

Shanghai Eternity Media & Culture Co., Ltd. & Medoc (Beijing) Media & Culture Co., Ltd.

Present

a Walking Iris Media, Fish + Bear Pictures, Breezy Doc, &
Independent Television Services (ITVS) Production

in Association with Shanghai LIAN Cultural Development Co., Ltd

Our Time Machine

Directed by **Yang Sun & S. Leo Chiang**

2019, Color, 81 minutes



*Shaken by news of his father's dementia,
Chinese artist Maleonn sets off to build a time machine.*

Contacts

Production

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Synopsis

43-year-old Maleonn is one of China's most influential conceptual artists today. His father, Ma Ke, was the artistic director of the Shanghai Chinese Opera Theater. After being humiliated and forbidden from working for a decade during the Cultural Revolution, Ma Ke immersed himself in theater. The mysterious excitement of Ma Ke's creative world inspired the young Maleonn, but his father's absences stoked early feelings of resentment.

When Ma Ke is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, Maleonn pours everything into an ambitious new theater project: "Papa's Time Machine," a visually stunning time-travel adventure told with human-sized puppets. At the play's heart are autobiographical scenes inspired by Maleonn's memories with his father. He hopes this will bring them together artistically and personally.

With enthusiasm both domestically and from abroad, the play shows signs of a promising future. But Ma Ke's condition deteriorates. Maleonn is torn between the original goal to honor his father and the pressure towards commercial success. Ma Ke struggles to contribute to the play, and barely recognizes the play when it is completed.

Facing his father's painful decline, Maleonn becomes more aware of life's complexities. There are no effortless masterpieces or simple solutions. And there's no traveling back in time to retrieve what has been lost. There, is however, the relationship that has developed with co-director Tianyi. He proposes to her, ready to become a partner and a father, and to carry on forward with a new outlook on his art and life.

Directors' Statement

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 everyday, 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.

About the Filmmakers



Yang SUN is a documentary director and cameraman based in Beijing. He was on staff at China's Central Newsreel and Documentary Film Studio, making documentaries for broadcasters including CCTV, Youku and the Travel Channel. He has directed several short and mid-length documentaries, including THE SECOND ALBUM, AKEN, BACKPACKERS FOR 10 YEARS, AFTER HE ROSE TO FAME, as well as the ten-part series TAKE ME TO TRAVEL. He worked as a director of photography on A CENTURY WITH NANJING, CENTURY MASTER, and SOUTH OF THE OCEAN. Sun Yang holds a Master's degree from the School of Television and Film Art at the Communication University of China. OUR TIME MACHINE will be his first feature-length documentary.



S. Leo Chiang is a Taiwanese-American filmmaker based in San Francisco and Taipei. His documentary, MR. CAO GOES TO WASHINGTON, won the Inspiration Award at the 2012 Full Frame Documentary Festival. His previous film, Emmy® Award-nominated A VILLAGE CALLED VERSAILLES, picked up eight awards and aired on the American PBS series, Independent Lens. Leo's work has received funding support from the Sundance Documentary Fund, the Tribeca Film Institute, and ITVS. He also collaborates with other documentarians as editor and a cameraman. Leo received a MFA in film production from University of Southern California. He is the co-founder of A-Doc, the Asian American Documentary Network, and a documentary branch member of the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences.

Credits

Directed & Produced by
Yang Sun & S. Leo Chiang

Editor
Bob Lee

Executive Producers
Jean Tsien
Sally Jo Fifer
Nick Fraser

Cinematographers
Yang Sun
Shuang Liang

Co-Director
Shuang Liang

Writers
S. Leo Chiang & Bob Lee

Original Music
Paul Brill

Additional Music
Elizabeth Ziman

Co-Producer
Violet Du Feng
Qingzeng Cai

Associate Producers
Daniel Chein
Betsy Tsai
Grace Wang

Featuring artwork by
Maleonn

Featuring
Maleonn
Ma Ke
Zheng Wei Tong
Ma Duo
Tianyi Huang
and
Makuji the Puppet

Puppeteers

Pengcheng Shu
Xia Ning
Suman Liu
Ting Guo
Hanjing Ni
Lingling Chen
Yang Chen

Stage Crew

Frank Fang
Yu Qi
Yi Yue
Dingyi Chen
Zhongzhi Guang
Hongyang Guo
Leon Lin
Sarah Chen
ZhongPeng Guan

Co-Executive Producer

Kelly Wang

Supervising Producer

Michael Ehrenzweig

Production Assistants

Daniela Flori Goodfellow
Lesley Yiping Qin
Zheng Yang
Kevin Yeh
Yudi Zhang

Photographer

Hong Wu

Additional Camera

S. Leo Chiang
Qing Zhao
David Zhang

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Tribeca All Access
Sundance Institute Documentary Film Program

Additional Sound Recordist

Xun Huang

Sound Designer & Re-recording Mixer

Joe Milner

Additional Sound Editing

Jingjue "Jo" Zhou

Animation & Title Design

Ryan Wehner

HD Post Services, DI & DCP provided by

Different By Design

Digital Intermediate Colorist

Luke Cahill

Online Editor

Sean Meyers

Digital Intermediate Producers

Matt Radecki & Greg Lanese

Assistant Editors

Ruolin Xu
Zikai Yuan
Zhenzhen Li
Ningrui Liu

Translator

Athena Chen
Peter Pei

Transcriber

Nathan Nie