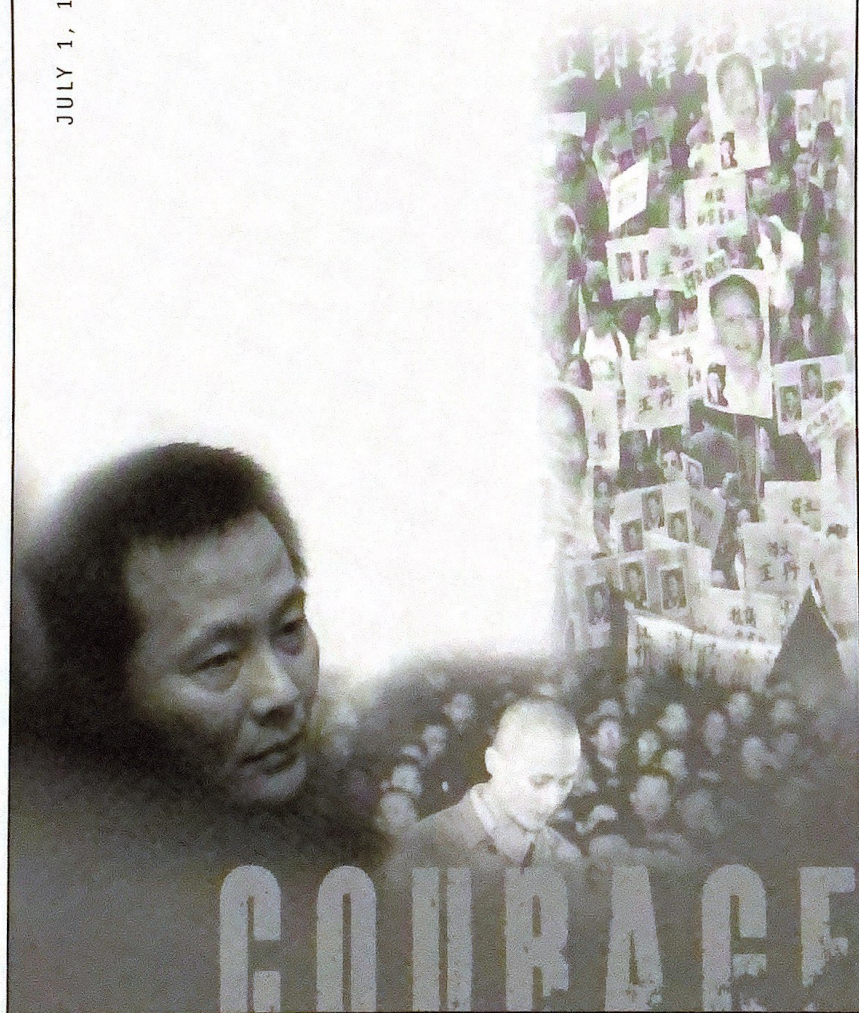


# THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE

LETTERS FROM POLITICAL PRISONER WEI JINGSHENG

JULY 1, 1997



# COURAGE

 MARKTAPERFORUM

Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum  
Gordon Davidson, Artistic Director/Producer  
Charles Dillingham, Managing Director

# THE COURAGE TO STAND ALONE

LETTERS FROM POLITICAL PRISONER WEI JINGSHENG

July 1, 1997

A READING

Featuring **Sandra Oh** and **Sab Shimono**

A PANEL DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

**Alan Gleitsman** - The Gleitsman Foundation

**Fang Lizhi** - Chinese Dissident

**Nancy Pelosi** - U.S. Congresswoman

**Alvin Shuster** - Los Angeles Times

**Larry Siems** - PEN Center USA West

Produced by **Susan Obrow**

Adapted by **Clarence Coo** and **Chay Yew**

Original Music by **Nathan Wang**

Scenic Design by **Akeime Mitterlehner**

Lighting Design by **Kris Sandheinrich**

Sound Design by **Jon Gottlieb**

Production Stage Manager, **David S. Franklin**

Assistant Director - **Bobby Garcia**

Conceived and Directed by **Chay Yew**

Text adapted from *The Courage to Stand Alone: Letters From Prison and Other Writings*, translated and edited by Kristina M. Torgeson. Copyright ©1997, Wei Jingsheng. Used by arrangement with Viking, a division of Penguin Putnam Inc.

Additional dramatic text and material for this presentation written by Clarence Coo and Chay Yew. Copyright ©1997. All rights reserved.

July 1, 1997, is the day of Hong Kong's handover to the People's Republic of China.



This event is a presentation of the Mark Taper Forum's **Asian Theatre Workshop**.

This evening would not be possible without the support and guidance of Alan Gleitsman and The Gleitsman Foundation.

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**Wei Jingsheng.** Many consider Wei Jingsheng to be the world's most important political prisoner; he has spent all but six months of the last 17 years in prison and has been a leading contender for the Nobel Peace Prize, as well as winner of the 1996 Sakharov Peace Prize, the Olaf Palme Award, the 1994 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award and the 1993 Gleitsman Award. As a writer, political philosopher and human rights advocate, Wei has become an important symbol and inspiration — not only of the democracy movement in China, but of the tens of thousands of other Chinese men and women who, like him, have been silenced. Formerly a self-confessed "fanatic Maoist" and an electrician at the Beijing Zoo, Wei emerged as an eloquent and utterly fearless fighter for individual rights in China when, in 1978, he added a poster to Beijing's Democracy Wall in which he insisted that the government's Four Modernizations (in industry, agriculture, defense and science) were inadequate without the addition of a fifth — democracy. He was arrested in March of 1979, and sentenced to 15 years in prison. In 1993, pressure from the United States and other nations helped obtain his release. He immediately recommenced his campaign for democracy and was soon detained again. He was sentenced to another 14 years in prison. He is serving his present term under an around-the-clock watch in a jail in the northern port city of Tianjin, where, due to relentless persecution, his health has rapidly deteriorated. In May of 1997, Viking published *The Courage to Stand Alone*, a collection of his prison letters and other political writings, translated by Kristina M. Torgeson.

**Sandra Oh**, a Canadian transplant, recently finished her second season on HBO's half-hour comedy *Arli\$\$*. Other credits include *Double Happiness*, for which she won a Genie (Canadian Oscar) for Best Actress, and *Diary of Evelyn Lau*, for which she won the FIPA d'or for Best Actress at Cannes and a Gemini nomination (television award). Theatre credits include *Oleanna* (the National Arts Centre and Grand Theatre), *Inquest* (The Factory) and *Diana Son's Fishes* (workshop at the Taper). Upcoming film credits include *Dr. Bean* (with Rowan Atkinson) and *The Red Violin* by Francois Girard. Sandra is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada (NTS), and she is very proud and honored to participate in the evening's event.

**Sab Shimono** first appeared on the Mark Taper Forum stage in *A Christmas Carol* by Doris Bazley followed through the years by *The Winter Dancers* and Philip Kan Gotanda's *The Wash*. Sab's Broadway credits include *Mame* and *Pacific Overtures*. Off-Broadway he has worked at the Manhattan Theatre Club (*The Wash*), Playwrights Horizons (*Yankee Dawg You Die*), Vivian Beaumont (Iago in *Othello*), New York Shakespeare Festival (*Music Lesson*) and many others. His film credits include *Paradise Road*, *Waterworld*, *The Shadow*, *Presumed Innocent*, *The Wash*, *Come See the Paradise* and others. Sab received three Drama-Logue Awards, two L.A. Weekly Awards, a Clio, and a N.Y. Drama Desk Award nomination for *The Wash*.

**Chay Yew.** Some of playwright Chay Yew's plays include *Porcelain* (London Fringe Award for Best Play), *A Language of Their Own* (George and Elisabeth Marton Playwriting Award, GLAAD Media Award for Best Play), *Half Lives*, *Red* and *As If He Hears*. His plays have been presented at the New York Shakespeare Festival, Royal Court Theatre (London), Studio Theatre, Intiman Theatre, East West Players, The Group Theatre, Dallas Theater Center and TheatreWorks (Singapore), amongst others. His work has recently been published by Grove Atlantic. As a director, his last production was *Two at the Top* with Alec Mapa and Sandra Tsing Loh at Taper. Too. His next directing project is *Closet Land* by Radha Bharadwaj at Playwrights Arena in Los Angeles this fall. Chay is also the director of the Asian Theatre Workshop at the Taper.

**Clarence Coo** is the author of *Proof Through the Night*, *Removing the Glove*, *Fairfax County* and *Bahola No*. His work has been presented by the Young Playwrights Festival, Mark Taper Forum, Very Special Arts at the Kennedy Center, Theatre Virginia, International Thespian Festival and the New England Theatre Conference. Coo is also the recipient of numerous playwriting awards which include Theatre Virginia's New Voices for the Theatre, Very Special Arts Young Playwrights Award and the Howard Scammon Playwriting Award.

**Nathan Wang** started his musical studies at the age of four. When he was nine, he was accepted to USC to study music performance, musical theory and composition. After high school he decided to get a liberal arts education from a small campus and graduated from Pomona College and received a Fulbright to study at Oxford University in England. Composing regularly for television, he has been writing on *Eekstravanza*, the popular animated television series now for five years on Fox, and has also written for shows such as *China Beach* at Warner, HBO's *Tales From the Crypt*, CBS' *Felix the Cat* and Disney's *Snookey's and Meat Funny Cartoon Show*. He also composed for the series *The Excellent Adventures of Bill and Ted* and just finished working for Bruce Willis' nationally syndicated series *Bruno the Kid*. He has been the composer for martial arts star Jackie Chan's Asian version of *Rumble in the Bronx* and *First Strike*, and is currently working on Jackie Chan's next film *Who Am I?* Nathan is happy to return to the Taper mainstage after several years absence since composing the music for *The Traveter* in the 1987-88 season.

**Susan Obrow** is the assistant producer for the Ahmanson Theatre. She produced three AIDS benefits for CTG Cares as well as "The Waiting Room Weekend" for the Taper which included a health fair and panel discussions focused on breast cancer. She was the associate producer for the Ahmanson Theatre Rededication Ceremony and is currently the associate producer for the annual Salon at the Taper.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

KCRW (89.9 FM) will tape the event and on Friday, July 4, 1997, from 7 to 8 p.m. will air it as part of special Independence Day programming; Wei Jingsheng's *The Courage to Stand Alone* is carried at Dutton's Brentwood Books, 11975 San Vicente Blvd. in Brentwood (310) 476-6263; *A Voice for Chinese Democracy* video is presented with permission from Human Rights in China; Wei Jingsheng photo by Adrian Bradshaw.

**Very Special Thanks** to Robert Bernstein, Paul Slovak and Wendy Wolf of Viking Penguin; Bob Carlson, Jacqueline Des Lauriers and Ruth Seymour of KCRW; Jeffrey S. Klein of the Los Angeles Times; Amnesty International; Hong Kong Forum; Human Rights Watch; PEN Center USA West; Community Redevelopment Agency; Xiao Qiang and Beatrice Laroche of Human Rights in China; Howard Sherman of MCO; Actors Equity Association.

With great appreciation to the Mark Taper Forum staff including Alana Beidelman, Nancy Hereford, Christopher Komuro, Christopher Lore, Yolanda Rodriguez, Monica Romig, Nausica Stergiou, Stephanie Tagiku, Ann E. Wareham, the Taper press office, production office and crew.

#### Production Credits

Panel Coordinator - Wendy A. McClellan  
Artists' Coordinator - Pamela Schmeer  
Manager - Susan Barton  
Production Manager - Jonathan Barlow Lee  
Technical Director - Ted Carlsson

#### PARTICIPANTS IN THE PANEL DISCUSSION:

**Fang Lizhi** was born in Beijing in 1936 and received his diploma of physics from Beijing University in 1956. He immediately joined the Chinese nuclear project as a junior researcher. When he spoke out on freedom of thought and expression, he was dismissed and transferred to the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) as an assistant professor in 1958 and lecturer in 1961. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), he was sent to do labor in the countryside and in a coal mine. In 1978, Fang became a full professor and later the vice president of USTC in 1984. In 1986 he was once again dismissed because of his support of the student movement. In 1987 he moved to the Beijing Astronomical Observatory. Following the bloody event at Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, Fang was named the most wanted counter-revolutionary criminal by the Chinese authorities. He sought sanctuary in the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, where he remained for over a year. When he got out of China in 1990, he became a guest professor at Cambridge, and in the following year at Princeton. In 1992, he joined the faculty of the University of Arizona as a professor of physics and astronomy.

**Alan Gleitsman.** A successful entrepreneur in the television industry for more than three decades, Alan was aware of many causes he wished to support, but as a small businessman he felt he did not have the time to do so. That situation changed when he sold his business and established The Gleitsman Foundation in 1989 to honor individuals who, through courage and commitment, have initiated social change. His decision to launch a foundation is based on his belief that if attention is brought to those who have made a positive impact on society, others will realize that determined individuals can indeed make a difference. In addition to the foundation, Gleitsman has initiated a scholarship program at UCLA designed to help attract outstanding medical students to the field of geriatrics; been honored by the University of Southern California for his contributions to cancer research; participated in the International Peace Walk in the Soviet Union; and established a scholarship program at the high school he attended in Great Neck, New York, that is awarded annually to the school's most outstanding graduate. He currently serves on the boards of directors of a number of organizations devoted to civil liberties, human rights and peace. A father of four and grandfather of five, he now lives in Malibu.

**Nancy Pelosi** was elected in 1987 to represent the City of San Francisco (California's 8th Congressional District) in Congress. She serves on the powerful House Appropriations Committee, is the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and Export Financing and the only Californian on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. Pelosi also serves on the Permanent Select Committee on

“The banner of  
democracy will  
never again  
be obscured...”

Let us unite together under this great  
and true banner and march toward  
modernization of society for the sake  
of the tranquility, happiness, rights,  
and freedom of all the people!”

- WEI JINGSHENG  
Beijing's Democracy Wall, 1978

**Intelligence.** She chairs the Congressional Working Group on China and is co-chair of the AIDS Task Force of the House Democratic Caucus. She plays a prominent role in forging the appropriations bill for the nation's domestic programs and foreign investments, and is a champion of U.S. global leadership for human rights and sustainable development. She graduated from Trinity College in Washington, D.C. She is married to Paul Pelosi and they have five children.

**Alvin Shuster,** now senior consulting editor of the Los Angeles Times, was the foreign editor of the paper from 1983 to 1995. Prior to joining the Los Angeles Times, he was a foreign correspondent for The New York Times, working overseas for a decade as bureau chief in London, Saigon and Rome, reporting from more than 50 countries. Presently, Shuster sits on the board of the Monterey Institute of International Studies and serves as the editor of the international journalism magazine, *IPI Report*, published for the International Press Institute, an organization of editors and publishers working for press freedoms. He was a 1966-67 Nieman Fellow.

**Larry Siems** has directed the Freedom to Write Program at PEN Center USA West since 1995. PEN West is a center of International PEN, the worldwide association of professional writers that strives to promote and defend freedom of expression and to create a vital regional and international literary community. The Freedom to Write Committee of PEN Center USA West campaigns on behalf of writers around the world who have been persecuted, imprisoned or murdered as a result of their work and monitors and defends freedom of expression in the United States. Siems is also a poet and a nonfiction writer who has written extensively on immigration and cross-cultural issues. His book *Between the Lines: Letters Between Undocumented Mexican and Central Americans and Their Families and Friends* was a finalist for the PEN West Award for nonfiction in 1993. His work with the undocumented community led to a position at Human Rights Watch, where he researched and co-wrote the America's Watch report "Brutality Unchecked: human rights abuses along the U.S. - Mexico border." In addition to his writing and human rights work, he has taught literature and writing at both the high school and university level.

All proceeds from tonight's event will benefit Human Rights in China. Donation envelopes are being taken in the Taper's lobby.

**Human Rights in China** is an international non-governmental organization founded by Chinese scientists and scholars in March 1989. HRIC monitors the implementation of international human rights standards in the People's Republic of China and carries out human rights advocacy and education among Chinese people inside and outside the country. HRIC's objectives are to facilitate the development of a grassroots human rights movement in China and to promote international scrutiny of China's human rights situation.

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