More than 300 forms of indigenous theatre entertainment incorporating song and music have evolved in China. The different forms of *xiqiu* (music-drama), commonly translated as Chinese opera, were developed and performed in specific regions throughout the country. Jingju (capital drama), known in the west as Peking/Beijing opera, is based in Beijing and is the most widespread and influential of the theatre forms, having been the nationally dominant form of indigenous theatre for over one hundred years. Variously called *pihuang*, for the principal modes of music, Jingxi (capital theatre) and Guoju (national drama), the name Jingju emerged in the nineteenth century and has been widely used since 1949. Jingju fuses song, speech, dance, music, and acrobatics simultaneously into an integrated performance. Jingju today is presented in three types: traditional, newly written historical, and contemporary. This book focuses on the costumes used in traditional Jingju as currently performed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Photographic examples from newly written historical dramas have been incorporated when the costumes match those used for traditional Jingju performances.

This book represents my understanding and interpretation of traditional Jingju costumes based on my own research, the teachings of my Chinese professors, and a life’s work in the study and practice of Euro-American costume design. Writing from the perspective of the outsider, my viewpoint can both enhance and inhibit the findings. My knowledge and talents in the field of costuming give me a foundation for research and analysis of clothing of other periods and cultures. My practice as a designer enables me to identify and explore the issues of importance to the study of dress. With this experience, I can identify and explicate aspects of traditional Jingju dress that have not been previously articulated. However, not being Chinese, I lack the innate understanding of the field that comes from inhabiting the way of life. To address this shortcoming, I have embraced all aspects of Chinese culture in the preparation of this material: the history of dress, textiles, embroidery, design, and symbolism, to name a few. Cultural context informs the choices made in theatrical clothing in both east and west, so I have applied the methodology for costume design analysis that I have adopted in my own context to the structure of this study.

The discipline of costumes in traditional Jingju is vast and infinitely complex. To effectively cover the range of materials, I employed some selectivity. In limiting discussion to performances of traditional Jingju plays in the contemporary period, I have concentrated on establishing current aesthetic principles and usage patterns of the costumes and on uncovering the relationship between the existing costumes and their imperial precedents. Therefore the historical precedents of traditional Jingju practices, the evolution of individual costumes, or the descriptions of imperial garments are included only when the information elucidates the current use or image of a traditional Jingju costume. The costumes are not intended to replicate past garments,
and the historical examples in fact prove the inherent theatricality of the stage versions. Reforms that have been made in existing costumes and the development of new pieces are included when they add to the understanding of the costume description. Costumes from other regional forms of xiqu, such as Cantonese (Yueju) and Taiwanese (gezai xi) have not been addressed.

This book presents a comprehensive reference for traditional Jingju costumes. Chapter One introduces a brief history of Jingju and description of the staging precepts, which provides a context for the costumes. The theoretical basis presented in Chapter Two contains the underlying principles of costumes and their selection for the roles. Analysis of the design components of form, color, and ornamentation occurs in Chapters Three, Four, and Five. Tan Yuanjie told me in a personal communication on May 29, 2002, that three techniques can be employed for explaining the system of costuming for traditional Jingju. Several books from China sort the costumes by their form and then relate the different colors and pattern of that form to the characters. A second approach delineates the costumes by story, providing a “costume plot” that lists the garments and accessories needed for each character in a play. The third system organizes the material by the character. This book includes examples of all three approaches, discussing the individual costumes in Chapter Six, the format of the costume plot, and the typical wardrobe of the role types in Chapter Eight. Chapter Seven covers makeup, hair, and headdresses to complete the image. Technical aspects are examined through the patterning and construction practices in Chapter Three, the application of makeup in Chapter Seven, and the dressing process in Chapter Eight. The combination of theoretical and practical information about the costumes will enable the reader to envision the garments in both a cultural context and performance construct. A glossary of Chinese words follows the text, along with a dictionary introducing many of the characters discussed. All photographs in this book are by the author or reproduced by permission from the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, University of Oregon, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak.