

## YANG LIPING'S *RITE OF SPRING*

*Let the music  
begin; let aurous blood suffuse the earth,  
stain the square altar arched skywards, and blot  
the columns of crowds gathered to watch me  
gently disintegrate.*

*Karthika Nair (Distant Music)*

*Rite of Spring* will be the second contemporary dance piece by Yang Liping, China's most iconic choreographer and dancer. After an extensive production period her first work *Under Siege* received widespread critical acclaim at its European premiere in London in November 2016. There was a strong sense that a Chinese artist rooted in traditional aesthetics had found a "modern expression" and distinctive personal language that could reach out and connect with both Chinese and non-Chinese audiences.

The work was enthusiastically received and played to virtually sell-out houses. It signalled Yang's arrival on the international contemporary stage; and has since received many invitations to some of the world's leading dance houses and festivals.

Yang Liping's *Rite of Spring* reflects her artistic ambition to refine her artistic "voice" further by offering her interpretation of one of the most revered musical scores for dance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It will be a full-length production for twelve performers. The work will be constructed in three sections with the second section using the original *Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky. The first and last section will use a specially created new score, inspired by traditional music from Tibet.

What sets Yang's version apart is that it will be influenced by Tibetan and Chinese symbols of nature as well as beliefs in the cyclicity of life and death, of duty — and the inevitability of rebirth. The three-part structure represents the Tibetan symbolic number "3" which is the first number that represents the notion of "all" as well as the idea that life is cyclical and non-linear as in the West. The Tibetan spiritual idea of "essence" is integral to the work where everything has a soul. Nature and Man are inseparable. By destroying one you destroy the other!

The thematic structure of the work is: Incantation – Sacrifice – Reincarnation. The chosen will be the sacred bird of the Peacock. The Peacock is a metaphor for beauty, purity and life. It has also been a personal physical embodiment as a dancer for Yang throughout her career. In Yang's *Rite of Spring* the Peacock will volunteer herself as the chosen one — sacrificing herself for the common good, in the knowledge that she will be reincarnated. The tale staged by this *Rite of Spring* will actually be the journey

of the Chosen One from fear and doubt to the empowerment she finds in her sacrifice. The sage will be represented by another important symbol of Tibetan culture — the White Lion. His purpose is to accept the Peacock's sacrifice, and with the human community prepare the ritual that will lead to her death and possibly a "sky burial."

It is not Yang's intentions to create a narrative real world but to find an abstraction of a physical universe where time, space and life co-exist in the transient sense of a cycle. Aside from the Peacock and White Lion the work will be non-gender specific. There will be extensive research into a dance language that reflects both Tibetan traditional dances and modern dance infused with the physical qualities that have been seen in Yang's Peacock character over the years.

For her *Rite of Spring* Yang has assembled a highly experienced creative team from China and around the world – UK, Italy, Holland and India. Some of China's most exceptional traditional and modern dancers are currently being cast in the work.

It will be Yang's first major international co-production with confirmed partners Sadler's Wells London and Shanghai International Arts Festival. Discussions are underway with Edinburgh International Festival as well as festivals in the US and Spain. Research and development will be undertaken in 2017 with a world premiere in Shanghai in October 2018. This will be followed by an international tour in 2019 and 2020.

This will be the first major work of the newly formed non-profit Peacock Contemporary Dance Company.

## About Yang Liping



Yang Liping is a Bai ethnic person from Dali, Yunnan Province. She is a National First-class dancer and the vice chairman of China Dancers Association.

A lover of dance from her early childhood, Yang never underwent formal dance training, but with her astonishing natural talent she became quite a unique and distinguished dancer in China. She won nationwide fame for her performance of her original dance piece *Spirit of the Peacock* in 1986, which is elegant and dreamlike.

As a household known name in China, Yang and her performance had won a large numbers awards: the gold award for 20th Century Chinese Classics of Dance; the highest honours at the Osaka International Exchange Centre, best dance poetry, best female lead, best choreography, best costume design and outstanding performance awards at the 4th China “Lotus Awards”. In 2011, Yang appeared as one of the Chinese Beauty in the China Image – People advertisement broadcast in Times Square, New York City As 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.

Main works: (As choreographer / performer) *Spirit of the Peacock*, *Moonlight*, *Two Trees*, *Love of the Peacock*; (As director, choreographer and lead dancer) *Dynamic Yunnan*, *Tibetan Mystery*, *Echoes of Shangri-La*, *The Peacock*, *The Winter Peacock*; (As director) *Under Siege*

### Selected Awards and Achievements:

1979 Yunnan Provincial first prize for best performance (large scale ethnic dance drama *Peacock Princess*)

1986 First prize for best creation and first prize for best performance at the Second National Dance Competition (Solo *Spirit of the Peacock*)

1993 Audience award at the CCTV Spring Festival Gala (Duet *Two Trees*)

1994 Gold award for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese Classics of Dance (Solo *Spirit of the Peacock*)

1997 Yang performs at the Osaka International Art Festival, and is awarded the highest honors at the Osaka International Exchange Center; the Philippines National Ethnic Dance Association grants Yang a lifetime membership

1998 Jury Prize at the Montreal Film Festival (film *Sunbird*, directed by and starring Yang)

2004 Best dance poetry, best female lead, best choreography, best costume design and outstanding performance awards at the 4<sup>th</sup> China “Lotus Awards” (*Dynamic Yunnan*)

2005 Montblanc International Arts Fellow

2011 Nominated for the “Chinese People who have Influenced the World” awards by a committee of ten international Chinese media outlets led by Phoenix TV

2011 Winner of the Cultural Arts Award at the “Influential Chinese Figures Gala 2010-2011”

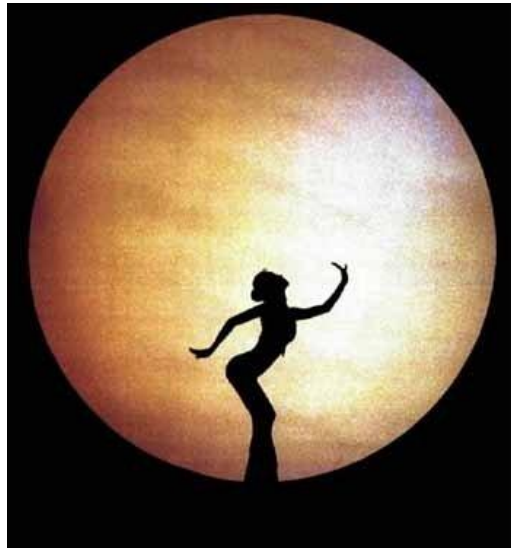
2011 Appearance in the *China Image – People* advertisement broadcast at Times Square, New York City

2011 Named one of “Ten Outstanding Artists” by the China Ministry of Culture

2011 Received the Greater China “Arts and Culture Award”

2012 Named Best Female Role Model at the 2011 Female Media Awards

## Images and Videos



## ***Under Siege***

The full-length video (in two parts) could be viewed on Vimeo:

<https://vimeo.com/album/4322440>

Password: ambush

Trailer 1: <https://vimeo.com/195607415> Trailer 2: <https://vimeo.com/195605902>



## **Reviews**

“a breathtakingly gorgeous bloodbath”

Financial Times ★★★★★

“an absolutely stunning production”

Evening Standard ★★★★★

“the cinematic quality of this work is fascinating”

The Stage ★★★★★

“It's hard to think of a more visually ravishing production this year”

The Guardian ★★★

“visual splendour”

Bachtrack

★★★

“spectacular dance work”

BritishTheatreGuide



