

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

David L. Rolston, associate professor of Chinese language and literature, with tenure, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of Chinese language and literature, with tenure, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D. 1988 University of Chicago
B.A. 1977 Montclair State College

Professional Record:

2002, 2016–present Visiting Scholar, Academy of Traditional Chinese Opera, Beijing, China
1995–present Associate Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, University of Michigan
1988–1995 Assistant Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Rolston has taught a wide range of classes across the Chinese studies curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate level, including large lectures (Asian 260) and a number of self-designed seminars. Professor Rolston is a serious and diligent instructor. Conscientious of student needs, he is dedicated to creating courses that emphasize dialogue and student-centered classrooms. In the course evaluations, students express their appreciation for his dedication, his deep knowledge of Chinese literature and performance traditions, and his sense of humor and approachability. Professor Rolston is an active mentor of graduate students in ALC and has served on many dissertation committees, one of which he currently chairs.

Research: Professor Rolston is a scholar of early modern Chinese literature, and is particularly known for his learned work on oral forms of literature. His period of specialization stretches from the sixteenth to the twenty-first centuries. The culmination of three decades of research, his new monograph, Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera, is a monumental piece of scholarship. In the book, Professor Rolston demonstrates the range and rigor of his scholarship, which spans the field of pre-modern fiction and modern performance studies. Professor Rolston's commitment to publishing in Chinese has built an impactful profile within Chinese-speaking academia and demonstrates his longstanding commitment to introducing Chinese literature and theater to Western audiences.

Recent and Significant Publications:

Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera: Textualization and Performance, Authorship and Censorship of the "National Drama" of China from the Late Qing to the Present. Leiden: Brill, 2021.

“The Stage Arts of the Qing Court: A Study of the Stage Direction in the Osaka Manuscript Copy of Shengping baofa.” In Qingdai xiqu yu gongting wenhua (Qing Dynasty Theater

and Palace Culture), edited by Zhu Wanshu and Shang Wei, 109-128. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2018.

“Introduction: *Jin Ping Mei* Chapters 1 and 100: Zhang Zhupo Commentary.” *Renditions* 81-82 (Spring & Autumn, 2014): 13-28.

“Tradition and Innovation in Chen Shi-Zheng’s Peony Pavilion.” *Asian Theatre Journal* 19, no.1 (Spring 2002): 134-46.

Service: Professor Rolston has served two times as the director of undergraduate studies (2001-2002 and 2018-2019), and he was the director of the Language Program for multiple terms (2004-2006, 2008-2009, 2010-2011). He also was the interim director of the Chinese Language Program from 2014-2015. Professor Rolston has served on university committees, including the executive committee of Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS). He has also offered substantial service to the field over the years. He has been a peer reviewer for many books, articles, and grants, and has served on the editorial board of *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, and Reviews* (CLEAR) since 1996. Most notably, Professor Rolston was the editor of the *Journal of the Chinese Oral and Performing Literature (CHINOPERL)* from 2010-2016, single-handedly bringing the journal into full status and making it the foremost publishing outlet on Chinese performance genres. Professor Rolston invested significant energies in each issue, working to broaden the topics and kinds of scholarship published in the journal and mentoring junior scholars through his editorial assistance. His editorial work has thus been field-making.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer (A): “*Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera* is sure to be a landmark work not only in Jingju studies, but in Chinese theater studies more generally. The volume will stand as a model of what can be achieved through years of tenacious hard work. It is hard to imagine, though, that many will have the patience and grit (or talent) to follow in these enormous footsteps.”

Reviewer (B): “[*Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera*] is monumental in size, running to 700-some pages in print...it is equally substantive in its contributions to the field of traditional Chinese drama: it constitutes the most comprehensive, exhaustively researched, and up-to-date study of certain aspects of Peking Opera published to date in English or (to my knowledge) in any Western language.”

Reviewer (C): “*Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera* is a tour de force of scholarly erudition and analytical insights. Its sophistication and sheer comprehensiveness only underscore why it has taken the author this long to complete this monumental study...As the first study of its kind, *Inscribing Jingju/Peking Opera* is both issue-focused and comprehensive in its treatment of its subject. It is destined to become the standard-setter in the field of Peking opera study just as his two earlier books have done in the field of traditional Chinese fiction study.”

Reviewer (D): “Rolston has been a major presence in the field of late imperial Chinese literature for decades. He has done pioneering work in fiction criticism and his work on Peking opera is nothing short of encyclopedic...Professor Rolston has also written many Chinese articles on [Peking opera], and he is deeply respected as the foremost scholar on this field in China.”

Reviewer (E): “*Inscribing Jingju/ Peking Opera* is a superb book. Not only is it extremely thorough, but also full of ideas, both old and new. In other words, it is a summation of research up to its publication, as well as pushing the boundaries of new ideas. Broad in its scope, albeit within the narrow field of Peking Opera, it covers extensively a range of disciplines and topics in Chinese history, literature, performance and music, among others. It traces change and continuity, corrects and/or develops formerly held ideas and advances new theories. It is splendid research and well and confidently written.”

Reviewer (F): “Rolston has also made tremendous contributions to Chinese literary studies through his generous and dedicated academic service...As a leading scholar in performing literature, [he] has been an active member of CHINOPERL...and his contributions to this subfield can hardly be overestimated...he served as the Editor-in-Chief of CHINOPERL, the academic journal of the same association, for more than five years and currently still holds the title of Consulting Editor. Much due to his efforts, this journal has attracted contributions from many scholars, including young scholars. Under his leadership, it not only has survived but also gained increasing respect in the field of Chinese literary studies.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Rolston is a learned and meticulous scholar who has produced a comprehensive book that is the sum and capstone of his career, and will be the starting point for anyone studying Peking Opera. A scholar of literature of the late Imperial and modern eras, he gradually moved away from literature proper to address questions about textuality when oral performances were committed to the written page. He has left his mark on the study of this era of literature by being extremely giving of his time through a long history of service to his field, mentoring junior scholars and editing an impactful journal. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor David L. Rolston be promoted to the rank of professor of Chinese language and literature, with tenure, Department of Asian Languages and Literatures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Anne Curzan, Dean
Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of
English Language and Literature, Linguistics,
and Education
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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