

UK FILM AT BEIJING INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

LONDON 15 April 2015

The BFI today announces UK activity at The Beijing International Film Festival (BJIFF). An excerpt from *The Legend of the Willow Pattern Plate* (1926), newly restored by the BFI National Archive, will screen at the opening night gala on Thursday 16th April. Carol Morley's *The Falling*, supported by the BFI, is also screening In Competition at the festival on Saturday 18th April with rising star Florence Pugh, who plays Abbie in the film, attending the red carpet premier. With a UK-China Co-Production Treaty firmly in place, BFI CEO Amanda Nevill will be attending the festival and joining the panel at the Sino-Foreign Film Co-Production Forum on April 17th, a major part of the festival organized by the China Film Co-Production Corporation.

Amanda Nevill, BFI CEO said *'It is really important for the UK to be at the Beijing International Film Festival. Presenting this restored film from the BFI National Archive featuring Chinese history and culture and the hugely talented Carol Morley's brilliant and compelling new film The Falling deepens the burgeoning relationship and cultural exchange between the UK and Chinese film industries. How symbolic to be presenting such an early example of a UK-China film collaboration The Legend of the Willow Pattern Plate and at the same time starting our journey towards making many more together.'*

An extract of the restored *The Legend of The Willow Pattern Plate* will premier with a live orchestral accompaniment at the festival's opening night gala event on 16th April, 89 years after its original premier in Shanghai at The Carlton Theatre on 8th April 1926. The film was thought to be lost until it was discovered by BFI curators researching the China on Film collection launched on BFI Player last year. It tells the tragic story of the elopement of a mandarin's daughter with her father's secretary, and how the vengeance of a disappointed suitor overtakes and destroys the two lovers. The film's

story was widely publicised as an authentic adaptation of a traditional Chinese legend. However, that 'legend' seems not to be Chinese at all, but in fact a concoction of 18th century English potters – conjured up to help market their new 'willow pattern' decorated china, manufactured in the style of traditional Chinese porcelain. Shot in a Shanghai studio, with exterior scenes filmed in Hangzhou, the film was financed and produced by British American Tobacco and is significant as the first film with an all-Chinese cast to be distributed internationally. The film was a hit with British audiences and its London premier on 27th February 1927 was attended by Queen Mary, who was captured on film leaving the theatre afterwards.

At the opening night gala of the festival, Amanda Nevill, BFI CEO will be presenting *The Legend of the Willow Pattern Plate* and the recent BFI National Archive restoration of *Modern China*, depicting life in Beijing in 1908, as a gift to the Beijing International Film Festival on behalf of the BFI.

The Falling is written and directed by Carol Morley (*Dreams of a Life*) and premiered at the 2014 BFI London Film Festival to critical acclaim. Set in 1969 at a strict English girls' school it follows best friends charismatic Abbie and intense and troubled Lydia. After a tragedy occurs at the school, a mysterious fainting epidemic breaks out threatening the stability of all involved. The authorities claim that there is nothing seriously wrong, but Lydia refuses to accept this, and in seeking the truth, discovers a long buried secret.

BFI activity and involvement in the festival is part of a journey of cultural and industrial exchange between the BFI and China. At the GREAT Festival of Creativity, Shanghai last month the BFI presented one of the earliest films of China to survive anywhere in the world from the BFI National Archive *Nankin Road, Shanghai* (1901). The BFI presented a year-long programme of activity with China: *Electric Shadows* in the UK in 2014, including a series of rare early films entitled 'Shanghai on Film: 1900-1946' exploring life and landscape in Shanghai during the first half of the 20th century. The BFI has also hosted two film industry trade delegations to China in the last year and screened hugely successful presentations of the BFI's restorations of Alfred Hitchcock's early silent films across China in 2013.

Notes to Editors

About The BFI's China programme *Electric Shadows*

In 2014 the BFI launched its Electric Shadows programme (the Chinese term for movies: 电影“diànyǐng”) and a year of unprecedented film collaboration with China, both cultural and industrial. The BFI continues to work alongside a range of key strategic partners throughout the year including the British Council, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, UKTI and the government's GREAT Campaign. A selection of films featuring Shanghai can be viewed now on BFI Player at <http://player.bfi.org.uk/collections/china-on-film/shanghai-pearl-of-the-orient/>

The BFI's early films of China have been recently been digitised with National Lottery funding through the Unlocking Film Heritage programme. Unlocking Film Heritage is a project with the ambition to digitise 10,000 titles from the BFI National Archive and make them available to the public.

– Ends –

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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
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is now a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film.

The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Greg Dyke.



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