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# “Circuit Listening: Mambo and Musicals in the Chinese 1960s”

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Music Department Classroom 9, UHM  
2:30 p.m., Friday, October 25, 2013

What kinds of circuits enable music to travel? How are pop musical genres launched into global circulation? What does it mean to say a song is of its time? Was there a Chinese 1960s? This paper listens closely to the musical cinema of Hong Kong and Taiwan of that tumultuous period with a view to thinking through such questions. I begin by focusing on the Hong Kong diva Grace Chang, and her appropriation of Afro-Caribbean genres such as mambo and calypso in a series of high-flying Mandarin musicals such as ‘Air Hostess’ (1959) and ‘Because of Her’ (1963). These films, and their music, posit Hong Kong and southeast Asia as an open circuit, albeit one shadowed by the spatial and ideological containments of the Cold War. The paper goes on to consider the roughly concurrent arrival of mambo and other pop genres in Taiwan, and the way in which their entrance into local circuits were constrained by the marginalization of Minnan dialect musical cinema, as well as the lingering legacy of Japanese colonialism.

*Andrew F. Jones, Professor and Louis B. Agassiz Chair in Chinese, received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1997. Professor Jones teaches modern Chinese literature and media culture. His research interests include music, cinema, and media technology, modern and contemporary fiction, children’s literature, and the cultural history of the global 1960s. He is the author of Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music (Cornell East Asia Series, 1992) and Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age (Duke University Press, 2001), co-editor of a special issue of positions: east asia cultures critique entitled The Afro-Asian Century, and translator of literary fiction by Yu Hua as well as Eileen Chang’s Written on Water (Columbia University Press, 2005). His latest books are Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture (Harvard University Press, 2011), and a volume co-edited with Xu Lanjun, 儿童的发现 — 现代中国文学及文化中的儿童问题 [The Discovery of the Child: the Problem of the Child in Modern Chinese Literature and Culture], (Peking University Press, 2011).*