

# In Search of Home? Heimat and Musical Practice

Dialogues Across Time and Space: Contemporary Resonances of Kunqu Opera

## 古今對話：昆曲的當代回響

### Academic Conversation

Chen Jun, Professor at Peking University & Barbara Mittler, Professor at Heidelberg University

#### 《千忠戮·慘睹》

##### The Massacre of a Thousand Loyalists: A Tragic Sight

Performers: Emperor Jianwen: Wang Weijie (Department of History, Peking University)

Overall Story: In the early Ming, Prince Zhu Di launched the “Jingnan Campaign,” forced his nephew the Jianwen Emperor to abdicate, then seized power and carried out a brutal purge, massacring court officials even to the “tenth degree of kinship.” In the Kunqu scene Can Du (“Tragic Sight”), the deposed Jianwen Emperor, disguised as a monk, flees across the country. He witnesses severed heads of loyal ministers on carts, retired officials and their families dragged out, and women bound for execution. Overwhelmed, he feels unbearable grief, shame, and rage.

#### 《長生殿·彈詞》

##### Love in Long-Life Hall: Tan Ci

Performers: Li Guinian: Fu Yichao (School of Arts, Peking University)  
Dizi (flute) accompanist: Zhu Yueyang (School of Economics, Peking University)

Overall Story: “Tan Ci” (Scene 38 of Love in Long-Life Hall by Hong Sheng) is a signature Kunqu piece for the laosheng role. After the An Lushan Rebellion, court musician Li Guinian flees to Jiangnan, earning a meager living with his pipa. At a temple fair, he pours out his grief over the dynasty’s fall, recounting how Emperor Xuanzong’s obsession with Consort Yang led to ruin. A full performance consists of ten arias; tonight we present five.

#### 《牡丹亭·驚夢》

##### The Peony Pavilion: Waking from a dream

Performers: Du Liniang: Jiang Zhiyuan (Department of Sinology, Heidelberg University) Liu Mengmei: Gong Kai (School of Economics, Peking University)

Overall Story: Returning to her chamber, Liniang expresses her longing for a lover and falls asleep. Shortly after, a scholar came to ask her to write a poem with a willow branch, and then carried her to the Peony Pavilion for a date. When she woke up, she realized it was just a dream.

SCAN ME FOR THE SCRIPTS

