

YOUTH

Ancient Chinese poets used the willow tree as a metaphor to eulogize women. While the slim leaves portrayed a woman's thin eyebrows, the resilient branches often inspired writers to use them to symbolize a woman who looks fragile but perseveres with what she believes in.

The centuries-old literary legacy has inspired Dai Wei, a veteran director, to come up with the English title of her latest directorial outing. *The Chanting Willows*, an art house romance, was released earlier this month.

"Chanting refers to a praise that comes deeply and sincerely from the heart. Willow is a metaphor for the leading female character, a persistent and flexible woman who sticks to pursuing her dream," explains Dai.

"We believe the title will also make sense to foreign audiences and we wish it to convey traditional Eastern aesthetics," she adds.

The film was nominated for the Golden Goblet Awards at the 24th Shanghai International Film Festival in June last year.

Its lead star, Zheng Yunlong, won a Golden Angel award for the best new actor at the 17th Chinese American Film Festival in Los Angeles in November.

Zheng, a musical theater actor and singer, said at the premiere in Beijing that the movie is his first major silver-screen project, and he regards it as a gift to pay tribute to his mother, a former Peking Opera actress.

The movie is adapted from the Mao Dun Literature Prize winning novelist Wang Xufeng's novella *Liu Lang Wen Ying* (Yellow Warblers Singing in a Sea of Willows) — also the film's Chinese title.

The tale is set in the titular park, one of the 10 most renowned scenic spots, surrounding the iconic West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

With Zheng starring as an artist who lives by making paper fans, the film recounts his bittersweet romantic triangle with Chuitiao (played by Wang Yang) and Yinxin (acted by Kan Xin), two intimate friends and actresses from a local troupe in Shengzhou, a county-level city in Zhejiang, which is considered the cradle of Yueju Opera.

With most of its classical works being love stories to be performed in an elegant way, Yueju Opera was once popular, exemplified by the success of the Zhejiang Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe in the 1980s, says director Dai.

But its popularity declined in the early 1990s, as a result of the combined impact from domestic audience's shifting interest to modern culture in the forms of pop music and television programs, and the reform of State-owned enterprises, which caused layoffs in opera troupes, she adds.

Set against a backdrop of the history of Yueju Opera, the movie, shrouded in melancholy, follows the two lead female characters' different choices for their life paths.

Despite suffering the loss of sight after injuring her eyes, Chuitiao is depicted as a persistent artist who never quits her pursuit of performing on the stage even amid a harsh environment.

As a more pragmatic person, Yinxin leaves the troupe to go abroad to lead a better life.

"With many people facing uncertainty in the then changing era, their humanity was complex and

Call of the willows



“Blending Yueju Opera elements with Jiangnan (south of the Yangtze River) flavor, the movie has a romantic, gentle and sensitive personality.”

Teng Jingshu, producer

Top and right: Scenes from *The Chanting Willows*, an art house film adapted from prizewinning author Wang Xufeng's novella. Yueju Opera performances are one of the biggest draws of the film.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Romantic film uses Yueju Opera to bring a sense of tradition to a modern love story, **Xu Fan** reports.



under test from various aspects like love and friendship. But if you have been part of the era, you would understand the film," explains Dai.

The veteran director, with more than 40 galas under her belt at China Central Television, shifted her interest to the silver screen with the 2008 musical film *Ganglamedo*, named after a popular Tibetan folk song *Snow Lotus*.

With other directorial efforts, including *Once Upon a Time in Tibet* (2011) and *Once Again* (2017), Dai has demonstrated her talent in the examination of women's status quo and psyche.

But her connection with *The Chanting Willows* started much earlier.

"When I was studying in college, I was impressed by novelist Wang while reading her award-winning series *Charen Sanbuqu* (Tea Men Trilogy). Her language has a particular magic to make you feel that you could step into the fictional world and closely follow the characters," recalls Dai.

When her executive producer recommended Dai to read Wang's *Liu Lang Wen Ying*, one of 10 novellas in the anthology *Aiqing Xihu* (Love Stories in West Lake), Dai was quickly hooked.

After getting financed and then interviewing more than 100 actors to select the cast, the movie started shooting — with its major scenarios filmed in West Lake — in summer last year.

The two lead actresses — both music majors — were trained with professionals of a local Yueju Opera troupe in Shengzhou for around two months, with some cameo appearances by the troupe's performers in the film.

The performances of several Yueju Opera classics, including *Butterfly Lovers*, account for 20 minutes, or nearly 20 percent of the 106-minute film, making it a distinctive draw to create a "play-within-a-play" effect, says Dai.

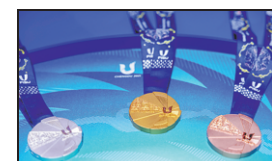
Teng Jingshu, the producer, says: "Blending Yueju Opera elements with Jiangnan (south of the Yangtze River) flavor, the movie has a romantic, gentle and sensitive personality."

Contact the writer at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Chengdu ready for student games

CHENGDU — The Chengdu FISU World University Games unveiled the design of medals and materials used at award ceremonies at an event held at the World University Games Park on Friday, marking 100 days before the games begin.

Named Rongguang, literally meaning "light of Chengdu", the design of medals focuses on the expression of the characteristics of the Chengdu Universiade and Tianfu culture while highlighting the sporting spirit, the ancient Shu civilization and the vision of the host city. The medals feature the "sun and immortal birds" with geometric feathers, echoing the emblem of the Chengdu Universiade. The immortal bird ready for flight signifies flying to the future and dreams, which is corresponded to the slogan "Chengdu makes dreams come true".



The design of the medals and mascots for the Chengdu World University Games is recently released.

PHOTOS BY XINHUA

The medals with unique pictorial elements and symbols related to Chengdu, from the ancient to modern, manifest China's 5,000-year-old civilization, expressing Chengdu's confidence in hosting the games, as well as the good wishes to athletes, according to the designer.

The reverse side of the medals is embedded with a piece of enamel with patterns of iconic buildings in Chengdu to showcase the city's image as a modern international metropolis and its hospitality.

The design also incorporates the wings of the "sun and immortal birds" at the bottom of the letter "u", symbolizing that a divine bird is protecting this land.

On the side of the medals, Chinese and English slogans are carved.

The medals are attached to a ribbon applying the craftsmanship and materials of Shu brocade, a national intangible cultural heritage of China.

Along with the medals, the podium, tray and mascot for award ceremonies were also released.

XINHUA

International Education Column

If you are interested in this, please contact: i.education@chinadaily.com.cn

HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY
HONG KONG SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Be U.
Be a RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS LEADER

Be part of the HKBU School of Business, where responsible business leaders are nurtured.

bus.hkbu.edu.hk/responsible-leader

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX BUSINESS SCHOOL

Join a UK top ranked Business School

1st in the UK for Accounting & Finance Graduate prospects on track. Complete University Guide 2022

13th in the UK for Business and Economics. Times Higher Education World Rankings 2022

Times Higher Education Awards 2021 - Business School of the Year Finalist

Accounting • Finance • Banking • Business Studies • MBA
Development Economics • Econometrics • Energy • Human Resource Management • Global Supply Chain Management • Innovation Studies
Leadership • Marketing • Policy • Sustainability • Trade

TO FIND OUT MORE VISIT:
www.sussex.ac.uk/business-school
Or email China@sussex.ac.uk

CONNECT WITH US ON WECHAT AND SINA WEIBO

法国雷恩商学院
RENNES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

全球精英商学院 • 纯英文授课 • 国际化校园 • 雷恩 • 巴黎

文凭均受中国教育部认证
55% 国际学生比例 95% 资深国际教授

2022 秋季入学高管项目招录中

- IMBA 国际工商管理硕士
- EMBA 高级工商管理硕士

了解更多详情

雷恩商学院管理官微
DIY 你的入学申请
www.rennes-sb.cn

30th ANNIVERSARY
RENNES SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
UNFRAMED THINKING