

# A LONG WAY HOME

A film by Luc Schaedler



## World Sales (F)

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**Director:** Luc Schaedler

**Production:** go between films gmbh

**Co-Production:** Recycled TV AG – Swiss Radio and Television SRF|3sat

**Length:** 73 mins. (cinema) | 52 mins. (TV)

**Versions:** Chinese (en, de, fr subtitles), color and b/w, DCP

**Film Distribution (CH):** Xenix Filmdistribution

**World Sales (F):** Wide House

**Release:** January 2018

## SYNOPSIS

The film centers around five of the most significant representatives of contemporary Chinese counterculture: the visual artists the *Gao Brothers*, the choreographer and dancer *Wen Hui*, the animation artist *Pi San* and the poet *Ye Fu*. With bravery and subversive wit, they each shed light on the social problems in their country from their unique perspective. What they share is a struggle to come to terms with their respective pasts, all scarred by violence and oppression. Their vision is of a democratic, supportive and humane civil society. *A Long Way Home* takes us on a fascinating journey into both the grim days of recent Chinese history and the dazzling cultural scene in present-day China. In doing so, the film poses universal questions that ultimately concern us all: which values determine our cultural identity and in what kind of world do we want to live? *A Long Way Home* is an entertaining and moving plea for human solidarity.

## STATEMENT

My exploration of China and Chinese culture goes back more than 25 years now. Since the brutal suppression of the Democracy Movement in 1989, I've traveled through China several times. I have followed its economic development and subsequent political and social upheaval with both amazement and bewilderment. The deeper I delved into the country the more I learned about its grim history, the effects of which can still be felt in China today. Along the way one question has arisen time and time again: What do external events, ruptures and changes trigger in people, and how does it impact their daily lives?

China also always inspired me to think about my own world. Taking a close look at another culture can cause you to see your own in a new light. This was a view also held by French ethnologist and philosopher Claude Lévi-Strauss who felt both encounters and confrontations with a foreign culture give us an opportunity, or stronger yet, a responsibility to look at and question one's own society.

From my perspective as a Swiss filmmaker, I ask myself where they find the courage to expose themselves. How would I behave in their situation? How are we each shaped by our past? And finally: How is it possible that many of the existential problems they are confronted with seem surprisingly familiar to me, despite our vast cultural differences?

## PROTAGONISTS

The connecting element and main theme of the artistic works of *Wen Hui*, *Pi San*, *Ye Fu* and the *Gao Brothers* is a demand for the reconstruction of humanity throughout Chinese society. Looking back at their personal family histories, and thus recent Chinese history, takes on greater significance within the backdrop of their unease toward present-day Chinese society. Actively remembering is an important part of their work as they try to fathom the roots of present-day problems. Like researchers, they explore the possibilities of collective healing in their work.

**WEN HUI choreographer | dancer** In China, Wen Hui is considered the mother of modern dance. For years she has explored the topic of memory. In her current piece «Red», based on the propagandist ballet of the same name from the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), she processes the physical impact of this traumatic era.

**PI SAN animation artist** Pi San is known to millions in China for his subversive animated film series, which have caused a sensation on the Internet. Through his mischievous cartoon character «Kuang Kuang» he exposes the injustices and absurdities of everyday life in China. In doing so he must constantly gauge how far he can go with his criticism.

**YE FU writer | poet** The former police officer, who resigned in 1989 in protest against the suppression of the Democracy Movement, has made a name for himself in recent years with his autobiographical essays and blog articles which loudly demand political change.

**GAO BROTHERS visual artists | painters** Gao Zhen and Gao Qiang, known internationally as the Gao Brothers, have been around since the birth of the modern Chinese art scene in 1985. They belong to the group of critical avant-garde artists whose work reflects the complexity of recent Chinese history and the «human condition» in a globalized world.

## BACKGROUND

*The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.*

Milan Kundera

The historical background for A LONG WAY HOME is made up of two defining phases in recent Chinese history: the Democracy Movement of 1989 and the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976. Beginning with present-day China, A LONG WAY HOME moves deeper into the «heart of darkness» of Chinese history. The focus is on how people handle historical and biographical ruptures and how they process traumatic experiences.

During the **Cultural Revolution** (1966-76), systematic violence was employed to eliminate everything private and to destroy social relationships. Mao Zedong and the Party relied on betrayal, public humiliation, self-incrimination, and re-education in everyday life. Mistrust and deep insecurity continue to shape relationships among people in China today. In the film, the **Democracy Movement of 1989** stands in direct opposition to the Cultural Revolution. What began as a student protest in Beijing soon grew into a sweeping movement uniting people of diverse social backgrounds. The first spontaneous mass movement outside party structures, it showed initial signs of a possible civil society that would not be able to germinate until after Mao's death.

The violent suppression by the People's Army was a clear sign from the regime that this was not welcome and that public criticism of the Party would not be tolerated - a condition that continues to this day.

**BIO- FILMOGRAPHY – Luc Schaedler**

Born 1963 in Zurich, Switzerland. Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Film and Social History at Zurich University, Switzerland. Degrees in Visual Anthropology: *Made in Hong Kong* (MA, 1997) and *Angry Monk* (Ph.D., 2007).

Since 1996 freelance filmmaker and producer (go between films gmbh):

1997 MADE IN HONG KONG (Leipzig, competition)

2005 ANGRY MONK (Sundance World Documentary, nomination Grand Jury Prize)

2013 WATERMARKS (Locarno, critic's week)

2018 A LONG WAY HOME (Solothurn, nomination Prix de Soleure)

**CREDITS**

**Written and directed by:** Luc Schaedler

**Production:** go between films gmbh (Luc Schaedler | Josy Meier)

**Co-production:** Recycled TV AG (Peter Guyer | Madeleine Corbat)

SRF – Swiss Radio and Television

-Editorial office pacte | Urs Augstburger

-Editorial office Sternstunden | Denise Chervet

-Editorial office 3sat | Rajan Autze

**Cinematography | Sound:** Luc Schaedler

**Editing:** Kathrin Plüss | Marina Wernli | Martin Witz

**Color Grading:** Peter Guyer | Ueli Müller

**Music:** Oli Kuster | Peter von Siebenthal

**Sound Editing | Sound Design:** Peter Von Siebenthal | Projektstudio GmbH

**Sound Mix:** Denis Séchaud | Peter Von Siebenthal | SDS

**Trainee:** Song Yunlong

**Subtitles:** Song Yunlong | Babelfisch Translations

**Translations:** Song Yunlong | Misha Kavka | Babelfisch Translations

**Treatment Consultants:** Peter Guyer | Josy Meier

**Accountant:** Roland Stampfli

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