

As part of the NWCC's Film & Literature Series, Dr. Jeffrey Kinkley orchestrated an excellent screening and discussion of the film "A Girl from Hunan" (湘女潇潇 Xiāngnǚ Xiāoxiāo) directed by Xie Fei and U Lan. Dr. Kinkley, a recipient of the 2010 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, specializes in the intellectual and literary history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century China. At St. John's University in the New York City borough of Queens, the now-retired Dr. Kinkley previously taught World and East Asian History as well as Modern Chinese History, Literature and Film.

A substantial turnout of film enthusiasts sat in the Bamboo Room captivated from start to finish watching Fei's 1986-released artistic film production of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century life in Hunan Province, southern China. The film follows the life, tragedy, and comedy of Xiaoxiao, a young girl given to a child marriage. "A Girl from Hunan" leaves viewers awestruck by a different culture, time, and place captured in this vivid tale from modern Chinese history. It is based on the 1929 short story "Xiaoxiao" written by Shen Congwen, (沈从文 Shěn Cóngwén, 1902-1988), an author hailed as "one of the greatest Chinese writers of the pre-war period" whose books were not only banned in Taiwan but even burned in China. The English title of the story "Little Flute" is not a translation of the Chinese title. Instead, that title reflects the name of the main character invented for the English translation. As a piece of literature adapted for the screen, writer of the film Xian Zhang greatly expands upon the original story in a way neither divergent from it nor violating the vision of the author. In 1987, positive reception of "A Girl from Hunan" became evident in China when its lead actress Na Renhua received cross-category nominations from multiple film awards societies, including for 'Best Actress' from *Golden Rooster* and *Hundred Flowers Awards*. Further validating the quality of her outstanding performance, *Golden Phoenix Awards* presented Na Renhua with the award for 'Female Actor in a Motion Picture' in the same year.

Dr. Kinkley both personally knew and directly worked with Shen Congwen, allowing him to contribute a great deal of background information on the film. The viewers in attendance received from Dr. Kinkley a concise and in-depth introduction on the history of the film as well as the story of his travels throughout China including the region where the film is set. He also offered insightful commentary throughout the viewing, relying on his fluency in Mandarin to clarify issues with the English subtitles of the film as well as give accurate historical context to various aspects of the story. During the informal post-viewing discussion in which attendees shared and compared their reactions to the film, Dr. Kinkley presented an exquisitely-dyed fabric of rich indigo blues and complementary white touches from Fenghuang, the hometown of Shen Congwen.