The Color Scheme of Three Revolutionary Epics in Socialist China (1964-2006): Red Legend, Grey Performance, or Black Restoration to Capitalism

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This power-point presentation examines the images and messages of three “song and dance revolutionary epics” in the PRC from 1964 to 2009. First, it examines the impact of The East is Red, which showcased some of the best talents in performing arts in the first seventeen years after the founding of the PRC from 1949 to 1966. Still treasured with fond memories in post-Mao China, The East is Red became a model for the creation of The Song of the Chinese Revolution premiered in 1984, a so-called “sister performance” to The East is Red, to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. Justifying its drive to capitalism with “Chinese socialist characteristics,” The Road to Prosperity demonstrates, once again, the enduring power of revolutionary epic performance that manipulates historical narrative, political orientation, star and popular culture, and nationalistic sentiments, which embody shifting and complex identities in the formation of the new red legend in contemporary China.