



HAWAII
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UNIVERSITY of HAWAII
MĀNOA
Kennedy Theatre

Department of Theatre and Dance
University of Hawaii at Mānoa
1770 East-West Road
Honolulu, HI 96822
E-mail: ktpub@hawaii.edu

Contact: Tracy Robinson, Publicity Director
Phone: (808) 956-2598
Fax: (808) 956-4234
Box Office: (808) 956-7655
Images online: <http://www.hawaii.edu/kennedy>



Media Release • 2009 - 2010 Season

December 22, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

English-Language World Premiere of Jingju (Beijing “Opera”) Play Story of “The White Snake” is One of the Most Famous Legends in China

The University of Hawaii at Mānoa’s Department of Theatre and Dance is proud to once again present the Chinese Jingju (Beijing “opera”) art form with its production of “The White Snake,” one of China’s most famous and beloved plays. This lavish production of the mythological tale features comedy, high drama, thrilling song and music, and vibrant battles. “The White Snake” will be performed Feb. 5, 6, 10, 11, 12 and 13 at 8 p.m. and Feb. 7 and 14 at 2 p.m. Translated by UH professor and production director Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak and Punahou School instructor Hui-Mei Chang, “The White Snake” is making its English-language world premiere with this production. Free pre-show chats are planned for Sat., Feb. 6 and 13 at 7 p.m. In conjunction with the performances of “The White Snake”, an exhibition entitled *Jingju Arts and the Famous Mei Lanfang* will be held at the Commons Gallery, UH Mānoa Art Building, sponsored by the Jiangsu Province Department of Culture. This exhibition on the development of Jingju will also highlight the life of Jingu’s most renowned performer and will be open to the public Feb. 8 – 12.

“The White Snake” relates the famous legend of a snake spirit who descends to earth as a beautiful woman, falls in love with a handsome man, and then must fight to restore his life and save their marriage in the face of supernatural attacks from a powerful monk. “Jingju (literally “drama of the capital”) has four performance skills—song, speech, dance-acting and combat,” said Wichmann-Walczak. “Many Jingju plays feature only two or three of these skills, but our last Jingju, *Women Generals of the Yang Family* (2006), included all four skills, and we were very happy with the results. The Jingju teachers and I wanted to build on that success for this 6-month training program and its culminating production. “The White Snake” has delightful dance sequences, exciting combat sequences, and some of the most famous songs in the entire Jingju repertory,” she added.

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The UHM Department of Theatre and Dance is home to the largest university-based Asian theatre program in the world and is renowned for its training programs. The resident teachers for "The White Snake" are three nationally acclaimed artists from the Jiangsu Province. The Jiangsu Province Department of Culture, a long-term supporter of Jingju at UHM, is providing major funding for this training program and production.

"Jingju is not just for Chinese people. It should also be an expression for people all over the world," explained resident guest artist and teacher Mr. Lu Genzhang when asked about Jingju's appeal to broader audiences. "Arts are not to be separated by boundaries, and indeed Shakespeare is played on the Chinese Jingju stage. Only by benefiting from each other can all forms of art be enriched and reach their full potential. The rigorous Jingju training and preparation of UHM students will strengthen them in many ways, enriching their own future artistic experiences," he added.

Genzhang is a National Actor of the First Rank, and an Emeritus Leading Actor with the Jiangsu Province Jingju Company and has been elected a lifetime member of both the Jiangsu Theatre Artists Association and the prestigious Chinese Theatre Artists Association. He is teaching acting, movement, and voice for all the male-voice roles in the 2009-10 Jingju Resident Training Program. **Ms. Zhang Ling** is another National Actor of the First Rank, and an Emeritus Leading Actor with the Jiangsu Province Jingju Company. She is teaching acting, movement, and voice for all the female-voice roles. **Mr. Zhang Xigui** is a National Instrumentalist of the Second Rank, an Emeritus Leading Instrumentalist with the Jiangsu Province Jingju Company, and Principal Instrumentalist with the Wenhuali Jingju and Kunqu Association of Shanghai. He is teaching technique and interpretation for all the musical instruments (melodic and percussive).

Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak is producer of this massive project and is also serving as director and translator. Wichmann-Walczak was the first non-Chinese to perform Jingju in the People's Republic of China and is the first honorary (and first non-Chinese) member of the National Xiqu ("Chinese opera") Institute. She is also the recipient of Jingju's Golden Chrysanthemum Award, the equivalent of America's lifetime-achievement Tony Award, for outstanding achievements in promoting and developing Jingju.

The Jingju training program and production of "The White Snake" are made possible with support from the: Office of the Chancellor, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa; University Research Council Special Funding for Scholarly and Creative Works; Dr. Shuang Troy; the Center for Chinese Studies and its Confucius Institute, School of Pacific and Asian Studies, UHM; University of Hawai'i Foundation Chinese Theatre Endowment Fund; and the College of Arts and Humanities, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. This program is also supported by funding through the State Foundation On Culture and the Arts, and through appropriations from the Hawaii State Legislature (and by the National Endowment for the Arts).

Tickets for "The White Snake" are now available online at www.etickethawaii.com and by phone at 944-2697. Tickets will also go on sale at the Kennedy Theatre Box Office beginning Feb. 1 and may be purchased Monday through Friday from 10:30a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with extended hours on the days of performances. Prices are \$22 regular; \$20 seniors, military, UH faculty/staff; \$15 students; and \$5 UHM students with a validated Spring 2010 UHM photo ID. UHM Students Buy-One-Get-One Free Nights are Wed., Feb. 10 and 11. Students, with validated UHM student ID's can get two tickets for \$5 beginning at 5 p.m. on the day of the performance. Ticket prices include all service fees. For more information or disability access, call the Kennedy Theatre Box Office at 956-7655 (voice/text).

WHAT: "The White Snake"

PRESENTED BY: UHM Department of Theatre and Dance

WHEN: Feb. 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13 at 8 p.m.
Feb. 7, 14 at 2 p.m.

WHERE: UHM's Kennedy Theatre, Mainstage

TICKET PRICES: \$22 regular; \$20 seniors, military, UH faculty/staff; \$15 student; \$5 UHM student with validated student ID; all service charges included in ticket price.

TICKET INFO: Tickets on sale now at www.etickethawaii.com, at outlets and by phone. Tickets on sale at Kennedy Theatre Box Office beginning February 1. Call 956-7655 for more information or visit www.hawaii.edu/kennedy.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Free Pre-show Chats

Sat. Feb. 6, 13 at 7 p.m. in the Kennedy Theatre Mainstage auditorium.

Student Buy-One-Get-One Free Nights

Wed., Feb. 10 and Thurs., Feb. 11. Get two tickets for \$5 beginning at 5 p.m. on the day of the performance. Validated UHM student ID required. Call for details!

Exhibition at the Commons Gallery, UH Manoa Art Building

Jingju (Beijing "opera") Arts and the Famous Mei Lanfang
Feb. 8 thru 12, 2010

Sponsored by The Jiangsu Province Department of Culture, this exhibition on the development of Jingju will also highlight the life of Jingju's most renowned performer.

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