

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

*Music Department*  
香港中文大學音樂系



**Colloquium**

# **"Four Women in Chinese Musicals"**

**(in English)**

**By**

**Prof. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh 葉月瑜**

**(HKBU)**

二零一零年二月九日(星期二)

下午4時30分

崇基學院 許讓成樓LG01室

**9 February 2010 (Tuesday) 4:30pm**

**Room LG01, Hui Yeung Shing Bldg**

**Chung Chi College**

**Free seating. All are welcome**

## **Abstract**

### Four Women in Chinese Musicals

From the first talkie *Songstress Red Peony* (dir. Zhang Shichuan, 1931) made in Shanghai to the Bollywood-flavored extravaganza *Perhaps Love* (dir. Peter Chan, 2005), there have been hundreds of films with musical content produced over the last seven decades in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the mainland. There are musicals that directly copy Hollywood models and there are flamboyant renditions of Chinese opera, as well as multifaceted varieties in between. Given these variations, it would be wrong to define Chinese musicals strictly by means of “song-and-dance” (gewu) alone. So, let me introduce Chinese musicals more inclusively, identifying representative figures that typify clear tendencies and historical developments. This talk introduces four types of performing women: the singsong girl, the mambo girl, the opera girl and to conclude, the go-go girl. This approach affords a history of Chinese musicals with sharply focused images, narratives and sounds. First, it highlights gender specificity in musicals—privileging female performers as protagonists and spectatorial attraction. Thus it demonstrates the genre’s constant fascination with gender politics, including sympathy with and antagonism toward the feminine and feminism. My approach also connects the musical with popular music (sometimes predating the cinema by many years); with the recording industry and with star discourses. These three key concerns help to orient Chinese musicals within modern Chinese entertainment of the early twentieth century.



**Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh 葉月瑜** is Professor of film studies and Director of the Centre for Media and Communication Research and Associate Director for David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. Her publications include: *TAIWAN FILM DIRECTORS: A TREASURE ISLAND* (with Darrell Davis, Columbia University Press, 2005), *CHINESE-LANGUAGE FILM: HISTORIOGRAPHY, POETICS, POLITICS* (with Sheldon Lu, University of Hawaii Press, 2005, Choice's 2005 outstanding academic title), *EAST ASIAN SCREEN INDUSTRIES* (with Darrell Davis, British Film Institute, 2008) and *PHANTOM OF THE MUSIC: SONG NARRATION AND CHINESE-LANGUAGE CINEMA* (Taipei: Yuan-liou, 2000).

She has written more than 30 journal articles and book chapters. Her current research projects include China’s film marketization and Chinese *wenyi* pictures.