



**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA COMMISSION *DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER*
WILL TOUR PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

**Opera by Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang Will Be Staged in
Three Chinese Cities in September 2017 Following Sold-Out Performances at
San Francisco Opera and Hong Kong Arts Festival**



Dream of the Red Chamber. ©Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera;
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SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 15, 2017) — *Dream of the Red Chamber*, commissioned by San Francisco Opera from Chinese-American composer Bright Sheng with a libretto by Sheng and playwright David Henry Hwang, will tour to the People's Republic of China in September 2017, a press conference unveiled today at the late 18th-century Prince Gong Mansion in Beijing. Co-produced by Poly Theatre Management Co., Ltd. and Armstrong International Music & Arts Enterprises, Ltd., the *Dream of the Red Chamber* China Tour will travel to three Chinese cities in six performances.

The tour opens with two performances at Beijing's Poly Theatre on September 8 and 9. The work will then be presented as part of the grand opening of the Meixihu International Culture and Arts Centre Grand Theatre in the southern city of Changsha on September 15 and 16. Designed by the late Zaha Hadid, the Meixihu complex was among the noted British-Iraqi architect's last projects before her sudden death in March 2016. The third and final stop of the tour will be the Qintai Grand Theatre in Wuhan on September 22 and 23.

The *Dream of the Red Chamber* tour performances will be conducted by Sheng, marking the composer's first time conducting his opera. In Beijing, Sheng will lead the Hangzhou Philharmonic Orchestra; in Changsha and Wuhan he will be joined in the pit by the Wuhan Philharmonic Orchestra. The Chorus of the State Opera of Dnipro, Ukraine, will sing at each performance. *Dream of the Red Chamber* will be presented in the original production by acclaimed Taiwanese director Stan Lai and Oscar-winning Chinese designer Tim Yip. A "first-rate visual production, thoughtfully staged" praised the *San Francisco Chronicle* at the opera's world premiere at the War Memorial Opera House. "One sensuous tableau flowing into the next," said the *Financial Times*.

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock said: "*Dream of the Red Chamber* had a profound impact in connecting San Francisco Opera to its broader Bay Area community. It's thrilling, then, that this impact will continue as *Dream of the Red Chamber* travels to China in one of the most exciting American–Chinese cultural bridges to emerge in recent years. I couldn't be more proud that San Francisco Opera was the birthplace of a work that speaks so powerfully to such a broad audience."

Chinese tenor Yijie Shi, who created the role of Bao Yu, returns as the young nobleman at the center of the drama. Soprano He Wu portrays Dai Yu; mezzo-soprano Lin Shi is Bao Chai; mezzo-soprano Katherine Pracht sings the role of the Jia matriarch Lady Wang; contralto Qiulin Zhang is Granny Jia; soprano Karen Chia-ling Ho is Princess Jia; soprano Yanyu Guo is Aunt Xue; and Pichead Amornsomboon is the Monk. Yijie Shi, Quilin Zhang, Karen Chia-ling Ho and Yanyu Guo were all members of San Francisco Opera's world premiere cast.

Dream of the Red Chamber had its world premiere at San Francisco Opera on September 10, 2016 and played to capacity crowds at the War Memorial Opera House and at the 45th Hong Kong Arts Festival in March 2017. The *San Francisco Chronicle* hailed the opera's "series of tautly constructed scenes that reveal the canniness of Sheng's compositional strategy—in particular, his skill in crafting an operatic language that is a hybrid of Chinese and Western traditions."

Adapted from Cao Xueqin's sprawling 18th-century novel, the opera focuses on the illustrious Jia clan and the love triangle of the Jia's young heir Bao Yu with two very different women: Dai Yu, his spiritual soulmate, and Bao Chai, a worldly beauty. When the Emperor rejects Princess Jia as his favored concubine, the Jia family's future is threatened along with the union between Bao Yu and Dai Yu. Framed by a dreamlike prologue and epilogue, *Dream of the Red Chamber* relates the poetry and sadness of the original Chinese tale as a lush and lyrical 21st-century opera.

The opera first took root when Pearl Bergad, Executive Director of the Minneapolis-based Chinese Heritage Foundation, approached former San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley in 2013 about producing an opera based on *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The operatic retelling was to have an English libretto so it would be readily accessible to non-Chinese speaking attendees and introduce new

audiences to this classic of world literature. As in its earlier stagings, the tour performances of Sheng's opera will be sung in English, with surtitles in both English and Chinese.

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