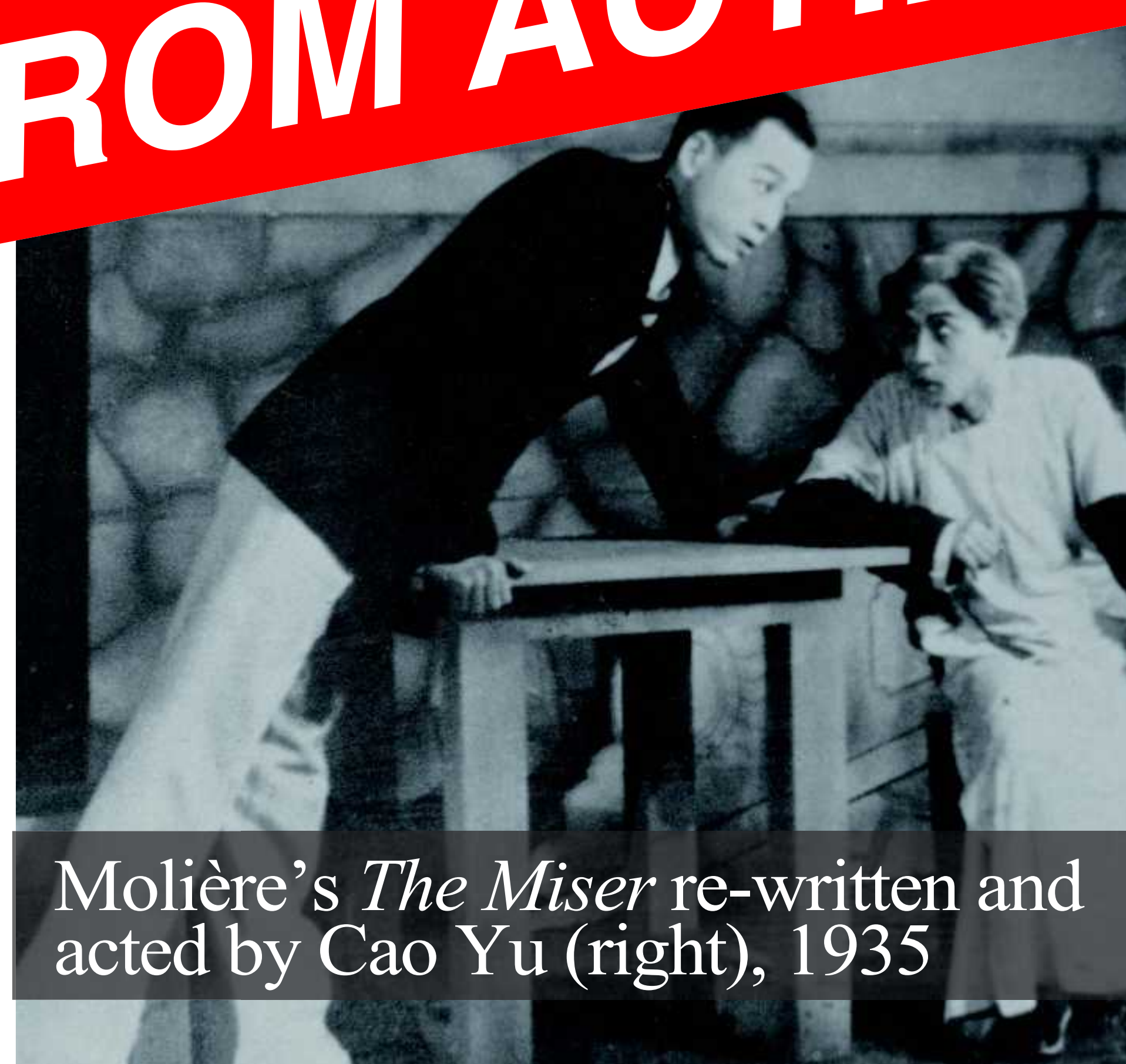




When just three years old, Cao Yu started accompanying his stepmother to the theatre. He was fascinated by the variety of traditional Chinese opera and its distinctive songs, dance and acrobatics. Subsequently, at the Nankai Middle School in Tianjin, he became an active member of the drama club and his first major role was the female character Petra in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*.

Acting led Cao Yu to the study of original Western masterpieces: with the aid of dictionaries he read Ibsen, O'Neill, Galsworthy, Chekhov, Shakespeare and Greek tragedies. Enthralled by the power of artistic expression, profound characters and the significant social and political immediacy the Western style of "spoken drama" offers, he decided to "borrow the golden threads from foreign masters" to make his own "humble coat" as a playwright.

FROM ACTING TO PLAYWRITING



Molière's *The Miser* re-written and acted by Cao Yu (right), 1935



Cao Yu as Mozart in *Requiem*, a translated Hungarian play, 1943



Cao Yu as the board chairman (right) in Galsworthy's *Strife*, 1929



Galsworthy's *Silver Box* translated, directed and acted by Cao Yu (right), 1933