

SPRING IN A SMALL TOWN

小城之春

Directed by Fei Mu

China 1948, 93 mins, Cert TBC

With Wei Wei, Shi Yu, Li Wei, Zhang Hongmei



"An extraordinary work, anticipating Antonioni in its slow unfolding of an erotic situation, treated with a mixture of sympathy and austerity."
David Bordwell (film theorist and author)

"Sophisticated cinematically and psychologically, the film eschews sentimentality for something far more beguiling."
Geoff Andrew, BFI

Opening on 20 June 2014 at BFI Southbank and selected cinemas nationwide

30 April 2014 – Widely regarded as the best Chinese film ever made and now newly restored, *Spring in a Small Town* is released in selected cinemas nationwide on 20 June as part of the BFI's major exploration of Chinese cinema.

Focusing on people rather than politics, director Fei Mu's greatest achievement perfectly captures the dilemma of desire raging against loyalty, and sits alongside both the tender family dramas of Japan's Yasujiro Ozu and the wonderful post-war humanist realist cinema of René Clément, Satyajit Ray and Vittorio De Sica.

Set in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-45), *Spring in a Small Town* tells the story of the once prosperous Dai family. The patriarch Liyan (Shi Yu) is a shadow of his former self, an invalid who spends his days lost in nostalgia. His marriage to the beautiful Yuwen (Wei Wei) has become little more than a passionless duty of care on her part. Meanwhile Liyan's teenage sister Xiu (Zhang Hongmei), too young to remember the past, plays cheerfully in the rubble of their home. Across the broken town wall and into their world comes Liyan's childhood friend Zhang (Li Wei), an adventurous doctor from Shanghai and an old flame of Yuwen. In the ensuing love triangle Yuwen finds herself torn between the two men, while Xiu has her own ideas about the future.

Noah Cowan, season curator for TIFF, who programmed the **Century of Chinese Cinema** season opening at BFI Southbank in June comments:

"Spring in a Small Town is the apotheosis of Golden Age Shanghai cinema, at once a deeply literary work that forges unexpected connections between pre- and post-Republican prose forms, and a breathtaking visual masterpiece that marries symbolism derived from ancient landscape painting with innovative camera and editing ideas."

Now acknowledged as a formative influence by Zhang Yimou (*House of Flying Daggers*), Chen Kaige (*Farewell My Concubine*), Jia Zhangke (*Still Life*), and Wong Kar-wai (*In the Mood for Love*), the film was made before the Communist takeover of China in 1949 when it was subsequently suppressed by the new regime. Fei Mu fled to Hong Kong and died just two years later aged 44. His films were forgotten and he was shunned as a "rightist" until the 1980s when the China Film Archive (which had been closed down during the Cultural Revolution of the late 60s) was re-opened and a new print of *Spring in a Small Town* was made.

In 2005 it was declared No. 1 in the Best 100 Chinese Motion Pictures announced at the 24th Hong Kong Film Awards. A re-make as *Springtime in a Small Town* by Tian Zhuangzhuang was released in 2002, but this will be the first time that the original film has opened theatrically in the UK.

During 2014 the BFI is making a wealth of previously hard-to-see Chinese films available in the UK as it presents the largest and most comprehensive exploration of Chinese cinema ever to be undertaken here.

A second major Chinese classic will be released in cinemas nationwide this summer.

Noah Cowan will be available for interview from mid May.

More about the BFI's China activities

Spring in a Small Town is one of the highlights of an extended retrospective at BFI Southbank running from June to October: **A Century of Chinese Cinema**, programmed in partnership with TIFF Bell Lightbox, with the generous support of season sponsors Lycamobile and Shangri-La and with special thanks to Cathay Pacific Airways, forms a key part of **Electric Shadows**, the Chinese term for movies or 电影 "diànyǐng" and the name of the BFI's extensive year-long programme of business, trade, creative and cultural collaborations with China. Key Chinese classic titles will be released UK-wide in cinemas, on DVD and online. Extremely rare early non-fiction footage of China from the BFI National Archive will also be made available.

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Images are available at www.image.net >BFI>Theatrical releases
More details on venues at www.bfi.org.uk/releases

Notes to editors

- *Spring in a Small Town* will be released on DVD in February 2015

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

About A Century of Chinese Cinema

Curated by Noah Cowan for TIFF (TIFF Bell Lightbox), in collaboration with China Film Archive (Beijing), Hong Kong Film Archive and Chinese Taipei Film Archive.

About Lycamobile

Lycamobile is a prepaid mobile SIM card provider that provides low-cost, high-quality international and national calls and has acquired over 30 million customers across 17 countries (UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Spain, Australia, France, Germany, Poland, Ireland, Portugal, Italy and the USA). Lycamobile is available through an extensive network of more than one million retail outlets. The brand was initially introduced in 2006 and is already Europe's largest pre-pay MVNO. Lycamobile continues to grow rapidly with further market launches planned throughout 2014.



About Shangri-La

Hong Kong-based Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, one of the world's premier hotel companies, currently owns and/or manages more than 80 hotels under the Shangri-La brand with a room inventory of over 34,000. Over four decades the group has established its brand hallmark of 'hospitality from the heart.' The group has a substantial development pipeline with upcoming projects in mainland China, India, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Qatar, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. For more information and reservations, please contact a travel professional or access the website at www.shangri-la.com.



About Cathay Pacific Airways

Carmen Tse, Marketing Communications & E-commerce Manager at Cathay Pacific Airways, commented: *"Flying five times a day from London to Hong Kong, and onwards to 21 destinations within mainland China, we are committed to bringing China and the Far East closer to the UK to share cultural experiences. We are delighted to be supporting Electric Shadows, the BFI's film season in 2014 which will showcase some of China's most iconic films ever created. Serving business and leisure travellers, Cathay Pacific has connecting flights from Hong Kong International Airport to more than 170 destinations worldwide."*