

Mei Lanfang and Modern China

梅兰芳与现代中国



Mei Lanfang (1894-1961), was a male performer who played female roles in *jingju* (known in the West as Beijing Opera) and probably the most famous Chinese actor/singer in the world. Born to a distinguished *jingju* family, Mei worked on the stage for more than fifty years. Through his tours to Japan, the USA and the USSR, he made tremendous contributions to both Chinese and world theatres.

Mei's personal and performing life was shaped by the responses he made to the great social and cultural upheavals as China strode towards modernization through dynastic, republican and communist governments. Mei enhanced the meaning of the performance art of male-actors-playing-female-roles, a career that had been abused and misinterpreted in the past. Not only rebuilding the dignity of classical aesthetics in the trend of consumerism in commercial theatres, he also asserted the value of traditional arts in the ultra-leftist social-discourse.

Mei Lanfang's life and his performance art can be seen as a symbol of the great achievements of culture in modern China.

Speaker: Professor FU Jin

Professor FU Jin is an academic at Nanjing University and Peking University. He is the Director of the Academic Board of the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, the Director of the Traditional Theatre Research Institute, the Director of the Mei Lanfang Art Research Centre, and the Vice-President of Beijing Literary Critics Association.

Publications include: *A History of Chinese Theatre: 1949-2000*; *The Power of the Grassroots – Fieldwork and Research into the Taizhou Theatre Troupes*.



Place: the Alec Clegg studio, stage@leeds

Time: 5.10 pm 19 February 2014

