingren chuban zhuanji” 伶人出版專集 (Actors publish dedicated collections), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 193, mentions such a collection that is in the works for Xun Huisheng and Xiao Cuihua and the possibility of doing one for Lü mudan 綠牡丹 (Green Peony, stage name of Huang Yulian 黃玉麟 [1907-1968]). Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 93, discusses these kinds of vanity publications, including one compiled to honor himself and Mei Lanfang. Matsuura Tsuneo 松浦恆雄, “Tekan zai Zhongguo xiandai yanju de zuoyong—Yi Minguo chunian de tekan wei zhongxin” 特刊在中國現代演劇的作用—以民國初年的特刊為中心 (The functions of special collections in modern performance in China—Focusing on the special collections of the early Republican period), translated from the Japanese by the author and Wang Jie 王傑, *Xueshu yanjiu* 學術研究 (Academic research) 2010.3: 143-51, p. 147, presents a list of seven of these kinds of publications that appeared in the 1910s (one focuses on a *wenming xi* performer and another on a *wenming xi* charity performance, the rest focus on the *Jingju/bangzi* actors Feng Zihe, and Mei Lanfang [the only one with more than one collection] and actresses Bi Yunxia and Zhang Wenyan 張文艷 [1898-1940]). To Matsuura’s list could be added Xu Yugong 徐籲公 et al., *Yunhong ji* 雲紅集 (Collection for [Du 杜] Yunhong [a Heibei bangzi actress]; Beijing: Huiyou she, 1914), Zhang Qicai 章棄材, ed., *Liu Xikui ji chubian* 劉喜奎集初編 (Collection for Liu Xikui, First part [it does not appear that a later continuation ever appeared]; Beijing: Xiju xinwen she, 1915), and *Meilang xiezhen* 梅郎寫真 (Portraits of Mei Langfang; Shanghai: Meishe, 1920). A collection for Yu Lianquan did come out: Shu Sheyu 舒舍予 [Lao She] ed., *Xiao cuihua* 小翠花 (Shanghai: Shengsheng meishu, 1922).

³⁹³ An example is the Baishe 白社 (White society), formed to protect the interests of Xun Huisheng (stage name Bai mudan 白牡丹 until 1922), before he could get out of the clutches of the master he had been sold to. See Lu Yingkun, “Chuantong Jingju yishu de ‘jingji jichu,’” p. 625.

³⁹⁴ Wu Zuguang, *Fengxue ye guiren*, pp. 44-45, has the hyper-fan, Chen Xiang, of the male performer of female roles at the center of the play, boast about how he gave the latter a *pengtou hao'er* 碰頭好兒 (welcoming shout of approval) when the latter first entered the stage, and “in quick succession made eight different calls of approval” 一連氣兒叫了八種不一樣的。

³⁹⁵ Zhang Kai, “Beiping jubu dashi ji,” *Xiju yuekan* 3.2 (November 1930), item 52, entry for August 13, 1930, reports on such a fight (reproduced *Su wenxue congkan*, 18: 300-301). Qi Rushan, *Guanju jianyan*, pp. 16b-18a, divides up spectators according to what they pay the most attention to in performances and makes some remarks on the social background of each group. Writing two decades later, Wu Zuguang, “Guanghe lou de pengjue jia,” does the same kind of thing for the audiences at Guanghe lou. Xu Lingxiao, *Gucheng fanzhao ji*, depicts the formation of a club of Mei Lanfang supporters and discussion of what kind of rules they want to have and the different ways to support actors in and outside of the theater (fifth installment in *Zhonghua xiqu* 26 [2001], pp. 292-313).

³⁹⁶ Colin Mackerras, *The Rise of the Peking Opera*, p. 214, says, “No direct proclamation seems to have been issued against the attendance of women at the theater.” He then goes on to relate the story that the request of a certain painter that the theaters be closed to women was accepted by the Qianlong emperor. Although Wang Liqi, ed., *Yuan Ming Qing jinhui xiao xiqu shiliao*, contains privately written calls for the prohibition of women from the theaters (see pp. 256-58 for examples) it contains no national edicts or local regulations to that effect. A January 7, 1874, *Shenbao* piece announces that local officials in Shanghai, in the wake of the Yang Yuelou case, have decided to ban women from attending the theater. See “Yanjin funü ruguan kanxi gaoshi” 嚴禁婦女入館看戲告示 (Proclamation strictly prohibiting women from entering theaters to watch plays), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 7. The proclamation, which is quoted in the piece, mentions no penalties and seems more interested in persuasion than laying down the law. According to Yeh, “Courtesans and Opera Singer Lovers,” p. 154, the consent of the foreign authorities was not obtained and the order was

kept out of most commercial theaters until well into the twentieth century. The Qing dynasty was comparatively conservative when it came to gender prescriptions³⁹⁷ and there was both extensive concern about the mixing of the sexes (*nannü hunza* 男女混雜) in public³⁹⁸ and worry about the effect of lewd plays (*yinxi* 淫戲) on women, who were conceived as being less able to deal with temptation than men. Although frowned on in many quarters, women had long been going to see plays in less easily controlled spaces than theaters such as performances at temple fairs.³⁹⁹

The first women openly allowed into the theaters of the Qing dynasty were prostitutes, who were presumably beyond redemption. In any case, they were initially allowed in for the convenience and pleasure of men, whatever advantages they later managed to make of the privilege.⁴⁰⁰ Officials could threaten to treat any ordinary women who went to the theater as prostitutes.⁴⁰¹ Originally, prostitutes and foreigners had to pay a surcharge when they went to the theater.⁴⁰²

never posted in the theaters. An item in Xu Ke, *Qingbai leichao*, “Jingshi funü guanju” 京師婦女觀劇 (Female theatergoers in the capital), pp. 5065-66, that claims an edict of prohibition was promulgated in the Daoguang reign period is discussed below.

³⁹⁷ This was particularly true for Han Chinese women. Manchu women were allowed to enjoy more social freedom than them. See Weikun Cheng, “In Search of Leisure: Women’s Festivities in Late Imperial Beijing,” *The Chinese Historical Review* 14.1 (Spring 2007): 1-28, p. 11, which asserts that “Manchu women obviously enjoyed more liberty than did their Han equivalents due to their minority customs” and “They were usually visible in public, rode horses in the streets, and had big feet.”

³⁹⁸ For examples of newspaper reports of sightings of males and females together in which the reporter asks that something be done to stop such things, see Zhang Fenggang 張風綱, ed., *Jiujing Xingshi huabao: Wan Qing shijing tai* 舊京醒世畫報: 晚清市井態 (Wake Up the World Pictorial from old Beijing: The ecology of urban late Qing China; Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian, 2003), p. 165, “Nannü he wang” 男女何往 (Where were that man and woman going?), and p. 342, “Tai bu yaguan” 太不雅觀 (How inelegant). Both come from the same Beijing newspaper and are dated to the same year (1909). The second item is about mixed gender sledding and contains the phrase *nannü hunza* 男女混雜 (males and females mixed together).

³⁹⁹ Xu Ke, *Qingbai leichao*, “Henan funü guanju” 河南婦女觀劇 (Woman watch plays in Henan), p. 5066, relates the story of a prefect named Zhang Guanzhun 張觀準 who prided himself on being a moralist (*yi dao xue ziming* 以道學自名), and whose first act on arriving at the prefecture he was to govern was to proclaim that women would not be allowed to go to temples to watch plays. When he found out that although the proclamation was obeyed in the city, every time a temple outside the city put on plays the women would “empty all the alleys” (*kongxiang* 空巷) and go see them, he went to catch the women at such a performance, blocked off the exits, declared that the women must have come to see their monk lovers, and threatened to have monks carry them out on their backs. This plan was supposed to have been effective and made the women not dare to go to the temple again. On attempts to prevent women going to temples during the late Qing in particular, see Goossaert, “Irrepressible Female Piety: Late Imperial Bans on Women Visiting Temples,” who also cites an alternate version of the story about Zhang Guanzhun (p. 231). As noted above, women could attend private performances (*tanghui*) if they had the right connections.

⁴⁰⁰ Catherine Vance Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, p. 68, lists going to the theater as one of “the common pastimes and business activities for Shanghai courtesans at this time [c. 1898]” and, p. 264, says, “The theater was the place where the courtesan could play hostess, invite her client, parade her conquest in public, and be seen by potential clients.”

⁴⁰¹ Xu Ke, *Qingbai leichao*, “Jingshi funü guanju,” claims that in the Daoguang reign it was fine for women to go the theater but that an unnamed censor thought this was bad for morals (*you shang fenghua* 有傷風化), memorialized the emperor, and was successful in getting an edict of prohibition that was posted in the theaters but was ignored. According to the story, the censor then went to a theater where women were in the audience and had his attendants post a proclamation saying that since women of good family would not ignore the prohibition, all of the women in the theater must be prostitutes. He further ordered that they should all come and have their names registered. When they balked, he threatened to accuse them of going against the edict. After the women signed guarantees that they will not go to the

The dates when ordinary women first began to be allowed to see plays in public theaters differed from place to place, with the foreign concessions in Shanghai most likely being the earliest⁴⁰³ and Beijing being pretty much the last,⁴⁰⁴ if one discounts the brief period when the city was occupied by allied troops during the Boxer Rebellion.⁴⁰⁵ To alleviate concern about the sexes mixing in the theaters, women were originally restricted to sections of the balcony and were supposed to have their own entrances/exits and restrooms,⁴⁰⁶ although this did not allay concern about women being stared at in the theaters nor did it prevent mutual flirtation. The next step was to allow women to sit with relatives in rented boxes, and the final step was to integrate the sexes completely. Even in parts of the country where it was alright, either officially or by custom, for women to go to public theaters, individual theaters apparently had the right to refuse entry to women.⁴⁰⁷ Since the segregated areas for the women tended to be in the more expensive balconies or in the even more expensive rented boxes,

theater again, they were allowed to return home. This item and non-official proscriptions against women going to the theater are quoted and discussed in Ding Shumei, *Qingdai jinhui xiqu shiliao biannian*, pp. 208-209 and her *Zhongguo gudai jinhui xiqu biannian shi*, pp. 519-20.

⁴⁰² Xin Wutai was among the first to abolish this practice. See Hong Peijun, “Huadeng chu shang: Shanghai Xin Wutai (1908-1927) de biaoyan yu guankan,” pp. 43-44.

⁴⁰³ Yeh, “A Public Love Affair,” p. 25, says that this was done “from the outset,” and in *Shanghai Love*, pp. 74-75, says, “Western women living in the Settlements [in Shanghai] regularly went to the theater, and this set an example for Chinese women.” Nevertheless, it was not the case that it was anything goes in Shanghai. A Shanghai theater owner was brought into court in 1918 when it was found that women were allowed to sit with the men in his theater. See the February 25, 1918, *Shenbao* piece, “Xiyuan xu fen nannü zuowei” 戲院須分男女座位 (Theaters must separate the seating for males and females), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 175.

⁴⁰⁴ “Sanzhi Zhongsheng beiju” 三志鐘聲被拘 (Third notice about the arrest of [Wang] Zhongsheng), *Guanhua Jingdu ribao*, issue 1163 (1911), in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan xubian*, 4: 438, is one in a series of newspaper items about the arrest of Wang Zhongsheng for alleged fornication. The writer blames such events on foreigners in the foreign concessions showing movies at which women were allowed to attend, followed by the allowance of women to attend charity performances of theater. The writer says that reform of all this has to begin with the prohibition of evening performances.

⁴⁰⁵ Huang Yufu, *Jingju, qiao he Zhongguo de xingbie guanxi (1902-1937)*, p. 125, presents a chronological chart of how things worked out in Beijing. According to it, up until 1900 the audiences were all male, 1900-1902 they were mixed but segregated, 1902-1912/13 they returned to being all male, 1912/13-1914 they were mixed but segregated, 1914-c. 1930 they are integrated but primarily in the boxes, and from about then on fully integrated. This is, of course, just a rough chronology and exceptions can be found. Theater tickets (*xidan*) often indicated where women were to sit, if they were allowed at all. In Lou Yue and Du Guangpei, *Jiujing lao xidan*, you can find examples of tickets with the annotation *nannü biezuo* 男女別座 (male and female segregated seating) dating from 1910 (pp. 2-3) through 1942 (pp. 140-41), for mixed seating in boxes (*baoxiang nannü hezuo* 包廂男女合座) from 1920 (p. 34) to 1930 (pp. 64-65), and for plain mixed seating (*nannü hezuo* 男女合座) beginning in 1919, with one ticket offering “ordinary mixed seating” (*putong nannü hezuo* 普通男女合座; pp. 66-67).

⁴⁰⁶ Allen, *Chinese Theatres Handbook*, p. 3, says that in “the old fashioned kind [of theatre],” “the women are seated apart from the men, in a gallery with a separate entrance,” and “are locked in at the end of a performance until the men have left the house.”

⁴⁰⁷ Most famously, women were kept out of Guanghe lou, the theater in Beijing where Fuliancheng students daily put on plays, because their presence was thought to be a distraction for the young male student actors. Written in 1936, Wu Zuguang, “Guanghe lou de pengjue jia,” pp. 364-65, presents the lifting of the prohibition of female spectators at that theater as a very recent thing.

and not in the pit where the cheapest seats were, women were in effect made to pay more to go to the theater than men.⁴⁰⁸

One argument for keeping women out of the theaters was so that they would not see the lewd plays performed in them.⁴⁰⁹ Although this continued to be a concern once women were allowed into the theaters,⁴¹⁰ many think that the introduction of women into the public theaters eventually actually had the effect of cleaning up the content of the plays.⁴¹¹ This even prompted a certain amount of nostalgia on the part of certain male authors for the days when the theater was a male preserve where men could literally bare their chests and enjoy naughtily bits together.⁴¹²

Besides affecting what was performed in the theaters by their mere presence, it has also been thought that as the numbers of females going to the theater increased and sometimes outnumbered

⁴⁰⁸ This disparity could be quite straightforward in the cheaper mat-shed theaters. Gamble, *Peking: A Social Survey*, p. 226, cites one where the men were charged ten coppers and the women twelve coppers for admission.

⁴⁰⁹ Concern over this appears in an extremely graphic form in an item called “Wuhan shishi: Huiyin Tang” 武漢時事：誨淫堂 (Current event in Wuhan: Hall for the Propagation of Lewdness) that appears in the “fiction” (*xiashuo* 小說) chapter of Muyou sheng, *Haishang liyuan zazhi* (pp. 11/1-7). In the story, two women emerge from a theater and talk about how watching the plays (especially *Xiao fangniu* [Xikao #71]) has made them “hot and moist down below” 下面有些濕潤潤的. The younger asks the elder if people really do such things in real life and the elder responds, “Whatever happens on stage also happens off it” 臺上有, 臺下有 (p. 11/3). They are overheard by two men who had already noticed them in the theater and purposely followed them. They have sex (“offstage,” so to speak). Afterwards, one of the men, noting that the women were already “moist,” wonders if they had just had sex with someone else, but the other points out that it was from watching the plays. The two men give thanks to the owner of the theater for making things easier for them by putting on the lewd plays. An old man who had tried to prevent the seduction complains, “Little officials might be afraid that Westerners will interfere, and are afraid to try and control this, but do you mean to say that big officials also are afraid of the Westerners?” 小官雖是怕外人干涉, 不敢來管, 難道大官也怕外人嗎? (p. 11/6). The author of the piece, self-labeled “jizhe” 記者 (recorder), several times inserts moralizing comments in parentheses and concludes the story by saying, “Your recorder has privately been surprised that ignorant people of remote villages, who are [naturally] so honest and simple, also have many instances of sexual affairs. But when I looked into this, it was actually the case that lewd flower drum plays had taught them to do this” 記者竊怪僻鄉愚民, 渾厚樸實, 亦多桑間陌上之事。迨稽之, 實花鼓淫戲有以誨之也 (p. 11/7).

⁴¹⁰ See, for instance, Zhang Fenggang, ed., *Jiuqing Xingshi huabao: Wan Qing shijing tai*, “You shang fenghua” 有傷風化 (It is harmful to morals), p. 71.

⁴¹¹ Qi Rushan makes this argument at least twice, in his *Guoju mantan*, p. 170 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 3: 1648) and *Wushi nian lai de guoju*, pp. 115-16 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 5: 2787-88). Wu Zuguang, “Guanghe lou de pengjue jia,” p. 361, links the crudeness and lewdness of the performances at Guanghe lou to the prohibition of female spectators, and notes that there was “pulling back” (*shoushu* 收束) from “indecent performance” (*weixie biaoyan* 猥褻表演) after the prohibition was lifted, but then goes on to say that most of the female students who came to watch plays there “precisely liked to watch that kind of performance [the indecent kind]” 正愛看這路的表演.

⁴¹² See Liang Shiqiu, “Tingxi,” especially p. 81. A May 26, 1910, *Shuntian ribao* item, “Sanqing juchang” 三慶劇場 (Sanqing Theater), reproduced in Fu Jin, ed., *Jingju lishi wenxian huibian: Qingdai juan*, 5: 658-59, describes how when the weather is hot as at the time of the visit to this theater by the reporter, the men would give their upper garments to the table tender to be deposited behind the counter and be picked up after the performance according to the “clothes token” (*yipai* 衣牌) given when the clothes are given to the table tender. Qi Rushan, *Xijie xiao zhanggu*, “Chang’e benyue” 嫦娥奔月, p. 87 (*Qi Rushan quanji*, 4: 2403), says that before the advent of female audience members in the public theaters, seasonal plays (*yingjie xi* 應節戲) “were performed any old way, but after women joined the audiences, things got exciting” 隨便演演, 自從女子准觀劇以後, 才熱鬧起來. He goes on to stress that with the advent of women in the audiences, plays had to win their support (*zhongshi* 重視) and actors had to be able to appeal to women if they were to have “drawing power” (*lilian* 力量).

those of the men there, their preferences began to influence the programs that were mounted in the theaters. A common way to understand what they wanted was to say that as new theatergoers they had no way to understand the real complexities of the artistic and vocal art of *Jingju*, and instead focused on what looked good, in effect helping to change a previous emphasis on the aural in favor of the visual. What did they supposedly think looked good? Male performers of female roles, such as Mei Lanfang, for one thing. Many associate the rise of male performers of female roles (*nandan*) to the rise of the female audience.⁴⁴³ They are also supposed to have liked the handsome and macho male martial role actors (*wusheng*), who also reached unprecedented prominence during the period when women first began to go to the public theaters.⁴⁴⁴ There is also the idea that women particularly liked romantic stories,⁴⁴⁵ and that they were very attentive to the costuming of the actors.⁴⁴⁶ They supposedly did not

⁴⁴³ In an interjection by Xu Jichuan in Mei Lanfang, *Wutai shenghuo sishi nian*, 1: 112-13, Xu says: “With the founding of the Republic, a great body of female spectators entered the theaters, and this stirred up a sudden change in the theatrical world. In the past it was the *laosheng* and *wusheng* actors that were on top. Because the theater-going experience of male spectators already had quite a long history, with regard to the art of *laosheng* and *wusheng* actors, they were generally able to evaluate and appreciate it. Female spectators had just begun to see plays, so naturally they were unfamiliar with things, so what they looked for was excitement, what they picked was what was good to look at. As for a dried-up oldster such as Tan Xinpei, if you were able to appreciate his art, even if they watched him, they would definitely not get excited about him. Therefore, it was the *dan* role-type [actors] that became their favorite thing to look at. Before many years went by, *qingyi* actors had a substantial audience, and with one leap found themselves among the most important of role-types. The late-coming new batch of spectators [the women], contributed some power to this development” 民國以後,大批的女看客涌進了戲館,就引起了整個戲劇界急遽的變化。過去是老生武生站着優勢,因為男看客聽戲的經驗,已經有他的悠久的歷史,對於老生武生的藝術,很普遍地能夠加以批判和欣賞。女看客是剛剛開始看戲,自然比較外行,無非來看個熱鬧,那就一定先要揀漂亮的看。像譚鑫培這樣一個干癟老頭兒,要不懂得欣賞他的藝術,看了是不會對他發生興趣的。所以旦的一行,就成了她們愛看的對象。不到幾年工夫,青衣擁有了大量的觀眾,一躍而居戲曲行當裡重要的地位,後來參加的這一批新觀眾也有一點促成的力量的。The first two pages of the biography of Mei Lanfang by Liaoliao in the beginning of [Liu] Huogong, ed., *Meilangji*, recounts an incident in which several young women try to get at Mei Lanfang backstage and then laid an ambush for him on his way home when they are kept away from him. Liaoliao then says that according to Mei Lanfang, this kind of incident has happened to him as many as a hundred times (*shu shi bai ci* 數十百次). Mu Rugai’s *Mei Lanfang* includes many examples of women falling for Mei Lanfang, including one about an elderly prostitute and another about a young unwed woman. Liu Xikui is presented as unusual in rejecting the chance to marry him. Li Lingling 李伶伶, *Mei Lanfang de yishu yu qinggan* 梅蘭芳的藝術與情感 (Mei Lanfang’s art and emotions; Beijing: Tuanjie chuban she, 2008), “He Liu Xikui duanzan de lian’ai” 和劉喜奎短暫的戀愛 (In love with Liu Xikui for a short time), pp. 215-17, quotes her memoirs to the effect that they fell in love around 1915, she gave him up so as not to harm his future, and this was a big regret to her. Writers such as Zhang Yifan, in his *Juxue’ benwei de queli*, have stressed that the rise to stardom of male performers of female roles in the beginning of the Republic brought with it plays that featured female characters (p. 159), while writers such as Sophia Tingting Zhao, in her “Reorienting the Gaze in Mei Lanfang’s Lyrical Theatre: Performing Female Interiority,” *Asian Theatre Journal* 33.2 (Fall 2016): 395-419, have stressed the newness of the kind of female characters these actors presented on stage.

⁴⁴⁴ Ouyang Yuqian, “Zi wo yan xi yi lai,” p. 125, recounts that in the 1920s there was a pretty bad *wusheng* (Ouyang says he was “unbearably vulgar”: *su bu kannai* 俗不勘耐) whom he does not name who nevertheless was able to fill the theater because of the support of the female audience. The time when women first began to go into the theaters in Beijing was also the time when there was a craze among men for actresses. Many of those men went to see actresses to look at them rather than to hear them sing.

⁴⁴⁵ See, for instance, Hou Xisan 侯希三, *Beijing de lao xiyuanzi* 北京的老戲園子 (Old theaters of Beijing; Beijing: Zhongguo chengshi, 1996), p. 122, which claims that women “especially liked to see on stage plays about the loves of older unmarried girls and young wives” 專愛看戲臺上大姑娘小媳婦的言情戲。

shout out *hao* as the men did, but instead wept when they were moved.⁴¹⁷ Unfortunately, since the vast bulk of the writing on *Jingju* for that time period comes from men, we are in the end rather at a loss to know exactly what women thought about *Jingju* at the time.⁴¹⁸ However, some female playgoers did become the patrons of actors,⁴¹⁹ opera fanatics,⁴²⁰ and amateur performers.⁴²¹

With the women come children, especially small children.⁴²² In a book published in the 1920s, B. S. Allen says, “To the afternoon performances many babies and small children are taken by their

⁴¹⁶ Pang, *The Distorting Mirror*, p. 161, says, “The increasing emphasis on flamboyant clothing and decoration [on stage] could be explained by the greater numbers and influence of female spectators.”

⁴¹⁷ Zucker, “Peking Playhouses,” p. 307, claims that “weeping at the proper moments” is “the only proper way a Chinese lady can applaud in public.” Li, Dray-Novoy, and Kong, *Beijing: From Imperial Capital to Olympic City*, p. 94, report that according to a memoir published in 1853, the Russian visitor to China Egor Petrovich Kovalevsky thought that “there was much more movement, play, and passion in their [the female spectators’] faces than in those of the men.” Kovalevsky actually only had a chance to see female spectators in private restaurants (*fanzhuang*) and not in public theaters. He actually once almost got in trouble for staring at a female spectator. See Alison J. Dray, “Excerpts from E. P. Kovalevsky’s *Journey to China*,” *Papers on China* 22A (May 1969): p. 72.

⁴¹⁸ The earliest piece on traditional Chinese theater clearly published under the name of a female that I know of appeared in *Xiju yuekan* 3.2 (November 1930), Lei qin nüshi 蕾琴女士, “Yuequ jianyao ‘Ketu qiu hen’” 粵曲簡要‘客塗秋恨’ (The essence of Cantonese song: “Autumn resentment of a sojourner”).

⁴¹⁹ Goldman, *Opera and the City*, pp. 95-97, discusses the rare example of a “wealthy woman imitating this elite male practice [having a boy-actor drink with her]” portrayed in the *zidi shu* piece, “Kuo da nainai ting shanhui xi” 闊大奶奶聽善會戲 (The wealthy young mistress goes to the holy festival festival plays [her translation of the title]). This piece is reproduced in Liu Liemao and Guo Jingrui, eds., *Qing Che wangfu chaocang quben: Zidi shu ji*, pp. 260-61. Hou Yushan, *You Meng bashi nian*, pp. 199-200, tells of how the *wusheng* actor Zhu Xiaoyi 朱小義 (1903-1943) was continually pursued by his female fans who would invite him out to eat and drink, etc. He says that all of that led to the collapse of Zhu’s health (*ba shenzi hui le* 把身子毀了). Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, p. 115, cites Shi Zhengquan 施正泉, “Liantai benxi zai Shanghai” 連臺本戲在上海 (Serial plays in Shanghai), *Shanghai wenshi ziliao xuanji* 上海文史資料選輯 (Selected Shanghai literary and historical material) 61 (1989): 196-210, p. 203. In Shi’s account, for which he gives no source, a woman once gave Feng Zihe a diamond ring that Feng turned around and gave to Xia Yueshan 夏月珊 (1868-1924), who in turn announced from the stage that the actors were artists with a sense of morality and would not be tempted by such gifts; the ring would be used to help the poor. In a 1946 piece collected in *Su Shaoqing xiqu chunqiu*, p. 443, Su Shaoqing recounts it was reported in the papers that a woman threw a diamond ring onto the stage for Mei Lanfang as he was singing, and the theater manager (*houtai laoban* 後臺老闆) announced that it was a charity donation.

⁴²⁰ Wu Zuguang, *Fengxue ye guiren*, includes two of them in his play, whom he describes in the stage directions (p. 43) as timid before most men but infatuated with the male performer of female roles the play is about.

⁴²¹ The May 15, 1924, *Shenbao* piece, “Jinghu Jingju Yanjiu She zhi kuochong” 京胡京劇研究社之擴充 (The expansion of the Society for the Study of *Jingju* and the *Jingju* fiddle), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 294, notes that a “woman’s section” (*nüzi bu* 女子部) has just been added to this amateur opera club.

⁴²² Women were often lumped together with small children in terms of their ability to appreciate opera or their preferences. For instance, the November 18, 1912, *Shenbao* piece, Xuanlang 玄郎, “Ping Lao Tan zhi Hongyang dong” 評老譚之洪羊洞 (On Tan Xinpei’s *Hongyang Cave* [*Xikao* play #2]), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao xuanbian*, p. 82, which, speaking of a performance of this play by Tan Xinpei in Shanghai, says, “That evening, with the exception of the women and little children, everyone was concentrating their entire spirits listening quietly, silently devastated [this is a tragic play]” 是晚除婦女小兒外, 俱凝神靜聽, 蕭然無聲. Xuanlang says that Tan’s singing could have such an effect on the audience is proof that the Shanghai audience (except the women and kids, of course), has made “great progress” (*jinbu* 進步). Alternatively, the February 26, 1929, *Liyuan gongbao* piece, Nian sisheng 念四生, “*Di yi qiao caiying jiliue*” 第一橋彩影記略 (A brief account of the scenery of The Number One Bridge), in Cai Shicheng, ed., *Shenbao Jingju ziliao huibian*, p.

women and their wants are attended to with the utmost freedom.”⁴²³ There are accounts of at least two incidents of women in the balconies of theaters holding their babies over the railing and letting them pee on those below.⁴²⁴

Although it appears that there was no way to stop the eventual integration of women into the *Jingju* audiences of the public theaters, and marketers were quick enough to recognize that trend,⁴²⁵ the press for a long time continued to print stories about female theater goers coming to grief in a variety of ways. These stories depict women who go to see plays getting robbed,⁴²⁶ being threatened by fires in the theaters,⁴²⁷ getting swept up in raids on theaters performing illicit material and getting their bound feet stepped on,⁴²⁸ getting drunk and stripping off their clothes,⁴²⁹ and getting abducted.⁴³⁰

644, claims that the earlier version of this play (*Luoyang qiao* 洛陽橋 [The Bridge at Loyang; *Xikao* play #183]), which he saw in his youth, was only attractive to “women and kids” (*furu* 婦孺).

⁴²³ Allen, *Chinese Theatres Handbook*, p. 4.

⁴²⁴ One of these incidents supposedly led to the razing of the *huiguan* theater in which it happened. See Chen Moxiang, “Guanju shenghuo sumiao,” part 1, pp. 375-78 and the fictionalized version in Pan Jingfu and Chen Moxiang, *Liyuan waishi*, pp. 29, 354-57. Reports of a separate incident at the Wenming Chayuan 文明茶園 (Civilized teahouse) in Beijing appeared in two different pictorials. See *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, “Ke dei liu dian shen na” 可得留點神哪 (You should be more careful!), p. 8817, and *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng xubian*, “Ting xi bei jiao” 聽戲被澆 (Watered while listening to a play), p. 940. I myself was a witness, in 1982, to a women holding her baby outside the window of a bus so that he could pee (he had split bottom trousers on) as the bus was moving down a Beijing street past people on bicycles. I was not in a position to see if anyone got “watered.” The Wenming Chayuan began letting in females the year it was opened, in 1907. See Hou Xisan, *Beijing de lao xiyuanzi*, pp. 122-23, and Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, p. 80. It was closed down shortly after, however. According to “Fengjin Wenming Chayuan zhi yuanyin” 封禁文明茶園之原因 (The reason for the closing of Wenmin chayuan), *Shishi baoguan wushen quannian huabao*, reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, p. 6349, the theater was closed because a patron made a fuss when the courtesan, Hong Lanfang 洪蘭舫, refused his advances. The writer of the account puts the blame on the men involved in the incident and absolves the theater of responsibility, accusing the authorities of partiality.

⁴²⁵ Pang, *The Distorting Mirror*, p. 92, speaks of photos of Mei Lanfang being “printed on the backs of mirrors or the inside of washbasins” and concludes “obviously these commodities were women-oriented.”

⁴²⁶ “Yingshen zhao huo” 迎神兆禍 (Disaster caused by going to plays to welcome deities), *Shishi baoguan wushen quannian huabao*, reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, p. 6645, tells the story of four women who go to see plays and get robbed. The text says the disaster was “of their own making” (*ziqu* 自取).

⁴²⁷ In both “Xichang huozai shang ren” 戲場火災傷人 (Fire harms people in theater), *Shishi baoguan wushen quannian huabao*, reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, pp. 7538-39, and “Funü tingxi zhi shoujing” 婦女聽戲之受驚 (Female theater goers receive a fright), in *Tuhua ribao*, 2: 58 (issue 55), the main concern, in both the text and illustrations, is for the women in the theaters. In the latter item, the writer complains that in the theater in the Tianjin concession where the fire occurred, “ignorant women” (*wuzhi funü* 無知婦女) were in the habit of coming to hear licentious plays there and “of all things that harm social mores and custom, none is worse than that” 傷風敗俗, 莫此為甚.

⁴²⁸ *Wu Youru huabao*, *Fengsu zhi tushuo shang*, “Huiyin huoqian” 誨淫獲譴 (Teaching lewdness brings condemnation), *Di shiji shang*, volume 21, picture number 22, depicts a police raid on a theater performing indecent material. The picture depicts the spectators trying to flee down some stairs while the text says that the musicians and their instruments were impounded. The text also warns that as for women who listen to such performances, “there has never been a case in which their reputation has not been ruined” 未有不敗名, and describes how one of the women in the theater had her bound feet trampled.

⁴²⁹ See “Meiren zuinao Youyi yuan” 美人醉鬧游藝園 (Beauty drunkenly disrupts the entertainment center), *Beijing huabao* 北京畫報 (Beijing pictorial), reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng xubian*, p. 7547. The actual disrobing takes place in a movie theater within the complex.

Although things might, in the end, turn out well, the idea was that in exposing themselves in public by going to the theater, women were courting disaster or at least giving strangers access and some measure of control over them through that exposure.⁴³¹

⁴³⁰ “Youyi yuan zhi guaidai” 游藝園之拐帶 (The abduction in the entertainment center), and “Youyi yuan zhi guai” 游藝園之拐 (The abduction in the entertainment center), in *Beijing huabao*, reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng xubian*, pp. 7551 and 7619, respectively, concern such a story.

⁴³¹ A presumably happy story, “You shi ziyou jiehun (Nanjing)” 又是自由結婚 (南京) (Another example of free marriage [Nanjing]), *Shishi baoguan wushen quannian huabao*, reproduced in *Qingmo Minchu baokan tuhua jicheng*, p. 6679, relates how a man took a picture of a female spectator in a theater and used the photo to marry her.