

China Research Seminar Series (Lent 2021)
FAMES, University of Cambridge

Tracing Japanese Influence in Chinese Revolutionary Ballet

Matsuyama Ballet in China 1958–Present

Dr Rowan McLelland
(University of Roehampton)



Poster of the 1958 Matsuyama premier of the White Haired Girl in Shanghai.

5pm (London time), 24 February, 2021 (Wednesday)

Please register in advance for this Zoom seminar:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMscOyurT8pG9Tyff5c-pJUKGR8rtGGVVmu>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the seminar

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Abstract

In the mid-twentieth century in the People's Republic of China, as part of the revolutionary project, Western performing arts traditions were consciously adopted and institutionalised by the state. This lecture takes the ballet *White Haired Girl* 《白毛女》 (1965) as an example to illustrate how this systematic adoption was part of a nation building exercise which made use of artists for state ideology. Despite this, the iconic Chinese ballet is actually demonstrative of Intra-Asian cultural exchange of the period. Choreographed by the Matsuyama Ballet company, the ballet had its premiere in Tokyo, Japan. The Matsuyama Ballet Company was the only Japanese ensemble granted permission to stage performances in China during the Cultural Revolution, returning to perform in China eight times in the twenty years between 1958 and 1978. The lecture will illuminate the continued interaction between the two nations and highlight the ways in which the ballet made a significant contribution to Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations.

Speaker Bio

Dr Rowan McLelland is Senior Lecturer in the Dance Department at the University of Roehampton and a Research Assistant at C-Dare at Coventry University. She has completed more than 8 years of fieldwork in China and in 2016 was an AHRC Fellow at the Shanghai Theatre Academy. She is a former professional ballet and contemporary dancer, but can now more commonly be found in sweaty ballrooms dancing and teaching lindy hop and other swing dances.



The 1965 Shanghai Dance Academy version.