

SNOW IN MIDSUMMER

FRANCES YA-CHU COWHIG

BASED ON THE CLASSICAL CHINESE DRAMA

THE INJUSTICE TO DOU YI THAT MOVED HEAVEN AND EARTH
BY GUAN HANQING

U.S. PREMIERE



Jessica Ko (Dou Yi)

FROM THE DIRECTOR

As a director, I am drawn to two questions in drama: Firstly, how do we live in a world that is unjust? Secondly, how do we make it through the night? Most plays examine one of these questions. The remarkable thing about Frances's version of *Snow in Midsummer* is that it explores both of them and eschews offering us, as the complicit contemporary audience, easy answers to either.

Frances and I were thrown together as a creative couple by the Royal Shakespeare Company to explore Guan Hanqing's 13th-century Yuan drama masterpiece. Written at a time when the Mongols ruled China as an imperial power, Guan Hanqing portrays one woman's struggle to maintain her virtue

in a society riddled with vice. We wanted to keep the powerful story arc of a defiant woman who is wronged by lustful, cruel and venal men, a tale which feels as pertinent to our time as it would have been shocking in Mongol China. At the same time, we also wanted to create a narrative that illustrates the complexities and contradictions of living in contemporary China and the globally interconnected market-capitalist world of the 21st century.

We workshopped Frances's ideas with a company of British actors, continually improvising and re-working scenes and structure right up until we opened the play in the U.K. in 2017. In bringing this show to the U.S., we have kept on refining those scenes and the ideas behind them with the input of the truly brilliant OSF ensemble. Working in this collaborative manner, Frances has created a multilayered story that explores material corruption, environmental degradation and spiritual decay, while at the beating heart of it all it questions the lengths to which we will go for the ones that we love. As an audience your journey follows both the innocent and the guilty on Dou Yi's quest to find earthly and spiritual justice. It is a story that is both ancient and modern, epic and intimate, timeless yet urgent, and we are thrilled that you are joining us on this journey.

—JUSTIN AUDIBERT