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UK theatre producers team with China's Dadi Media on musical

Sen-lun Yu in Beijing

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London-based Broadway producer Toby Simkin and Hampshire-based Captive Theater and Music are teaming up with China's Dadi Media and ESA Cultural Investment to co-produce musical feature *The Sacrifice Of Yang Guifei*.

The film will be shot in mainland China with English as its primary language. It will be written and composed by Captive Theater and Music authors Kenneth Clarke, Richard Daniels and Mark Troop. It's understood that it will be budgeted at around £14m.

The partners signed a letter of intent in London on Feb 27, witnessed by Chinese Minister of Commerce, Chen Deming, and Lord Mandelson, the UK's Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform.

Director and main cast of *Sacrifice* are yet to be announced. Under the terms of the letter of intent, Simkin, Dadi and ESA will meet in Shanghai in the next 60 days to develop the production agreement and set the goals of the film.

The story will follow the romance between Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) and his concubine Yang Guifei. The emperor appoints a man called An Lushan as his courtier, but An's revolt forces the emperor to choose between the woman he loves and his crumbling dynasty.

"This is the Chinese version of the great Western story Anthony and Cleopatra," said Clarke, who has spent several years studying Yang Guifei.

In June 2008, the project was selected to take part in the Shanghai International Film Festival's co-production market – Co-FPC. According to the festival organisers, the project attracted the interest of ten companies.

Toby Simkin, whose credits include more than 120 Broadway and West End shows, acquired worldwide rights to the story and expects to make it into a theatre production as well as a film.

"It's a powerful, sometimes shocking, story filled with a roller coaster of emotions. Richard Daniel's remarkable score carries the audience through this cavalcade with a fabulous mix of Chinese and Western instruments," Simkin said at the signing.

Beijing-based ESA has previously invested in Stephen Chow's *CJ7* and John Woo's war epic *Red Cliff*, as well as several popular TV dramas in China.

Dadi Media has invested in more than 100 cinemas in China and recently distributed Johnnie To's *Sparrow* and Japanese drama *10 Promises to My Dog*. It is also producing a biopic *Confucius*.

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