



SOUNDINGS: east asia monthly

a newsletter for undergraduates

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WEATHERHEAD EAST ASIAN INSTITUTE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

COLUMBIA HOSTS PANEL DISCUSSION OF *FIRST EMPEROR* WORLD PREMIERE

by Caroline Gilliam, CC'08

“If there is one thing in the world that can unify peoples’ hearts, it must be music,” remarked Tan Dun at a November 30th Columbia-sponsored discussion of his new opera, *The First Emperor*. Unification is a prominent theme in this opera, which made its world premiere at the Metropolitan Opera House on December 21st and tells the story of Qin Shi Huang—the so-called “first” emperor of China who unified the country and started building the Great Wall. The Columbia event was organized as part of the World Leaders Forum and it brought Tan Dun together with his co-librettist, novelist Ha Jin, and his director, filmmaker Zhang Yimou, to discuss the work. Columbia’s own Lydia Liu, Professor of Chinese and Comparative Literature, and James Schamus, Professor in the School of the Arts’ Film Division as well as CEO of Focus Features, were also onstage to moderate the conversation and add insight.

You will already be familiar with the story of Qin Shi Huang if you’ve seen Zhang Yimou’s film, *Hero*, which Professor Liu explained was actually based on a movie from the 1990s called *The Emperor’s Shadow*. According to Ha Jin, however, while these films and many other versions of the story focus most attention on the emperor, the musician who plots to assassinate the emperor plays a very important role in the new opera.

The First Emperor’s creators displayed a delightful rapport, and they each drew on specific talents and backgrounds to develop the new opera. Qin Shi Huang comes from the Chinese city of Xi’an, and Zhang Yimou (also from Xi’an) said that the colors of the area—red, black, and white—were very influential in his design and staging. Tan Dun also traveled to Xi’an and said that local use of traditional “stone drums” and ceramic instruments shaped his composition. Ha Jin,

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STAY INFORMED!

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ONE MORE CHANCE FOR A NEW YEAR’S NEW START

by Caroline Gilliam, CC'08



Gong xi fa cai! Gung hay fat choy! Happy new year!

Sunday, February 18th marks the beginning of the Year of the Pig according to the lunar calendar, which is followed in many countries across East and Southeast Asia. The last in the 12-year lunar cycle, the Year of the Pig (or Boar) is supposed to be one of closure. Throughout the month of February, New York will host a variety of cultural events and celebrations to ring in the new year.

Making a trip down to Chinatown is a great way to take part in the Lunar New Year festivities and a useful calendar of upcoming events can be found online at the Explore Chinatown website (explorechinatown.com). The celebration opens with the Lunar New Year Flower Market, which is organized and sponsored by the Museum of Chinese in the Americas (MoCA; moca-nyc.org) on Friday, February 16th, and Saturday, February 17th. Also hosted by MoCA will be a Lunar Festival cooking demonstration on the 17th and a traditional Peking Duck Dinner on Wednesday the 21st.

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FIRST EMPEROR (CON'T)

who is no stranger to writing in English, stated that an important part of the libretto's power is produced by the tension—sadness, even—of a Chinese story written and performed in another language.

This opera represents a unification of worlds. Zhang Yimou told the audience that he hopes that the work will go “beyond translation” and show the American audience that at the core, all humans are the same. As Tan Dun explained, “My music is to dream without boundaries.”

After premiering on December 21st, *The First Emperor* was performed eight more times through the end of January, drawing sold-out crowds. As part of a new Metropolitan Opera initiative to expand its audience and accessibility, on January 13th the production was also simulcast live to a limited selection of high definition movie theaters across North America, Europe, and Japan. There will be two encore broadcasts on March 7th and 11th. Tickets went on sale on February 10th. See www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/broadcast/hd_events.aspx for more information.

SAVE THE DATE!

**THIRD ANNUAL CHINA SYMPOSIUM
“BECOMING A STAKEHOLDER: CHINA IN
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS”
FRIDAY, APRIL 20TH, 9:00AM-5:00PM
REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!**

Anticipated Speakers Include:

- Lee C. Bollinger (President, Columbia University)
- Myron L. Cohen (Director, WEAI, Columbia University)
- Senator Norm Coleman (R-Minnesota)
- Congressman Norm Dicks (D-Washington)
- Senator Chuck Hagel (R-Nebraska)
- Congressman Mark Kirk (R-Illinois)
- David Lampton (Director, China Studies Program, Johns Hopkins University)
- Ken Lieberthal (Professor, University of Michigan)
- Edward C. Luck (Director, Center on International Organization, Columbia University)
- Senator George Mitchell (Symposium Co-Chair)
- David Shambaugh (Director, China Policy Program, George Washington University)

To register or for more info, please visit:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/china-symposium-2007.html>

NEW YEAR'S FESTIVITIES (CON'T)

There will also be a number of parades and fireworks displays in Chinatown, beginning on Sunday the 18th. The New Year's Day Firecracker Ceremony and Cultural Festival will feature dancing and cultural performances in the afternoon, and it will be followed by Illuminations: Lunar New Year Fireworks Spectacular at 7:00 pm. The following Sunday, February 25th, from 1:00-5:00pm, you can see the Chinatown Lunar New Year Parade, which features floats, beauty queens, acrobats, celebrities, and dancers.

Lunar New Year is also a great opportunity to escape from Manhattan and explore Flushing, Queens, which is one of New York's largest and most vibrant Asian communities. Flushing's Lunar New Year Parade, which usually includes almost 4,000 people, takes place on Saturday, February, 17th, from 11:00am to 1:00pm. Viewing stands are located at Flushing Library (Main St and Kissena Blvd) and at the parade's end (Main St and 37th Ave).

Finally, if you are looking for an event that emphasizes Lunar New Year as a cross-cultural celebration, the Asian American Arts Centre will be hosting a Lunar New Year Folk Arts Festival, featuring Chinese, Indian, and Tibetan folk artists, craftspeople, and musicians. It will take place on Sunday, February 18th, from 3:00-5:30pm. Visit the Asian American Arts Centre website (artspiral.org) for more information.

So head to Chinatown or Flushing for some New Year's festivities—and don't forget to eat your fill of *jiaozi*, or dumplings, the traditional New Year food.



HIGHLIGHTED EVENTS

Ladakh: Photographs by Prabir Purkayastha
Bodhi Art—New York (www.bodhiart.in)
February 23 through March 17



“During the past fourteen years, Purkayastha has journeyed...through the wilderness of Ladakh, which lies at the northern tip of

India, and captured powerful images of the last bastion of ancient Tibetan culture. The powerful images of the landscape, sometimes juxtaposed with the people, are passionately crafted and speak volumes of a magical way of life which has changed little through the centuries.” (text and photo: chelseaartgalleries.com)

Director Retrospective: *Shohei Imamura's Japan*
Brooklyn Academy of Music (www.bam.org)
March 2 through March 29



“A leading force behind Japan's New Wave... Shohei Imamura rebelled against

the classical themes of his mentor, Ozu, and embraced the darker side of Japan that simmers beneath the manners, order, and ceremony—focusing on the carnality, squalor, and violence within his country's social periphery... Imamura was famously quoted as saying, 'I like to make messy films,' but this quote belies the meticulous research, intricate design, and visual precision that went into his work.” (bam.org)

EVENTS CALENDAR

Weatherhead East Asian Institute Events

Thu, Feb. 15, 12:00-1:30pm

Brown Bag Lecture: “Mongol Society's Basic Unit: What it Was and Wasn't”

Christopher Atwood, Inst of Adv Studies, Princeton
918 IAB

Tue, Feb. 20, 12:00-1:30pm

Brown Bag Lecture: “The Dandy and the Modern Girl: Shanghai, Tokyo, and Paris in the 1930s”

Hsiao-yen Peng, Professor, Academia Sinica of Taiwan
918 IAB

Tue, Mar. 6, 12:00-1:30pm

Brown Bag Lecture: “The Roots of Unemployment and the Political Economy of Lay-offs in Urban China”

William Hurst, Assistant Professor, UT-Austin
918 IAB

See www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/events.html for an up-to-date calendar of Institute events.

East Asia Events at Columbia

Thu, Feb. 15, 6:00-8:00pm

Lecture/Performance: “Ancient Asian Harp Reborn”
Bo Lawergren (Professor Emeritus, Hunter College)

Tomoko Sugawara (Harpist and Kugo Player)
301 Philosophy

Thu, Feb. 22, 6:00-7:30

Gagaku Concert: “From the Classics to T. Takemitsu and H. Miura”

Low Library

Sat, Feb. 24, 10:00-4:00pm

Open Gagaku Workshop for Musicians and Composers
403 Kent

Registration required: medievaljapan@columbia.edu

Thu, Mar. 8, 6:00-7:30pm

Lecture: “Three New Mysteries in Shingon Buddhist Theory and Practice: Mapping Mandalic Metaphors”

David Gardiner (Colorado College)
403 Kent

For more info on any of the three events listed above, see www.donaldkeenecenter.org.

East Asia Events in NYC

Thu, Feb. 15, 6:30pm

Vintage Korean Cinema: “Madame Freedom” (1956)
Directed by Han Hyeong-Mo

Korea Society (www.koreasociety.org)

Thu, Feb. 22 – Sun, Feb. 25, 8:00pm

Dance: “Sunhwa Chung/Ko-Ryo Dance Theater”
Joyce Soho (www.joyce.org)

Mon, Feb. 26 – Tue, Feb. 27

Mini Film Fest: Director Bong Joon-Ho
IFC Center (www.ifccenter.com)

OPPORTUNITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Study Abroad:

Undergraduates are encouraged to apply for the Weatherhead Undergraduate Training Grant, which provides up to \$2,500 in support to undergraduate students for summer projects in East Asia. Projects involving a single East Asian country are eligible, and priority will be given to projects that cross traditional disciplinary, geographic, or temporal boundaries, as well as to applicants with a commitment to make East Asia a part of their long-term careers. The application deadline is March 2. See www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/student_resources/whug_training.html for more info.

Registration is underway for the summer program in Chinese film history and criticism hosted by the Beijing Film Academy. Administered through the University of Washington, this program is open to students worldwide. No knowledge of Chinese is required. The program runs July 2-29. For more info, see faculty.washington.edu/yomi/bfa/.

Volunteer to spend the summer teaching with the Rural China Education Foundation. Teaching teams will be in China from July 14 - August 8, 2007. Knowledge of Mandarin is required and the deadline for applications is March 15. For more info, see www.ruralchina.org.

Interested in volunteering in Asia? VIA Programs offers summer as well as one- and two-year programs in China and SE Asia. Applications are due by February 22. See www.viaprograms.org for more info.

CONTACT INFORMATION

To add your name to the undergraduate mailing list, visit <http://www.columbia.edu/weai> and click on "get on the mailing list," or e-mail us at: weaiundergrads@columbia.edu.

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For information on how to contact East Asia-related student groups on campus at Columbia, visit:

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/undergrad_student_groups_n.html

ABOUT US

About SOUNDINGS: east asia monthly

Published monthly by CU-EAST, **SOUNDINGS** aims to help better incorporate undergraduates into the broader East Asian Studies community at Columbia by providing increased access to information about East Asia-related groups, activities, and events. Incorporating academic as well as non-academic news and listings, it seeks to help interested undergraduates further pursue their interest in East Asia, whatever form it may take. **SOUNDINGS** is edited by Jon Kief (CC'07, jk2336@columbia.edu).

About CU-EAST

CU-EAST, the Columbia Undergraduate East Asian Studies Network, facilitates the study and discussion of East Asia and East Asia-related opportunities. It arranges lectures and panels with renowned East Asian scholars, volunteer and career open-houses, and other events.

About the Weatherhead East Asian Institute

Since its establishment in 1949, Columbia University's Weatherhead East Asian Institute has been a major center for research, teaching, and publishing on modern and contemporary Asia. The Institute's mission is to train new generations of Asian experts in the humanities, social sciences, and the professions and to enhance understanding of East Asia in the wider community.
