

KING LEAR HAS BEEN ADAPTED AGAIN ON STAGE—THIS TIME IN A TAIWANESE ACCENT

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“King Lear”, one of the most famous Shakespearean plays, has been adapted many times to fit into different time and languages in recent years. This time it was given a new breath of life by the English Department of TKU for their graduation performance. The time and characters were transformed to a bookstore owner and his three daughters in Keelung, Taiwan between 1951 and 1981. Most stories occur between them and the owner’s best friend, Gloucester and his two sons. Music, costume and stage design reflected a Taiwanese touch rather than anything that was remotely English.

However, the soul of the play is Aunt Fool, a long-time neighbor of King Lear, who comments throughout the play about these two families in a comic Singaporean English. Yu Yi-shian, a sophomore, who played her, won warm applauses from the audiences with his humorous performance. He points out that his cross-dressing and accents as well as good timing with jokes are the factors that made this character so endearing. Another character, Edmund, played by Lin Yu-zhi, a Junior of the Department, also stood out for his performance that was full of dark psychological intrigue. Lin admits that it was not an easy role to play, but appreciated such an opportunity to play such a complex character.

Other students who played King Lear, Gloucester and Regan, Lear’s second daughters respectively also expressed their delight and challenge in playing their roles. For example, Wu Zhong-shian, the King Lear in the play, believes that this play sends out a strong feminist message, whereas Chen Wan Yu, the daughter, thinks it is about family love as she has learned how to love her family through her involvement in the play. (~Ying-hsueh Hu)