

Lincoln Center's

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

July 10–August 10, 2019

Jane Moss
Ehrenkranz Artistic Director

Louis Langrée
Renée and Robert Belfer Music Director

American Express is the lead sponsor of the Mostly Mozart Festival.

Thursday–Saturday, August 8–10, 2019 at 7:30 pm

U.S. PREMIERE

Under Siege

Pre-performance lecture by Renqiu Yu on Thursday, August 8 at 6:15 pm in the Bruno Walter Auditorium

Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.

Major endowment support for contemporary dance and theater is provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Endowment support for the Mostly Mozart Festival presentation of *Under Siege* is provided by the Blavatnik Family Foundation Fund for Dance.

The Mostly Mozart Festival presentation of *Under Siege* is made possible in part by the Harkness Foundation for Dance.

This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.

David H. Koch Theater

Mostly Mozart Festival

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UPCOMING MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL EVENTS:

Friday–Saturday, August 9–10 at 7:30 pm in David Geffen Hall

Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra

Louis Langrée, conductor

Steven Osborne, piano

HAYDN: Overture in D major

SHOSTAKOVICH: Piano Concerto No. 2

SCHNITTKE: Moz-Art à la Haydn

MOZART: Symphony No. 35 in D major ("Haffner")

Pre-concert recitals by Yi-Nuo Wang, piano, at 6:30 pm

Friday, August 9 at 10:00 pm in the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

A Little Night Music

Steven Osborne, piano

SCHUBERT: Sonata in B-flat major

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit MostlyMozartFestival.org. Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or request a Mostly Mozart brochure.

Visit MostlyMozartFestival.org for full festival listings.

Join the conversation: #MostlyMozart

We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.

In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.

U.S. PREMIERE

Under Siege

Yang Liping Contemporary Dance

Yang Liping, *Chief Choreographer and Director*

Tim Yip, *Visual Director/Set and Costume Design*

Principal Performers:

Tong Mingguang (*Xiao He*)

Ge Junyi (*Xiang Yu*)

Hu Shenyuan (*Yu Ji*)

Zhu Fengwei (*Liu Bang*)

Gong Zhonghui (*Han Xin, White*)

Ouyang Tian (*Han Xin, Black*)

Performers: Dong Jilan, Xiao Han, Ni Jingxia, Ni Junsong,
Qi Jinlong, Yan Cao, Yang Bixi, Zhang Lei, Gao Wei,
Gu Yueyang, Han Zhao

Pipa: Wang Yihan, Feng Xiaofan

Paper Cutter: Wang Yan

*This performance is approximately one hour and 40 minutes long,
with no intermission*

The Setting: the Chu-Han Conflict

The entire performance is narrated by **Xiao He**, a statesman and adviser of Liu Bang who would later become his prime minister.

Following the collapse of the Qin dynasty (220–206 BC), two major contending powers—Western Chu and Han—emerged, engaged in a struggle for supremacy over China. Western Chu was led by **Xiang Yu**, an ambitious tyrant, while the Han leader was the much weaker **Liu Bang**, who eventually prevailed because, according to Chinese legends and historical accounts, he could command a group of brilliant advisers and generals. The war between these two forces, from 206 BC to 202 BC, is known as the Chu-Han Contention.

Han Xin was a military general and skillful strategist who joined one of the armies led by Xiang Liang (Xiang Yu's uncle) to overthrow the Qin dynasty, and continued to serve under Xiang Yu. However, he was not placed in high regard despite having constantly proposed strategies to Xiang Yu. In 206 BC, Han deserted Xiang Yu's army and joined Liu Bang.

We enter the story with the final battle of the four-year war—the Battle of Gaixia—where Han forces led by Liu Bang and Han Xin have surrounded Xiang Yu's troops in Gaixia and launched repeated ambushes. Setting a trap, Han Xin has ordered Han soldiers and captured Chu troops to sing Chu songs; hearing them, Xiang Yu believes that he is completely under siege and has been defeated. **Yu Ji**, Xiang Yu's favorite concubine, who travelled with him, kills herself, for she cannot bear the thought of outliving her beloved. A broken-spirited Xiang Yu continues to fight the war, but eventually, no longer able to hold his forces, commits suicide by the Wu River in 202 BC.

It is a complete victory for Han, and Liu Bang soon proclaims himself the first emperor of the Han dynasty, which will become one of the greatest reigns in Chinese history.

Synopsis

THE CHARACTERS

Xiao He: a great statesman

Xiang Yu: an ambitious, tragic leader

Yu Ji: the devoted concubine of Xiang Yu

Liu Bang: a fierce warrior

Han Xin (played by two performers): a brilliant tactician who straddles life and death

ACT I: Mantis on the Hunt

Thousands of scissors form a dark cloud overhead, and a deep forest below
Looming over the stage like a heavy curse

The scissors are the crossed blades of Xiang Yu and Liu Bang

The perfect image of the war between Chu and Han

A group of black-clad dancers emerges from the forest of blades

An unconscious mass emerging from the distant past

Some wounds are like scissors, seemingly common, but difficult to predict

Some things in the subconscious are like scissors, seemingly harmless, but bringing
a disaster of a thousand years

Here, Xiao He is a watcher of history and a keeper of tradition

Chanting through the centuries of the ceaseless battle and struggle

ACT II: The Campaign Begins

Xiang Yu is the eternal hero with the power to raise mountains

Liu Bang fights strength with wisdom to gain control over the land

Han Xin is a conflicted figure who rises from nothing to great heights, only to
fall again

Xiao He projects an air of calm, but succumbs to the weight of history

Yu Ji loves for the sake of love, even unto death

In the roiling torrents of history, as the tale of the great ambush takes the stage

These people are not characters, but countless pieces of evidence

They are not content, only form

What matters is not the story, but the fear and desire in the human heart

ACT III: The Siege

Han Xin's conflicted soul comprises black and white, yin and yang

Of his two personas on stage

One is the man in reality, the other the demon in his heart

Just as good and evil, desire and reason are bound like body and shadow

A beam of light divides the stage, like the Chu-Han boundary

At the confluence of life and death, light and darkness

Blades shimmer and blood flows into rivers

The road to power is paved with countless corpses

Yu Ji, who loves for the sake of love

Stands above success and failure, yet comes crashing down in the chaos of war

She is like a candle in the dark night

Beautiful and fragile

Bringing hope and comfort to the soul

ACT IV: Forgotten Graves

As Han Xin dances, his soft sleeves become flying daggers, spilling rivers of blood
and piling mountains of corpses

The blood is like a great red snow, tinting the land and staining the crown

The tyrant stands in death. Liu Bang has won the world

Thousands of scissors collapse to the ground

Shimmering as they pile into a mass grave of history

Burying countless great men and leaders from history

A performance about sieges and schemes

Ends in silence

The glimmering lights in the rivers of history

Tell us not of those legends of old

But of today, of you, living in the here and now

A Blend of Past and Present

By Sarah Crompton

It's a vast distance in more than miles between the Yunnan province of China and the city of Wuppertal in Germany. Yet it was Pina Bausch who provided powerful inspiration when Yang Liping, one of China's most celebrated choreographers and dancers, decided she wanted to make her first contemporary dance work.

It was the humanity of Bausch's work that spoke so directly to Yang. "I was most struck by the way she tries to convey something about human ideas and human philosophy in her work," she says. But sometimes you have to look back to find a story with relevance to the present. So in casting around for her theme, Yang alighted on the great saga of the war between the Han and the Chu armies that ends up with the Han victorious, and so begins the history of modern China. It's one of the most significant tales in Chinese history, the subject of many retellings, including one in the film *Farewell My Concubine*. Yang had no doubt it was perfect for her purposes.

"Even though the story is 2,000 years old, what's happening in the story still happens in the world today," she says. "The show is talking about the big human emotions, regardless of nationality, time or place, like war, jealousy, betrayal, class, love, these sort of issues... Hopefully people can see the message of the brutality of war and the futility of power struggles between individuals which lead to the sacrifice of thousands of lives."

Although *Under Siege* is Yang Liping's fifth major production as a choreographer, it is the first she has made that incorporates contemporary dance alongside other Chinese arts. Her own background is as a folk dancer. Born in Dali, in Yunnan province in the southwest of China, her family were farmers and members of the Bai ethnic minority. Music and dance were part of the daily fabric of life. She told the *New York Times* that "my grandmother was the best singer in the village. I clearly remember, when I was six years old, waking up and hearing my grandmother's voice. My grandfather had died and she sang all day long—all the details of their life together. This was our life. My family loved to sing and dance."

At the age of 11, she joined a local dance troupe in Xishuangbanna, where her talent was quickly recognized. Most notably, she began to perform a traditional piece that imitates the movements of the peacock, a traditional emblem of the Bai people. In her early 20s, she joined the Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble in Beijing and continued to develop her peacock dance, embellishing it with her own distinctive arm and finger movements. In 1986, that choreography and her

performance won her first prize in a national dance competition—the first step in a solo career that brought her fame all over China where she became known as the Peacock Princess.

When she began to develop her interest in choreography and direction, her first production took her back to her childhood. *Dynamic Yunnan*, in which she led a company of about 70 performers, was based on the folk dances of her home province, China's most ethnically diverse. She prepared the show by travelling around the area, recording vanishing folk songs and recruiting local dancers.

She continued to dance in her own shows until her retirement in 2012, but each show has been quite different in character from its predecessor as she consistently extended her range. In *Under Siege*, for the first time, Yang is exploring an interest in contemporary dance that she has developed over her career, watching Western companies such as Alvin Ailey Dance Theater and Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch. Most contemporary dance in China, she notes, is inflected by ballet. "They stand on their toes." Her aim is to forge a style that is entirely Chinese, drawing on a wide range of traditions to produce something new and almost abstract.

"*Under Siege* contains many different elements of Chinese art, not just in terms of dance, but of Peking Opera, music, sculpture, paper cutting and so on," she says. "For me, it's an experiment...Just to show the traditional Chinese elements on stage would be copying what other people have done. So I have melded them with a more contemporary way of passing the message to the audience. At the same time, I don't feel the Chinese audience is ready for abstract things only. So there needs to be some traditional elements there as well. It is a mixture of traditional and abstract. I am continuing to strive for a Chinese way of developing contemporary art and dance on stage."

You can see that exploration and her careful blending of past and present everywhere in *Under Siege*. Male performers, according to custom, take all the leading roles, including that of the concubine, but they are surrounded by women dancers. The scissors that form the basis of the setting come courtesy of the visual artist Beili Liu; she had made an installation of scissors that caught Yang's attention in a contemporary art show. Together with her designer, Tim Yip, Yang adapted the piece to provide a striking frame for the action.

Yip, the Oscar-winning art director of the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, has worked with Yang before, on the dance drama *Peacock*. His own aesthetic choices echo the combination of new and old that she seeks in her choreography; the use of the traditional movements of martial arts alongside the weightlessness of hip-hop, for example, or the haunting cries of the music alongside the shapes of a flowing contemporary duet. In this context, the use of a paper cutter—that most traditional of Chinese artists—on the side of the stage, cutting out the words and images that set up each scene, works as a profound way of rooting the story in its traditional past. Equally, the way she holds up words that signal the arrival of each character ("the emperor," "the

generals”—the passage of time, and the nature of the action—at one moment she cuts an actual picture of the lovers) makes *Under Siege* speak directly and clearly to the present.

The show has been in development since 2014, when it was first seen in a 20-minute version. This finished production has already played more than 400 times in China and has proved popular with audiences. “That’s quite unusual because Chinese audiences are not very receptive to contemporary dance,” Yang says. She hopes that its message will emerge just as clearly today.

“In all of my work there are themes about humanity and about life,” she says. “I just want to provide some ideas that the audience will have some reaction to. These things happen today, love and loyalty are always sacrificed in the horror of war. These things still scar the world.”

Sarah Crompton is a writer and broadcaster.

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Meet the Artists



Yang Liping

Yang Liping is from Dali in China's Yunnan province and has loved dance since early childhood. A national first-class dancer and the vice chairman of China Dancers Association, Ms. Yang never underwent formal dance training but gained popularity as a unique and distinguished dancer in China, winning nationwide fame for her performance of her original dance piece *Spirit of the Peacock* in 1986. Her other credits include *Moonlight*, *Two Trees*, and *Love of the Peacock*, among many others. She is the director and choreographer of *Dynamic Yunnan*, *Tibetan Mystery*, *Echoes of Shangri-La*, *The Peacock*, and *The Peacock of Winter*, and is the director/ chief choreographer of *Under Siege*. A household name in China, Ms. Yang and her performances have earned numerous awards, including the gold award for 20th Century Chinese Classics of Dance, the highest honors at the Osaka International Exchange Centre, and outstanding performance awards at the 4th China "Lotus Awards." A versatile talent, she also wrote, directed, and performed in the film *Sunbird*, which won the Grand Jury's award at the Montreal International Film Festival.

Tim Yip



Tim Yip's work (*visual director, set and costume design*) appears in the diverse fields of costume design, visual art, cinema set design, and contemporary art creation. He won an Academy Award for best art direction and the British Film Academy award for best costume design in 2001 for his work on the film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. He was the first ethnic Chinese person to win either award. Through his art, Mr. Yip introduced his concept of the "New Orientalism" aesthetic, making him an important artist

in helping the world understand the beauty of Eastern culture and art. In 2011, he collaborated with acclaimed dancer and choreographer Akram Khan and an international team to produce *DESH*, for which he served as visual art director. The production won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production. Before *Under Siege*, Mr. Yip collaborated with Yang Liping in 2012 on the dance drama *Peacock*, designing the visual set art and costumes.

Tong Mingguang



From 2011 to 2015, Tong Mingguang (*Xiao He*) worked at the China Lu Opera Theater, and toured the U.S., France, Singapore, and Taiwan, among other countries. In 2016, he was transferred to the Jinhua Cultural Center. His credits include *Broken Bridge*, *Waiting*, *Father's Grassland*, and *The Mother's River*. He has appeared on television multiple times, including on the influential CCTV in China. In 2018, he was invited to star in Yang Liping's *Under Siege* as Xiao He.

Ge Junyi



Ge Junyi (*Xiang Yu*) performed with the Beijing Modern Dance Company from 2015 to 2018, with tours to Germany, Croatia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Canada, Turkey, Morocco, and many other countries. His performance highlights include *Under Siege* (China and international tour), and the dance dramas *The First Light*, *Aida*, *October-Rite of Spring*, *The Zodiac*, and *Three Rains and Wishes*. His choreography works include *A Piece of Red Cloth*, *Male Dog*, *Table*, *Ten*, *Empty Room*, *Annoying*

Spring Breeze, *Besieged City*, and *Cheers Darlin*.

Hu Shenyuan



Dancer and choreographer Hu Shenyuan (*Yu Ji*) graduated from the School of Dance of the MinZu University, a top dance school in China. From 2012 to 2014, he worked at Beijing LDTX Modern Dance Company. He has won awards including the 2017 Best Performance Award of the 4th Beijing International Ballet and Choreography Competition, silver medal at the 16th International Choreography Competition in Rome, and the Chairman Prize of the Jury for the Young Men's Group of Modern Dance in

the 15th Seoul International Dance Competition, both in 2018. His choreography work *Id, Ego and Superego*, was selected for the 4th China Youth Dance Talent Cultivation Plan, and his recent work, *Moonlight Rainbow*, was commissioned by the 5th China Youth Dance Talents Cultivation Program. Other choreography credits include *Roving*, *So Close, With*, and *The Flower of Freedom*.

Zhu Fengwei



Zhu Fengwei (*Liu Bang*) was a resident dancer of the Beijing Modern Dance Company from 2014 to 2017. His credits include the modern dance drama *The Zodiac*, *October-Rite of Spring*, and *Three Rains and Wishes*. Other credits include Yang Liping's large-scale marine theme dance *Pingtian Image*, which he choreographed and starred in, *10-faced ambush* tour, *Eating Fire* (premiered at the Nanluoguxiang Drama Festival), Gong Zhonghui's dance work *The Pavilion*, and *Aida*, both premiered at the National

Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

Gong Zhonghui



Gong Zhonghui (*Han Xin*, *White*) studied modern dance choreography at the Beijing Dance Academy. He worked at the Beijing Paper Tiger Studio and Xianwuren Studio, and taught choreography at the Beijing Contemporary Music Academy, Dance Academy of Hebei Communications University, Shanghai Drama Academy, and the Beijing Modern Dance Company. He is signed as a performer with the Beijing Modern Dance Company, and has created and performed in many modern dance theater pieces, including *Very*

Happy, *October-Rite of Spring*, *Cool*, *Reading*, *Seeking Nala*, and *Weighing*. His work *Immortal Riding A Mule* won the gold medal at the 2013 Yang Liping International Dance Spring Competition.

Ouyang Tian



Ouyang Tian (*Han Xin, Black*) graduated from Man Cheng Arts & Gong Fu School in 2010. His performances include the Chinese New Year's Eve Show in Man City (2010), *Gong Fu Infinity Company* (2011), and *Image Shang Rao* (2011), and in 2014, he took part in a Gong Fu Show of Han Style in Xuzhou. In 2016, he joined the Yang Liping dance company. He took principal roles in *Image Huang Shan*, *Under Siege*, and *Ping Tan*.

Mostly Mozart Festival

Now in its 53rd season, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival is a beloved summertime tradition and New York institution. Launched in 1966 as America's first indoor summer music festival, with an exclusive focus on its namesake composer, Mostly Mozart has since broadened its focus to include works by Mozart's predecessors, contemporaries, and related successors. In addition to performances by the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, the festival now includes concerts by the world's outstanding chamber and period-instrument ensembles, acclaimed soloists, as well as opera productions, dance, film, and late-night performances. Contemporary music has become an essential part of the festival, embodied in its annual artist residency that has included George Benjamin, Kaija Saariaho, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, John Adams, and the current International Contemporary Ensemble. Among the many artists and ensembles who have had long associations with the festival are Joshua Bell, Christian Tetzlaff, Itzhak Perlman, Emanuel Ax, Garrick Ohlsson, Stephen Hough, Osmo Vänskä, the Emerson String Quartet, Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the Mark Morris Dance Group.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA

Mostly Mozart Festival

provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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