

Oration for Mr David Yip

David Yip is probably the best known and successful Chinese heritage actor in the UK – having played the role of a very popular TV detective, appeared in Doctor Who and taken on various roles in Hollywood blockbusters such as James Bond and Indiana Jones.

There is so much more to David than his most famous roles in TV and film. He is also a celebrated writer and director, who is continuing to create personal and reflective work.

David was born in Liverpool. He is one of eight children, and his father was a seaman from the Canton area of China, who arrived in Liverpool aged just 16, in 1942. His mother was English, and from Liverpool.

David graduated from East 15 Acting School in 1973, so we are proud to say that he is an Essex alumnus.

He has gone on to play many, many roles in film, television and theatre. In this country, he's probably best known in the title role of John Ho in the primetime 1980s TV series, *The Chinese Detective*.

Written by Ian Kennedy Martin, this series is still very fondly remembered and has been listed by the British Film Institute as one of the BBC's top 100 gamechangers due to its depiction of underrepresented communities.

Other TV work includes Michael Choi in the Channel Four soap opera Brookside, a close shave with the Daleks in Doctor Who and Casualty. He's also appeared in American serials such as 24 and Fortitude.

You might also have spotted him in Hollywood blockbusters such as *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* directed by Stephen Spielberg, and James Bond movie *A*

View to a Kill which have served to widen David's international fan base. The film work has continued right through to the present day and in 2020, David played a veteran Chinese pool champion in the independent film *Break*, directed by Michael Elkin, described as "Rocky with a snooker cue".

As is the case with many actors, the immediacy and visceral pull of the stage always beckons, and more recently David's work has included roles at the National Theatre in *Yellow Face* in 2014 and *The Great Wave* in 2018.

He is also a playwright, having written *Gold Mountain*, based on his early life in Liverpool, which premiered in October 2010 at the Unity Theatre, Liverpool. Developed in partnership with the internationally renowned, multi-media theatre company, Les Deux Mondes based in Montreal, the play has since been performed in Montreal, Vancouver, London and Sweden.

Creating *Gold Mountain* was an "amazing adventure" for David and while the story had its roots in his experience of growing up in Liverpool and the relationship with his father, it developed far beyond the personal story, exploring broader themes of identity, belonging and history.

At East 15 we love using performance to investigate different perspectives. David shares this passion. When discussing *Gold Mountain*, he said: "*I had to learn to respect my father – and I do now. The characters have conversations I would never have been able to have with my father. And I love that about any kind of drama: you can make the inarticulate articulate in drama without destroying the reality of what they're doing.*"

The experience of being brought up in a mixed race family has been a source of inspiration and curiosity throughout David's life and career and in response to this, he has written and presented six documentaries for television and radio about the Chinese community in Liverpool, the oldest Chinese community in Europe.

East 15 has a truly international outlook on performance and David has loved travelling the world for work including *America, Canada, Europe, the Far East and China*.

He says: "As well as enjoying each place for its own qualities and customs, I have learned a lot as a performer by acting with people of different cultures and traditions".

Today David lives in North Oxfordshire with his wife Virginia, where he has taken on what he refers to as *"the most demanding and exciting role of my life" – being a granddad*.

David has practiced as a Buddhist for more than 30 years. He is a member of SGI UK, whose name derives from 'creation of value' and 'society'. A humanistic movement, SGI UK encourages development of the individual's greatest potential – and works with other institutions, associations, groups and individuals who wish actively to create a better world.

David explains this as *"beliefs and practice which direct people to respect that which is of ultimate value: life itself; developing the qualities needed to bring about personal fulfilment and contribute to the positive development of society."*

Today, while we recognise David's ground-breaking achievements in his professional career – rubbing shoulders with Daleks, Indiana Jones and James Bond no less – it is also David's personal achievements and values that we recognise.

His personal experience, understanding, and celebration of what it means to live in a global community – and his commitment to the idea that, as individuals, we can work together to create a better society, and a better world.

Values that we hold dear as a university.

We are very proud to welcome David back to Essex today, to receive his honorary doctorate.

Pro-Chancellor, I present to you David Yip.