

Memorial Minute for Nan Zhang, Senior Lecturer in Theatre, Smith College Memorial Gathering of November 20, 2024, written and read by Kiki Gounaridou, Professor of Theatre.

It is a very sad task and also a great privilege to write about one of the most brilliant, intelligent, delightful, generous spirits, and kind colleagues and friends I have ever known. After struggling with serious illness for some time, Nan Zhang, Senior Lecturer in Theatre at Smith College, passed away peacefully at her home in Northampton, on Sunday, August 25, 2024, just a week shy of her 49th birthday.

More than a colleague, Nan Zhang was a friend, and even more, she was family, not based on blood alone. In my mind's eye, I'll always see her coming out of her office, right next to mine, with a warm smile, a mischievous laughter, and a heart of gold: "ah, there you are, what's happening today?" I'll always see her in one of our home kitchens in Northampton, making dumplings and other delicious concoctions, and showing us how to pour Chinese tea. And we'll all always cherish her beauty and stories during our tri-continental "covid salons" on zoom that brought a few loving colleagues and friends from three continents together during the pandemic lockdowns.

Nan was born in Beijing on September 1st, 1975. She got her BA in English Literature from the Peking University in China in 1997. That same year a scholarship took her to The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, where she received her MA in Theatre History/Literature/Criticism in 1999 and her MFA in Lighting Design and Technology in 2001. Nan came to Smith College as a Lighting Design Lecturer in 2001. After her impressive job interview, we all thought that she was the only candidate we wanted to hire, and we did so unanimously.

In 2010, Nan married Han Zhao, a true admirer of hers since their college days in Beijing. It was a marriage of hearts and minds, two people deeply in love, a curious, erudite, polyglot, and always modest—even to a fault—couple, who worked together on theatre productions and translations. Their new Chinese translation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in 2018 was commissioned by The Royal Shakespeare Company's "New Folio Translation Project" and published by Yilin Publishing in Nanjing, China. In 2020 Nan and Han received a new commission from the RSC and created a new Chinese translation of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Nan was an intellectual and a designer, an international scholar/designer with a wide range of talents. She designed, directed, produced, and dramaturged for both professional and college theatre in China and the USA: Beijing, Northampton, Amherst, New York City, Shanghai, Smith College, Peking University, including such productions as *Mozart: The Rock Opera*, *Next to Normal*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Eurydice*, *The Golden Lotus*, *The Elephant Man*, *The Master Builder*, *The Impression of Love*, and *Galileo*.

Nan also presented her work in international conferences and symposia, including her paper "Going Native: Recruitment, Conversion, and Identification in Cultural Research" in 1999, at the Center for Folklore Studies in conjunction with the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio, as well as her presentation in the lecture series "Visual Literacy for the Stage" at the Today Art Museum in Beijing, China in 2013.

Her article "On the Creative Process of *A Number*" was published in the journal *Arts Criticism* in 2018, and her essays on "Chang," a central concept to understanding Chinese theatre, and on "Piaoyou," the amateur performers of Chinese Opera, were published in *The Routledge Companion to Performance-Related Concepts in Non-European Languages* in 2024.

Nan's designs for *Orpheus Descending* and *The Parrot* were exhibited in Toronto, Canada in 2005. She received the Outstanding Lighting Design Award at the Liaoning Theatre Festival in China in 2004 for her design of *The Redshore*. In addition, Nan wrote and adapted extraordinary plays, including her one-act play *Selves*, which was staged in 2013 in China, and for which she received The Village Award for Best Play in the 1st International Wuzhen Theatre Festival in China.

One of Nan's most lasting legacies is as a teacher and mentor. Deeply committed to the principles of justice and equality, she is remembered by her Smith College Theatre students as one of their most brilliant professors and champions, who taught them and nurtured them with her thoughtfulness, who conveyed her passion and high standards for the theatre to her students, and communicated to them her enthusiasm about the limitless possibilities of theatre performance and theatre lighting design. Her colleagues and her students, several of whom are now renowned professionals, could rely on her integrity and trust her completely, as she designed our theatre productions, side by side with students and colleagues with whom she formed important and meaningful artistic partnerships.

Nan radiated light, she was luminous herself, a source of light for all her students who studied lighting design with her at Smith for over two decades, for all her colleagues with whom she worked in theatre, and for all her loving friends across countries and continents. She made the world a better place, and she will be remembered with love, gratitude, and admiration by the many whose lives she brightened. Nan, our friend, you lit all our lives brilliantly.