

PROGRAMME

THE THEATRE GUILD PRESENTS

presents

The Motherly and Auspicious

Being the life of the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi, of China, in the form of a Drama, by Maurice Collis.

The author has chosen a most formidable heroine. "The Motherly and Auspicious" is the name she took when she manoeuvred herself into the great position of Empress Dowager and Co-Regent of China. Clever, courageous, and charming, she was yet the most successfully and supremely unscrupulous egotist the world has ever seen.

The play is constructed as a series of short episodes grouped into three Acts which mark the three stages of the unusual career of this amazing personality — her rise to power, her joint rule with the well-meaning but fatuous widowed Empress, and the supremacy she enjoyed for the last twenty-seven years of her life. Most of the episodes take place in corners of the most secret palaces in the world. It is as though the audience were hidden, and see and hear secrets which have only lately been given to the world in the writings and diaries of contemporary historians and scholars.

Wen Li, the commentator, who appears before each scene, has been sent from the place of departed spirits by his exacting mistress, the Dowager, to whitewash her. He has a difficult task, poor man, and finds it necessary to fortify himself with the wines of our "deplorable city." The whole play is so rich in humour and subtlety that at times the grimness of the deeds that lie behind is almost obscured.

ACT ONE: RISE TO POWER

SCENE 1: A wharf bank of the Yang-tze River near Nanking, 1852.

SCENE 2: In a house in Pewter Lane, Peking, 1853.

SCENE 3: The Lacquer Pavilion of the Noble Lady Orchid in the Royal Park of Yuan-Ming-Yuan, 1854.

SCENE 4: A room in the apartments of the Lesser Consort Yi in the Forbidden City, 1856.

ACT TWO: JOINT RULE

SCENE 1: A room in the old Hunting Palace at Jehol, 1861.

SCENE 2: An audience room in the residence of the Western Dowager, Tzu Hsi, in the Forbidden City, 1872.

SCENE 3: A room in the west wing of Her Majesty Tzu Hsi's residence, in the Forbidden City, 1875.

SCENE 4: A room in the residence of the Eastern Empress Dowager, Tzu An, 1881.

ACT THREE: SUPREMACY

SCENE 1: A pavilion in the gardens of the New Summer Palace, 1894.

SCENE 2: A private audience room in the Palace, 1898.

SCENE 3: A bedchamber in the Winter Palace, 1908.

The persons in the play in order of appearance are as follows:

WEN LI—The Honourable Commentator. Appears before each Scene.

MADAME HUI CHING—Mother of Orchid and Chrysanthemum.

ORCHID—Later Imperial Concubine Yi, later the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi.

CHRYSANTHEMUM—Later Wife of Prince Chun and Mother of Emperor Kuang Hsu.

WU TAN—Son of Magistrate of Nanking.

LI LIEN-YING—Imperial Eunuch, second grade, later Chief Eunuch.

EUNUCH ATTENDANT.

NIU-KU-LU—Imperial Concubine, later Empress, later Empress Dowager Tzu An.

PALACE MAID—Personal Waiting Maid to Orchid throughout most of her life.

HSIEN FENG—Emperor of China (1851-1861).

THE GRAND PHYSICIAN.

PRINCE YEE

PRINCE CHENG

SU SHUN, Grand Secretary

} Conspirators.

JUNG LU—Vice-Captain of the Imperial Guard, later Captain.

TUNG CHIH—Emperor of China (1862–1874).

PHOENIX ELEGANCE—Lady-in-waiting to Tzu Hsi, later Imperial Concubine to Tung Chih.

A-LU-TE—Lady-in-waiting to Tzu An, later Empress Chia Shun, Wife to Emperor Tung Chih.

MA TANG—Confidential Eunuch to Emperor Tung Chih.

PRINCE KUNG

PRINCE CHUN

PRINCE TSAI CHI

} Members of the Inner Council.

FIRST AND SECOND LADIES-IN-WAITING TO TZU AN.

LUNG YU—Niece of Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi, Empress; Wife of Emperor Kuang Ksu.

PEARL—Imperial Concubine of Emperor Kuang Hsu.

KUANG HSU—Emperor of China (1875–1908).

PRINCESS CHUN—Daughter of Jung Lu.

YUAN SHIH-KAI—Inspector-General of the Forces.

BOATMAN, ARTISTS, EUNUCHS, MESSENGERS, EMISSARY, A WOMAN OF THE PEOPLE, MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, ETC.

The Players are:

Iris Thomas

May Haynes

Patricia Hackett

Betty Fenner

Elizabeth Campbell

Enid Brown

Helen Western

Gay Carman

Sidney Downie

James Glennon

Oscar Cox

Tom Brown

Michael Robertson

Peter Osborn

Freddie Storch

Alan Sierp

The play is produced by Patricia Hackett

Settings and decor by Alan Sierp

Costumes by Patricia Hackett

Stage Manager Shylie Niell

Assistant Stage Manager Margaret Sneyd

House Manager Lisbeth Cornell