

Chinoiserie



For Betty Chong

Production History

Chinoiserie premiered at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln, Nebraska, on September 22, 1995. It was conceived and directed by Ping Chong, with text and lyrics by Ping Chong and Michael Matthews. Additional text was by Regine Anna Seckinger and Ric Oquita. The music was by Guy Klucevsek, the set design and projections were by Jan Hartley, the lighting design was by Thomas Hase, the sound design was by David Meschter and the costume design was by Byron Lars, Carol Ann Pelletier and Chan Kwok Yuen. The dramaturg was Regine Anna Seckinger, the stage manager was Courtney Golden and the managing director was Bruce Allardice. The performers were: Ping Chong, Shi-Zheng Chen, Aleta Hayes, Michael Edo Keane and Ric Oquita. The musicians were Guy Klucevsek, Bill Ruyle and Steve Elson.

Chinoiserie was commissioned by the Lied Center for Performing Arts at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Fine Arts Center of the State University of New York at Buffalo, Yellow Springs Institute, Lafayette College, the Walker Arts Center and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The commissioning of *Chinoiserie* was made possible by a grant from the Meet the Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. *Chinoiserie* was produced by Ping Chong and Company as part of the 1995 BAM Next Wave Festival with the support of National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, AT&T, Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Portions of the spoken text are drawn from *Who Killed Vincent Chin?*, a documentary film by Renee Tajima and Christine Choy, available through Filmmakers Library, 124 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016. Also included is an excerpt from *The Chinese Must Go*, a play by Henry Grimm, published in San Francisco in 1879. Music credits: “The Celebrated Chop Waltz (Chopsticks),” anonymous, 1877; “Take Me Out to the Ball Game,” music by Albert von Tilzer, words by Jack Norworth, 1908; “Willie the Weeper,” lyrics anonymous, 1890s.

Introduction

Chinoiserie is organized along a historic arc beginning with the first encounter in 1793 between Qianlong, the Celestial Emperor of China, and Lord George Macartney, the trade emissary from King George III of England. *Chinoiserie* is a collage from the detritus of East-West relations, including the events leading up to the Opium War, the European obsession with tea, the fascinating (but little known) history of Chinese settlers in America, the murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit in 1982, and the continuing trade disputes between China and America. *Chinoiserie* also includes material based on the author's childhood in New York's Chinatown and his experiences in the mysterious East and the mysterious West.

The title of the work is meant to be ironic. The term "chinoiserie" in the eighteenth century referred to an elaborate and very popular style of decorative art that reflected (or was felt to reflect) the Chinese aesthetic. Thus, the European aristocracy, hungry for new diversions, transformed Eastern culture into Western fashion with the willing assistance of Chinese merchants. Eventually, the word came to mean "Chinese export goods": things neither truly Eastern nor Western but the curious by-product of the two.

The West's fascination with China, however, masks an equally powerful countertrend—turning the Chinese into the exotic, the mysterious "other." This particular view reached its zenith in nineteenth century America with the exploitation of, and the racism directed toward, Chinese immigrants who were relegated to "Chinatowns" in urban centers which persist to this day.

For its part, China resisted Western consumer goods and cultural influences throughout most of its history, remaining relatively isolated until the British Opium Wars in the nineteenth century. With the opening of the East, China gradually developed a moneyed international aristocracy that imitated the fashions and values of Western society. It had little concern for the common people. The Communist Revolution in China can be seen partially as an attempt to end colonial European influence and create a new society with the welfare of the common people at the forefront.

Chinoiserie mines the ironies and metaphorical possibilities inherent in the word “chinoiserie” in the larger contexts of China and the West. The work also explores aspects of the Chinese spirit as seen in the Chinese diaspora. Of particular interest are the ironic reversals of power and tradition that reveal underlying ethnic and racial prejudices which continue to affect interpersonal and international relations today.



An open dance stage with a black floor and black wings. The back wall is framed by four panels, each painted with a different lattice-work pattern. Between the lattice-work, the back wall serves as a large projection screen on which an array of images and texts are projected. Above the projection screen, is another screen painted with Chinese characters. Downstage right is a large, bright red podium where Ping remains throughout. A large, rectangular, white carpet covers the floor center stage, and serves as the performance area for much of the play. Lighting patterns are projected onto it as well. Two bright red rods, each five and a half feet long, sit to the left and right of the carpet. A long, low piece of wood stretches upstage along the width of the carpet and serves as a threshold over which the cast must always step to get to the playing area.

Four sets of music stands and stools stand upstage right, arranged in a curve around the carpet. The Cast (the four actors other than Ping) sits at the music stands whenever they are not performing on the carpet. Except for one costume change near the end of the play, none of the actors ever leaves the stage.

At stage left are musical instruments, including a percussion setup: vibes, gongs, marimbas, drums, etc.; a baby grand piano;

The East-West Quartet

an accordion and wind instruments. The musicians remain in this area throughout.

PROJECTION:

C
HIN
OIS
ERI
E

(The musicians enter and begin to play a percussive musical sequence.

Ping enters and walks to the podium. He wears black pants, a black turtleneck and a black jacket tied in front. The clothing is contemporary and stylish.)

PING:

Pittsburgh. 1987.

I am having dinner with a curator and his lady friend.

They suggest a Chinese restaurant.

I think the place was called Peking Garden or Peking Palace?

Something like that . . . I don't remember.

The restaurant we ended up in was one of those chinoiserie jobs . . .

Paper lanterns, beaded curtains, Chinese dinner mats . . .

You know, the kind that tell you whether you were born in the year of the dog or ox . . .

As we are waiting for our dinner, the lady friend undresses her chopsticks from their paper clothes, pouts and frowns. I ask her, "What's the matter?" and she says, "Why don't they use knives and forks? This is America. Why don't they stop using chopsticks?"

I wonder who she thinks "they" are.

I don't bat an eye. I don't miss a beat. I don't murder her.

No matter how insulted you may feel, if you are a guest—and a Chinese guest at that—you must never, never, never violate your host. Even if you want to take a knife and plunge it into their heart. So I smile and change the subject. The rest of the dinner goes on without a ripple all the way through to the fortune cookies.

Mine says: “You believe in the goodness of mankind.”

Can I have a blackout please.

(Blackout. The projection fades out. In the dark, the cast enters, wearing costumes like Ping’s, except for white jackets. The percussive music stops when the actors begin to speak.)

CAST (*Ceremoniously announcing the emperor*):

Ten thousand years! (*Repeated*)

Mansoi, mansoi, man man soi.

Mansoi, mansoi, man man soi.

Mansoi, mansoi, man man soi.

(Lights up. Shi-Zheng and Ric cross to the carpet. Each picks up one of the red sticks. Standing on the carpet, they spin the sticks, pose with them and hit them against each other in choreography inspired by martial arts. The sound of a stream is heard underneath their movement.

At the end of the stick dance, the musicians begin the music for the next section. Ric and Shi-Zheng return the sticks to the sides of the carpet, cross back over the threshold and take their places at the music stands. The lights go out and come up on the four lattice-work panels.)

PROJECTION:

1

ALL: 1.

ALETA: One day, the Bodhidharma, a holy man, grew sleepy after meditating for seven years. He got so angry with himself that he plucked off both his eyelids and threw them on the ground.

The East-West Quartet

Two bushes sprang up instantly whose leaves possessed the power to ward off sleep. This is the genesis of *tea*.

PROJECTION:

2

ALL: 2.

MICHAEL: Tea is plucked for the emperor's pleasure under the strictest rules. Young virgins using gold scissors cut only the bud and the youngest leaf of the plant. These are left on a golden platter to dry before being poured directly into the emperor's bowl. (*He sings:*)

When the water
when the water begins to generate bubbles
bubbles as big as fisheyes
and emit a soft sound . . .

Three thousand years of friendship
between fire, water and tea.

PROJECTION:

3

ALL: 3.

ALETA: 1606. *Tea* is introduced to Europe.

MICHAEL: We recommend tea to the entire nation and to all peoples!

SHI-ZHENG: We urge every man, every woman, to drink it every day; every hour.

RIC: Beginning with ten cups a day and subsequently increasing the dosage—

ALETA: —as much as the stomach can take and the kidneys can secrete!

MICHAEL: The sick should consume at least fifty cups a day.

PROJECTION:

4

ALL: 4.

RIC: Tea was so in demand in Europe that servants of the rich
would save used tea leaves, dry them and sell them again.

PROJECTION:

5

ALL: 5.

ALETA: Between 1700 and 1750

MICHAEL: over forty million pounds of tea are purchased by Great
Britain.

RIC: The English addiction to *tea* becomes a severe drain on the
royal treasury.

ALETA: Those millions and millions of pounds of tea had to be paid
for in millions and millions of pounds of sterling silver.

MICHAEL: Emperors of China would accept nothing less—

RIC: for a simple reason which Emperor Qianlong

ALETA: It's Qianlung . . .

SHI-ZHENG (*Correcting them with subtle Chinese emphasis*): No, it's
Qianlung . . .

RIC: Ya—had explained to King George III:

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*): Our Celestial Empire possesses all
things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within our
borders. There is no need to import the manufactures of
outside barbarians.

PING (*Translating*): Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in
prolific abundance and lacks no product within our borders.
There is no need to import the manufactures of outside
barbarians.

SHI-ZHENG (*Singing*):

When the water has reached this boil
add a pinch of salt
add a pinch of salt
then the water will bubble
like a string of pearls
that sound . . .

The East-West Quartet

Three thousand years of trust
between fire, water and tea.

PROJECTION:

6

ALL: 6.

MICHAEL: In America, puritans drank bitter *tea* with butter and salt. New Englanders preferred their tea with saffron, iris root or gardenia petals.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*): Only barbarians drink tea this way.

PING (*Translating*): Only barbarians drink tea this way.

PROJECTION:

7

ALL: 7.

RIC: “Early Morning Cuppa”—The British sipped *tea* in bed, prior to washing and dressing. They drank *tea* with milk and sugar or *tea* with lemon.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*): Only barbarians drink tea any other way.

PING (*Translating*): Only barbarians drink tea any other way.

PROJECTION:

8

ALL: 8.

ALETA: On December 16, 1773, a group of men including silver-smith Paul Revere, disguised themselves as Mohawk Indians, boarded English ships and threw three hundred and forty-two chests of tea into Boston Harbor.

MICHAEL: This is commonly referred to as the Boston *Tea* Party in American history books. For many years British history books referred to this as a terrorist act against the Crown.

PROJECTION:

9

ALL: 9.

ALETA: Gunpowder tea. This green tea is rolled into little balls that
“explode” when placed in the teapot.

RIC: Whose history is this anyway?

MICHAEL AND SHI-ZHENG (*Singing*):

Add tea powder and stir.
Stop the boiling.
Let the smell still and rise.
Fire, water and tea
a delicate conversation
in a cup or bowl.

Here is your gunpowder tea, my friend.
Brewed with love and time.

ALETA (*Spoken*):

Tell me things
Tell me things
Tell me things

Teach me things
Teach me things
Teach me things

Show me things
Show me things
Show me things.

SHI-ZHENG: Whose history is this anyway?

(Sound of baseball being hit. A crowd roars.)

PING: New York City. 1956.

I am ten years old. I am walking home from my aunt's
house with my sister Norma. As we come to a street corner,
I see an elderly black man panhandling the passing cars.

The East-West Quartet

A huge black Cadillac pulls up beside him. The window of the Cadillac smoothly glides open and a pasty-faced man in dark glasses pokes his head out of the window. The panhandler steps forward and stretches out his hand. The man in the dark glasses puts his finger in the old man's face and says: "Every white man should have a nigger slave. Every white man should have a nigger slave. Do you hear?" The man in the dark glasses smiles. The window glides back up. The car pulls away.

PROJECTION:

10

ALL: 10.

(Sound of cannonball.)

PING (*Spoken*):

1792.

Tea addiction.

The American Revolution.

A depleted treasury.

The Beatles haven't been born yet.

Great Britain is in deep shit.

(The following spoken text is accompanied by percussive music and abstract movement:)

On September 26, 1792, Great Britain, a nation of eight million, sent an envoy of seven hundred men led by Lord George Macartney to China, a nation of three hundred and thirty million.

No British sovereign had ever assembled so impressive an embassy, and no European state had ever sent anything like it to China. Or to anywhere else for that matter. Only a thirteen-year-old boy, a page, bothered to learn Chinese.

RIC:

Boom boom boom
Men fighting
Friday night

Boom boom boom
Men fighting
Friday night.

ALETA: Would China open its doors to British trade?

CAST: Boom boom boom

SHI-ZHENG: Would the Emperor of China receive the British envoy?

CAST: Boom boom boom

MICHAEL: Would China work out the treaty rights issue and avoid
one hundred percent tariffs on its imports—

PING: But let's not get ahead of ourselves . . .

PROJECTION:

11

ALL: 11.

PING: The Ballad of Lord Macartney.

RIC AND ALETA (*Singing*):

I am Lord George Macartney,
former Governor General of British West Indies,
former Governor General of all India.
Knight of the Holy Order of Bath,
Baron of Lisanoure,
former Ambassador Extraordinary
Extraordinary
to the Russian Tsarina.

GUY: A what?

ALETA: Tsarina.

GUY: A what?

RIC: You know like the Tsar's wife . . .

The East-West Quartet

RIC AND ALETA (*Singing*):

Envoy to Provence and Viscount of Dervock
with a D as in daffodil
and a V as in Victoria.
I am a citizen
I am a citizen

CAST (*Singing*):

of the most powerful nation on earth
of the most powerful nation on earth
and the sovereign of all the seas.

MICHAEL: Is it my turn?

ALETA: Yes, Your Grace.

MICHAEL: I mean, historically, to understand the ballad of Lord
Macartney, one must also understand the ballad of his
Chinese counterpart. Don't you think?

ALETA: Absolutely, Your Grace.

MICHAEL: Then we'll have drama.

ALETA: That's correct, Your Grace.

MICHAEL: After all . . .

RIC: Whose history is this anyway?

(Percussion and woodwinds play music reminiscent of Chinese opera.)

PROJECTION:

12

ALL: 12.

SHI-ZHENG (*Singing*):

Ah . . .
I a . . .
I am . . .
Liang Kentang
Born into a world

you have never seen
in a land you will never know.

(*Gong.*)

MICHAEL (*Chanting in a deep voice*):

So I won't bother to explain it to you . . .
1756.

Became District Magistrate,
Provincial Commissioner
and Deputy Governor, Hunan Province.
That's Hu with an H, Nan with an N.

(*Gong.*)

1791.
Appointed Viceroy of Beizhili,
received peacock feather
and yellow jacket of rank . . .

You know, like in the Tour de France,
where the guy in the lead
gets to wear that yellow jersey . . .

When I turn eighty years old
I will be honored by the emperor
in a ceremony held to honor
the thousand grand, old men . . .

Imagine if you will
a lot more text being sung in this way
for a long long time . . .

When I turn eighty years old
and I will turn eighty
I will be honored by the emperor
at the palace

The East-West Quartet

at a banquet
held to honor the thousand grand, old men.

ALETA:

Your Grace, sir, could you hurry it along?
Time is money, you know . . .
Remember what happened to Frank Sinatra
on the Grammys?

(Horn fanfare.)

MICHAEL: My apologies, I'll be done very shortly. I will receive
the honorary title of Governor General of the Grand Canal.
I would never blow my own horn this way, but this is how
characters are introduced in the Chinese opera.

PROJECTION:

13

ALL: 13.

PING:

East meets West.
Liang meets Macartney.
Scene 5.

MICHAEL: The great emperor has personally instructed us to make
sure you have everything you need—you know, Kleenex,
Band-Aids, lemonade, Wash & Dry, Tiger's Milk bars and all
that other weird stuff you guys like . . .

PROJECTION:

The emperor will arrive tomorrow.

PROJECTION:

Will Macartney do the nine kowtows?

All right. You know the scoop, right? Anytime anything sent from the emperor, a letter, a note, a fax . . . is presented to you, you are to show reverence by kowtowing nine times before the item in question.

And—when you come to celebrate His Majesty's eighty-third birthday, you'll kowtow nine times before the great emperor, you'll be invited to a banquet, you'll get some tchotchkes, you'll have your picture taken, etc., etc., etc., and then maybe, maybe we'll talk shop. In the meantime, don't go where you shouldn't be . . .

PROJECTION:

14

ALL: 14.

PING:

East meets East.

A message for the emperor.

Scene 6.

ALETA: Your Majesty, son of heaven, father of our country, pivot of the earth, Your Most Extreme Highness . . . sorry to interrupt your shiatsu. Ah . . . acupuncture. I can come back another time. Really, I can . . . No? Stay? OK. The matter of the English. Macartney and company, you know . . . I invited Lord Macartney and the others to enter the Great Hall of the East as you had instructed. Well . . . they all took their hats off and saluted—I must say—they were mucho mucho respectful. But . . . instead of kowtowing nine times before the gracious letter you sent—like everyone should—Macartney and company just tipped their hats . . . Can you imagine?

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*): They have no manners. (*Gong*)

ALETA: I didn't catch that, Your Majesty . . .

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*): They have no manners. (*Gong*)

ALETA: What was that?

The East-West Quartet

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*): They have no manners! (*Gong*)

ALETA: Aaaaaaaaah—they ain't got no manners . . .

(*Sound of cannonball.*)

PROJECTION:

15

SHI-ZHENG: 15.

PING:

East meets West.

Liang meets Macartney.

Scene 7.

MICHAEL: Have you the required letter of introduction from King George III?

RIC: Isn't it wonderful how the midday sun falls over the pines? It's almost as impressive as the light in Darjeeling.

MICHAEL: Yes, it is beautiful—but the matter of the letter . . .

RIC: We particularly are delighted by the sunsets, too. And the sunrises. And the moonrises. Of course, we only have the perspective of this confinement. An elegant confinement, to be sure. May we not wander through your city and flirt with your women?

MICHAEL: Tea?

RIC: Please.

MICHAEL: Please?

RIC: Tea.

MICHAEL: Aaaah . . . It is a rather common tea, without breeding. I hope you are amused by its presumption.

RIC: Extraordinary, a marvel of nuance, complexity personified. But, is this confinement necessary?

MICHAEL: The tea is called the Monk's Hat.

RIC: May we not walk as far as the bell tower and observe your people? Survey your land should we need to use force against you one day . . . Which we will . . .

MICHAEL: More of the Monk's Hat?

RIC: Are we prisoners?

MICHAEL: Tell me—

(Michael and Ric move to different corners of the carpet.)

Tell me, in your country, if you come as uninvited guests to a home, do you have the right to demand a room?

RIC: Then we're guests?

MICHAEL: More tea?

RIC: Please.

MICHAEL: Please?

RIC: Tea.

MICHAEL: Aaaah . . .

RIC: He who controls trade, controls the world's wealth and therefore the world itself.

MICHAEL: We are the center of the civilized world.

ALETA: Boom boom boom

RIC: And we are the most powerful nation on earth.

ALETA: Boom boom boom

MICHAEL: Perhaps you'd prefer gunpowder tea?

(Ping opens a large, white Chinese fan. Sound of cannonball.)

PROJECTION:

16

ALL: 16.

ALETA:

Boom. Boom. Boom.

All I heard was boom boom boom.

Men fighting, ya know? . . .

All I saw was boom boom boom

Men fighting, ya know? . . .

I was standing here.

From here, all I could

The East-West Quartet

see and hear was boom boom boom
Men fighting, hollering, carrying on,
Friday night
ya know?

(Sound of baseball being hit. A crowd roars.)

RIC: Well folks, the Detroit Tigers smashed the Toronto Blue Jays
in a whopping 10 to 0 victory. Something must've just clicked
in the Tiger's offense. Must've been all those Tiger's Milk
bars they been chowing down on . . . Chow chow chow.

CAST: Chow chow chow . . .

RIC: I tell ya, those Blue Jays didn't stand a Chinaman's chance . . .
Chow on Tigers!

PROJECTION:

The Chinese character for "17" with a baseball behind it

ALL: 17.

PROJECTION:

Mrs. Chin

ALETA:

Long day all cook
could she cook
to love
she
family her for far go
it make to going is she
duck roast of pound quarter
a buy to going is she
hair
black straight has she
shoes
sensible wears she
tall

two inches five foot
is she.

RIC: Whose dinner is this anyway?

ALETA:

Me and my husband can't have children.
We try many times.
So I ask to adopt boy.
I want boy.
Little boy.
From China.

They send pictures. All sorts of boys!
Little skinny ones, round-headed ones.
Ones with faces all lychees and cream.
But when I see Vincent's little fat face smile,
I say, "This is my little bit of light and heaven!"
My little bit of light and heaven . . .
My little Vincent . . .

(Begins singing:)

I want
I want little boy
fat-face smile
little boy
cook for him
mother to him
all day long.

Mothers cook
for little boys
mothers cook
for fat-faced little boys
all day—always. All day—always.

(Sound of cannonball.)

The East-West Quartet

PING: New York City. 1989.

I am walking down the street. It's a beautiful spring day. I pass an Italian bakery in my neighborhood. A bunch of Chinese immigrants are repaving the sidewalk outside. Two young Italian bakers are watching. I overhear one of them saying, "Look at those monkeys. Why do they come here? They don't even know how to speak English." I think to myself, Do you think your great-grandparents from Italy spoke English when they first came here? Did you know congress wanted to prevent the dirty wops from entering the Unites States?

(Sound of baseball being hit. A crowd roars.)

PROJECTION:

18

ALL: 18.

(The following excerpt from The Chinese Must Go, a play from 1879, is performed on the carpet. It is presented in an exaggerated, melodramatic style. There are many musical sound effects: cymbals are scratched for the sound of dishwashing, gongs accentuate heavy steps, a slide whistle accentuates a puff of an opium pipe, etc. All the characters are presented as racist stereotypes with broad accents and large gestures.)

PING: Somewhere out west. Scene 1. Sam Gin washing dishes.

Ah Coy smoking his opium pipe.

AH COY: I tellee you, white man big fools; eatee too muchee, drinke too muchee, and talkee too muchee.

SAM GIN: White man catchee plenty money. Chinaman catchee little money. *Cheap labor.*

AH COY: By and by white man catchee no money; Chinaman catchee heap money; Chinaman workee cheap, plenty work; white man workee dear—for a lot of money—

SHI-ZHENG: No work—



The East-West Quartet

RIC: Sabee?

SAM GIN: Me heep sabee.

AH COY: Chinaman plenty work, plenty money, plenty to eat.

White man no work, no money, die—*get it?*

SAM GIN: *Got it.*

AH COY: White man damn fools; keep wifee and children—cost plenty money; Chinaman no wife, no children, save plenty money. By and by, no more white working man in California; all Chinaman—get it?

PING: Enter Frank Blaine.

(Woodblocks.)

FRANK: Damn such luck; can't borrow a cent to save my life.

Money is getting as scarce as flies about Christmas. I must have some. Losing three games of billiards, one after the other, with this flat-footed Jack Flint is a shame. *(To Ah Coy)*
Why don't you work?

AH COY: Your mother no payee me last month; no payee, no workee—sabee?

SHI-ZHENG: Me heep sabee.

FRANK: How much does she owe you?

AH COY: Six dollars.

FRANK: All right, John. I get it for you. If I squeeze the six dollars out of the old man, that Chinaman has to pay me commission, that's business.

PING: He pulls Sam Gin by the queue and exits. *(Frank exits)*

SAM GIN: Damn hoodlum. What for you foolee me all the time?

PING: Enter Lizzie Blaine.

(Woodblocks.)

LIZZIE: Has my brother been here, John?

(She repeats this line over and over.)

SAM GIN: Your brother damn hoodlum, he pullee my tail all the time.

LIZZIE: They are all trying to pull you back to China, John. Oh,
how nervous I am this morning.

AH COY: You like smoke opium?

LIZZIE: Yes, please.

Did you see *Broken Blossom*, John? Did you see *Shanghai Express*? No? How about the Foo Fighters? Know them? John?

AH COY: Drinkee too much coffee; no good, makee too muchee shaking—sabee?

PING: Enter William Blaine.

(*Woodblocks.*)

He takes the pipe out of his daughter's mouth.

WILLIAM: What! Are you smoking this dirty pipe again?

PING: To Ah Coy . . .

WILLIAM: Get out of my house, you miserable dog!

AH COY AND SAM GIN: I wantee money.

PING: Again.

AH COY AND SAM GIN: I wantee money.

PING: Again.

AH COY AND SAM GIN: I wantee money.

WILLIAM: Take that . . .

PING: He strikes Ah Coy with the pipe.

WILLIAM: . . . you breeder of ruin and desolation!

AH COY AND SAM GIN: I make you pay.

PING: All exit.

The Chinese Must Go: A play by Henry Grimm, San Francisco, 1879.

(*Sound of applause.*)

PROJECTION:

19

ALL: 19

MICHAEL (*Singing*):

Did you ever hear about Willie the Weeper?

Yes, the chimney sweeper.

The East-West Quartet

Had the dope habit and had it bad.
Listen and I'll tell you 'bout the dream he had.

ALETA:

'Round the layout a couple of dope fiends lay
Listen and I'll tell you what they had to say . . .
Tales of money they were gonna make
and casino banks they were gonna break.
I heard one big dope fiend say:

RIC:

"Grand scheme I got on today,
got an interest in a silver mine
left to me by a friend of mine
got a ruby bush, a diamond mine
an emerald tree, a sapphire vine
hundreds of railroads that run for miles
thousand dollar's worth of coke stacked up in piles.

CAST:

Started off in a Pullman car
did not get so very far
in their minds they had the railroads clinched;
woke up in the morning, found the joint was pinched.
Marched them off to the station house,
meek as a lamb, quiet as a mouse.
"What's the charge?" the judge then said.
"Hittin' up the hypo," and the fiend dropped dead!

MICHAEL:

"But I beg to differ," said the other smoker,
"The cop is kiddin', he's quite a joker.
I'm the king, the land of poppies is my home."

CAST:

"Jail!" said the judge.
"Show the king his throne!"

This is the tale of Willie the Weeper
 Willie the Weeper, yes, the chimney sweeper.
 Fell asleep in his hallroom cot
 dreamed he had a million dollars worth of hop.

MICHAEL:

“But in the morning where am I at?
 I thought that I was in my sweet baby’s flat.
 But in the morning I’m right in line,
 Mr. Hop Sing Toy—
 you’re no friend of mine.”

(Lights abruptly go to black. The sound of a train going by.)

PROJECTION:

20

PING: 20.

ALL: 1848.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*): Gold is discovered in California.

PING (*Translating*): Gold is discovered in California.

MICHAEL: The Chinese become 49ers.

ALETA: The Chinese are the first Asian immigrants.

ALL: 1852.

ALETA: The Governor of California:

MICHAEL: “Let us encourage a further immigration and settlement
 of *The Chinese*—they are peculiar but who isn’t?”

ALL: 1852.

SHI-ZHENG: The Governor of California four months later:

MICHAEL: “*The Chinese* are cunning and deceitful, they can never
 become like us and they are not of a race or native character
 which will ever elevate the social condition of California.”

ALL: 1869.

ALETA: Meanwhile down in Mississippi. M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-P-P-I.

RIC: “Emancipation has spoiled the Negro and carried him away
 from his place in the fields of agriculture. We therefore say
 let the coolies come, let them pick our cotton, let them work
 our fields, but they must become Christians, of course.”

The East-West Quartet

ALL: Of course, of course, of course.

MICHAEL: We did not let the Indian stand in the way of civilization,
so why let the Chinese barbarian? I suggest we do to them as
we have done to the Indian—

SHI-ZHENG: Put them on reservations.

ALL: 1882.

RIC: The Chinese Exclusion Act—the first immigrant law to
exclude on the basis of race:

MICHAEL: “Hereafter, no state court or court of the United States
shall admit Chinese to citizenship.”

PROJECTION:

20.5

*(Music underscores the following spoken section. Ping says each
line in English first, then Shi-Zheng repeats it in Chinese.
Throughout this scene a projection montage shows details of a
photograph. The image becomes fully identifiable only at the
very end of the scene.)*

PING:

This is a man.

SHI-ZHENG *(In Chinese)*:

This is a man.

PING:

This is a man sitting beside another man.

SHI-ZHENG *(In Chinese)*:

This is a man sitting beside another man.

PING:

This is a man wearing a hat.

SHI-ZHENG *(In Chinese)*:

This is a man wearing a hat.

PING:

This is a man eating with another man.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*):

This is a man eating with another man.

PING:

This is a man sitting in the sun.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*):

This is a man sitting in the sun.

PING:

This is a man breathing in the sun.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*):

This is a man breathing in the sun.

PING:

This is a man.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*):

This is a man.

PING:

This is a man breathing with another man.

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*):

This is a man breathing with another man.

PING:

This is a man
being a brother to another man
breathing with another man
sitting with this other man
eating with this other man
being with this other man
one with this other man.

The East-West Quartet

(The montaged photograph is now clearly shown. It is:)

PROJECTION:

Walter Scott and Wong Kee eating together

PING: 1908. Walter Scott and Wong Kee tried to have lunch together.
No one would serve Wong Kee. Walter Scott and Wong Kee
sat in the sun instead and ate together.

PROJECTION:

21

ALL: 21.

*(Ric and Shi-Zheng begin an abstract movement sequence. Each
italicized phrase cues a movement reminiscent of its meaning.)*

PROJECTION:

From a Chinese-English Phrasebook of 1875

PING:

He took it from me by violence. *(Claws)*

He claimed my gold mine. *(Soup)*

He cheated me out of my wages. *(Kick step)*

ALETA: Was *Coolie High* a film about inner-city Chinese youth?

PING: Can I sleep here tonight? *(Peekaboo)*

ALETA: "Take me out to the ball game . . ."

PING: An unmarried man is called a bachelor. *(Woman thinking)*

ALETA: Nigger, kike, chink, wop, gook, spic!

PING: The United States has many immigrants. *(Steps)*

ALETA: And they're all so happy.

PING: More Tea? *(Teapot)*

ALETA: They are all so pleased. *(Please)*

PING: She is a good-for-nothing hussy. *(I like him)*

ALETA: I like your shoes. Ferragamo?

PING: The passage money is fifty dollars from Hong Kong to California. (*Alligators*)

ALETA: "On a clear day you can see forever."

PING: No one can go to heaven without being a Christian. (*Slaps*)

ALETA: Some people say no when they mean yes.

PING: The Chinese immigration will soon be stopped.

(*Cloudhands*)

(*Michael joins the movement sequence.*)

ALETA: Nancy Kwon, Anna Mae Wong, Joan Chen.

PING: Can I have some food? (*Zombie*)

ALETA: History will be written by the victors.

PING: He assaulted me without provocation. (*Windmill*)

ALETA: "Everybody was kung-fu fighting—huh!"

PING: More tea, please. (*Elbow panhandle*)

ALETA: "Those cats were fast as lightning—huh!"

PING: He tries to extort money from me. (*Crane*)

ALETA: Lung, the dragon smiles its wayward smile.

PING: The men are striking for wages. (*Minister*)

(*Ric leaves the movement sequence. Michael and Shi-Zheng continue to move.*)

ALETA: The Vincent Chin murder case united the Chinese community in ways never seen before.

PING: He was choked to death with a lasso by a robber. (*Birds in hand*)

ALETA: Is there any gunpowder tea left?

PING: I said, is there any gunpowder tea left?

(*Sound of multiple cannonball explosions.*)

PROJECTION:

22

PING: 22.

The East-West Quartet

PROJECTION:

Mrs. Chin

ALETA:

My husband serves in the American army
we were happy to come to America
my father say America hard
my husband say America good
and I think so, too.

And lots of Chinese
lots of Chinese
my husband say all American good
he get job in a factory
we go to baseball game
very American
but they kick and curse at us.
I ask my husband
why they do this?
Why they do this?

(Sound of baseball being hit. A crowd roars.)

RIC: I tell you folks, the Detroit Tigers are on a roll! Last night they pulverized the New York Yankees in a 12 to 0 victory. Johnson bashed out two homeruns that probably ended up somewhere in China!!! And you know what they say—if you dig a hole deep enough, you come out on the other side in China!!!

CAST: Chow chow chow . . .

PROJECTION:

Photo of Ping's fifth grade class

(During Ping's speech, the projection closes in on an Italian girl, the only one among the many Asian faces.)

PING: New York City. 1957.

I am in the fifth grade at P.S. 23 at the corner of Mulberry and Bayard Streets on the border of Chinatown and Little

Italy. One day our teacher introduces a new student to our class. All twenty-three Chinese faces look up with jaws dropped to see a Sicilian country girl, her head dripping with sausage curls, dressed in an old-fashioned cotton print dress with white lace frills. Her name is Philomena—she is a vision from another planet. She can't speak a word of English. We torment her for the rest of the year.

ALETA: Whose history is this anyway?

PROJECTION:

23

PROJECTION:

Accessories for Smoking Opium

ALL: 23.

(Music for the "Opium" song starts.)

SHI-ZHENG AND MICHAEL

(Singing):

Yen Tsiang
Ow
Yen Hock
Yen Hop
Yen Dong
Kiao Tsien
Sui Dow
Dao
Yen Tar Har
Yen Shee Hop
Yen Shee
Gee Yen
Yen Shee Gon
Yee
Shee
Kwoi.

RIC AND ALETA

(Translating):

Pipe or gong
The bowl
Dripping needle
The box
The lamp
Scissors for cutting
Sponge for cleaning
The knife
The table
Box for ashes
The ashes
The residue
The scraper
You
And
Me.

The East-West Quartet

RIC (*Mimes smoking an opium pipe*):

A friend took me there.
Sixty Annamite boys lay smoking
on two tiers of planks
rows of lamps
one boy was gripped in the heat of a convulsive nightmare.
The smokers were as inert as vegetables
You know . . . isn't it kinda funny . . . you know . . .
it's the only vegetable substance
that, you know . . . produces a vegetable-like state in the
user, you know . . .
A person under the influence
does not talk . . . does not sing . . . does not laugh . . .
does not quarrel . . .
and is not prone to . . . what do they call it?
. . . um . . . maudlin fellowship, you know . . .
There is no sexual arousal.
None, whatsoever.
It is a passive experience.
You feel no need to create masterpieces . . . you become
one . . .
The bliss of misery.
Communication is useless . . . you know . . .
It'd be like saying to paper Shakespeare soils
or quenching the tears of silence broken by Bach.
. . . something like that . . .
I was able to cure myself in 1929. A necessary hell
Je suis Jean Cocteau . . .

(*Sound of multiple cannonball explosions.*)

PROJECTION:

24

PING: 24.

West meets West.
Macartney briefs his staff.
Scene 8.

MICHAEL: Lord George Macartney.

ALETA: Ambassador Extraordinaire to the Celestial Empire of China . . .

RIC: Former Governor General of British West Indies,

SHI-ZHENG: former Governor General of all India,

MICHAEL: Knight of . . .

ALETA: Etcetera,

SHI-ZHENG: etcetera,

PING: etcetera . . .

RIC: My lords—just a couple of reminders here okay . . . Our objectives on this urgent mission are as follows—

MICHAEL: Open new ports for British trade in China.

ALETA: Obtain the cession of a piece of territory

RIC: or an island,

MICHAEL: as close as possible to the area of *tea* and silk production,

ALETA: where British merchants can reside year-round,

SHI-ZHENG: make lots and lots of money

RIC: and in which British jurisdiction is exercised.

PING: That means: if you crack open a Chinaman's head, don't worry about it.

MICHAEL: Create new markets in China.

ALETA: Establish a permanent embassy in Beijing.

RIC: And last but not least establish an intelligence mission . . .

MICHAEL: However, do not excite any suspicion—

SHI-ZHENG: And don't forget . . .

RIC: spying is good and misinformation even better.

MICHAEL: History is written by the victors, you know . . .

CAST: Boom boom boom . . .

PING: 25.

East meets West.

Liang meets Macartney.

Scene 9.

MICHAEL: The emperor, the one and only son of heaven,

ALETA: father of his country,

SHI-ZHENG: His Most Highness,

The East-West Quartet

RIC: the pivot of heaven earth and

CAST: humanity,

RIC: etcetera,

ALETA: etcetera,

PING: etcetera . . .

MICHAEL: hereby decrees that the Chinese delegation,

ALETA: the children and servants of the one and only son of heaven,

SHI-ZHENG: father of his

CAST: country—

RIC: etcetera,

MICHAEL: etcetera,

PING: etcetera . . .

MICHAEL: will lead your envoy and adjuncts to the foot of the throne on His Majesty's eighty-third birthday. The procession will follow . . . as follows . . .

PROJECTION:

Will Macartney do the nine kowtows?

PROJECTION:

The Emperor has arrived but is waiting in the wings.

(During the following Ric, Shi-Zheng and Aleta perform a very stylized, deep, formal kowtow.)

You will wait for a sign . . . a sign from the emperor to present the gifts and tributes sent by King George III of England. You will then perform nine kowtows—that's nine as in nuove, as in the whole nine yards, as in nine guys on a team. When these gestures of reverence have been noted and accepted, you will move slightly . . . an itty-bitty tiny bit forward and perform one more kowtow before returning quietly . . . as in "you coulda heard a pin drop," as in "quiet as a mouse" to your assigned places. Smoking or chewing gum or fat is prohibited during the proceedings of protocol. His Most Highness, the one and only Son of Heaven, father of his country,

PING: etcetera,

MICHAEL: etcetera,

PING: etcetera . . .

MICHAEL: does not like the chewing of gum. In fact, chewing of
any kind . . . any kind is forbidden.

PROJECTION:

26

PING: 26.

East meets East.

Palace gossip.

Scene 10.

RIC: Well, the British, they don't kowtow, lowtow or bowwow for
nobody.

ALETA: That entourage is hardheaded and snotty . . . Ya know what
they did? Tell 'em . . .

RIC: Ya know what they did? Listen to this . . .

ALETA: Well, when the viceroy said that they must . . .

RIC: Ya hear her—*must*—bowwow to the emperor

ALETA: they went wild!

RIC: Oh yeah! Smoke started fuming out their heads like clouds of . . .

ALETA: beaucoup opium or like . . . aaah . . .

RIC: . . . a North Korean nuclear plant . . .

RIC AND ALETA: They went ape-shit chow mein!

RIC: Well, Lordy Macartney

ALETA: Lordy Macartney . . .

RIC AND ALETA: . . . and his merry men

RIC: went back to the little chalet the viceroy put them up in.

ALETA: You mean that piece of swamp with a couple of decaying
pavilions and some tents?

RIC: First-class swamp, girlfriend!

ALETA: Excuse me . . .

RIC: Well, his oh so Lordy Lordy . . . came up with an alternate
plan.

The East-West Quartet

ALETA: Business is business.

RIC: Love, brotherhood and human rights get swept right under the carpet,

RIC AND ALETA: once money rears its pretty little head!

RIC: Forget human rights!

ALETA: I already said that . . .

RIC: Take no prisoners!

ALETA: Uhuhmm . . .

RIC: Money *uber alles*!

ALETA: Right.

RIC: So.

ALETA: So . . . tell them the plan.

RIC: I tell them the plan?

ALETA: You tell them the plan. (*To audience*) He'll tell you the plan.

RIC: So the plan the British came up with was—now get this—so the plan the British came up with was—now get this—to hang a picture . . .

ALETA: to hang a picture

RIC: of King George III

ALETA: of King George III

RIC: behind the emperor

ALETA: behind the emperor

RIC: so that they would be bowing to their king

ALETA: so that they would be bowing to their king

RIC: and only look like they were kowtowing to his

ALETA: toasty-mosty—

RIC: the emperor,

ALETA: etcetera, etcetera, etcetera . . .

GUY (*One of the musicians*): Who?

RIC: Hello!!! The emperor!

GUY: Aaaaah.

RIC: It all smacks of S&M, doesn't it?

GUY: Yeah, "sadness & madness."

ALETA: Stick to the music, Guy . . .

RIC: That's nothing. Just wait until the Americans get into the picture.

ALETA: Have you seen that soap series, *The Chinese Must Go*?

RIC: The one set out west?

ALETA: Prospectors,

RIC: gold miners . . .

ALETA: opium freaks—

RIC: Wait a minute . . . Am I supposed to sing something now?

Guy, am I supposed to sing something now?

GUY: Yep . . .

PROJECTION:

27

ALL: 27.

(The following is sung to the tune of “Chopsticks.”)

MICHAEL: Give me a roast duck

RIC: some chicken

MICHAEL: or maybe fresh carp

RIC: snap snapper

MICHAEL AND RIC: boiled down in a ginger sauce.

MICHAEL: Give me some string beans

RIC: some snowpeas with rice

MICHAEL AND RIC:

I’m gonna cook up a storm
for my man tonight.
He likee chicken and the fish
but he don’t do pork
no he won’t do pork.
He likee string beans
snow peas and rice
but oh no, no pork
he says:
“Tastes like tree!”

GUY: Like what?

RIC: Like tree . . .

GUY: Like tree?

MICHAEL: Like tree.

GUY: Like tree, like tree, like tree!

The East-West Quartet

CAST (*Singing*):

Give me some margarine
scones and some tea
maybe some fish and chips
deep fried in lots of lard
give me a meat pie
a peach pie
a pudding
gonna cook up a storm
for my man tonight!

He loves that British
haute cuisine
so he'll eat this up
yes, he'll eat this up.

He likes that bland
and soggy food
and he'll eat it up
'cause it tastes like . . .

Can't eat the food they serve
don't get the customs they have
or the language they speak
so aggressively
won't give in, can't give in
shan't give in, won't give in
can't give in
shan't give in
no olay!!

They are the proudest
stubbornest bunch
and I will not budge
no I will not budge.

They are the high
and mightiest bunch

and I will not budge
'cause I am a Brit-Chinese.

GUY: A what?

ALETA AND RIC: A Brit

SHI-ZHENG AND MICHAEL: Chinese

CAST: Olay!

(Sound of a train going by.)

PING:

Silent swans.

Spreading their wings, flapping their wings . . .

Whose history is this anyway?

History is the story of men and women, not birds.

Yes, please, more *tea*.

Yes, please, more *tea* . . .

PROJECTION:

28

ALL: 28.

PROJECTION:

Mrs. Chin

ALETA:

Vincent grew up good.

He have many friends.

White, black, Chinese.

He get job

he buy car

he gonna marry

and take care of me after my man die.

A good Chinese boy.

A good American boy.

He came home from work and said

that he's going out with friends.

The East-West Quartet

I say:

“Vincent, why you do this?

You marry tomorrow.”

He say:

“Last time out with the boys before wedding.”

I say:

“Vincent!

No say last time!

No say last time . . .

Bad luck.”

(Sound of baseball being hit. A crowd roars.)

MICHAEL:

I didn't see anybody throw blows
but I saw Chin standing in a position
where he had got done
throwing a couple of blows
and Ebens—you know, the big white guy
he was on the floor, you know . . .
and his stepson, Nitz, you know
the one with the mustache
I think he was on the floor, too . . .
and then they took it outside . . .

CAST: Chow chow chow . . .

PROJECTION:

29.

ALL: 29.

ALETA: Between 1800 and 1842,

RIC: over four hundred thousand chests of opium are smuggled
into China illegally.

MICHAEL: The Chinese addiction to opium was so severe that for the first time in the long history of the country China had to export silver to pay for the *opium* of the “barbarians.”

PROJECTION:

30

ALL: 30.

RIC: British opium was so strong, *the Chinese* believed that the British had mixed it with the sacrificial flesh of little girls and the dried corpses of crows.

PROJECTION:

31

ALL: 31.

1839.

RIC: In 1839, Commissioner Lin, appointed by the emperor to deal with the illegal *opium* trade, orders twenty thousand chests of *opium* to be dumped into the sea.

MICHAEL: Was this a patriotic act or an act of terrorism?

PROJECTION:

32

ALL: 32.

ALETA: Although the British Parliament sent confused and confusing comments about the unacceptability of the *opium* trade, it didn't matter as long as it turned a healthy profit . . .

PING: The British had found a way to balance their budget.

RIC: And the Beatles are not even born yet.

MICHAEL: Whose history is this anyway?

PROJECTION:

33

The East-West Quartet

PING: 33.

MICHAEL AND RIC (*Singing*):

Are we to be
silent as swans
are we to be
precious and calm
used and abused
opium in our shoes
silent as swans.

CAST:

Are we to be
free of its charms
sinuous charms
a killer's kiss
the kiss of death
silent as swans
silent as swans.

(Sound of cannonball.)

PROJECTION:

34

PING: 34.

A letter to Queen Victoria.

(Shi-Zheng speaks the following in Chinese. Ping translates simultaneously:)

The way of heaven is fairness to all. It does not suffer us to harm others in order to benefit ourselves. Men are alike in this the world over: that they cherish life and hate what endangers life.

Your country lies twenty thousand leagues away; but for all that, the way of heaven holds good for you as for us, and your instincts are not different from ours.

Over many many years, Englishmen have traded peacefully and profitably at Canton. Lately however, some of them have taken to introducing opium. This poison, it appears, is manufactured by certain devilish persons in places subject to your rule.

Why do you permit it to be produced and carried to China? Perhaps it is because you have never been clearly or formally warned.

I now give assurance that we mean to cut off this harmful drug forever. What is here forbidden to consume, your dependencies must be forbidden to manufacture. And what has already been manufactured, Your Majesty, must immediately search out and throw to the bottom of the sea.

Calamities will not be sent down on you from above; you will be acting in accordance with decent feeling, which may also influence the course of nature in your favor.

Sincerely, Lin Tse-Hsu

(Percussive music starts. The Cast performs an abstract movement sequence in a diagonal on the carpet. Sound of multiple cannonball explosions.)

PROJECTION:

Queen Victoria Never Received the Letter

PROJECTION:

The Opium War 1839-1842

PROJECTION:

China loses the war. Hong Kong is ceded to Britain for 99 years, and 21 million dollars in indemnities are paid. China's humiliation is complete. A sign outside a British country club in Shanghai reads: "No dogs or Chinese allowed."

PING: 1994.

San Francisco.

I am sitting alone in a stylish restaurant. I am waiting for the bill. While I am waiting, I see a tall man with a crew cut

The East-West Quartet

in full camouflage walk into the restaurant. A flash goes through my brain—is this a hip outfit he’s wearing or is this the real thing? The man walks over to the bar which is an island in the center of the restaurant. He starts talking to a man who is sitting at the bar.

I can tell that the man at the bar does not know the man in the camouflage outfit. My eyes scan for the maître d’. He sees what I see. He makes a beeline for the bar. I hear the man in the camouflage outfit speak: “Tellin’ me I can’t have a drink at this bar? That’s what you’re tellin’ me, right? Tellin’ me I can’t sit down at this bar.”

I can see the maître d’ making depreciating gestures and at the same time smoothly guiding the man in camouflage away from the bar toward the exit. I know he is going to pass my table and I try to avoid eye contact, but my waiter returns with the bill just as the man in camouflage passes my table. I have to look up. He looks straight at me.

“*You serve niggers here.*” —There is a black couple sitting opposite me. “*You serve gooks.*” —That would be me. “*We used to kill gooks and you serve ’em here.*”

I think to myself, This man is honest about how he feels.

ALETA: Whose history is this anyway?

PROJECTION:

35

ALL: 35.

SHI-ZHENG (*Singing in Chinese*):

Take me out to the ball game
take me out to the park
buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jacks
I don’t care if I ever come back.

’Cause it’s root, root, root
for the home team
if they don’t win it’s a shame

and it's one, two, three strikes you're out
at the old ball game!

PING: Again!

SHI-ZHENG (*In Chinese*) AND RIC (*In English*):

... and it's one, two, three strikes you're out
at the old ball game!

PING: Again!

CAST:

Take me out to the ball game
take me out to the park
buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jacks
I don't care if I ever come back.

'Cause it's root, root, root
for the home team
if they don't win it's a shame
and it's one, two, three strikes you're out
at the old ball game!

PING: Again!

CAST:

... and it's one, two, three strikes you're out
at the old ball game ...

(Sound of baseball being hit. A crowd roars.)

PROJECTION:

36

ALL: 36.

The East-West Quartet

RIC, MICHAEL AND SHI-ZHENG:

Boom boom boom

RIC:

Next thing I *know*
while the other girls are

SHI-ZHENG:

dancing

RIC AND MICHAEL:

we hear boom boom boom

SHI-ZHENG:

you know

RIC AND MICHAEL:

and we run to the

SHI-ZHENG:

stage

RIC AND MICHAEL:

to see what's

SHI-ZHENG:

happening

RIC AND MICHAEL:

you know, we go,

SHI-ZHENG:

"What's up?"

RIC AND MICHAEL:

And we look

SHI-ZHENG:

out

RIC AND MICHAEL:

and I see men fighting out

SHI-ZHENG:

there.

RIC AND MICHAEL:

Men

SHI-ZHENG:

fighting

RIC AND MICHAEL:

going at each

SHI-ZHENG:

other

RIC, MICHAEL AND SHI-ZHENG:

boom boom boom.

MICHAEL:

I didn't see anybody throw *blows*
 but I saw Chin standing in a *position*
 where he had got *done*
 throwing a couple of *blows*
 and Ebens—you know, the big white guy
 he was on the floor, *you know* . . .
 and his stepson, Nitz, *you know*
 the one with the *mustache*
 I think he was on the floor, *too* . . .
 and then they took it *outside* . . .
 I heard Ebens *say*,

RIC:

"It's because of you little
 Japanese motherfuckers
 that we're out of work with GM!"

The East-West Quartet

MICHAEL:

I'm not a little Japanese *motherfucker* . . .

CAST:

Boom boom boom!

MICHAEL: They jumped out from behind the *truck*

RIC: They attempted to grab and corner *Vincent*

MICHAEL: Nitz

RIC: Ebens

MICHAEL: Two big white *guys*

RIC: One with a *mustache*

MICHAEL: Two big white *guys*

RIC: One holding a *bat*

MICHAEL: A bear hug from *behind*

RIC: A full swing to the *head*

MICHAEL: A bear hug from *behind*

RIC: A full swing to the *head*

MICHAEL: He held the bat with both *hands*

RIC: A full swing to the *head*

MICHAEL: Again

RIC: Again

SHI-ZHENG: *Again*

CAST: Boom boom boom

MICHAEL: All I heard *was*

CAST: Boom boom boom

MICHAEL: Doubles, triples and *home runs*

CAST: Boom boom boom

MICHAEL: His skull was *crushed*

RIC: Pieces of brain bleed into *tar*

MICHAEL: The body released turns and *falls*

RIC: He was wearing white *socks*

MICHAEL: The body released turns and *falls*

RIC: Not a speck of blood on white *socks*

MICHAEL: A black man standing on the corner *says*:

PING: Ebens swung the bat as if a baseball player was swinging for
a home run, full contact, full swing.

(Sound of baseball being hit.)

PROJECTION:

37

ALL: 37.

ALETA:

I
I want
I
want
I want
I
want
jjjjjjustice for my son
for mmmmy Vincent
my precious bit of light and heaven
dragged out my heart in murder

I
want
I want
I
want
I want
jjjjjjustice for my son

a good boy
a Chinese boy and an American boy
you kkkkill him! You kkkkill him!!!
Like some wild beast!
Let me ask you
if Vincent were white and not Chinese
would you have been such savages?!
You kkkkill him!! You kkkkill him!!!
You . . .



And I
I want
I
wwwant
I wwwant
jjjjjjustice for mmmmy son
for my precious bit of light and heaven
dragged out mmmmy heart in murder.

PROJECTION:

Vincent Chin's murderers never served any jail term. They were
fined \$3780 and released on probation.

PROJECTION:

38

ALL: 38.

ALETA (*Singing*):

Moonlight will protect me
from what I don't want to know
moonlight protect my Vincent
moonlight comfort
soothe and smile
moonlight will protect me
from what I don't want to see.

PING (*Spoken*):

It rises and rises
then falls
history flowing past me
ending
is this the end or
a new beginning?

MICHAEL (*Spoken*):

What will our world be like
when we cease being the world

The East-West Quartet

and reconciled to simply
being a part of the world?
A world no longer our own
a world no longer in servitude
to emperor or king
the banality of an ordinary world
filled with ordinary men
wearing ordinary shoes and hats
walking common steps
left right then left right . . .

PING: They tore down the Berlin Wall.

MICHAEL: Will the Great Wall be next?

PING: Only time will tell

MICHAEL: and what time cannot tell is really none of our business . . .
ah yes.

ALETA (*Singing*):

Moonlight will protect me
from what I don't want to know.
Moonlight protect my Vincent
moonlight comfort
soothe and smile
moonlight will protect me
from what I don't want to see
moonlight protect my Vincent
moonlight comfort
soothe and smile.

(The music from the song continues under the following section.)

PING: 1994.

San Francisco.

I am trying to find the famous image of the meeting of
the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads at
Promontory Point in Utah. The place where East met West,
if only in a geographic sense.

MICHAEL: The Celestials—

ALETA: The Chinaboys—

MICHAEL: John Chinaman

ALETA: who had been considered too weak, too unmechanical, too unmanly to build a railroad through the solid rock of the Sierra Nevada, did rise to the task.

MICHAEL: *The Chinese* were quick to learn,

ALETA: slow to complain,

MICHAEL: did not get drunk on payday,

ALETA: and did not frequent whorehouses.

MICHAEL: They did, however, have the outrageous habit of bathing every day and drinking hot *tea*, which prevented them from getting sick from the bad water. And some of them did smoke *opium*.

ALETA (*Spoken*):

The atmosphere is electric.

You can taste it in your mouth.

The historic event has gathered
a frenzied curious crowd.

East meets West.

West meets East.

This must be the event of the year.

Everyone is keyed to the arrival of the emperor.

What will he say to the British?

Will he offer them tea?

And more importantly
what will he wear?

PING: When the railroads finally met in the scorching desert of Utah on May 10, 1869, a commemorative photograph was taken of this historic moment in American history. Ten thousand Chinese pioneers or ninety percent of the workforce of the Central Pacific Railroad were not represented in the photograph.

PROJECTION:

Famous photo of the joining of the first transcontinental railroad tracks, from east and west, Promontory Point, Utah, 1869

The East-West Quartet

(The photo is black and white. There are no Chinese people in it at all. Gradually, the picture changes as a few Chinese workers are digitally added in color. Then more and more and more are added. Once the Chinese workers are restored to the photo, the following text is projected above the image:)

PROJECTION:

20,000 pounds of Chinese railroad workers' bones were shipped back to China for burial. Some of the bones are still in storage and remain unclaimed to this day.

(Loud sound of a train passing. As the projections fade out, the musicians begin playing entrance music for the Emperor in a grand processional style, evocative of Chinese opera.)

PROJECTION:

39

ALL: 39.

(Shi-Zheng enters dressed in elaborate period clothing, as described below by Aleta. He crosses to the carpet and performs a formal movement sequence based on the style of Chinese opera.)

ALETA: The emperor is wearing a mad yellow dragon robe with tapered sleeves ending in horse-hoof cuffs. The robe is embroidered with the twelve mystical symbols. This includes dragons—which, by the way, is the emperor's personal symbol—stylized triple-peaked rocks rising out of psychedelic waves wrapped around the hem of the robe, the sun, moon and constellations for days . . .

Around the emperor's neck is a string of one hundred and eight precious pearls. To complete the ensemble the emperor is wearing knee-high riding boots made of black satin with thick, white, inflexible soles. On His Majesty's head is a close-fitting hat with an upturned, black mole-hair brim. The ornate finial or spike on top is composed of three

tiers of Eastern pearls each clasped by writhing golden dragons. The emperor's jewel of rank is a single extra-large baroque pearl set in the top of the spike, and is rumored to be the legendary Azure Dragon. Azure like it . . .

How's that for a drop-dead ensemble?!

(Emperor's dais is brought out. The Emperor's music ends. Tinkling bells are the only sound we hear. The Emperor very slowly gets on his pedestal.

Lord George Macartney enters dressed in sixteenth century European clothing. Sound of wind.)

PROJECTION:

Will Macartney do the nine kowtows?

(Macartney crosses slowly to the Emperor. He bows and hands him a letter. The Emperor slowly reaches for the letter. As he is about to touch it: blackout.)

PROJECTION:

An image of a sky full of stars

(Sound of multiple cannonball explosions. Under this cacophony, the sound of crickets slowly comes up. When the explosions stop, only the sound of the crickets is heard.)

PROJECTION:

1995

PROJECTION:

Bill Gates and Warren Buffet go to China

PROJECTION:

When they are there, they see a clock in Tiananmen Square counting the hours and minutes until Hong Kong is returned to China on June 30, 1997.

The East-West Quartet

(As the projections fade out, Ping crosses to center stage and stands on the carpet. A light comes up on him. He signs: "You believe in the goodness of mankind" in American Sign Language. He signs it a second time. As he does:)

PROJECTION:

You believe in the goodness of mankind

*(Lights fade to black.
Then the lights rise on all the performers, who take their bows.)*

PROJECTION:

40

PROJECTION:

To be continued into the 21st century.

THE END