



Name in English: David Henry Hwang
Name in Chinese: 黃哲倫
Name in Pinyin: Huáng Zhìlún
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1957
Birth Place: Los Angeles, California
Current location: New York, New York
Philanthropy: Yes (remove, if no)

Profession (s): Author, Playwright

Education: Bachelor of Arts, English, Stanford University, 1979; Yale University School of Drama 1980-1981

Awards: 1996-1997, “Golden Child” Obie Award – Playwriting, Village Voice; 1988, “M. Butterfly” Tony Award- Best Play; 1988, “M. Butterfly” Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Broadway Play; 1988, “M. Butterfly” Drama Desk Award Outstanding New Play; 1988, “M. Butterfly” John Gassner Award, Best American Play; 1985, National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship; 1984, Guggenheim Fellowship; 1980-1981, “FOB” Obie Award- Best New American Play, Village Voice

Contribution (s): David Henry Hwang grew up totally assimilated in San Gabriel, California. He didn’t even know when Chinese New Year was until he started dating a Chinese American girl as a high school senior. Hwang went to Stanford University with the vague idea of becoming a lawyer but the 1970s were a period when Chinese Americans were becoming much more militant and aware of their cultural identity.

Hwang began to take an interest in studying Chinese history and culture and exploring his identity as a Chinese American. He also fell in love with the idea of creating his own world after seeing a play in San Francisco. One day he went into a Stanford English professor’s office and asked if he could be taught how to write plays. The professor was startled to learn that Hwang had only seen two plays up until then but his obvious devotion to the craft won the professor and other academics over. They helped him get the instruction he needed and the result was the 1979 Stanford play, “FOB,” about Chinese Americans and their struggle for identity between America and China. By 1980, the play was on stage in New York and had won the prestigious Obie Award. Hwang’s next play was the 1981, “The Dance and the Railroad” about a strike in a 19th Century Chinese railroad worker camp. The play uniquely incorporated something never seen before in an American play, Chinese opera choreography and music performed by John Lone, who’d trained in the discipline in Hong Kong.

Hwang’s best known play was the 1988 “M. Butterfly,” which combined elements of Puccini’s opera, “Madame Butterfly” with the true story of the French diplomat who married a Chinese opera star then claimed not to have known “she” was really a male Chinese spy for 20 years. The play forced audiences to reconsider their own attitudes

and stereotypes about Asian sexuality by reversing the Puccini victim roles. The play won a rich crop of honors, including the first Tony Award for an Asian American playwright. It was made into a successful movie in 1993. In addition to his plays he was worked as a librettist for musical theater, including Elton John and Tim Rice's "Aida," Disney's "Tarzan" with music and lyrics by Phil Collins, and a retelling of Rodgers and Hammerstein's, "Flower Drum Song."

In 1998, the nation's oldest Asian American theatre company, the East West Players, christened its new mainstage, "The David Henry Hwang Theatre." He serves on the Council of the Dramatists Guild and was appointed by President Clinton to the President's Committee for the Arts and the Humanities serving from 1994-2001. He is also a member of the Committee of 100, a Chinese American leadership organization.

Publications:

Broken Promises: Four Plays. New York: Avon, 1983. Contains F.O.B., The Dance and the Railroad, Family Devotions, and The House of Sleeping Beauties.

The Sound of a Voice. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1984.

M. Butterfly. New York: Plume, 1989.

F.O.B. and Other Plays. New York: Plume, 1990. Includes Rich Relations.

Trying to Find Chinatown and Bondage. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1996.

External Links:

http://www.tuvaly.com/resource/books/authors/h/david_henry_hwang.htm

http://www.bedfordsmartins.com/literature/bedlit/authors_depth/hwang.htm

<http://www.stanfordalumni.org/news/magazine/2007/novdec/features/hwang.html>

http://www.syracusestage.org/pdf/02-03_study_guide_02.pdf