

Grist To The Mill Presents

The Ballad Of **Mulan**

When you hear  
the horses Scream...

木蘭辭



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

# The Ballad of Mulan

*When you hear the horses scream...*

*A woman, a warrior, a Chinese Legend.*

*Around fifteen hundred years ago China was split into two parts – the Northern and the Southern dynasties. This was a time of great unrest, a time of civil war, a time when legends were born, and that is what ‘Mulan’ is – a legend. And legends give rise to many stories and, over the years, they change in the telling, but like some great rivers, they all owe their origin to a single source – an ancient Chinese poem called “Ballad of Mulan”.*

After the success of *The Empress and Me* and *An Evening with Miss Wong*, British East Asian actor **Michelle Yim** returns with this Chinese Heroine who, to save her family’s honour, disguised herself as a man and joined the Emperor’s army. The Chinese legend has been made popular around the world through Disney’s reinterpretation, but don’t expect a fluffy tale in our production of **The Ballad of Mulan** – this Mulan is visceral. She is a warrior, a fighter, a woman who survived in a very male world for ten years without discovery. There is no perfect make-up, no singing animals, just a gritty story of a soldier, based on the legend of Mulan as written in the historical 6<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese poem.



This project’s development was supported using funding from **Arts Council England**. The play had just finished a run at Edinburgh Festival Fringe in Assembly Rooms in August 2019.

**The Ballad of Mulan** was commissioned by British East Asian actor and producer **Michelle Yim** and written by Bloomsbury playwright **Ross Ericson**. Ericson’s critically acclaimed *Casualties* was nominated for an Off West End Award and his solo World War One play *The Unknown Soldier* officially sold out at Edinburgh Fringe 2016. Both plays, along with his adaptation of Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* and 5 star *Gratiano*, have been published by Methuen Drama, Bloomsbury.

**Grist to the Mill Productions** has championed new writing in British theatre since 2012. Working in collaboration with West Yorkshire-based British East Asian theatre company **Red Dragonfly Productions**, the two companies strived to bring classic Chinese stories to the West in an accessible and entertaining format to British and European audiences. *The Autumn of Han*, *DiaoChan: the Rise of the Courtesan* and *Monkey and The White Bone Demon* has graced the British stage and toured the UK.

# The Ballad of Mulan Audience Reviews

**Ann Arglye** (Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough 2021)

Just seen the fabulous performance of Mulan at SJT Scarborough. The show was thrilling, amusing, and perfectly acted. We were enthralled. Thank you.

**Francesca Peschier** (Sheffield Crucible 2021)

I really enjoyed the show, in particular the incorporation of the original poetry.

**Shivani Preston** (Adelaide Fringe 2020)

*Brilliant performance. Thoroughly enjoyed it. Great use of soundtrack and projections*

**Meltham Carlile Institute** (2020)

*Michelle held the audience spellbound. Her energy and vitality were palpable. The script well-structured -with different moods balancing and contrasting with each other'*

**Owen AM Williams** (UWTSD 2020)

*Really enjoyed 'The Ballad of Mulan' last night. Evocative, intense, and thought-provoking. Focus was rightly on Mulan's battles with her identity rather than on her battles with external forces.*

**Sarah Forster, Schools and Families Coordinator** (Tullie House Museum 2020)

*Thank you for your fantastic performance it was great to watch and really gave a different perspective on the story of Mulan. We had some excellent feedback from our audience.*

**Lisa Nelson** (Edfringe 2019)

*After 19 days at the Fringe, this is my favourite piece of storytelling so far. Excellent adaptation from a poem based on true events. Evocative and entertaining, plus great acting and staging. Highly recommend.*

**Isabel Paterson** (Edfringe 2019)

*What a talent! Such a well delivered performance. So engaging, we felt the battle around us, and harsh reality of the difficult life Mulan felt compelled to live was so well portrayed. Huge well done.*



# Press Reviews

## On *The Ballad of Mulan*:



*'A powerful exploration of gender, war, and identity, as relevant and timely today as ever'*

– **Tupla Magazine, Australia**

*'Michelle Yim is absolutely terrific as Mulan. She holds the stage with a commanding presence as well as charm and warmth.'*

– **Stage Whispers, Australia**

## On *The Empress and Me* (The true story of a Chinese Princess):



*'Full of ambition, politics and cultural tension'*

– **Adelaide Theatre Guide, Australia**



*'Absolutely fascinating'*

– **Fringe Review**

*'An evocative tale of a remarkable life, and a perfectly pleasant way to spend an hour.'*

– **The Stage**

*'A fascinating piece of theatre that has the audience enthralled... thanks to a clever script, costumes and an engaging performance'*

– **Stage Whispers, Adelaide**

*'An immersive snapshot of period theatre well delivered'*

– **Broadway Baby**



## On *The Unforgettable Anna May Wong* (Previously *An Evening with Miss Wong*) (The tragic and wonderful life of 1930s Chinese-American Actress Anna May Wong):



*'You don't have to be a movie fan to enjoy this'*

– **The Scotsman**



*'Yim plays Wong with talent, vivacity, and an exceedingly agreeable lightness'*

– **Edinburgh49+3**



# Show Package Information

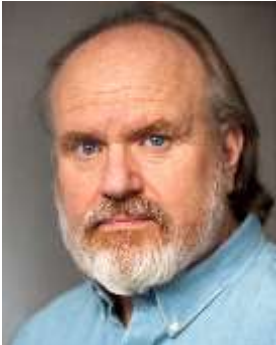
The Ballad of Mulan	
Genre:	Drama, solo show
Themes:	Identity, Gender, Chinese history, War
Availability:	Touring CNY 2022: please ask for dates
Running time:	1 hr
Post-show Discussion:	Available
Suitable for:	Adults, 10+
Schools:	We can tailor an education pack on the Chinese poem "Ballad of Mulan" and conduct a short post-show talk and discussion.
Insurance:	Full public liability cover
Marketing:	Press and marketing, A3 and A4 posters, A5 flyers will be provided
Technical Requirements	
Minimum performance area:	3m x 3m
Layout:	Theatre: thrust, traverse etc.
Set:	Flexible, depending on venue/space, will include: a white canvas, a Chinese chair, and a <b>back projection projector</b>
Props:	A halberd
Lighting:	Battle scenes: wash with red tint Camp scenes: wash with amber hue
Sound:	Sound on laptop, just need minijack connection into desk.
Blackout needed:	Yes
Get in & set up:	3 hr
Get out:	1 hr
Company:	1 actor & 1 stage manager
Parking:	1 car/ van
Hospitality:	If available – for two people

Going out to meet her comrades,  
They are all surprised.  
Marching together for twelve years,  
No one knew Mulan was a woman.

The buck has nimble legs,  
The doe has misty eyes.  
When the two rabbits run side by side,  
How do you tell if I'm male or female?

安能辨我是雄雌？  
雙兔傍地走，  
雌兔眼迷離，  
雄兔脚撲朔，  
不知木蘭是女郎。  
出門看火伴，  
火伴皆驚惶，  
同行十二年，

# Creatives



Director, Playwright & Show Operator: **Ross Ericson**

Ross has been acting since the mid 1990s and has appeared in productions of *Othello*, *Teechers*, *Macbeth*, *A Man for All Seasons*, and *The Little Shop of Horrors* and, more recently, as Lennie in *Of Mice and Men* (Lighthouse, Poole), a Corner man/Bailiff in *Sucker Punch* (Royal Court, London), Ben in *The Dumb Waiter* (The Mill Theatre, Guildford), Number 4 in *Fewer Emergencies* (The Print Room, London), Pembroke/Austria in *King John* (Union Theatre, London), Ned in *Parlour Song* (Cockpit Theatre, London), Jake in *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* (Riverside Studios, London) and The Stage Manager in *Our Town* (Apollo Theatre Company, Touring).

Ross is the resident playwright of **Grist to the Mill Productions**. Among his writing credits are a stage adaptation of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* – which has been optioned by LA Theatre Works in California – *Punchline*, *Life*, *The Autumn of Han* and the critically acclaimed, and OffWestend Awards nominated, *Casualties*, which is published by Methuen Drama. His solo-show *The Unknown Soldier* sold-out its run at Edfringe 2016 and his most recent play *Gratiano* received 4 and 5 star reviews in Edfringe 2017. [www.rossericson.co.uk](http://www.rossericson.co.uk)



Costume: **Elizabeth Cooke**

Elizabeth is a costumer with over five years of experience working on theatre, dance and acrobatics. With a Ba (Hons) in Costume from the Arts University Bournemouth, her previous costumes credits include *Touched* by Remix at the Southbank Centre London, and *A Town Is Bourne* at Shelly Theatre, Bournemouth. <http://costumecooke.blogspot.com/>

Amour and Weapon construction: **Philip Dell**

Music: **Pearl Yim**

Pearl is an international award-winning composer, conductor, orchestrator and arranger. She graduated at Seattle Film Institute, USA, she studied under two-time Emmy Award composer Hummie Mann (*Robin Hood: Man In Tights*, *Thomas and the Magic Railroad*, *Language of the Heart*, *Year of the Comet*). Pearl was born in Hong Kong, raised in Singapore and England. She received an Honours Bachelor Degree in Music at University of York, UK in 2012 and then began to work as a freelance composer and arranger, where her projects have spanned across USA, Canada, UK and Singapore. <http://www.pearlyim.com>



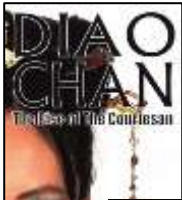


Actor & Producer: **Michelle Yim**

Michelle is a British-East-Asian actor and graduated from ALRA. Theatre: *DiaoChan: The Rise of the Courtesan* (UK Tour); *From Shore to Shore* (Freedom Studios, Leeds); *The Autumn of Han* (UK Tour); *Arrivals* (NI tour); *The King and I* (Theatre at the Mill); *The Translator* (play-reading, Soho theatre) & *Writers Pathway Project* (play-readings, Octagon Bolton). She has also appeared in numerous short films and in small roles on TV (*Sherlock & Blue Murder*), and works as a voice over artist in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

She is also one of the founders of **Red Dragonfly Productions**, which strives to bring stories from the East and Far East to a British and European audience. Working in collaboration with **Grist to the Mill Productions**, the team has started on a three year programme to bring three classic Chinese stories to the British stage. *The Autumn of Han* 2014-2015 and *DiaoChan: The Rise of the Courtesan* 2015-2016 successfully toured the UK and the third year has seen *Monkey and The White Bone Demon* grace the British stage in 2019. Red Dragonfly also encourages and nurtures new BEA and BSA playwrights through their annual new-writing competition *Taking Flight Festival*.

[www.reddragonflyproductions.co.uk](http://www.reddragonflyproductions.co.uk)



*'Beautifully realised, captivating piece of theatre.'*

★★★★★ **LondonTheatre1 on *DiaoChan: The Rise of the Courtesan***



*'An exquisite little piece of theatre, a respectful bow to the era with an aura of authenticity and intrigue.'*

★★★★★ **Everything Theatre on *DiaoChan: The Rise of the Courtesan***

*'A wonderful experience to explore the culture and traditions of ancient China through their own mythology, in a manner that will appeal to everyone.'*

★★★★★ **British Theatre Guide on *The Autumn of Han***



*'I cried twice and lost count of the times I laughed... it hits all the right notes'*

★★★★★ **Everything Theatre on *Taking Flight New Writing Festival 2017***



*'Fast paced... with much entertainment... Red Dragonfly Productions has exceeded expectations'*

★★★★★ **LiveTheatreUK on *Taking Flight New Writing Festival 2017***





**Grist to the Mill** was founded in 2012 with a specific aim to bring new writing to the world's stages. Resident writer **Ross Ericson** has had noted success with his critically acclaimed adaptation of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and his play *Casualties*, which was nominated for Best New Play at the OffWestend Awards and published by Methuen. Grist also co-produced *The Autumn of Han* and *DiaoChan* with Red Dragonfly. 5 stars *The Unknown Soldier* **sold-out** it's run at Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2016 and is also published by Methuen Bloomsbury.

[www.gristtheatre.co.uk](http://www.gristtheatre.co.uk)



'If you don't ever want to see another WW1 play, then you want to see \*this\*. Superb!'

★★★★★ **FringeGuru on *The Unknown Soldier***

'An unmissable and thought-provoking play that has so much relevance in today's society'

★★★★★ **Edinburgh Festival Mag on *The Unknown Soldier***

'An original perspective on a story we think we all know, and offer a reminiscence that... is poignant and thought-provoking'

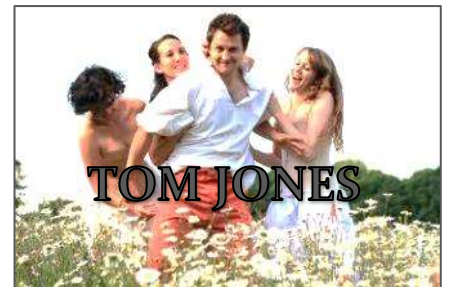
★★★★★ **The Independent on *The Unknown Soldier***

'It's not about glory or futility, it's about the loyalty forged between friends'

★★★★★ **The Scotsman on *The Unknown Soldier***

'The quality of the adaptation and the wit of the cast ensure that... it makes for a thoroughly entertaining evening'

★★★★★ **The Public Reviews on *Tom Jones***



Casualties 2013 at Park Theatre, Photo by Simon Annand



Simon Annand (The Half)  
– "Contained,  
but Epic"



'*Casualties* is perfectly executed... and will easily leave you reeling.'

★★★★★ **What's on Stage on *Casualties***

'A play of extremely high standard both in writing, direction and performance.'

★★★★★ **LiveTheatre.co on *Casualties***

'Wonderful piece of work... would have gladly gone back for more'

★★★★★ **One Stop Arts on *Casualties***

'Be prepared to be harrowed, to be moved to tears and to fall in love with the characters'

★★★★★ **Remotegoat on *Casualties***



# The Ballad of Mulan Show Copy

## Bi-line

The Real Heroine behind the Chinese Legend that inspired Disney's films

## 28 words

Woman, warrior, Legend. For 10 years Mulan fought as man in the army - now it's time to go home. The real heroine that inspired Disney's films.

## 63 words

Woman, warrior, Legend. For ten years Mulan disguised as a man, has fought for the Chinese Empire, but the fighting is coming to an end, one last battle and she will be going home – but can she return to her old life, become a woman again. A search for identity in a violent world. The real heroine that inspired Disney's films.

## 120 words

Around fifteen hundred years ago China was split into two parts – the Northern and the Southern dynasties. This was a time of great unrest, a time of civil war, a time when legends were born, and that is what 'Mulan' is – a woman, a warrior, a Chinese legend. Based on the historical 6<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese poem, we follow Mulan who, to save her family's honour, disguised herself as a man and joined the Emperor's army. Now the fighting is coming to an end, one last battle and she will be going home – but can she return to her old life, become a woman again. A search for identity in a violent world. The real heroine that inspired Disney's films.

## Links:

Website: <https://www.gristtheatre.co.uk/ballad-of-mulan>

Website: <http://www.reddragonflyproductions.co.uk>

Twitter: @gristtheatre #balladofmulan #mulan

*'Click, click', and again, 'Click, click,'  
Mulan weaves facing the doorway.  
No sound of the loom and shuttle,  
Only that of the girl's sighing.*

*Ask her of whom she thinks of,  
Ask her of whom she longs for.  
'There is no one I think of,  
There is no one I long for'...*

女 女 問 問 唯 不 木 唧  
亦 亦 女 女 聞 聞 蘭 唧  
無 無 何 何 女 機 當 後  
所 所 所 所 嘆 杼 戶 唧  
憶 思 憶 思 息 聲 織 唧  
。 ， ？ ？ 。

# The Ballad of Mulan Press Release

Grist To The Mill Productions  
Presents

## The Ballad of Mulan

The real Chinese heroine than inspired Disney's films

Don't expect a fluffy Disney tale here, this Mulan is visceral. She is a warrior, a fighter, a woman who survived in a very male world for ten years without discovery. There is no perfect make-up, no singing animals, just a gritty story of a soldier. **Michelle Yim** (*The Empress and Me* and *An Evening with Miss Wong*) brings to life our Heroine who, to save her family's honour, disguised herself as a man and joined the Emperor's army – but was that the real reason or was there some other motive, and just how did her true identity remain secret?

Writer **Ross Ericson**, whose play *Casualties* was nominated for an Off West End Award and whose solo WW1 show *The Unknown Soldier* officially sold out at Edinburgh Fringe 2016, has returned to the original text, the C6th Chinese poem on Mulan, and tried to fill in the gaps to explore the true identity of one of the most revered women in China.

*The Ballad Of Mulan* is produced by **Grist to the Mill Productions**, who have championed new writing since 2012, working in collaboration with British East Asian theatre company **Red Dragonfly Productions** whose recent productions *The Autumn of Han*, *DiaoChan: The Rise of the Courtesan*, and *Monkey and The White Bone Demon* have toured the UK. This production was developed with funding from **Arts Council England**.

*'A powerful exploration of gender, war, and identity, as relevant and timely today as ever'*

★★★★ **Tupla Magazine** (on *The Ballad of Mulan*)

*'Captivating piece of theatre. Don't miss it.'*

★★★★★ **LondonTheatre1** (on *DiaoChan: The Rise of the Courtesan*)

*'Delivered with style and feeling by [Michelle Yim]'*

★★★★ **The Scotsman** (on *An Evening with Miss Wong*)

*'A wonderful experience... will appeal to everyone.'*

★★★★ **British Theatre Guide** (on *The Autumn of Han*)

*'Full of ambition, politics and cultural tension'*

★★★★ **Adelaide Theatre Guide** (on *The Empress and Me*)

**Web:** [www.gristtheatre.co.uk](http://www.gristtheatre.co.uk) **Twitter:** @gristtheatre **Facebook:** gristtothemill

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### LISTING INFORMATION

**Venue:**

**Time:**

**Running Time:** 60mins

**Dates:**

**Tickets:**

**Bookings:**

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# Contact Details

Any enquiries, questions on shows and interests in booking, please contact:

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