

Performing Transposition and Cultural Interpretation:
Lady Precious Stream on Broadway
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Shih-I Hsiung (1902-1991) was one of the most successful Chinese diaspora writers in the West. He left China for England in 1933, intending to pursue graduate study in Shakespeare. However, following his advisor's suggestion, Hsiung wrote *Lady Precious Stream*, an English-language play based on a classical Beijing opera. Soon after its publication, the play was premiered in Little Theatre in London in 1934 and ran for 900 successive shows. As the first Chinese to write and direct a West End play in England, Hsiung became a celebrity whose play was later staged and acclaimed in many other parts of the world. After that, he translated into English the Chinese classic *Romance of the Western Chamber* and wrote several plays, novels, and a biography.

My paper traces the transposition of the play *Lady Precious Stream* through its Broadway showing in 1936. In particular, the paper will examine the play's translation, stage production, and reception by Western audiences either familiar or unfamiliar with Chinese tradition. In addition to celebrating the historical significance of the play, the study will document Hsiung's pioneering efforts in introducing Chinese theatrical art abroad and in shaping an objective and favorable perception of the Chinese. It aims to broaden the scope of transnational studies and bring about an enhanced appreciation of diaspora writers and contributions they have made in such cross-cultural exchanges.

Biography

Da Zheng attended graduate school at Boston University in 1986, where he received his PhD in English. He is Professor of English and Director of the Asian Studies Program at Suffolk University. His research interests include American literature, Asian American literature, popular culture, and Chinese diaspora. He is the author of *Moral Economy and American Realistic Novels* (1996), *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East* (2010), and *Xixing Huaji* 西行画记 (2012). He is now working on a biography of Shih-I Hsiung, a Chinese diasporic writer who was best known for the English language play *Lady Precious Stream* and novel *The Bridge of Heaven*.