

《京剧《穆桂英挂帅》登梅兰芳剧院舞台》

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On Monday two of Peking Opera's most famous actors took to the stage, bringing to life the story of one of China's most heroic female folk characters.

Famous Peking Opera "Mu Guiying Takes Command" meets a packed house at Mei Lanfang theater. This year marks the 120th anniversary of renowned opera master Mei Lanfang's birth. In celebration of this, many events and performances are planned for this year. The main character, Mu Guiying, was a well known female general who served during the Northern Song Dynasty. She carried on the Yang family's glorious legacy by leading her army from victory to victory. This drama was adapted by Mei Lanfang in 1959 and became one of the crowning artistic achievements in his later years.

"My role was first played by Mr. Mei, and it's an honor to reprise the role again, especially since we are celebrating him this year." Li Shengsu, Actress said.

Mu Guiying sports the lavishly embroidered costumes and colorful makeup that Peking Opera is known for. The actors rely only on their expert physical and vocal techniques, and on the audience's imagination, to bring the story to life. A vital supporting character, imperial minister Kou Zhun is a friend of the Yangs and helps them throughout the story. He's played by famous actor Yu Kuizhi, who sings expressive and poignant arias.

"I have collaborated with Li on numerous occasions, but at every performance we bring a different meaning, a different splendor to the characters. This piece doesn't just have beautiful arias, it also has all the different aspects of Peking Opera, like the comedy, the painted faces, the male and female roles. It's a historical piece, so we have to preserve it." Yu Kuizhi, Actor said.

Audience members range from young to old. Some are regulars, while others are watching the piece for the very first time.

"I've known about this story for a long time, but I've never seen it live so I'm really excited. This art form has been passed down to us from our ancestors, so Peking Opera is something everyone should watch and learn." Jiang Guannan, an audience said.

"I love these two actors. Their collaboration brings out the best in the characters. From singing to dialogue, they have great sensitivity and understanding toward each other. I come here almost every week to watch." Shi Zhaojie, a audience said.

"Mu Guiying Takes Command" explores issues such as personal ethics versus national duty, and the power of youthful exuberance, versus the wisdom of age.