

Korean Cultural Centre UK presents

KOREAN FILM NIGHTS 2017

FEBRUARY TO MARCH

CHILLS
AND THRILLS

South Korean Horror Films

Welcome to Korean Film Nights 2017, our year-round programme of film screenings and talks. With each passing year the programme is curated around a theme, and this year is no different. For 2017 the Korean Film Nights has been divided into three distinct mini-seasons with six films each. And during each season, the screenings will take place weekly – every Thursday evening. Also, for 2017 we have invited guest programmers to offer their selections for each season, and we are very pleased to announce that the first season has been programmed by Dr Colette Balmain, a Senior Lecturer in Film, TV and Media at Kingston University. Her research interests are East Asian cinemas and cultures, particularly Korean Cinema on which she has published extensively.

This first season of the 2017 Korean Film Nights focuses on contemporary Korean horror films, or K-Horror, as they are colloquially known. The films chosen are representative of the dominant trends in Korean horror including School Horror, Fairy Tale cinema, Revenge films and of course, the vengeful ghost film. K-Horror provides viewers with the best in contemporary horror cinema. The Revenge film, although not always horror, is one of the most quintessential Korean genres, and the narrative twists and turns never fail to thrill which is why it has been included in the screening programme. The films are aesthetically and sonically accomplished, and the complex narratives keep you on the edge of your seat. Most of all, the films are scary! Whether it is the ghosts that haunt the edge of the frame, and our subconscious, or the real monsters who are all-too human, Korean horror films have something for everyone blending together subtle scares with outright horror. Indeed, these films offer us new ways of thinking about horror through the reimagining of traditional folklore and urban legends to produce something new and unexpected.

Six films have been selected from the last 12 years; each one is an exemplar of the genre. Starting in 2005 with a female-inflected version of the Korean Revenge film, *Princess Aurora* and a Korean version of Hans Christian Anderson's *The Red Shoes* in the film of the same time, the programme moves onto 2009 and the last film in the *Whispering Corridor* series of films, *A Blood Pledge*, the omnibus horror film *Horror Stories* (2012), the reinvention of the vengeful ghost story in *Mourning Grave* (2015) and finally *Fatal Intuition* (2015). The later film, which is similar in tone to *The Wailing* (2016), also evokes the earlier Italian giallo genre. While much has been made of the relationship between Korean and Hollywood cinemas, the influences on Korean Cinema are much more diverse as *Fatal Intuition* demonstrates. Despite this, the films are resolutely Korean, and indeed the strength of Korean horror and Revenge films are their local concerns even when they address global issues and trends. Further these films have been carefully chosen to highlight the work of Korean directors which has not been previously shown in the UK in order to demonstrate the breadth, scope and diversity of Korean horror cinema.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Appearing on nearly every horror themed top ten list of 2016, *Train to Busan* (Yeon Sang-ho: 2016) and *The Wailing* (Na Hong-jin: 2016) mark South Korean horror or K-Horror's coming of age on the world stage. As such, it seems the right time to explore the rich history and tapestry of contemporary K-Horror. In fact, South Korea has been producing quality, well-made horror films for decades. The gothic films of Shin Sang-ok in the 1960s and 1970s are some of the finest examples of the genre including his cinematic rendering of the *kumiho* (nine-tailed fox) legend in *Thousand Years Old Fox* (1969) and his take on the archetypal vengeful ghost in *A Ghost Story of the Joseon Dynasty* (1970). The foundation of contemporary Korean horror film was laid down in the transformation of the film industry in the late 1980s, which led to the critically acclaimed films of the Korean New Wave and the subsequent *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) of the late 1990s.

1998 is a key year with the release of *Whispering Corridors* (Park Ki-hyung), a film that would come to define a particular type of K-Horror film, and give rise to four sequels – the final one being *A Blood Pledge* in 2009. School Horror is female-orientated in that it mainly deals with relationships and friendships between girls at all girl high schools, and resonated with both young and middle-aged audiences. More recently, the *Death Bell* films – *Death Bell* (Chang: 2008) and *Death Bell 2: Bloody Camp* (Yoo Sun-dong: 2010) kept the female-focus of School Horror but changed the setting from single-sex to mixed-sex schools.

The vengeful ghost story is perhaps the most ubiquitous in K-Horror, giving rise to one of the best contemporary horror films in Kim Jee-woon's *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003). The vengeful ghost story also provides filmmakers a mechanism through which to deal with historical trauma by setting the narrative in the past: *R Point* (Kong Su-Chang: 2004) and *Muio: Portrait of a Legend* (Kim Tae-Kyung: 2007) deal in different ways with the Vietnam War while *The Epitaph* (Jung Bum-Sik, Jung Sik: 2007) is mainly set in Occupied Korea in the 1940s. There are many similarities between the vengeful ghost film and the revenge thriller; with the only difference being is that vengeance in the latter is human rather than supernatural. Park Chan-wook's *The Vengeance Trilogy* (2002-2005), Na Hong-jin's *The Chaser* (2008) and Pang Eun-jin's *Princess Aurora* (2005) operate within a world where good and evil have lost meaning.

The trend for Fairy Tale Horror films marks perhaps a growing internationalisation of K-Horror where traditional Western fairytales and/or local variations provide a mechanism through which to articulate contemporary socio-economic concerns. For example, *Cinderella* (Bong Man-Dae: 2006), *The Red Shoes* (Kim Yong-kyoon: 2005) and *The Piper* (Kim Gwang-tae: 2015) are cautionary tales warning of consumerist and capitalist excess. In a similar manner, the serial killer takes his place at the table of K-Horror, embedding local concerns in global forms.

K-Horror films are 'well made' films which boast stellar performances from sometimes unknown casts, and utilise the full scope of the cinematic palate to offer us nightmarish worlds, often rooted in a naturalistic aesthetic. While some films offer us supernatural terrors, other films offer us bloody horror in full Grand Guignol mode. The success of *Train to Busan* and *The Wailing* is not a surprise to any of us that have followed K-Horror cinema since the late 1990s; the only surprise is that it took this long.

Dr Colette Balmain

16 FEBRUARY, 7PM | KCCUK

PRINCESS AURORA

오로라 공주



SOUTH KOREA, 2005

DIRECTOR: PANG EUN-JIN

CAST: UHM JEONG-HWA, MOON SUNG-KEUN, KWON OH-JUNG, KIM SUN-HWA

106 MINS / 18 CERT. / ENG SUBS

The directorial debut of Pang Eun-jin, *Princess Aurora* is a female take on the one of the most feted of all Korean genres: the revenge film. Vengeance, bloody and violent, here is meted out by Jung Soon-jung (Uhm Jung-hwa), a mother grieving the horrific death of her young daughter, at the hands of a stranger some years prior to the opening of the film. But what is the reason behind her 'kill list' – the people on which, including an abusive mother, seemingly have nothing in common, besides the small sticker of "Princess Aurora" (a children's television series) which is found at the scene of each crime? To complicate matters, one of the detectives who is investigating the murders, Oh Sung-Ho (Moon Sung-geun), is her ex-husband. Driven down a spiralling path of destruction, can Detective Oh stop Soon-jung before it is too late?

23 FEBRUARY, 7PM | KCCUK

THE RED SHOES

분홍신



SOUTH KOREA, 2005

DIRECTOR: KIM YONG-GYUN

CAST: KIM HYE-SOO, KIM SUNG-SU, PARK YEON-A, KOH SUI-HEE

103 MINS / 15 CERT. / ENG SUBS

Paying homage to Hans Christian Anderson's 1845 fairy tale of the same name, *The Red Shoes* brings a peculiarly Korean twist to this grotesque tale of magical shoes whose beauty, while enticing, hides their cursed nature. Discovering her husband has been unfaithful, Sun-jae (Kim Hye-su) flees to Seoul with her young daughter, Tae-soo (Park Yun-a), and tries to begin her life over. One day, Tae-soo comes across a pair of pink shoes as she is riding on the subway, and unable to resist their beauty she takes them home with her. And as in the fairytale, these are no ordinary shoes and everyone who comes into contact with the shoes, including her daughter, falls under their curse. In order for Sun-jae to save her daughter, she enlists the help of her boyfriend, In-cheol (Kim Sung-su), to trace the origins of the cursed shoes. Their investigation leads them back to a traumatic time in Korean history: the Japanese Occupation. As past and present coalesce, can revealing the mystery of the shoes and their original owner, put paid to the curse in the present?

2 MARCH, 7PM | KCCUK

A BLOOD PLEDGE

여고괴담 5: 동반자살



SOUTH KOREA, 2009

DIRECTOR: LEE JONG-YONG

CAST: OH YEON-SEO, JANG KYOUNG-AH, SON EUN-SEO, SONG MIN-JEONG

88 MINS / 15 CERT. / ENG SUBS

The fifth and last film in the *Whispering Corridors* series (1998–2009), *A Blood Pledge* does not dramatically change what is by this time a very successful formula. Set in an all-girls high school – as are the previous films – the film focuses in on the fractures to the close friendships between three girls – So-yi (Son Eun-seo), Yu-jin (Oh Yeon-seo) and Eun-young (Song Min-jung) – in the aftermath of a suicide by one of their classmates, Eon-ju (Jang Kyoung-ah). Soon, the girls are seeing the ghost of their dead friend and become afraid that she is out for revenge. At the beginning of the film, we see the three girls signing a blood pledge, underlining their intentions to commit suicide. But what does this have to do with the suicide of Eon-ji, if anything? And are they being haunted by their guilty consciences, or has the ghost of Eon-ju really returned to take her revenge?

9 MARCH, 7PM | KCCUK

HORROR STORIES

무서운 이야기



SOUTH KOREA, 2012

DIRECTOR: KIM GOK, KIM SUN, MIN KYU-DONG, LIM DAE-WOONG, JUNG BUM-SHIK, HONG JI-YOUNG

CAST: KIM HYEON-SOO, NOH KANG-MIN, ZIN TAI-HYUN, CHOI YOON-YOUNG, NAM BO-RA

108 MINS / 18 CERT. / ENG SUBS

The first of three omnibus films featuring some of South Korea's most talented young directors, *Horror Stories* is a truly horrific experience. Made up of four stories – *Don't Answer the Door* (Jung Bum-Sik), *Endless Flight* (Lim Dae-woong), *Secret Recipe* (Hong Ji-young) & *Ambulance on the Death Zone* (Kim Gok & Kim Sun), the film begins with a short framing narrative (Min Kyu-dong) in which a highschool girl (Kim Ji-won) is kidnapped by a serial killer (Yoo Yeon-seok) and is forced to tell him scary stories in order to stay alive. *Don't Answer the Door* and *Secret Recipe* are based upon traditional Korean folktales, *Sun and Moon* and *Kongjwi and Patjwi* (the Korean version of Cinderella), while *Endless Flight* and *Ambulance* take on more contemporary horror tropes including the ubiquitous zombie. Also called *Scary Stories*, the stories in this anthology, turn out to be very scary indeed.

16 MARCH, 7PM | KCCUK

MOURNING GRAVE

소녀괴담



SOUTH KOREA, 2014

DIRECTOR: OH IN-CHUN

CAST: KANG HA-NEUL, KIM SO-EUN,
KIM JUNG-TAE, HAN HYE-LIN

90 MINS / 15 CERT. / ENG SUBS

The directorial debut of Oh In-chun, *Mourning Grave* is a contemporary reinvention of the traditional Korean ghost story that is as much a romantic drama as it is a horror story. A young boy, In-soo (Kang Ha-neul), who possesses the ability to see ghosts, transfers to a new school, after having problems at his old one because of this ability. Taking up residence with his uncle, Sun-il (Kim Jung-tae), a part-time exorcist and full time agoraphobic, In-soo soon settles into his new school and even falls in love with a beautiful girl (Kim So-eun), who cannot remember her own name, and eventually turns out to be a ghost – the very thing that he's trying to escape from. However, trouble isn't very far away, and one by one his classmates disappear – victims of a masked vengeful ghost who may or may not be the unquiet spirit of a bullied girl who committed suicide the previous year. Coming to the realisation that he cannot escape himself and that his ability to see ghosts may in fact be a gift, he teams up with Sun-il in order to prevent any more of his classmates from being murdered.

23 MARCH, 7PM | KCCUK

FATAL INTUITION

그놈이다



SOUTH KOREA, 2015

DIRECTOR: YUN JUN-HYEONG

CAST: JOO WON, YOO HAE-JIN,
LEE YOO-YOUNG, RYU HYE-YOUNG

109 MINS / 15 CERT. / ENG SUBS

Jang-woo (Joo Won) lives with his teenager sister, Eun-ji (Ryoo Hye-Young), in a small and desolate coastal town eking out a living by working a menial job at an ice factory. With both parents having died in a car accident, Jang-woo takes on the parental role for Eun-ji and plans to leave the small town and relocate with her to Seoul so that she can attend college. Eun-ji disappears one night. No-one seems to know where she is with the exception of Shi-eun (Lee Yoo-young), a strange young woman whose ability to see into the future has led to her being ostracised. The police aren't interested in helping Jang-woo search for his sister, and Shi-eun's powers seem to be the only way to find her. Will they find Eun-ji before something awful happens or is it already too late? And what is it that Shi-eun knows?

ATTENDING KOREAN FILM NIGHTS

Admission is free, but booking is required for each screening. To reserve your place, please visit www.kccuk.org.uk Click on the Korean Film Nights section, select the 'Reserve' icon on the right side of the page. Type your name and email address first, and click 'Send Verification Code'. You will then receive a six-digit code in your inbox, which can be 'applied' to the same window. Now your booking is completed!

Selected titles from this programme will be shown again at various venues outside the KCCUK under Korean Cinema Echoes. Please check our facebook and twitter pages for the most up-to-date information. The programme and venue may be subject to change, please confirm at the time of booking.

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