

Institute for Chinese Studies Lecture

Redefining Roles: Status, Ethics, and Gender Between Female zaju Performers and Male Literati in the Yuan Dynasty

50
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EAST ASIAN
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Friday, Jan 31, 4-5:30 pm
Mendenhall Lab 115



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In the heyday of zaju theater in the Yuan dynasty, there emerged a large number of female zaju performers of excellent skills. Though lowly in social status and morally stigmatized, they attracted many admirers among the social elites, especially literati gentlemen. So, could their relationship be one characterized by mutual respect and appreciation, at least for some of them? If so, what was the foundation of such a relationship? Was it under strong social and moral pressure and, if yes, how did those involved in this kind of relationship cope with that pressure? Moreover, how did it challenge the traditional social and gendered roles of literati gentlemen deeply rooted in Confucianism and, in the long run, modified literati culture?

In this talk, I would try to answer these questions by reexamining *The Green Bower Collection*, a personal memoir of anecdotes about the achievements of more than a hundred courtesan-performers active in the Yuan and their interaction with literati gentlemen.



Free and open to the public
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