1-12-2009

Ying Ruocheng

Claire Conceison
Tufts University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/chinabeatarchive

Part of the Asian History Commons, Asian Studies Commons, Chinese Studies Commons, and the International Relations Commons

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/chinabeatarchive/401
The Top Ten Things You Probably Don’t Know About China’s Celebrated Actor

By Claire Conceison

During the final three years of his life, I collaborated with Ying Ruocheng on his autobiography in English. Sitting by his bedside, he captivated me with stories from his imprisonment, education, childhood, and his careers on stage and screen as well as in political and cultural diplomacy. His resulting autobiography, entitled Voices Carry, is an unusually witty narrative that includes vivid accounts of the events listed below and many more...

1. He was chosen by Bernardo Bertolucci to star in his film The Last Emperor after Bertolucci saw him play the role of Kublai Khan in the 1982 NBC miniseries Marco Polo.

2. His grandfather, Ying Lianzhi, founded the Dagongbao newspaper in Tianjin (now in Hong Kong) and Furen University in Beijing (now in Taiwan), and was knighted by Pope Pius XII for his impact on Catholic education in China.

3. His father, Ying Qianli, was imprisoned twice by the Japanese during the occupation, and then taken to Taiwan by Chiang Kai-shek in the late 1940s, where he became a prominent scholar at Taiwan National University until his death in 1969.

4. His son, media celebrity Ying Da, is host of several talk shows for CCTV, creator of the wildly popular 1990s sitcom Wo ai wo jia (I Love My Home), and a featured actor in Chen Kai-ge’s new film about the life of Mei Lanfang.

5. He was a founding member of the Beijing People’s Art Theatre, where he starred as Pock-mark Liu in the 1958 staging and 1979 revivals of Lao She’s masterpiece Teahouse, and translated the play into
English for its touring productions abroad. (He also translated plays by Shakespeare, Shaw, Miller, Cao Yu, and others.)

6. He spent a decade of his childhood in Prince Qing’s palace, and acquired his remarkable English skills in missionary schools during his youth, but his first travel abroad was not until 1980 at the age of 51.

7. He was imprisoned for three years during the Cultural Revolution due to the suspicion that he was a spy, and while in prison kept a secret notebook with interrogation notes, information about other prisoners, and portraits and poetry of Chairman Mao.

8. He instituted bold reforms as China’s vice minister of culture (under Minister of Culture Wang Meng) from 1986-1990, selected for the post by Hu Yaobang.


10. He was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver in 1994 and died in December 2003 at Peking Union Medical Center Hospital, having just completed a new translation of Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus* (which was staged by Lin Zhaohua in 2007, starring Pu Cunxin in the title role).

*Claire Conceison is associate professor of drama at Tufts University and an associate-in-research at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University. Ying Ruocheng’s autobiography *Voices Carry: Behind Bars and Backstage during China’s Revolution and Reform* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009) is available at Rowman & Littlefield and Amazon.com.*

Tags: Arthur Miller, Voices Carry, Ying Ruocheng