

DOCTORAL THESIS

An artistic director as an auteur in contexts: the case study of Dr. Joanna Chan of Hong Kong repertory theatre (1986-1990)

Tao, Siu Tip

Date of Award:
2014

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and intellectual property rights for the publications made accessible in HKBU Scholars are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners. In addition to the restrictions prescribed by the Copyright Ordinance of Hong Kong, all users and readers must also observe the following terms of use:

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from HKBU Scholars for the purpose of private study or research
- Users cannot further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- To share publications in HKBU Scholars with others, users are welcome to freely distribute the permanent URL assigned to the publication

Abstract

The main objectives of this dissertation are: to research the theatrical term “artistic director”; and to investigate how an artistic director of a theatre troupe performs as an “*auteur* in contexts”. Through the case study of Dr. Joanna Chan (Chan), the second-ever artistic director of the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre (“the Rep / HKRep” / the Theatre), this dissertation examines the execution of her artistic directorship while she worked for a theatre company established and operated by the British colonial government. *Auteur* theories, Andrew Sarris’ in particular, are applied to investigate Chan’s creative works.

“Artistic director” is a relatively new term in drama history. No serious or special studies have been conducted on the position, despite the fact that the jobholder is the creative force of a theatre company – by no means a meagre role. This dissertation closely studies the artistic directorship of Chan as an “*auteur* in contexts” when she took up the position at HKRep during Hong Kong’s final decade under British rule, particularly after the Sino-British Joint Declaration had been signed. Taking advantage of special political and social contexts, and as a Catholic nun with a broadly exposed, overseas educational background and an established career in theatre, Chan created local discourses in Hong Kong as an “*auteur* in contexts” by writing original plays and setting up the Rep’s first-ever theme for its drama season – *Facing Deadlines*. The bold and unique offerings of the drama season she designed, along with her other artistic works, all explored individuals’ dilemmas, social anxieties, and the Hong Kong people’s conflicting identity, induced by “the 1997 deadline”. Her emphasis on writing and promoting original plays had greatly contributed to the shift in the Rep’s programming from purely artistic offerings to productions tinted with social agendas. Through first-hand information obtained by interviewing Chan, other industry insiders and drama critics; through close study of Chan’s plays for textual analyses; and through research carried out particularly in the Rep’s news clippings library, this case study investigates how Chan as an artistic director managed to carve out a space for herself, to display her own style as an “*auteur* in contexts” of the text of HKRep, and to influence the local drama scene while working under a system replete with governmental constraints as well as facing larger political, social and cultural changes in society.

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and Oliver.

Heartfelt thanks to all these wonderful people who have offered me assistance, encouragement and support in completing this dissertation.

Mr. Chan Kam Kuen, Anthony
Dr. Chan, Cindy S. C.
Dr. Chan, Joanna
Mr. Chan Hang Fai
Mr. Chan Kin Bun
Ms. Chan Kwok Wai
Ms. Chan Lai Hing
Mr. Chan Kwan Yun, Rupert
Dr. Chen, Darwin
Dr. Cheung Ping Kuen
Ms. Choi Suk Kuen
Professor Chu Yiu Wai
Dr. Chung King Fai
Mr. Chung Shu Kun, Christopher
Professor Erni, John
Ms. He Jiping
Mr. Ip, Derek
Dr. Jiang, David
Mr. Jerome, Robert
Mr. Ko Hon Man
Mr. Kuh Fei
Mr. Lam Sheung Mo

Dr. Lee Wai Sum
Mr. Leung Kwok Hung
Dr. Lin Kehuan
Professor Lo Kwai Cheung
Dr. Lo Wai Luk
Professor Luk, Thomas Y. T.
Ms. Lui Sze Lan
Professor Man, Kit Wah Eva
Mr. Man, Oliver
Dr. Mao, Fredric
Ms. Ng, Floria
Ms. Poon Pik Wan
Mr. Samtani, Prem
Professor Robinson, Douglas
Mr. Ting Ka Sheung
Mr. To Kwok Wai
Mr. Tse Kwan Ho
Dr. Wong Kwok Kui
Dr. Yang, Daniel S. P.
Mr. Yuen Lup Fun
Mr. Yu Hong Ting

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Introduction In Search of Artistic Directorship	1
Chapter One What is an Artistic Director? – Findings	24
Chapter Two The Birth of Hong Kong Repertory Theatre – Its Background and objectives	107
Chapter Three Case Study: An Artistic Director Situated in (Post)- Colonial Hong Kong	149
Chapter Four Case Study: Joanna Chan’s Work in Artistic Expression	193
Chapter Five Case Study: Joanna Chan’s Work in Artistic Management	268
Conclusion	306
Epilogue	331
References	335
Curriculum Vitae	373