Oct. 31, 2012

Movie screening has special meaning for Sac State professor

The audience gathered in the University Theatre on Monday, Oct. 22, got to view a piece of cinema history when Sacramento State Professor Gregory Mark hosted a screening of the 1916 silent movie *The Curse of Quon Gwon*. The movie has been recognized by the Motion Picture Association of America as the oldest Asian American film in existence.

The movie has personal meaning for Mark. It was produced and directed by his great-aunt, Marion Wong, and stars his grandmother, Violet Wong. Mark’s great-grandmother and an aunt also are in the movie.

The screening was sponsored by Sacramento State President Alexander Gonzalez’ Committee to Build Campus Unity and was preceded by a reception in the theater lobby attended by the President, Mark and several deans.

Marion Wong directed the film in 1916 after a visit to China during the Xinhai Revolution in 1911. Shot in and around Oakland and Fremont, the movie ended up gathering dust in Violet Wong’s home until 1968, when she presented the canisters of 35mm film to Mark and told him to do something with them.

He had them converted to 16mm film and showed the movie at a family Christmas gathering five years later.

In 2005, the movie was digitized and placed on the National Film Registry by the Library of Congress.

For the Sacramento State screening, music student Kate Janzen wrote a score and accompanied the movie on piano. She was inspired by composer Richard Wagner to use specific themes for repeating characters, thoughts and ideas.

The event included a panel discussion by Mark’s family members following the movie. The professor noted how special it was to have the screening at Sac State. “I work here. I teach here. I educate people here. And to be able to use my family as an educational tool about Asian American history and United States history is just the perfect combination.”
For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

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