

Film Archive to present screening programme "Integrating Traditional Morality with Modern Reality: Sil-Metropole Retrospective" (with photos)

The Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA) of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) will present a screening programme entitled "Integrating Traditional Morality with Modern Reality: Sil-Metropole Retrospective" from June 23 to September 22 at the Grand Theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre and the Cinema of the HKFA, showcasing 16 classic films produced by the Sil-Metropole Organisation. The screening programme is one of the features of the inaugural Chinese Culture Festival (CCF).

Since the 1950s, the Sil-Metropole Organisation and its predecessors (Great Wall Movie Enterprises Ltd, Feng Huang Motion Picture Co and Sun Luen Film Company) have produced over 500 films, which have reflected the changes in Chinese traditional culture in modern society from various perspectives.

The programme opens with "Father and Son" (1981) (4K Digitally Restored Version) which is the debut feature of New Wave director Allen Fong. Continuing the humanistic realism of Cantonese cinema, the film realistically and delicately depicts the relationship of a father and son in a grassroots family. The film was selected for the 31st Berlin International Film Festival and won the Best Film and Best Director awards at the first Hong Kong Film Awards. The closing film is the "Butterfly Beauty" (1959) (Original Theatrical Version), featuring a cast of great Cantonese opera artists including Hung Sin Nui and Ma Si-tsang in four opera excerpts. The film is also the sole visual record of Cantonese opera virtuoso Pak Suet-sin's father Pak Kui-wing in the HKFA collection.

Many of this Sil-Metropole selection depict various aspects of everyday life and social conditions, and the contradictions between old and new cultures. Set in Shanghai in the 1940s, "Awful Truth" (1950) satirises the people scrambling for money using foul means. "The Prodigal Son" (1952) and "Aren't the Kids Lovely?" (1953) are family melodramas. The former tells the story of a spoiled son realising the gravity of his errors after losing his family, friends and home to highlight and affirm the values of hard work and women's self-reliance. The latter encourages parents to pay more attention to their children through the story of a couple correcting their misbehaving children with the help of a friend.

"Mutual Understanding" (1954) and "It So Happens to a Woman" (1955) are stories about women in modern times. Through the disputes between a woman and her mother-in-law, the former explores the conflict between the old and new generations of women, as well as that between superstition and science. In the latter, while audiences can watch the unfolding dilemmas faced by women seeking a balance between family and work, they can also listen to the rarely

heard singing of Mandarin songs by Hung Sin Nui in the film.

Elements of traditional art forms and various local customs can also be found in many Sil-Metropole films. "The Princess Falls in Love" (1962) is an adaptation of a Shanghai Yue opera romantic classic. With a brisk cinematic technique, the film skillfully combines the best of Yue opera and film arts. "The Golden Eagle" (1964) is the first Hong Kong film shot on location in Inner Mongolia, capturing the culture of the exotic grasslands.

In addition, the screening programme also features masterpieces by famous directors Zhu Shilin, Johnnie To, Ann Hui, Stanley Kwan and Jacob Cheung. Directed by Zhu, the protagonists of "Festival Moon" (1953), "The Eternal Love" (1960) and "Garden of Repose" (1964) are a modern-day office worker, a scholar and his wife in ancient China, and wartime owners of a grand mansion respectively. Spanning across different eras and social strata, they all fall victim to conservative customs, revealing the devastating effects of feudal social order.

The directorial debut of To, "The Enigmatic Case" (1980) (4K Digital Version), is based on the wuxia heroes common in classical literature and traditional opera. Though the film is the debut of Cherie Chung as the lead actress, she is already exuding a star quality in her performance. "The Romance of Book and Sword" (1987) is the only wuxia film directed by Hui. Though the film honours the original novel's dual emphasis on the wuxia spirit and history, it raises more questions about traditional values.

"Full Moon in New York" (1990), directed by Kwan, brings together three great award-winning actresses: Sylvia Chang, Maggie Cheung and Siqin Gaowa, in an intricate psychological portrait of women in a foreign land. Directed by Jacob Cheung, "Cageman" (1992) is a realistic portrayal of the lower-class housing issues of the time. The film won the Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Supporting Actor awards at the 12th Hong Kong Film Awards.

All screenings, except "Father and Son", will be accompanied by post-screening talks hosted by Cantonese opera scholars Professor Yuen Siu-fai, Professor Chan Sau-yan, and Leonard Wong; filmmakers Teddy Robin and Chu Kar-ning; and film researchers Dr Kenny Ng, Sam Ho, Eric Tsang, Matthew Cheng, Joyce Yang and Thomas Shin.

"The Prodigal Son", "Aren't the Kids Lovely?", "Festival Moon", "Mutual Understanding", "It So Happens to a Woman" and "Cageman" are without subtitles. "Butterfly Beauty" is with Chinese subtitles. Other films are with Chinese and English subtitles. "Cageman" is rated Category III and restricted to viewers aged 18 or above.

Tickets priced at \$45 will be available at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk) from May 24. For telephone bookings, please call 3166 1288. Those who purchase tickets of six different screenings, are eligible to enrol in a guided tour to visit the Clear Water Bay Film Studio in Hang Hau, Sai Kung, with limited space available on a first-come, first-served basis. The enrolment method and details will be available on the HKFA website (www.filmarchive.gov.hk).

For programme details, please call 2739 2139 or visit the HKFA website: www.filmarchive.gov.hk/en/web/hkfa/2024/silver/pe-event-2024-silver.html.

The CCF, presented by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau and organised by the LCSD and the Chinese Culture Promotion Office, aims to enhance the public appreciation of Chinese culture and cultivate citizens' national identity and cultural confidence. The inaugural CCF will be held from June to September. Through different performing arts programmes in various forms and related extension activities, including selected programmes of the Chinese Opera Festival, exemplary local arts projects recognised by the China National Arts Fund, performing arts programmes from arts and cultural organisations, film screenings, exhibitions, talks and more, the festival allows members of the public and visitors to experience the broad and profound Chinese culture with a view to promoting Chinese culture and patriotic education as well as making contributions to the steadfast and successful implementation of "one country, two systems". For details, please visit the CCF website www.ccf.gov.hk.

The LCSD has long been promoting Chinese history and culture through organising an array of programmes and activities to enable the public to learn more about the broad and profound Chinese culture. For more information, please visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/en/ccpo/index.html.

