

# Laughter and Tears

Translation of Selected Kunqu Dramas

Translation by Ben Wang

## 悲欢集

◎汪班译  
◎白先勇 余秋雨 序

昆曲

选剧英译

思凡

The Mountain Gate

钟馗嫁妹 山门

As a Lioness Roars

The Peony Pavilion

Ballad of the Broken Axe Mountain

狮子吼记

Mountain Gate

玉簪记

The Jade Pin 牡丹亭

烂柯山

Sea of Lust

The Peony Pavilion

Zhong Kui's Earthly Mission

Lady Glory's Trek to the North 长生殿

Mountain Gate

昭君出塞

下山

Sea of Lust



外文出版社  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

First Edition 2009

ISBN 978-7-119-05729-3

© Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 2009

Published by Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

<http://www.flp.com.cn>

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation

35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

悲欢集: 昆曲选剧英译: 汉英对照 / 汪班编译. — 北京:  
外文出版社, 2009

ISBN 978-7-119-05729-3

I. 悲… II. 汪… III. ①英语—汉语—对照读物 ②昆曲—  
剧本—中国—选集 IV. H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2009)第071725号

策划: 周明伟

责任编辑: 邵东 蔡莉莉

图片提供: 张肇基 江苏省昆剧院

装帧设计: 北京大盟文化艺术有限公司

印刷监制: 冯浩

## 悲欢集

汪班 译

©2009 外文出版社

出版发行: 外文出版社(中国北京百万庄大街24号)

邮政编码: 100037

网址: <http://www.flp.com.cn>

电话: 008610-68320579(总编室) 008610-68995852(发行部)

008610-68327750(版权部)

制版: 北京大盟文化艺术有限公司

印刷: 北京外文印刷厂

开本: 787mm×1092mm 1/16 印张: 28.75

2009年6月第1版第1次印刷

(汉英)

ISBN 978-7-119-05729-3

09800(平)

10-CE-3906P

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# 序 言

## 弘扬昆曲于海外

白先勇

二〇〇六年九至十月间昆曲青春版《牡丹亭》到美国西岸巡回演出一个月，在加州大学以柏克莱校区为首的四个分校盛大公演，演出十二场，场场满座，受到美国观众空前的热烈欢迎。论者甚至认为这是继梅兰芳一九二九年来美巡演后，中国古典戏曲对美国文化界产生的最大一次冲击。

这次青春版《牡丹亭》在美国成功演出可以得到几项结论。美国观众完全可以接受像昆曲这样高雅古典的艺术形式。青春版《牡丹亭》三晚连本共九小时，对西方观众的接受度是一大考验。美国学界对中国这项少为人知的表演艺术产生强烈的研究兴趣，可以说美国学界对昆曲的古典美学感到惊艳。还有，这次青春版《牡丹亭》在美西演出获得巨大成功，其中重要原因之一是演出前期宣导工作做得扎实，深入民间。

在演出的前几个月，我们便积极展开宣导工作，其中重点项目是延请专家学者，对美国大学师生以及一般观众讲解昆曲，而且在每场演出前还有半小时的导读讲座。我们特别从东岸把纽约华美协进社人文学会共同主席汪班请到柏克莱，做了一系列的昆曲演讲。汪班学养丰富，对昆曲以及中国传统戏曲有独到见解，而且他口才特佳，言辞生动，在柏克莱一系列的英文讲座，极受美国观众欢迎，起了很大的启蒙作用。青春版《牡丹亭》在柏克莱首演成功，汪班先生的昆曲讲座，功不可没。

汪班自少年时便着迷于京昆，来美教书后，一直大力推广昆曲活动，在美东名大学如哥伦比亚大学、威廉思学院等演讲，介绍昆曲艺术，并在纽约著名的林肯中心专题讲解《牡丹亭》，同时与纽约昆曲社合办专场演出，敦请中国昆曲大师如张继青、蔡正仁等赴美东表演。

这些年汪班在海外弘扬昆曲，贡献甚大。

事实上，西方文化界对昆曲的认知十分有限，西方人对中国戏曲的印象几乎仅止于京剧。然而昆曲的美学成就乃中国戏曲中至高者，有“百戏之祖”的美称。自联合国教科文组织二〇〇一年评定中国昆曲为“人类口述非物质文化遗产”后，昆曲走向世界乃成为当务之急。把昆曲介绍到外国，首先昆曲的文本需有一流的翻译。汪班先生正是做出了这样一件极有意义的事情：他把昆曲多出名剧中的主要折子译成英文，取名《悲欢集》，即将出版。

汪班这部昆曲选剧英译，一大特点是译自场上演出本，对象是美国观众。其实明清传奇名著如《牡丹亭》、《长生殿》早已有了全译本，但那是案头文学，只适合在课室中做研究用。演出本的译文，首要条件是清楚明白，观众一目了然，字幕的空间有限，速度很快，艰涩的英文，观众来不及消化，对剧情了解会产生阻隔。其次译者对昆剧演出必须熟悉，译文的戏剧效果才能拿捏得准确。而且昆曲的曲牌唱词多为诗歌韵文，因此译者本人对中国诗词的修养，以及中国诗词英译的掌握，便可决定译文的高下。汪班先生以及他下过苦功译成的《悲欢集》完全具备这些条件。

汪班长年在美国向美国学生讲授中国诗词书画，他本人不仅娴熟中国诗词传统，而且英文根基扎实，中诗英译，十分在行。加以汪班又曾经票过戏，工小生、小丑，舞台上的戏剧效果，他当然认识深刻，因此他的昆剧选译，生动活泼，趣味盎然，处处透露巧思，很容易引起观众和读者的共鸣。

《悲欢集》中，一些名剧名折子如《牡丹亭》中之“寻梦”、“拾画”，《长生殿》中之“闻铃”、“哭像”，汪班的译笔固然下足功夫，难得的是他把《烂柯山》、《玉簪记》、《孽海记》中“思凡”、“下山”等一些从未译成英文的剧目也都译了出来，而且译得十分出色。

总之，《悲欢集》不但好读好看，日后要将这些昆剧送到海外巡演，让西方观众赏识到中国的“百戏之祖”，汪班先生这些优美的译文也正好可以派上用场，作为字幕。别小看了字幕的功能，字幕翻译的优劣，往往影响外国观众对一出戏的评价呢。

(二〇〇八年二月于加州)



# Promoting the Art of Kunqu Overseas

By Kenneth Hsien-yung Pai

Towards the end of September 2006, the “Young Lovers Version” of the Kunqu opera, *The Peony Pavilion*, came to the west coast of the United States for a month-long tour to four campuses of the University of California, starting at U.C. Berkeley with a grand premiere. Altogether, there were twelve performances, all sold-out, and they received an unprecedented warm welcome from the audience. Critics were of the opinion that the influence which Chinese traditional opera exerted on the American cultural scene was even greater than that created during the 1929 tour to America by the famous Chinese performer, Mei Lanfang.

One can draw several conclusions from the success of these performances of *The Peony Pavilion*. The American audience can easily acquire an impression of Kunqu’s particular kind of elegant and classical form. The “Young Lovers Version” of *The Peony Pavilion* lasts nine hours, played over three evenings. This is a real test for the Western spectators’ expectations for the length of a performance. The American academic world began to feel a strong desire to find out more about this rarified Chinese performance art form. One could say that they were stunned by the unimaginable radiance of Kunqu. Also, one of the principal reasons that *The Peony Pavilion* was such a huge success this time was the solid work of programs and lectures planned around these performances,



which reached people from all walks of life.

In the months leading up to these performances, we energetically carried out the work of preparing lectures and programs, among which the key task was to invite experts and scholars to hold panel discussions on Kunqu for university teachers and students, as well as for the general public. Also, there was to be a half-hour introductory lecture before each performance. From the East Coast, we especially invited Ben Wang, co-chair of the China Institute's Renwen Society, to Berkeley to give a series of lectures on Kunqu opera. Ben Wang's erudition is bountiful and he also has very unique opinions about Kunqu as well as about traditional Chinese opera. Furthermore, he is particularly eloquent, and his speech vivid. At Berkeley, the audience warmly received this series of lectures and found them very enlightening. Ben Wang's lectures were indispensable to the success of the "Young Lovers Version" of *The Peony Pavilion* in Berkeley.

Ben Wang became enamored of Kunqu at a young age, and after coming to the U.S. to teach, he always energetically promoted Kunqu activities. On the East Coast, he gave lectures on the art of Kunqu at Columbia University and at Williams College, among other prominent learning institutions. He also gave a specialized lecture on *The Peony Pavilion* at New York's famous Lincoln Center. At the same time, in tandem with New York's Kunqu Society, he cordially invited Chinese experts on Kunqu, such as Zhang Jiqing, Cai Zhengren, among others, to come to the East Coast to perform. For many years, Ben Wang has made a very large contribution to promoting Kunqu overseas.

In fact, Western cultural experts are extremely limited in their knowledge of Kunqu. The impression that the Westerners have of Chinese opera usually ends with Peking Opera. However Kunqu's aesthetic accomplishments are supreme among Chinese traditional operas, and it enjoys the laudatory title of



“Ancestor to all Chinese Dramas.” Naturally, after the UNESCO judged Kunqu in 2001 to be “a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity,” the introduction of Kunqu to the world has become an urgent priority. In order to promote Kunqu to the outside world, it was first necessary to have a first-class translation of the text. Ben Wang was the person who took on this important task. He translated many of the principal highlight scenes of the famous Kunqu dramas into English, entitling his work, *Laughter and Tears*, which is about to be published.

A notable characteristic of these translations by Ben Wang is that they were translated from performance editions of these texts, targeted for the American audience. Actually, English translations of famous stories of romance from the Ming and Qing dynasties such as *The Peony Pavilion*, and *The Palace of Eternal Youth* had existed for a long time but these were literary works, suitable only for readers and for academic research. The primary requisite for the writing style of a performance edition is intelligibility, so that the work can be crystal clear for the audience. Because the space on the subtitles screen is limited and the pace very fast, and also because of the angular nature of English, and the fact that there isn't enough time for the audience to digest the text, all these things can become an obstacle to understanding the plot. What is more, the translator must be so familiar with the performance practices of Kunqu drama that he can choose just the right words to express the drama fully. As the trademark melodies of Kunqu are mostly set to rhyming verses, the quality of the translation can only be determined by the level of the translator's cultivated knowledge of Chinese poetry, as well as his mastery of translating Chinese poetry into English. Ben Wang's *Laughter and Tears*, on which he expended so much effort, completely fulfills these requirements.

Ben Wang instructs American students on Chinese poetry,

calligraphy, and painting. He himself is not only steeped in the tradition of Chinese poetry, but in addition his foundation in English stands very strong, and thus he is completely adept at translating Chinese poetry into English. In his earlier life, he performed in Chinese classical operas where he played the role types of young man and clown, from which he acquired a deep understanding of the dramatic effects on stage. These experiences lent to his translations of these Kunqu dramas a particular vividness and exuberance that overflows with fun and his witticisms turning up everywhere. His translations will find an easy responsive chord in the spectators' and the readers' hearts.

In *Laughter and Tears* Ben Wang expended all his efforts to bring out the poetic flavor of these highlights from famous pieces, such as scenes from *The Peony Pavillion* and *The Palace of Eternal Youth*. What is amazing is that he included some never-before-translated dramas, such as *Ballad of the Broken Axe Mountain*, *The Jade Pin*, and acts from *The Sea of Lust*, among others - all of them truly remarkable.

In conclusion, *Laughter and Tears* not only makes for a wonderful reading, but in the future, when these Kunqu dramas are to be performed on tour abroad, it will also enable Western audiences to thoroughly appreciate Kunqu, this "Ancestor to All Chinese Dramas". These wonderful translations will be perfectly suited for projected subtitles in performance. Don't underestimate the power of those subtitles, as they can well influence the foreign spectators in their appraisal of the quality of Kunqu!

(Translated by Peter McClintock, Stage Director at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City)

(本序译者：麦培德，为美国纽约大都会歌剧院著名导演，精通中、法、德、俄、西班牙等五种外语。)



## 汪班先生《悲欢集》

余秋雨

二〇〇五年四月，在纽约联合国大厦的一个餐厅里，我和一些朋友边用餐边聊天。席间的主角是儒雅而又充满活力的汪班先生，当时大家都在兴奋地谈论他对昆剧折子戏的杰出英译。

中国传统戏曲在美国演出并受到欢迎，是二十世纪二三十年的事情。当时西方观众主要是从唱腔、表演、服饰、化妆上进行欣赏，对每出戏的具体内容关注不多。我从齐如山、余上沅等先生的回忆中知道，演出时也有一些英文的剧情简介，但都十分粗略，无法体现剧作的文学企图。

后来，随着文化交流的增多，中国的剧团赴美演出时也会带有一些比较正式的译本，甚至还制作成字幕在台侧打出。但这些翻译，大抵拘泥于原作文句，而中国传统戏曲的文句又牵连着一个复杂的文化大背景，外国朋友一眼看去总是疙疙瘩瘩、别别扭扭，而且又难于与舞台上的实际演唱搭调。在这种情况下，原本希望为观众提供拐杖的英译字幕，反而有可能阻断观众的正常欣赏，成为观剧的一种障碍。

于是，人们在期待着一个人的出现。这个人必须精通中国古典，精通得能够自由表述；这个人又必须有纯熟的英语能力，纯熟到让西方观众一听就产生感应；这个人还必须充分了解戏曲表演，知道什么样的表情动作最适合配上什么样的语言。这三方面条件的圆满极不容易，尤其是第三点，几乎是多数古文专家和英文专家的盲区所在。但是，这个人终于出现了，那就是汪班先生。

汪班先生是一位可以出入中西、兼通雅俗的现代名士。与他相处，时时觉得妙趣横生。妙趣来自何处？来自于对多种文化的深入体验，以及体验过后的潇洒选择。他对戏曲的迷恋，是他潇洒选择的一

个重要部分。因为戏曲能够道尽人生悲欢，最后却又能付之于那么美丽的姿态和演唱。结果，观赏即是体验，感叹即是享受。这是阅尽千山的智者所寻得的一个精神家园。我第一次见到汪班先生时，端详着他微斑的鬓角和炯炯的眼神，心想他一定是这样的人，果然。

他是在一九八九年上海昆剧团到美国演出时开始着手进行昆剧翻译的，以后为几十场来美的昆剧演出作了翻译。整整十八年，他翻译了四十多出昆剧折子戏，以及两个全本：《十五贯》和《春草闯堂》。只要知道这种翻译艰难的人，都会对他的累累成果深表钦佩。

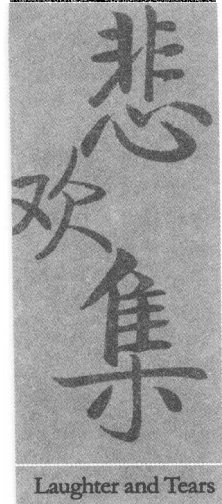
汪班先生在着手翻译这些剧本后，对戏曲艺术的把握更其深入，开始以一位不二的专家应邀在美国和英国诸多著名大学、研究机构、艺术馆和传媒讲解中国传统戏曲，广受欢迎。而中国传统戏曲到美国演出，如果能找到他来做翻译指导，又一定大放异彩。

前不久我又见到了白先勇先生，说起由他任总策划的昆剧《牡丹亭》在美国上演的盛况。我在热烈祝贺之余顺便问了一句：是谁去加州大学著名的柏克莱分校首演时做的英文演讲介绍？对这个问题我是有预设答案的，白先勇先生笑了，说：“汪班先生，当然是他！”

我也笑着呼应：当然是他！

我一直希望汪班先生的译稿能够在中国大陆出版，英汉对照，既可以让很多读者借着一个美好的故事完成两种语文的双相欣赏，又可以为一些古典戏剧的出国演出作一种翻译方法上的参考。现在，经汪班先生自己选择，终于有了这么一个英汉对照本《悲欢集》出版，实在是文化界的一件大喜事。谨小序于上，以表贺忱。

(二〇〇七年十二月)



Laughter and Tears

## Preface to Ben Wang's Laughter and Tears

*By Yu Qiuyu*

In April 2005, in the Delegates' Lounge restaurant located inside a giant U.N. building in New York, a few friends and I were having a meal and chatting at the same time. The leading character in the Delegates' Lounge was Ben Wang, he with his debonair, scholarly manner and brimming over with vitality. Everyone was excitedly discussing his outstanding English translation of Kunqu opera highlights.

Chinese traditional opera was first performed and found a welcome in the United States during the nineteen twenties and thirties. At that time, Western audiences could only appreciate the art form in terms of the melodies, the acting, costumes and make-up. They didn't pay much attention to the actual plots of these operas. From the memoirs of masters including those by Qi Rushan and Yu Shangyuan I learned that during those U.S. performances there did exist a few plot synopses in English. However, they were very sketchy and crude, unable to reflect what these dramas were trying to convey.

Later, with an increase in cultural exchange programs, Chinese theatrical troupes touring in the U.S would bring a few relatively more formal translated texts, with the subtitles on a screen at the side of the stage. However, these translations, generally speaking, punctiliously adhered to the original written compositions. As the dramatic writing in Chinese traditional opera is so tied up with quite a complex cultural background, the non-Chi-

nese speaking spectators found the translations very contrived and even annoying. Moreover, there is the difficulty of matching these titles to the reality of what is happening onstage. It was under these circumstances that a desire arose to provide the audience with the crutch of English titles. But unless well done, these titles could prevent the audience from having a normal appreciation of the opera; they could indeed become a kind of obstacle to enjoying the opera.

And so it was that people were waiting for just the right translator to appear. This person must be thoroughly versed in the Chinese classics, to the point that he can express himself freely on the Chinese classics. This person must also be completely proficient in English, so proficient, that his explications will find a responsive chord with the Western listeners. In addition, this person must have a full understanding of traditional opera performance practices, and thus know the language most suitable to match the performers' physical expressions and movements. It's not easy to find the perfect blend of these three conditions. The third condition is particularly difficult to satisfy, and for most experts of ancient Chinese literature as well as English specialists this is where their blind spot is located. As impossible as it might seem, this person has now appeared, and it is none other than Ben Wang.

Ben Wang is someone who can shuttle between East and West, a modern scholar who is familiar with both the classical and the vernacular. Being together with him, one feels endless intellectual joy and wit at every moment. Whence arises this intellectual joie de vivre? It comes from a penetrating, experiential contact with many different cultures, which allows him to choose with ease any kind of life he wants. His infatuation with Chinese traditional opera is one of his most important life choices. Why? It's because Chinese traditional opera has the ability to



express the tears and laughter of human life to the utmost, which ultimately are conveyed through beautiful dance and music. So for Ben Wang, watching and admiring is none other than experiencing life itself; to sigh with the drama is to enjoy it. Here is this wise, enlightened person who has been through myriad life experiences who in the art of Kunqu, has finally found a spiritual home. The first time I saw Ben Wang, with the slightly graying spots on his temples, and the twinkle in his bright eyes, I said to myself: this is exactly how I had imagined this person to be!

It was during a visit to the U.S. by an opera troupe from Shanghai in 1989 that he began to translate Kunqu operas and after that, he wrote translations for several dozen performances by Kunqu troupes. To be precise, over the course of eighteen years, he translated more than 40 highlight scenes from Kunqu, as well as two complete works: *Fifteen Strings of Cash*, and *Spring Grass*. It would take someone who knows just how difficult this kind of translation can be to admit sincere admiration for Ben Wang's rich accomplishment. After he set about translating these operas, he plunged even more profoundly into the art of traditional opera art form. He began to receive invitations from scholars from many celebrated U.S. universities and research institutes, fine art academies and media organizations to speak on Chinese traditional opera and he lectured to great acclaim. Additionally, whenever Chinese traditional opera is performed in America, if Ben Wang can be tracked down to help translate and consult, then it makes for an even greater event.

Not long ago I had a reunion with the eminent Kenneth Hsien-yung Pai and he mentioned the grand occasion of the U.S. performances of the Kunqu opera, *The Peony Pavilion*, under his leadership as producer and organizer. After offering my ardent congratulations, I casually raised another question: at the time of the premiere, who went to the famous University of California



at Berkeley campus to give an introductory lecture in English. Actually, I already had guessed the answer to this question; he smiled and said, “Ben Wang, of course it was him!”

Also smiling, I echoed, “Of course!”

I have always hoped Ben Wang’s translations could be published in China in a bilingual edition. This would not only enable many readers to experience the dual blessing of appreciating two languages at once by means of these beautiful stories, but could also serve as a reference for how to translate performances by Chinese troupes touring abroad. At long last, there now exists such a bilingual edition, thanks to Ben Wang’s Kunqu selections, *Laughter and Tears*, which is soon to be published. This is an incredibly joyful occasion in the world of culture. And hence this brief preface which I have respectfully written to express my sincere congratulations.

(Translated by Peter McClintock, Stage Director at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York)

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