

STILL TOMORROW



Directed by FAN Jian
A YOUKU Production
88mins / HD / COLOR / CHINA

A woman farmer in rural China rises to fame
in the most unlikely fashion- through poetry.
Her words are inspiring,
but her own life reveals myriad challenges and despair.
Can she rise through it all to find balance and true happiness?

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Synopsis

A village woman, despite not having finished her high school education, has become China's most famous poet in 2015. Her book of poetry has become the most widely distributed and sold poetry book in China for the past 20 years.

This poet is YU Xiuhua, a 39 year old woman living in a remote village in the middle of inland China. Though she has a bright mind, she walks unsteadily and speaks unclearly because of her cerebral palsy. She wonders if she'd done something bad in a previous life to deserve the suffering she endures in her present life. Attending school was so difficult that she dropped out of high school. When she was 18 years old, her mother married her off to an old man with whom she has never connected. The relationship has become the biggest pain and source of regret in her life.

Yu's early life was marked by misfortune. Through her poems, she contemplates her fate: she writes about the human body, life, sex, and her yearning for true love.

Yu Xiuhua has been writing since childhood, but in late 2014 a small collection of her work was published and commented on on a popular website, and they went viral.



People are surprised that a woman with cerebral palsy can write such talented poems. She's become famous, and hundreds of media outlets have reported on her. Publishing houses are lining up to publish her book of poetry, and she has a wide readership spanning all ages.

With the popularity of her poems has come fame and financial independence. This has emboldened her to start anew. Her husband, however, vehemently refuses to grant her a divorce, and her parents and her 20-year-old son disapprove of her life choices. To make things worse, her mother has just been diagnosed with cancer. What will she do?

Our film portrays the struggle of a woman and her personal desires, pitted against the wishes and daily realities of those around her. She yearns for the love of other men – as of yet, unrequited as she has not been able to break free of her unwanted husband.

The bigger the gap between her desires and reality, the greater the torture she feels. She expresses this through her poetry, which has become ever more poignant.

Yu Xiuhua has said, "I feel my voice cannot adequately deliver my poems: my soul is trapped in my body." To some degree, many of us feel similarly conflicted. Our deepest desires cannot always express themselves in reality.

After all, Yu Xiuhua's life is the most unlikely success story – and with her success has come the possibility of breaking free: breaking free from the constraints many others would simply be forced to live with. Our film follows a period in her life in which she no longer accepts the old constraints placed on her – and in so doing, it mirrors the conflicts so many of us have to face in our own lives.



Director's Note

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.

Key Creative Personnel

FAN Jian, Director

FAN Jian is a Beijing-based documentary director with a focus on Chinese social issues and human interest. After graduation from Beijing Film Academy, he has made more than 5 feature documentary films, which has been selected into Berlinale, IDFA, BIFF, HKIFF and other film festivals. His previous film *The Next Life*, a co-production with NHK & Al Jazeera, had won many awards in China. His latest work *My Land* got support from Sundance documentary fund and been selected into Panorama of Berlinale 2016.

YU Hongmiao, Producer

Hongmiao Yu is General Manager and Chief Producer and Senior Documentary Director of Factual Program Center, Youku Tudou Inc. She's the Chief Director of internet outdoor reality show *Lvxing* season1&2; Chief Director of *Meet with You*, the first ten-episode internet-rooted documentary series; Internet Dissemination Planner of Chai Jing's *Investigation of Smog: Under the Dome*.

She used to work for CCTV as Chief Editor of CCTV-13's news programs Oriental Horizon and Social Record during 2003 - 2015 and Documentary Director of CCTV-1's documentary program The True Story during 2000 – 2003.

XU Zitao, Producer

XU Zitao is a producer based in Beijing. She used to work for Youku Tudou Inc. as Factual Programming Chief Editor, and have produced a number of shows such as *On the Road*, *Growing Season*, *Beijing Youth*, *Ji Lu*, etc. that are widely recognized by the industry and market.

Documentary series 'On the Road', published in 2013, which attracted more than 500 media to cover its story and was rewarded by the International 'Golden Panda' Documentary Festival and 'JinTong' Award. Documentary series 'Ji Lu', 'Best Program' award by Chinese Documentary Association, are committed to memorize the true stories of growing-up, dreams and emotions of Chinese people. Episodes from the series were awarded 'Jin Tong' Award and 'Best Dissemination' of Xi'an International Video Festival.

CHENG Leer, Co-producer

Leer Cheng is a producer based in Beijing. Films she's worked on include documentary film *Plastic China* (in production) supported by IDFA Bertha Fund, feature film *(Sex) Appeal* selected for 2014 Busan International Film Festival New Currents Competition, and feature film *Line Walker* – a China box-office hit among 2016 summer releases. Leer holds an MBA degree from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, USA.

Matthieu Laclau, Editor

Matthieu Laclau has been working as a director of photography and an editor in

Beijing since 2008. He graduated from a Film Theory Master Degree at the University Paris 3 in France. Matthieu first came to Beijing in 2007 to make a documentary on Jia Zhang-ke ("Xiao Jia Going Home", dir. Damien Ounouri). He wins the 50th Golden Horse Best Film Editing Awards for his work on : "A Touch of Sin" directed by Jia Zhang-ke. He lives now in Taipei.

Credits

Presented by: Yang Weidong Victor Koo

Executive Producers: Wang Ping Wei Ming Liu Kailuo

Producers: Yu Hongmiao Xu Zitao

Co-producers: Cheng Leer Lu Yang

Directed by: Fan Jian

Cinematography: Xue Ming Fan Jian

Sound Recordist: Isabella Zang

Sound Designer: Li Danfeng

Edited by: Matthieu Laclau Fan Jian

Consultant: Bob Moore

Editing Consultant: Jean Tsien, ACE

Editing Assistant: Marine Chiu

MoFei Pictures Sound Departement

Sound Editor: Gao Rui Feng

Foley Artist: Liu Yan

Distribution: Clara Pan

Production Assistants: Zhang Zhitong Dai Fulin Liu Ziru Trilen Xiao

Camera Assistants: Wei Gao Wang Jian Wu Yuanhang

Script Supervisor: Isabella Zang

Colorist: Hung Wenkai

Editing Assistant: Marine Chiu

Timeline studio Post production coordinator: Joanne Lee

Subtitles Translator: Han Dong

Proofreading: Ning Xin

Poems Translators: Ai Luo Wang Tu Michael Grafals

Poster Design Lu Yunfan

Music

Intimate Portrait

Composed & performed by [Philip Guyler](#)

Moment Of Release

Composed & performed by Richard Lacy / Barrie Gledden

Calm

Composed & performed by [Patrick Hawes](#)

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Ava

Composed & performed by Ben Salisbury / Geoff Barrow

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