

渥太华加拿大中国电影节

OTTAWA CANADA-CHINA FILM FESTIVAL

October 2, 9 and 16, 2019

Presented by



Canada-China Friendship Society®
La Société d'amitié Canada-Chine
Ottawa Chapter. Founded 1976. | Section d'Ottawa. Depuis 1976.

Our Time Machine

Bao

A First Farewell

Still Tomorrow

Studio Theatre at CentrepoinTE, 101 CentrepoinTE Drive, Ottawa

www.ccfso.org

A Note from the Film Committee

Welcome to the third annual Ottawa Canada-China Film Festival.

Our commitment to you is to find and screen fascinating well-made films that explore the many sides of China's society, culture and history. This year's films tell deeply moving stories of love and loss, of challenges faced and of the complex human condition in China. These stories underline the common humanity shared by people around the world.

Since its inception each year has involved experiments as we search for ways to improve the experience of the audience. The biggest change this year was moving the festival to the Meridian Theatres at CentrepoinTE. This was driven by our desire to provide opportunities to explore the films and the topics they raise with post film activities. At the time of writing this enhanced programme is still coming together but we are happy to report that on opening night Director S. Leo Chiang will join us via Skype for a Q and A session with the audience. On October 9 following the screening of *A First Farewell* we will be joined by Chinese filmmaker Sun Zhao-Min.

The Festival opens on Wednesday October 2 with the first of **three Ottawa Premiers**; a truly extraordinary documentary **Our Time Machine** featuring influential Chinese artist Ma Liang (aka Maleonn). The following week on October 9 the evening will begin with **Bao** which won the 2018 Oscar for best animate short film. The film was written and directed by Canadian Domee Shi. It will be followed by the drama **A First Farewell** which tells an emotional story of separation and loss from the perspective of three Uyghur children. The Festival closes October 16 with the documentary **Still Tomorrow** an intimate portrait of Xiuhua Yu, who unexpectedly, became an internet sensation via her poetry. From a poor rural background, and disabled with cerebral palsy, Yu finds her newfound success is a means to escape from her situation, but with bittersweet results.

Ottawa Canada-China Film Festival Schedule

Studio Meridian Theatre at CentrepoinTE

Our Time Machine - Wednesday October 2, 2019 at 7:00 PM

Bao and A First Farewell - Wednesday October 9, 2019 at 7:00 PM

Still Tomorrow - Wednesday October 16, 2019 at 7:00 PM

Our Time Machine – Ottawa Premiere

Wednesday October 2 – 7:00 PM

Documentary 81 minutes

Directors: S. Leo Chiang and Yang Sun

Writers: S. Leo Chiang and Bo Li

Producers: S. Leo Chiang and Yang Sun

Starring: Ma Duo, Tianyi Huang, Ma Ke, Maleonn

Mandarin with English Subtitles

This recently released film is still on the festival circuit. It has already won 6 awards including 3 for Best Documentary.

Directors' Statement From S. Leo Chiang

Those who grew up in post-Cultural Revolution China lived through a kind of socio-economic transformation that would have taken another country 100 years to bring about. In the span of 20 years, cities emerged from towns, the economy generated unprecedented wealth for some while leaving others behind, and new roads and digital networks connected China to the world. These migrations within our country and its rapid digitization have fundamentally changed the way people communicate and relate to one another.

Today, in a bustling metropolis like Shanghai, it is easy to feel estranged from the thousands upon thousands of strangers we see every day, but we can also feel that same estrangement within one's own family. So, when we came across Maleonn and his ageing father, both artists, but who came of age on opposite sides of the Cultural Revolution in China, we made immediate personal connections. We see a story that could be our own in the not-so-distant future.

When we asked ourselves what is being lost at this juncture in time, we thought of our collective history, disappearing underneath China's urbanizing topography, and fading with the memory of the elderly that we have grown apart from. For us

and for Maleonn, the struggle to express affection towards one's family goes hand in hand with defining and sharing the meaning behind devoting one's life to art.

Our intentions in crafting our film are to move others the way it has profoundly moved us. This is an evergreen story, relevant for past and future generations and across cultural divides, so long as there is love between children and their parents. Especially on the international stage, documentaries from China often focus on powerful stories from marginalized classes or persecuted political dissenters, but our film offers an intimate look at a middle-class Chinese family facing issues that audiences around the world can immediately relate to. Our story provides a needed addition to highlight the similarities between people in the West and in China during a time where the political language can be hostile and divisive.

We hope this film celebrates the process in which two men reconcile their past feelings and create something together that repairs a distressed part of the fabric of Chinese society.

Bao

Wednesday October 9 – 7:00 PM

8 minute

Director: Domee Shi

Writer: Domee Shi

2018 Academy Award Winner of Best Animate Short Film

Domee Shi was born in 1989 in Chongqing, China. Domee and her parents immigrated to Canada when she was two. They settled in Toronto. Domee grew up learning about art from her father, who had been a college professor of fine arts and a landscape painter in China. Shi later studied animation at Sheridan College, graduating in 2011. "I asked [my father] what he thought [of the film] and he said, 'I really liked it, but I also have notes for you.' And I was like, Ah, that's my classic dad."

Shi is the first woman at Pixar to direct a short film. Shi is also the first woman of colour to win an Oscar for directing an animated short film. Her next project at Pixar is a full length feature.

In an interview with the *New York Times*, Domee said she wanted *Bao* to inspire audiences. “If they are Asian I hope they enjoy a bit seeing themselves on screen,” she said. “If not, I hope they learn about Chinese culture and community and are more curious about Chinese food, Chinatown. I hope they call their moms and take them out to lunch.”

Shi took a lot of inspiration and guidance from her mom when directing *Bao*. “My Chinese mom was always making sure I never wandered away too far, that I was safe.” Shi’s favorite dumplings are “the boiled pork and chives dumplings that my mom would make for me growing up”

Shi is hopefully that “there will be more different stories down the road from these big studios because ... they can’t keep drawing from the same creative well over and over again. If Pixar wants to stay at the forefront of animation and storytelling, they’ll have to look for different sources.”

A First Farewell– Ottawa Premiere

Wednesday October 9 – 7:10 PM

Drama 88 minutes

Director: WANG Lina

Uyghur and Mandarin with English Subtitles

The directorial debut from Xinjiang's Lina Wang is a poem to her hometown, portraying a Muslim farm boy's relationship with his deaf-mute mother, his friendship with his sweetheart girl, and his parting from them. The first international Uyghur film from Xinjiang, China by a homegrown female director.

Director's Statement From Wang Lina

A First Farewell is a non-fictional film with real people performing their real lives. It took around three years from preparation to finishing all the shots. The story is based in marvelous Xinjiang and shows beautiful childhood in Uygur-ethnic-group village.

A First Farewell is a text that the characters learned in class. I use it as the title to symbolize growth.

The delicate portrayals of childhood scenes structure the film, daily life changes brought growth to children, and also constitute the main line of the film.

All the lines are from people's real action. That is to say, it is a film without a screenplay from the beginning and has sense of reality and authenticity. To achieve this kind of feeling, the way we made the film was quite special. After one year's field research, we used the documentary-style method to make the shots for another year. We have set some scenes with the possibilities in their lives but also we didn't break the balance of people and their real life, whether in A Pa which was a full-screen naturalism documentary or in people's real life, to get a unique documentary-style feature film. In a sense, the film is a re-modeling of normal life which exposed to a view of original ecology. It shows a deep exploration of noumenon* itself and makes a perfect combination of documentary and feature film.

A First Farewell is a film about childhood, about a time that everyone has in the beginning of their lives, about a memory that I cherish most. I hope the film can keep the most unforgettable time on the screen and lead us back to pick our pure human heart.

* (in Kantian philosophy) a thing as it is in itself, as distinct from a thing as it is knowable by the senses through phenomenal attributes.

Still Tomorrow – Ottawa Premiere

Wednesday October 16, 7:00PM

Documentary 89 Minutes

Directors: Director Jian Fan

Starring: Yu Xiuhua

Mandarin with English Subtitles

Director's Note From FAN Jian

This film shows distinct female perspectives and centers on women's issues. The main theme is how a woman gains economic and personal independence, and then struggles for freedom in love and in life.

Most of Yu Xiuhua's poems are about love. In more than twenty years, she pursued love but never succeeded. There is no love between her and her husband. For Yu Xiuhua, to live a life without love is unacceptable, and she unleashed her emotions in her poems. After her poem collections were published, she had financial independence and readied herself for divorce. Through different social occasions, Yu Xiuhua met many male writers and journalists. She has feelings for several people, and she will never give up chasing love – it makes her more determined to divorce her husband.

In China, a woman asking for a divorce is often seen as immoral. Yu Xiuhua's divorce has three obstacles. The first comes from the husband. Out of pride, he would not agree to a divorce at first. It was not until Yu Xiuhua agreed to give him money that he felt duly respected and compensated. The second comes from the mother. This is a bigger conflict, coming between two generations of women. Yu Xiuhua's mom is a traditional rural woman. She believes that a woman needs to have a marriage, a family. A complete family is more important than true love. Mother has always tried to plan for and to impact Yu Xiuhua. Yu Xiuhua resists her mom's influence, but is close to her emotionally. After her mom was diagnosed with cancer, Yu Xiuhua found herself struggling in a dilemma. The third is social pressure. In China, a woman may get a bad reputation if she ditches her husband after becoming famous, which plays a significant role against her.

Besides her pursuit for love, Yu Xiuhua faces difficult situations similar to other women writers. Before she became well known, Yu Xiuhua, same as Emily Dickinson, wrote her poems in the isolated countryside. They share the same loneliness and fragility. Yu Xiuhua is also similar to Virginia Wolf, both emotionally and in life experiences. Wolf had serious mental illness, and Yu is often in agony for failed pursuits for love. For these women writers, their pains and agonies play an important role in their writings: the more pains they feel, the more touching their writings become.

Yu Xiuhua created a new wave of poem reading in China. Her readers are most women. She gives Chinese women, buried under daily chores, a new hope, when being disabled and living in countryside did not stop her from creating powerful words in pursuit of poetic fulfillment.

This film also shows difficulties and challenges of a disabled and sensitive woman. Yu Xiuhua hates her disabilities. Cerebral palsy makes it difficult for her to move around, and makes her appearance unattractive. Her bodily features are a huge obstacle between her and love. Yu Xiuhua once said: "I feel my voice cannot adequately deliver my poems; my soul is trapped by my body." She writes poems to break through confines of her body, to conquer physical deficiencies with literary beauty, and to fulfill bodily yearnings with poetic desires and emotions. Yu Xiuhua's struggles and pursuit for love are tragic. Even after divorce, she still cannot find emotional and bodily fulfillment because of her disabilities. So she wrote: "You wish there is tomorrow? Or you wish not?"

In addition, the film shows the power of new media in China. Once appeared on the Internet, they became well-known overnight. For some time, Yu Xiuhua's name was searched online more often than movies stars like Daniel Craig. New media changed her fate. Yu Xiuhua said it was like in a dream.

Although I am a man, I developed a very good relation with Yu Xiuhua during filming. She sees me as a close friend, since I very carefully read and try to understand her and her poems. She lets me film many private moments, and is willing to open up to me. Also, to build female perspectives in the film, women members in my team helped me.

Film Committee

Chair: Roy Atkinson

Members: Stephen Chappell, George Choma, David Graham, Barbara Lynn Lewis, Dave McNicoll, Olya Helen Moscicky

Film Selection Committee Coordinator: Erqin Zeng

In its third year the Film Selection Committee's first task was to broaden and deepen its approach to identifying potential films. The members searched for Chinese made films or films about China that has won awards at international film festivals. In addition through our growing network and number of films were added to the long list. This process yielded over 50 candidate films.

For each candidate film it was necessary to locate the company with the distribution rights for Canada and to secure access to a "screener" for CCFS reviewers. Next the members of the committee reviewed the films and applied the screening criteria developed last year namely:

- Would the reviewer recommend the film to their friends or family
- Did the film shed light on life in China, or its culture or history
- Was the film well made, considering factors as the quality of the acting, cinematography, sound, sub-titles and the pacing of the film?

The result was a short list of well-made films that the reviewers personally recommend, and each film tells an intriguing and deeply personal story.

The final selection was made taking into account the overall composition of the festival films, and novelty, (the extent to which the films had been screened previously in Ottawa) and the potential for an interesting post film event. The result is three terrific Ottawa Premiers and an Oscar winning animated short film.

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The CCFS was founded 43 years ago with the goal of helping Canadians learn about China and understand it better. It is an independent member financed group of approximately 200 people with an interest in China.

Our programmes and activities include:

- Monthly Speaker Events from September to June (free for members);
- Canada-China Film Festival;
- Chinese New Year Banquet;
- Book Club;
- Opportunities to be part of delegations to China;
- Receiving/hosting delegations from China;
- Members only receptions;
- CCFS Blogs

Annual Membership

- Regular membership: \$25
- Family membership (two people): \$40
- Student membership (full-time, registered): \$15

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