

Beijing People's Art Theatre
presents

The Teahouse
A Play in Three Acts
by

Lao She

Saturday, November 5, 2005, 8 pm

Sunday, November 6, 2005, 3 pm

Zellerbach Hall

Lin Zhaohua, *artistic director (remake director)*

Gao Qiang, *stage director*

PROGRAM

Act I

1898

Act II

1918

INTERMISSION

Act III

1948

Cast:

Liang Guanhua, Pu Cunxin, Yang Lixin, Feng Yuanzheng, He Bing, Li Shilong, Wang Danian,
Zhang Wankun, Gao Dongping, Zhang Fuyuan, Sun Xing, Wu Gang, Wang Gang, Wang Changli,
Ma Xingyue, Song Dandan, Yang Guixiang, Yan Yansheng, Lu Fang, Gong Lijun, Li Zhen,
Li Guangfu, Yin Wei, Wang Tao, Mi Tiezeng, Lan Faqing, Gao Qian,
Yue Xiuqing, Qiu Xiaoguang, Long Yiyi

Presented in cooperation with Starbridge Art, Inc.

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PROGRAM NOTES



The Teahouse

SYNOPSIS

The Teahouse encompasses the 50-year period from the late Qing Dynasty to just after the Japanese invasion and war, based on the ups and downs of a local Beijing teahouse, and describes the changing ethos of Beijing and the separate destinies of different classes. It is the story of Wang Lifa, a teahouse master, who desperately wants the teahouse he inherited from his father to be a great success. To do this, he treats everyone with courtesy, but is constantly mocked by cruel reality and finally ends swallowed by merciless society. A frequent visitor to the teahouse, Qin Zhongyi, a national bourgeois capitalist, begins an ambitious plan of industrialization to save the country, but ends up bankrupt. Another visitor, upright Master Chang, of Manchu ancestry, tries to make a living on his own after the dismissal of the Qing Emperor. The play also depicts the lives of some smaller characters such as Pockmark Liu.

In the first act, which takes place in the year 1898, the year of reform and the ensuing crackdown, the Yu Tai Teahouse prospers, and its customers include a pet bird keeper, fortune teller, antique dealer, and cricket gambler. The young manager, Wang Lifa, must play both sides of the fence in order to keep his business going well. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses hidden behind the prosperity: foreign goods (including opium) flood the market, the peasantry is forced into bankruptcy and the sale of their children, eunuchs

buy wives, and patriots are arrested.

The second act begins twenty years later, in the early times of the Republic. People have been suffering through incessant civil war. All of the old teahouses in Beijing are closed except Yu Tai, and Wang Lifa tries his best to keep up with the times, providing accommodations for college students in the back yard and putting a record player in the hall. However, the teahouse does not escape the effects of the social turmoil: refugees crowd the doorway, soldiers steal the manager's money, and secret agents extort from time to time. In this turmoil, the smaller characters become even more confused about what to do.

As the third act begins, thirty more years have passed. Wang Lifa is aging and feeble; he reforms again and even hires a waitress. Although the Japanese have surrendered, the common people hardly have had time to celebrate China's victory when the Kuomintang instigates an all-out civil war. Patriots have again been repressed, and rogues and secret agents want to seize the teahouse. The manager is in total despair when two old friends, the upright Master Chang and Qin Zhongyi, who is now completely bankrupt, come to visit. The three old men recall the past in tears, and plan an advance funeral for themselves. When Wang Lifa is left alone, he takes a belt and goes into his bedroom to end his life.

Established on June 12, 1952, **Beijing People's Art Theatre** (BPAT) is one of the most famous professional theatre companies in China. In the past half century, the company has won high praise both within the country and abroad for its diverse repertoire, superb and rigorous stagecraft and an artistic style of great subtlety and emotional depth, qualities that are cherished by theatre audiences.

Guided by the late president Cao Yu and the late general artistic director Jiao Juyin, the artists of BPAT pursue realism as their main style, exploring this with Chinese nationalized drama productions, but incorporating art forms of a different nature as well. These diverse art forms are absorbed and displayed like "a hundred-flowers blossom." Representative productions include *The Tiger Tally* and *Cai Wenji* by Guo Moruo; *Dragon Whiskers' Ditch*; *The Teahouse* by Lao She; *Rickshaw Puller Xiangzi* adapted from Lao She's novel of the same title; *Thunderstorm*, *Sunrise* and *Peking Man* by Cao Yu; and *Guan Hanqing* and *Death Of A Famous Actor* by Tian Han. Other productions include *Warning Signal*, *Xiaojing Hutong*, *Weddings and Funerals*, *A Farmer's Nirvana*, *Top Restaurant*, *Poet Li Bai*, and *Antiques*. The theatre has also produced a large number of famous foreign plays: *The Miser*, *Aesop*, *Even the Wise are Not Free from Error*, *Measure for Measure*, *Der Besuch der alten Dame*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Life of a Woman*, *The Gin Game*, *Amadeus*, *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*, and *The Seagull*. While faithful to the original texts, these productions have also acquired a distinctive Chinese nuance.

In the past fifty years, BPAT has performed all over the country, with its distinctive "BPAT performing style." In the 1980s, BPAT performed their classic repertoire, such as *The Teahouse*, in Germany, France, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, Singapore, Korea, Egypt, and Ireland, as well as in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. These tours won international acclaim for Chinese modern theatre. The cooperation between the theatre and artists such as Toby Roberson, Arthur Miller, Charlton Heston, Oleg Yevremov and Manfred Beilharz have further promoted international theatre exchange.

BPAT now has three theatres, mainly for drama performances: Capital Theatre, Mini Theatre of BPAT and Experimental Theatre of BPAT. The

company's Stage Art Center has a professional production shop, which creates sets, costumes and props for the company and other performing troupes.

To carry forward the theatre's traditions and promote innovation in modern Chinese theatre, BPAT established its Theatre Museum, the first professional museum of spoken drama in China, which includes exhibitions, collections and research displays featuring the best achievements of Chinese spoken drama.

Artistic and Administrative Staff

Ma Xin, *chairman*

Pu Cunxin, *vice chairman*

Chen Qiuhuai, *vice chairman and secretary-general*

Zhang Chunlin, Xue Xiaoshu, *deputy secretaries-general*

Lin Zhaohua, *artistic director (remake director)*

Yang Tiezhu, *stage manager*

Gao Qiang, *stage director*

Li Yan, *set painting director*

Zhang Zhijin, *master carpentry*

Ma Shuanhe, Li Qi, Wang Lianguo,

Zhang Zhijin, Zhang Kewen, *technicians*

Qang Jianhua, Li Cong, Fang Yi, *lighting*

Wang Hongyi, Wang Weiwei, *costumes*

Ying Shu, Xu Li, *make-up*

Wang Huabin, Chen Fengyan, *prop masters*

Zhen Chen, *sound effects*

Li Yan, *set painter*

Yu Wenping, *exhibition director*

Li Guo, *exhibition designer*

Liu Peng, *exhibition photographer*

Wu Zhuhong, *translator (director of subtitles, interpretation and dubbing)*

Chen Li, *translator (stage technique)*

Jia Wei, *publicity*

Wang Luwen, Jiao Feng, *cinematographers*