

Yáu Swèi (1239-1314)

*Wind That Sheds the Plum+

55³57³4

(c1310)

Swèi was orphaned early, but through assiduous study attracted the notice of patrons, and held several posts; in 1295 he became a Reader in the Hàn-lín Academy, and in 1301 went out as Commissioner for Jyāng-dūng. In 1308 he was back in the capital as Master of Guests to the Heir Apparent; there followed several other posts. He retired due to illness in 1312 and died in 1314.

His style is considered to be austere but not harsh; to have some of the granitic quality of early Hàn, and the cragginess of Hàn Yw̄. Here, he transforms the wordlessness of Dù Mù's quatrain (p291) into a different kind of pathos: an old man keeps from youth the deeper sorrows of the age. The national spirit had sunk low under the Mongols: too low to be mentioned openly.

Wine can turn your cheeks more ruddy still,
 Gray can make your gray hair more like snow;
We sit before the cup,
 And all our inmost feelings we unfold;
 If Heaven too possessed a heart,
 Heaven would grow old –
But keep it to ourselves:
 The younger folk should not be told

新刊關目張鼎智勘魔合羅

正末同旦上云

自家李鴻昌便是妻劉氏有小孩兒嫡親三口兒在這河
南府居住開有絨線鋪有叔又李伯英與叔伯弟兄李文
鐸開有牛藥鋪對面門住如今我往南昌做買賣去渾家
在意着家咱 旦云住

你叔嫂後來清性乖因此上將伊曾勸來休閑幽莫傷懷照受
這家私里外好亂付小嬰孩 **公** 男子為人須掙揣如今向它
鄉做買賣你則受淚盈腮多不到半載但得利便回來下

且下 二外一折 末擔砌末上云 從南昌兜兜回

來這里姓家有十里田地早起天晴如今陟恁的好雨衣裳
行里都濕了且是死楚兩處 **點** 七月才初孟秋時

序尤存着穿這單布衣服怎遮懸麻雨 **混** 江有連又不

長

Mǜng Hàn-chīng (c1300)

The Figurine
(c1310)

The young, meanwhile, even as they attempted to prosper, were encountering dangers of their own. This opera is about one such danger. It is a story of domestic intrigues: brother will poison brother; a heroic magistrate will assemble evidence to discover and punish the murderer. These courtroom-justice pieces had a great vogue under the Mongols. The magistrate in question, Jāng Dǐng, served in the Wǔ-chāng area in 1273. Wǔ-chāng was an operatic center; the audience could even buy little libretto books, with the sung parts (less easy to the common ear) printed in full, and the spoken dialogue, in easier colloquial, merely summarized. At left is the first page of that libretto. We will follow the story just that far.

The plot revolves around an image of the Indian mother-figure Muhurta, which plays a role in the Seventh Evening festival. It gives the opera its title.

And now we start reading our one page.

Prologue

(Enter male lead with female lead): I am Lǐ Dǔ-chāng; this is my wife Miss Lyóu. We have a child, and we three live here in Hýnán City, where we keep a thread shop. My uncle Lǐ Bwó-yīng and my cousin Lǐ Wýn-dwó keep a drugstore across the street from us. Today I am going to Nán-chāng to trade. Wife, look well to our home.

(She speaks. Though the libretto does not specify, what she tells him is that his cousin has been paying improper attentions to her. He sings):

*While Enjoying Flowers+
753345

Yes,

**The way your cousin feels toward you
has always been a thorn**

And therefore,

**Against that kind of thing I've had to warn
Don't give yourself to woe
Don't let your heart be torn**

See that you

Keep the house and mind the store,

And

Try and take good care of our firstborn

*Reprise+
753345

**Worldly struggle is the yoke
we men have always worn**

Today,

**For far-off places I must leave my door
Dry the stream of tears
That well from eyes forlorn**

At the most,

It won't be half a year before

Newly

Wealthy, I return one happy morn

(He exits. Lady exits. Scene with two extras)

Scene 1

(Enter male lead, with a heavily loaded carrying pole over his shoulder. He speaks): I am coming back from trading in Nán-chāng, and am only ten leagues from home. It was fine weather when I got up this morning, but now it has turned dark and there is a heavy rain; my clothes are all soaked with walking through it, but there's no place I can stop and take shelter from it.

*Dotting Vermeil Lips+
44345

(The key of this piece immediately announces to latecomers that they are in the first act; The aria itself is the one which always begins the first act. Here is the protagonist making his stylized entrance. Our composer, the formally ingenious M̀ng H̀n-ch̀ng, heightens the mood by having him, even in this preliminary section, already engaged with his enemy, the rain.

**The seventh month, a pleasant day,
A bit of summer on the wane,
The autumn hours retain**

But dressed

**As I am, in light array,
How shall I escape the pelting rain?**

*Turbid River Dragon+
474455544

(And this is the traditional second entrance-aria, continuing the mood established in the first aria. Unfortunately, our one page of libretto ends here, and we will have to imagine the rest of the story).