

Rose Jang
Interviewed by Wenhong Wang
The Evergreen State College oral history project
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FINAL

Wang: Good morning, Rose. Thank you for doing this interview. Today is August 30, 2021. I'm Wenhong Wang. I'm interviewing Rose Jang over Zoom. This is a new type of interview.

Jang: Good morning, Wen. Nice to see you.

Wang: Nice to see you. I'm so glad that you're taking time from your busy schedule doing this. Can you start by talking about your important memories before college?

Jang: My upbringing and my early education. I was born and raised in Taiwan. Growing up in Taiwan, I was studying a lot of traditional Chinese culture until I finished college at the age of 21. After that, I came to the United States and went to Northwestern University to study theater, and eventually got my PhD there.

While in Taiwan during my childhood and youth, Taiwan was under the rule of the Nationalist government. I believe that most people nowadays are more familiar with the political tensions between China and Taiwan. Politics aside, during the time when Taiwan was under Nationalist rule, because the Nationalist government wanted to declare themselves as a vanguard of traditional Chinese culture—

Wang: By the way, was it during 1960s, '70s, '80s? Which period?

Jang: 60s and 70s Exactly. The Nationalist government came to Taiwan in 1949 to flee the Communists. To compete with the Communists, to show that they themselves are the legitimate government of China, they wanted to preserve everything traditional about Chinese culture, so all the educational systems are based on traditional Chinese cultural programs.

I studied traditional Chinese history, language, literature, philosophy—Confucianism, Taoism, all that, and Chinese geography. I was very good in schooling, and I was definitely a very dedicated and very successful student. I became very good in writing, writing a lot of prose, essays, always getting good grades or awards. I was good at calligraphy—everything that the school was trying to promote.

At the same time, although Chinese theater wasn't considered orthodox or official educational agenda, I somehow became fascinated by Chinese theater. What I mean by Chinese theater is traditional Chinese performing arts, especially Beijing opera. It was really because of my family connections. My father was a big fan of Chinese theater, so I was taken to watch Chinese theater from a

very early age, and I became absolutely fascinated—obsessed—by this beautiful, exquisite performing tradition. As I grew older, I went to theater by myself.

I was very courageous in the sense that I would sneak into backstage and watch the performers. They were not that strict, so I could hang out backstage watching the performers putting on their makeup and costumes. I watched all these beautiful, fabulous, spectacular costumes and weapons and props laying out in the backstage.

When I went to college, I became even bolder. I would go to the training schools, several of them. Again, the teachers and the officials at these traditional professional Chinese Opera schools did not mind people like me going there and hanging out, because very few of us would do that.

Wang: Were you enrolled in classes?

Jang: No, I wasn't enrolled in classes. I would just contact them and say, "Can I come and just take a look at your rehearsals?" Sometimes I went with my friends, sometimes I went by myself. They welcomed all these young college students to watch them perform or rehearse. The students were very curious about schooling outside of their professional school settings, so we were just hanging around and having fun. At the same time, I watched them rehearse.

I was just curious and fascinated about every aspect of traditional theater. It was just part of growing-up process, not really entering my mind as a future career concentration or anything like that.

As a literature major, I chose, as the popular trend went at the time, to study Western literature. English. I majored in English at college. I went to the National Taiwan University and studied English for four years. Among all the Western literary accomplishments, I definitely liked Western theater the most. I enjoyed reading plays and imagined the productions, which would come out of these literary works.

With my original interest in Chinese theater, and my growing interest in Western theater, when I decided to come to the United States to continue to pursue my graduate studies, I decided that I would study theater, which was kind of a bold decision. None of my friends or classmates or people I knew of in my generation would consider theater as a graduate study major, simply because it didn't sound like a popular choice.

Theater was definitely considered entertainment, a pastime, in the cultural thinking in that atmosphere. "Who would study theater? You're not going to be a performer, are you?" No, I wasn't going to be a performer, or maybe I would be. I had no idea. I just wanted to know more about theater. To really study theater as an independent, profound art in the literary field is indeed a very big attraction to me, so I did.

Wang: Was it Western theater or Chinese theater or theater in general? Did you have a focus before you applied?

Jang: At that time, I wasn't thinking about pursuing Chinese theater in the United States. That wouldn't be a necessity. I could stay in Taiwan to do Chinese studies. I certainly wanted to come to the United States to study theater in the Western tradition. But at the back of my head, I already thought about incorporating my interest in Chinese theater into my study in the Western tradition. I had no idea what that meant, but I just wanted to study theater as a literary discipline, or artistic discipline, and to study everything about theater—theoretically, practically, aesthetically, literally, artistically. Everything about theater.

At the time, there was no computer, there were no Websites for searching for schools in US. At the time, there was a special place in Taiwan organized by the equivalency of an American embassy. It was like a library. You could go. I just looked through all these big books and found the schools. I found some of the best theater schools—universities—which had the best and most reputed theater departments, and I chose them all, and I was accepted by Northwestern University, which happens to be offering one of the best theater educations in the United States. The theater department at Northwestern was ranked either one or two, somewhere between Northwestern and Yale, as the best theater departments.

Wang: What year was that?

Jang: That was in 1980. When I went to Northwestern, I was the only foreign student. Actually, I should say that I was one of the two foreign students in that department who were accepted. Before me and the other girl—now I can't even remember whether she was from Japan or Korea—just two of us, two young Asian girls. Before us, I don't think they ever had any foreign students from Asia.

That was the year they decided to accept two students from Asia who they liked to just work with, I think maybe for the first time in the department. I thought that was revolutionary on their part to do that. My impression was that they had to make special effort to accommodate us. I was lucky enough that they treated us with I would say special favor. They really wanted us to succeed because that was their experiment to admit Asian-oriented students from outside the United States.

Wang: Was that the beginning of admitting foreign, international students? Did they have more and more, for instance, students in their department?

Jang: Yes. Let me just explain it in this way. Northwestern has a lot of—had a lot of—foreign students, from Taiwan. Not so many from China. In 1980, very few students from China came. Before China opened up in around 1990s, the Chinese students coming to the United States or Northwestern were all

older students, just out of the Cultural Revolution. But that's a totally different story. We don't have to go there.

But there were a lot of Taiwan students studying at Northwestern University, and so I wasn't the only Taiwan student going there. But those students were all engineering students in the Technical Institutes on the far side of the school, which I didn't go to at all. [laughing] Far away from my world. I was isolated in the Theater Department. I think in theater, I was a very rare entity. There had never been Asian students. I really could say that I had not encountered any record of Asian students at Northwestern Theater Department at the time. I believe the only two were there for the first time, the Asian girl from either Korea or Japan, and I myself. We were the first experiment.

After me, there were more. Again, they were isolated cases. I think I remember two others at different times after I had left, a girl from Thailand, and later, another girl from Taiwan. They were there for a couple of years, and both of them, I believe, got their master's degree, and left. That's my knowledge. I didn't trace what happened later. I believe there could be more.

I just wanted to say that theater wasn't a popular choice for a student fresh out of college from Taiwan. I was very lonely because the other girl only stayed there, I think, for maybe a quarter. I'm not even sure. Because the challenge and the demands were still severe and intense, and the cultural shock was inevitable. You were very young. You had to deal with a lot of new things in your life and in your environment. You were worried about your financial resources. None of us had an assistantship or fellowship or any financial support, because we were there to study for a master's degree. We were not qualified to do anything beyond that.

Wang: I see.

Jang: Fortunately, I had family support from really a very resourceful mother who managed to get enough funding for me to cover my first year. I was there trying to do my best and just go with the flow and see how I could manage to continue, if I could ever continue to the following year. And I did. I actually did.

That's a long story, and probably not worth talking about now, but it was a difficult period in my life. The school was new. The language, of course, was difficult. I studied in English for four years in college, but that wasn't enough for me to deal with the day-to-day conversation, to be a pal with my graduate friends.

Although, I have to say, I had a pretty lucky experience at Northwestern because I did have a lot of support. I found that my newness, my appearance as a foreigner, brought some new energy to the department. I had a wonderful advisor who really, really wanted me to succeed, who gave me extra

support, even giving me extra time in taking tests. Other people were doing their testing in this classroom during a defined period of time—for an hour, for example. I would get an extra half an hour in different classroom just by myself.

Wang: That was amazing.

Jang: It was really amazing. That was really helpful. Even that half an hour did not make much difference because I was still writing and struggling and all that. Although I always got As. I don't know. I did manage to do well because I studied so hard. But beyond that, I think just the mental and emotional awareness of the support really helped me to move forward. I did study really hard, and with the support from my advisor, I responded to the challenge with extra effort. I hardly ever slept. I was just reading and writing and doing everything I could. I was also having a job.

Wang: Oh, really? [laughing]

Jang: Which financially supported me for another year. I lived with an old lady who needed someone, a caretaker, a caregiver, who gave her regular injections of insulin. I had to give insulin shots to this old lady twice a day. Whenever I was there with her, I had to watch her. I had to keep her company. But it was easy because she also had two daughters living in Evanston. In exchange for living with this old lady, I got free room and board, so I was able to save money for my second year of tuition. My life was packed for my first two years at Northwestern. It was incredibly hard but incredibly fulfilling because all I cared about was to study.

I got my master's within a year with the agreement I would continue with my PhD, which could last legitimately for another five years maximum. It was all arranged between me and my advisor with her generous support and encouragement. I was able to continue and got my PhD.

I left Evanston after three years because I got married and followed my husband to Pittsburgh, but I finished my dissertation away from the campus, continuing my research and all that. It was a long period. I think everybody going through the process of study, getting PhD, finding a job, trying to manage life and marriage—everything—knew how that was. But it was also rewarding because, looking back, it really toughened me up.

Then to just put Chinese theater into the perspective, my theater education at Northwestern was purely traditional Western. I studied everything in the Western tradition. Northwestern is a very strong, solid, well-established theater department in higher education. It has two mainstage spaces [and] it has two black box theater spaces. A strong team of faculty members covering all aspects of theater. You pick classes—of course, there are requirements, prerequisites—and you just go through everything in the curriculum. You also have experiences doing productions. From a very early time, as a

freshman, you had opportunity to do freshman scene works, organized by the department, supervised by graduate students. For graduate students, you can also do senior thesis studies or other thesis productions. There are many, many opportunities, but there are also intense competitions between all these opportunities.

Wang: Were you involved in some of the productions then?

Jang: Yeah, I was involved in the freshman productions, supervising their productions, organizing the events. I did some small directorial works as a graduate student. I had to do a lot of technical work as part of my design courses. I was involved in a lot of different aspects of theater. I studied acting through acting classes, but the majority of my graduate works were in theater history, theory. I did most of that.

While I was trying to figure out my PhD dissertation, I worked with my advisor, and eventually landed on a topic, which incorporates Western and Chinese theater together. It was to use the Western theoretical foundations—different theoretical works and beliefs and values—to a specific Chinese traditional play, which also has a long tradition of thematic and historical development from earlier Chinese history.

Wang: What was the play you were researching?

Jang: The Chinese title is 新繡繡記, or 李娃傳 from the earlier time. The English translation is *The Embroidered Cloak*. The play that I was focused on is actually a modern adaptation, still in the traditional Beijing opera fashion. It was the one that was written by 俞大綱 in Taiwan. It used a lot of elements from the earlier period.

新繡繡記 started with a piece of fiction in Tang Dynasty in China and went through different adaptations, different versions or dramatizations through historical periods. You can trace the development of that story through Chinese folklore and Chinese literary tradition, into this final version of Beijing opera, which I was looking at. You could tell that it has a rich source of material, imagination. It has a lot of traditional Chinese values and cultural interests in it.

It's a rich material that could reflect a lot of things about China. Then I used a lot of theoretical understandings of Western origin, and you can also identify values from the Western tradition. Basically, my intent is to use this play as a cross work or bridgework, which can combine all these different sources of energies together. That was my intent.

I was very happy with my advisor—her name is Linda Jenkins. I will never forget her. I don't even know where she is now. She actually left Northwestern. Right around the time when I graduated from Northwestern, when I received my PhD, she left Northwestern. She was finishing her career at

Northwestern at the same time I graduated. She became a businesswoman. She transferred to California into running a business. She had had a wonderful successful career at Northwestern, but she decided that that was the end. She'd had enough of theater in her teaching and in her career and she developed a new career interest.

I was so lucky to have my years of graduate study with this wonderful woman who treated me as one of her success stories, I think. She was very proud during my defense and my final meetings when I was officially awarded the PhD. I really think I owe a lot to her--along with very many other students at Northwestern, who were also very supportive and very encouraging to me, simply because I was a foreign student, still very shy with limited language skills.

I have to say it's not untrue that foreign students had to encounter some really difficult—I would even say unfair—treatment in the traditional institutions like Northwestern. I had experiences with that, both from other students' experiences and naturally from my own experience.

I just suddenly remember. There's another Asian student who came after me. She was not a foreign student. She was an Asian-American student, meaning she was born in the United States speaking perfect English, native English-speaking skills. She's of Asian descent. The treatment she got. She stormed out of the department because she felt she was treated badly by one particular faculty who just trashed her work.

She complained with me. We became good friends. When I was still finishing my PhD coursework and she just came in. I don't think she even finished her first year. She felt that the faculty treated her unfairly. I gave her all my sympathy. I couldn't really quite remember what happened, nor would I really evaluate the situation because I wasn't in that class she suffered. But it could be true.

I even had a personal experience myself. When I was putting together my proposal for my dissertation topic, we had to first get approval. Everyone knows that. I wrote the proposal and I had to put together a committee. My advisor suggested these faculty members and professors as my committee members. I had to show them each my proposal and invite them to come and join the committee. My advisor was the leader of the committee, and I got another faculty who agreed to be on the committee.

There was one more who was a popular faculty member, a seasoned veteran faculty member everybody loved. Adored. I went to him, and I showed him my proposal. "Dr. Bob"—I still remember his name. He summoned me to his office, and he told me everything about my proposal was wrong. It was inferior to what he considered a standard proposal. He criticized my wording, basically my grammatic structure. He considered them as vague, unclear, and not sufficiently scholarly.

I was completely crushed, and so I went back to my advisor, thinking I wasn't worthy. I told my advisor about this, and I said, "What should I do? Should I rewrite the whole thing?" My advisor told me—I still remember she was so angry—she told me, "Forget him! Get someone else." She told me, "Don't believe anything he said. It was only because of his insecurity about the subject."

That was a very revealing incident. I realized even someone who was so admired could be also lacking. I didn't know that anybody could be lacking in that position, but I started to realize now. I wasn't truly understanding that at that point. I just knew I was so happy my advisor didn't criticize me along with that negative feedback and make me rewrite the whole thing.

"Go find this person," she suggested, this other person who's not a Theater Department professor, but whose course was associated with the Theater Department in many ways, and I had taken classes from that professor, too, who was always widely admired and popular with students. I went to the other professor, as directed by my advisor, and he came back to me saying, "I will be your committee member." It was as simple as that. I dared to ask him, "Did I say anything inferior, not clear?" That professor told me, "Oh, no, it's fine. I understand you."

That's just an incident that a foreign student could suffer, for instance, from prejudice like that. But I survived it. I survived it because I was not lonely. I wasn't forgotten, and was not abandoned, I was supported by more people to help me to turn things around. That was just a small incident.

Talking about prejudice and injustice in this interview helped me remember things. I have to say that today I understand why higher education needs to include diversity and inclusion and all that, because the cultural sensitivity is important, and I benefited from it. I suffered from the lack of it, but also benefited from the right attitude at the right time.

Wang: What happened after that? How did you make the decision to come to Evergreen?

Jang: Coming to Evergreen was a stroke of luck. When I was finishing my dissertation, I started to look for jobs. I surveyed the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, looking at all the job openings. There were many schools I was interested in.

One school, I don't think I was particularly interested in, but was curious about, was Evergreen, because the wording in Evergreen's advertisement included this term "multiculturalism," and there was a very strong intent in their language that the school was looking for faculty members of non-white orientation to bring more cultural understandings to the school to further multiculturalism in their institution.

So, I applied, and pretty soon, I got a response. Someone called me, and that someone I again always remember, and I owe him a lot of gratitude, because he also was a great support for me. His name is Chuck Pailthorp.

Wang: The philosopher?

Jang: Yeah. He called me up and asked me a lot of questions. I think I was able to answer his questions well enough. Later, I got an interview, and from that, one thing led to another. I was hired and I came to Evergreen as one of the faculty of multiculturalism with many other faculty of cultural differences from the mainstream white culture. There were a lot of faculty hires in the same year I was hired. That's how I came to Evergreen.

Wang: How did the first years of Evergreen look like to you? What were you teaching?

Jang: I was hired to join Bud Johanson, a dance faculty, and Ingram Marshall, a music faculty—who left Evergreen the year after that first year—to teach a program, I believe it's called Interaction in the Performing Arts. That was an introductory program for performing arts, including theater, dance and music, and I would be teaching the theater part of that introductory performing arts program.

The first year was wonderful. I taught with two really wonderful faculty members. Bud Johanson was a mentor me, very understanding, very tolerant to me, I think, because I was so new and I had some difficulty understanding Evergreen's structure, Evergreen philosophy, although I had studied it. I heard a lot of explanations during the interview and orientation, but coming from a very traditional cultural background and educational upbringing and all that, and also coming directly from Northwestern, which was a very traditional Theater Department, I really had to adjust my perspectives in a very wild, big way to understand the functions and the structures of Evergreen programs.

I had never taught in such an academic structure, which includes so many aspects in one place. I had to give a lecture for two, three hours, and lead a seminar with 20-some students. Simultaneously, I had to give a workshop, which I had to teach students acting and other production aspects of theater. That was never heard of and never practiced anywhere else. Not at Northwestern. At Northwestern, every aspect of theater was taught by a specialist. You never crossed to teach other things if you're not regarded as a specialist or as an expert.

But here, you're an expert in everything. You know everything. You had to do everything. I felt insecure. I felt inadequate in some aspects. I didn't feel I was fully prepared for the first year, but I learned. I think what happened with Evergreen faculty teams is that people really help each other, and I was able to work with people who were critical but were also encouraging to a new faculty.

I was lucky. I wouldn't say that for everyone else. I know some new faculty members, especially faculty of multiculturalism, suffered from some treatments or misunderstandings that they just couldn't tolerate. I know about some really severe conflicts and fights between faculty during the first couple of years after I was hired. I don't want to go into that too much, but I believe there was a big misunderstanding of the term multiculturalism among faculty. The misunderstanding is that Multiculturalism simply means to have a group of faculty with different cultural backgrounds to be together, but still grouped around the mainstream, white-oriented cultural perspective as the anchor or the core of education.

There could be that misunderstanding, or that kind of perception was reflected in the practice. That definitely could lead to some really big fights and conflicts. It did not happen to me, so I don't want to go there. I was having enough problems trying to fit in with my teaching style, my teaching practices within a program structure. I was too occupied to even worry about that.

I slowly got used to it. I was not totally unfamiliar with the seminar structure. When I was at Northwestern as a PhD student, I had two years of teaching assistantship in which I had to teach the freshman students. I had to lead mostly seminar discussions with these freshman students, so I was kind of comfortable with seminar even before coming to Evergreen, and I was definitely qualified to read papers and all that kind of thing because that was what I did most as a teaching assistant at Northwestern: to read and critique freshman student papers.

But giving lecture for two hours, that was just impossible for me. I think I struggled most with that. I had to learn from faculty colleagues how to structure lectures. In the beginning, my lecture was full of information I'd gathered from all the readings and the studies myself. I gave a lot of facts and dates and all that. I found that kind of lecture totally unsuccessful. Students were quickly bored and distracted, and they didn't give me good evaluations.

Evaluations were hard to swallow but they were helpful. That's one of the Evergreen things that I had to get used to because students were honest, as I soon learned the first year. I got some really good evaluations because students were kind. Most of the students were kind, but the critical part of the student evaluations showed me that I was not yet ready to give lectures in a productive, efficient way.

I learned from Bud Johanson, and then the next year, when I taught with another very seasoned, very popular faculty, Terry Setter, a music faculty member, I learned from Terry Setter how to give lectures. Terry Setter was incredibly efficient and effective as a lecturer. He would give interesting stories, anecdotes, quotations from various sources together in a very coherent, good narrative, and

then played music and showed videos. All kinds of things. I had to learn that. I had to learn how to mix things together, to structure things in a good way with just the right amount of information. I learned that through the first two years, and I thank Bud Johanson and Terry Setter for helping me.

The third year I taught with Ainara Wilder and the fourth year I taught with Doranne Crable. Both women were strong in teaching. Incredibly well read. Knowledgeable in their disciplines and everything else, too. They also pulled me under their wings. Unfortunately, Doranne Crable passed away in 2007.

Ainara Wilder just treated me as almost her friend—definitely her friend if I wasn't her daughter—because she was older than I. She was the founding member of the Theater Department, the theater program, at Evergreen. She gave me a lot of good guidance, as a mentor and a friend. I visited her home. I sipped tea in her living room watching this big collection of books she had on the wall. She told me so many stories about her rich life experiences. It was just wonderful. (It is sad that while I am revising this transcript, Ainara just passed away in April 2022.)

I learned Evergreen teaching through these interactions. Teaching became comfortable, and I became secure and self-trusting. I developed skills in lecturing, in workshops. I had to trust that I could do workshops. In workshops, I developed exercises. First was my Western training, and then I slowly also put in my Chinese training and worked it into my workshop exercises. It all happened gradually.

The first few years were a struggle, but these were really good, productive, necessary struggles to prepare me for my later teaching life at Evergreen.

Wang: What year did you join Evergreen?

Jang: In 1988.

Wang: You were the vanguard of China study at Evergreen. Do you want to talk a little bit about that? How did it get started?

Jang: To go to China programs, I think I still have to go back to performing artist programs first, because really, the China program is an outgrowth of the performing arts program. Performing arts is part of this big specialty area called the expressive arts area when I first joined Evergreen.

Just within the performing arts area, we had a very strong interest in cultural studies. The faculty members in music, dance and theater agreed in our curricular planning that we would always emphasize different cultural performances and traditions in performing arts.

Sean Williams is a famous, well-known scholar in ethnomusicology. The dance faculty, Ratna Roy, is a professional in Odissi dance, an Indian dancer. She taught Indian dance in every subject she taught in performing arts. Andrew Buchman is a classically trained Western music composer and

pianist. He is deeply interested in cultural performances of other cultures, so he always wanted to include performances in music traditions of other cultures in his program planning and teaching.

I was encouraged, of course, as a faculty of multiculturalism to teach Chinese performing traditions in my performing arts programs. I did that faithfully for every program, year after year. I tried to teach Chinese theater in my teaching of theater, and I always found it a little hard because Chinese theater could only occupy a week of study out of this ongoing theater syllabus.

It was hard to take students out of the ongoing theater tradition in the West and put them in the Chinese tradition, and to teach them something that is totally new and different from whatever else they had just encountered and explored. Students usually got really interested and curious and fascinated, but they were also understandably lost and completely overwhelmed. They came out of that week of study having received some impressions, some flashes of memory, but the impressions and flashed didn't last, and it didn't really affect them to any substantial extent.

I always felt that I needed to go to the center. I needed to go back to Chinese culture to really explore, with the students, where Chinese theater came from. Put China in the center as a foundation. The culture is the foundation, so we could then go to an artistic expression of that culture. It had been my desire for many, many years.

During all these years of teaching performing arts programs with my performing arts colleagues, I became very close with Andrew Buchman. We were just a wonderful faculty team. He had repeatedly encouraged me to teach China. I don't know why, but he'd developed an interest in China beyond music. He had studied some Chinese fiction and Chinese poetry along the way.

We finally decided at one point to design a program together. That was my first attempt at a China program. That's the program which is titled *East Wind, West Wind: Chinese Culture in a Global Context*.

Wang: That's a nice title.

Jang: It's a really nice title. That was in 1999. The title, *East Wind, West Wind*, was suggested by Andrew Buchman because he had just read a few novels by Pearl Buck. The first novel Pearl Buck ever wrote is *East Wind, West Wind*. We later studied Pearl Buck in the program. We didn't use *East Wind, West Wind*, we used the other, more famous work, the one which she received the Nobel Prize with, *The Good Earth*.

That's the first China program that we started. In that program, because we both were performing arts faculty members, we put in still quite a bit of performing arts elements in it. We made students study music—classical and theatrical music-- and have them perform.

Slowly, slowly, with the following China programs, I decided to reduce the performing arts elements. We still studied it—we still practiced music—but I became more interested in covering other aspects of Chinese tradition and culture. Starting with *China: The Waking Lion*, I made China program more a humanities program with different aspects.

Each China program, I decided to cover different aspects of China, depending on who I recruited to work with me. Those programs were inspired and encouraged by the success of my first couple of China programs, which I taught with Andrew Buchman. Andrew was so nice. When we were teaching *East Wind, West Wind*, we already planned the next program in two years, another China program, which is called *China: The Waking Lion*.

These early programs with Andrew made me really get used to teaching China in a systematic way. I then took more initiative and leadership in planning for the future China programs. I told my performing arts colleagues I would do China program every other year, alternating with my commitment to the performing arts program. I would be the coordinator for each China program, which gave me the authority to find faculty members that I would like to work within the next China program, which was geared toward the specialty, the scholarship, the academic strength of the faculty member I recruited.

Each China program became a very different China program, depending on who I worked with. That way, I could learn. I could learn from the faculty member I recruited, I solicited, to help build the program. I could also still bring my interest in Chinese history, Chinese literature, Chinese philosophy into it.

I found out that I really had a strong cultural base with my early education in Taiwan, and I had prepared myself solidly with all the authentic, original materials I had studied over the long years of growing up, and that facilitated me to continue to find materials, to find scholarship to enrich my understanding of China in the United States at the current time.

I had also gone to two NEH Summer Institutes paid by NEH to study Chinese culture, particularly in philosophy and religion, as well as contemporary issues. I traveled to China with a group of faculty of different colleges and universities from all over the United States to study China firsthand. I also went to Hawaii to study at the University of Hawaii East West Center through a NEH summer institute.

All these faculty development opportunities, combined with my earlier training in China, really helped me to solidify my China study programs, and gave me the freedom to use and pick the materials I wanted to cover for any program I was designing.

Then I developed interest in many other things about China. For example, the year we taught together, *Wen*. What year was that?

Wang: 2008.

Jang: Yes, 2008. Changing China. That year, I was just interested in political and social developments of China, and I knew I had to get an expert to do that with me, so I requested—I think you were hired to fill that request, right? For that particular program? Because of your background in communications and sociology and all the social science subjects you're good at. I was able to work with you and David Shaw, who is a business faculty, to look at China not only in earlier times, but its continuous development, its integral cultural development in society—the social movements, the ideology, the economic development, toward the modern times. It was a very interesting, successful, and very well-rounded program, utilizing disciplinary trainings and strengths of all three faculty.

Wang: I was forever grateful for your invitation.

Jang: Thank you for helping me out, because I've learned so much. I think in that program, although I was the coordinator, I actually did not teach as much as you. I thought you made a huge amount of contributions in terms of readings and lecturing. The modern Chinese development, especially the 20th Century Enlightenment movement and the movements under the Communist rule, especially the Cultural Revolution—all that, I did not have any firsthand knowledge or experience with, and I depended on you. You provided such substantial information to the students, and to me.

I think, in a way, we learned from each other probably more than our students learned from us. I believe that our students learned a lot from us because they caught our energy, our passion, our knowledge. But China is so huge and so profound, and students coming to these programs with such desire to learn, but they still were all new to this, so they had to really struggle and learn; sometimes had to scratch over the surface without going in depth. However, we had our training, our understanding, [and] we could spring off of the foundation and really capture the essence of what each other said. I think we learned a lot from each other.

That's one great thing about Evergreen programs. It was so fulfilling and enriching, exactly because of that.

Wang: Mm-hm.

Jang: That's what the China program is. It was really, first, an offshoot of the performing arts program, and then became a totally independent entity on its own. It was a struggle, however, in the sense that the school did not really endorse China program. It's more like a whim of faculty interest and they just let it go, let it happen.

The cultural studies used to be part of CTL specialty area, and CTL supported four cultural studies—Japanese, Russian, French and Spanish—in the sense that they would provide faculty hires and

funding and faculty development, whereas China studies was just a special, isolated faculty interest. The school did not promise any hiring, so I had to look for faculty members who were willing to join me on my own. It was not supported by the specialty area, not by CTL.

But it did not hinder it. I thought it was a pretty fun thing to do when I did not have to report to a specialty area. [laughing] I just got whoever I wanted to get to teach with me, and they were always willing. It's not to say that I was the only one teaching China. That's not fair, because sometime later, Hirsh Diamant also developed China studies at EWS as his own interest on his track of teaching. That also worked well. We didn't really coordinate together much, but the students, having finished one program, could also go to the other one, so there was an innate continuity, which was not intended, but somehow accidentally happened year after year, so it was a really positive thing.

I eventually got to teach with Hirsh Diamant, again, out of my initiative. I invited him in because I had known that he had been teaching China at EWS for a long time, and I was interested in soliciting his help and having him join me in the full-time program. We had a good successful teaching experience together. We're very different. I think students got to experience very different faculty and very different teaching philosophies and styles, and that was a good thing for students.

It was good. The China program had a life of its own. I hope the program is still continuing at Evergreen. I had a hope, Wen, you could carry the torch to some extent—maybe you're too busy teaching something else—and fulfill the obligations to the school, to Evergreen disciplines. But at some point, I'm hoping you can also teach China as part of your scholarly interests.

Wang: Mm-hm. Yeah, I've been teaching a lot of topics on sociology. When opportunities arise, I will definitely dive into that. Mingxia Li probably sometimes also incorporates some kind of Chinese poetry, literature elements in her teaching in Tacoma.

Jang: She's a famous Chinese poet, and I was fortunate to also teach with her in two programs. One is a program which is focused more on Chinese literature. Again, I designed that program to really take advantage of her strength in poetry. That's a program in 2011, Roots of China: Culture, Arts and Poetics. We were delving into the poetic tradition of China.

After that, we also taught together in a theater program with a theater production at the end of the program. The program is basically in China studies, too, because you use three pieces of Chinese poetic drama in traditional theater as a foundation of that production. That program happened either in . . . what year was that?

Wang: '14 or '15?

Jang: Yeah, 2014. Theater of Fantasy: Performing Chinese Drama on the Western Stage.

Wang: Those are fascinating programs. I think we were invited to watch your final production the students were performing in the Communications Building. [laughter]

Jang: Right. That program is really unique, and I think it could only happen on the Evergreen campus, thanks to Evergreen program structure. Because this is a program which really bridged Chinese culture with Western theater exercise. It bridged China and the West, East and West. China's rich tradition in performing arts -- rich poetic tradition, poetic structures, poetic writing, poetics in performing arts-- is able to be embodied by the Western technology on stage. I thought it was quite an accomplishment.

Wang: Oh, yeah.

Jang: It was a noble idea, and it was quite an accomplishment for me to brag about. Here we have a faculty member who is a poet, who knows the ins and outs of Chinese poetry, and we have a faculty, meaning me, who is specialized in theater, both theory and practice. We have a third faculty, a visiting or guest faculty member, all the way from PLU who came to help us without pay.

Wang: Oh, yeah.

Jang: Simply based on his love of theater and love of Chinese music, Gregory Youtz, who came every week for more than three hours. When we had the production rehearsals, toward the end of the quarter when the production was close, he practically was there every day for two weeks. It was amazing that he also taught fulltime at PLU. Luckily, he was teaching graduate students with more conference-type of teaching, so he was able to come to our productions, rehearsals, and final production week with all these intense preparations for production.

I really was very proud of the program. I am actually proud of all the China programs and all the performing arts programs in which I used China or Chinese elements. If I can just make a summary of that. It's really hard to go into specifics about my teaching in every program and what I have accomplished. But I think what I am really proud of is my identity and teaching as a faculty of multiculturalism, or a faculty of diversity—because I was from a different culture. I came from Taiwan. I fundamentally am a Chinese American. I have a strong foundation in China.

I felt that I had finally—with years of teaching of Evergreen—able to come to a point where I was able to take things out of each culture or each tradition, East and West. These are broad terms and specifics would be hard for me to give examples of. But in a broad term, each culture gave me nutrients that I can use to fertilize a particular program based on a particular theme.

In my teaching of Greek theater with Andrew Reece, for example, in *Dionysia: Enlivening Greek Theater*: that program was my initiative and mostly under my coordination. I invited Andrew Reece—a Greek scholar in Greek literature and mythology—to teach with me because I wanted to stage Greek

theater in that year. I was able to use a lot of Chinese performance elements and theater training regimens in the teaching of students in performing for Greek theater.

I had no idea how theater was trained in Greek time. We definitely had a lot of information, a lot of readings, discussions and studies done in the program to understand Greek theater, Greek philosophy, Greek mythology, and the staging of festivals, but we had no idea how we trained performers for that stage, for that Greek open space.

Theater is universal. Physical, emotional elements of theater performance are human. They go back to our needs as humans—our experiences, our emotional energy, our psychological setup. Every theater—Greek, Shakespeare, modern, Western and Chinese—came from same roots of trying to express human experience through physical and emotional identification. The training is a specific system developed within its own cultural setting, which could be different, but the same source, the same roots, are still there waiting to be discovered. I found [that] Chinese theater training system, performance elements, ingredients, and all the philosophies and aesthetics of Chinese tradition of theater could help me go there, go to the universal source, help me discover things in Greek theater, in Shakespeare, in modern theatre.

I use a lot of those in my teaching, and I make students practice certain Chinese regimens that are useful to them. They proved useful again and again. Make them focus. Sometimes they didn't understand why, but they understood that theater is not only inspirational and spontaneous, theater training is also disciplined and rigorous.

How do you train spontaneous and natural and genuine through rigorous and disciplined training system? That's the balance. That's the dilemma.

Wang: Right. Sounds like a paradox. [laughing]

Jang: Totally paradoxical, but it's totally harmonious. That's what art is. Art is different from reality. The most spontaneous thing is real—it's about real life—but that's not art. So how do you extract reality? How do you extract art from reality? How do you make art out of reality? Students need to learn that. They had to go through a pathway, and I found that the Chinese training system, Chinese cultural foundations, the thousands of years of Chinese wisdom through documentation and exercise, through the preservation of theater performance even today helped me do that, to go to the fundamental principles of how to extract arts out of reality.

I made students do improvisation exercises, go through some assimilation, systematic work, and I really designed a lot of things out of my Chinese background, and they proved useful.

I am actually very, very happy with what I had accomplished because I have found what is bridgeable between China and the West. I have found the connection between theater, my academic discipline, and China, my lifelong identity and devotion. I found a way to connect them to each other in my teaching. Because basically, it is also my life, isn't it? I live in both worlds.

Wang: Yeah, absolutely. On that note, in expressive arts, you incorporated a lot of productions in your programs. Right? Can you talk a little bit about that?

Jang: I think production is a very important part of performing arts curriculum. In a traditional school, like Northwestern, there was emphasis in production. But production is a very rigorous aspect of it, meaning that you really have to earn your due. You had to become really good at performance or in directing, proving by passing serious tests or auditions or having a degree at some point, then you were given the chance to mount a production. That's the experience I had with Northwestern education.

The great thing about Evergreen theater education is that you are encouraged, no matter what level you are, to experience production, to experience performance. Performance is part of learning about the art, not a reward for your learning abilities of the art. I think it is really a unique concept, but it's a really wonderful concept. You learn about a very important part of theater by actually doing it. You know that all learning of theater—the end result—is to be able to embody it. The drama, the literature you read, is not for reading alone. It's not complete. You have to embody it. Whether you can do it well or not is another matter. The writing, the drama of the play is for that embodiment.

I think that continuity, that holistic sense of theater as a whole as an art form, is very well introduced at Evergreen. In every program, we tried to incorporate workshops, which gives students little projects, so they can do performance from the beginning to overcome their insecurity, their fear of performance. Later on, the projects become bigger—bigger performance opportunities, student-oriented performance productions. Sometimes, in some cases, if the students really work hard, the faculty will arrange a production, which is a full-fledged mainstage production with the support of the technical staff, the space, costumes, lights, and all those technical facilitations.

At Evergreen, I had many theater productions coming from the theater program teaching and learning, and those are wonderful things to happen in theater education. Every one of the theater productions, I would say, was very successful in bringing all the materials together. Each one is different.

I had, as I said, the Greek theater production, which I was able to work with a Greek scholar. Really, we studied mythology and Greek gods and the energy of the psychological influences of the mythology and human emotions through performing these classical plays. *Trojan Women* and

Lysistrata. We work with students in understanding the profound sorrow and the loss of the Trojan women after the Trojan War.

Mythology became really approachable and accessible, to student, and to the audience, to us as human beings. It was no more a classical, imaginative or imaginary thing, it's a real-life suffering. We really worked hard in getting that realized on stage.

We had musical theater productions, which I worked with Marla Elliott. Marla is a wonderful theater director. She's also a great music teacher and music director. We connected several times—twice. One in the program Musical Theater in Cultural Context. Another, titled *The Play's the Thing: Study of Theatre and Drama*, without much music but more around the study of modern play. The musical theater production we did together was *The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay. It was, again, very successful. The students really worked hard.

Marla was the music director and I served as the director. Basically, we collaborated on it together. The students learned to perform, to sing, to play music, and also to understand characters in a very particular historical period, the early 18th Century London suffering, the slums and the thievery, the crime. All that. We studied musical theater at the same time we studied the English history through the play, so a lot of things were able to come alive in students' body and mind through the program and the production.

The ones I loved most out of all my productions are, first, *The Bacchae*, which I did in 2007, I think, with Kabby Mitchell. With the help of technical staff, we turned the Experimental Theater into this wonderland of Pantheus' palace and wild mountain scenes. We brought Dionysus to the Experimental Theater and really worked with psychological energies and forces embodied by the Greek god who dealt with the complex, the psychological inferiority, the complex, the opposites, the shadows—all these things in psychology and psychoanalysis in Jungian psychology. It was just wonderful to see all these things could come together to reinforce each other in a theatrical, artistic work.

Another production I was proud of and still am is in the program Theater of Fantasy, the play *The Blooming Season*, because it's such a collaboration between faculty and students, between faculty and staff on so many levels. The play itself is a really authentic, wonderful, rich, modern musical theater work written by a student of ours. His name is Nick McCord. He just wrote this excellent, modern musical play as an adaptation of three classical Chinese dramas. The kind of work and creative imagination that can come from such work is just amazing, and it could only happen at Evergreen.

I think at this point I would say that students were always our best collaborators, and the students were the core creators. A lot of programs depended on students to make them successful. All

my theater programs depended on theater students' collaboration and their work and their hardcore energy and their final realization, their success.

All my China programs depended on students' response to the faculty's energy and dedication. I really had some of the best students in China programs who gave me work on the graduate level that I couldn't possibly have imagined from another institution.

I had a book-length paper given to me about Chinese Taoism from a student.

Wang: Oh, really?

Jang: Pages and pages of exploration, joining so many different works of Taoist philosophy, including Taoist folktales. It's amazing that he would be willing to do such work because he cared about the materials we gave them, and he was responding to my critical invitation. He wanted my response, so I spent hours responding to that work.

What happened there is just this critical energy between faculty and students, this collaborative, responsible, interactive, reciprocal relationship between students and faculty that really was thriving in programs that I have taught. That really made Evergreen teaching so unique and so wonderful and so successful for me.

Wang: Yeah, absolutely. Is there anything else that we haven't touched upon that you would like to mention? Any memories? Nuggets?

Jang: I think there are way too many memories. I wish China program can continue. The Chinese language class seems to be in continuation through EWS. That's good. Although we always had problems with language because language studies require consistency. Because of the Evergreen program structures, we couldn't create that consistency. That's kind of sad.

Other than that, there have always been problems in performing arts in terms of the sharing of facilities, but those were in the past. I think Evergreen has come to a different phase of its life and it's going to have so many different things, and so many changes. But there are things in the past which I hope that I can still preserve in people's memories through this interview.

Another thing that I want to mention is that I believe the faculty is really unique at Evergreen because we care about our teaching, and always continue to develop ourselves because we care so much about our students. I personally never stopped faculty development. Evergreen also encourages me and has given me travel funding to attend conferences, allowing me to continue my scholarship in the field of China studies.

I also continue to perform and study Chinese theater through performance and through working with professional teachers as a way to help me understand what it takes to be a performer, so when I

work with my students, it's never just theory, it's also a practical, literal understanding of the mindset of the performer. I could always incorporate those understandings, those firsthand experiences, into my design and my structure of workshops and my production work.

Those things are important parts of Evergreen. The faculty development, the faculty-student interactions, the strength of program structure in every discipline, despite the forever lack of continuity in certain disciplines which require that. They've also been part of my teaching life and experiences at Evergreen for 30 years.

But there have never been any regrets of my life about those 30 years. I learned a lot, and I can still continue to thrive on those memories after I retire. That's what Evergreen has given me. I am forever grateful. I hope this is enough for this interview. [laughing] Thank you so much for spending the time with me and listening to all my babbling.

Wang: No, not at all. It was such a great pleasure just having this interview, and reading your five-year reviews, I learned a lot, a lot of things. Thank you so much. Take care.

Jang: You're welcome.