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# A Moment in Time

## 聲光轉逝

Press Kit

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The image of Bai Xue-xian illuminates the curtain at the Great Star Theatre in San Francisco's Chinatown.

# A Moment in Time

***Directed by***

Ruby Yang

***Producer***

Lambert Yam

***Executive Producer***

William Smock

Length: 57 minutes

Film Format: DV CAM

Original Language: English

***Short Synopsis***

*A Moment in Time* is a one-hour documentary about the experience of the Chinese in America through the films they loved.

***Paragraph Synopsis***

*A Moment in Time*, a new film by Oscar-winner Ruby Yang, is a one-hour documentary about the experience of the Chinese in America through the films they loved -- from Cantonese opera to Westerns. It harkens back to a time when six movie theaters in San Francisco's Chinatown crystallized the memories, the beliefs, the sorrows and aspirations of Chinese immigrant families. Chinese movies reduced an older generation to tears. They challenged the young to find out how they could be American and Chinese at the same time.

The principal speakers in *A Moment in Time* grew up here: Irene Dea Collier, Jimmie Lee, Chuck Gee, Cecilia Wong, Amy Chung, Norman Fong. As children they associated Chinese movies (and the Chinese language) with their parents' alien, backward world. Eventually they found their own reasons to appreciate Chinese film. The heartbeat of *A Moment in Time* is a series of clips from films that were hits in Chinatown. *A Moment in Time* shows how Chinese movie theaters could be both a battlefield between the generations and a profound affirmation of what it means to be Chinese American.

Ruby Yang and her producer husband, Lambert Yam, are Americans born in Hong Kong. Lambert Yam managed the World Theater in San Francisco's Chinatown from 1985 to 1995, an interlude of dramatic change in Chinatown and in Chinese films.



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## Project Personnel

### **Ruby Yang**

Director

Ruby Yang is a noted Chinese American filmmaker whose work in documentary and dramatic film has earned her an Academy Award and numerous international awards. She lives and works in Beijing.

Along with producer Thomas Lennon, Yang founded the Chang Ai Media Project in 2003. Since then, its documentaries and public service announcements about AIDS awareness have been seen more than 500 million times. *The Blood of Yingzhou District*, which Yang directed as part of the project, won the 2006 Oscar for Documentary - Short Subject at the 79th Academy Awards in February, 2007.

Their most recent documentary, *Tongzhi in Love*, which Yang directed, premiered at the Silverdocs Documentary Film Festival and the Frameline32 Gay & Lesbian Film Festival in June 2008. The film won the Golden Gate Award for Best Documentary Short Subject at the 52nd San Francisco International Film Festival.

Prior to her work in Beijing, Yang directed the 1997 production *Citizen Hong Kong*, “unflinching in its honesty, vivid in its kaleidoscopic imagery,” according to the *Chicago Reader*. Both *Citizen Hong Kong* and her 2000 production, *China 21* aired in Hong Kong, Taiwan and numerous European outlets after showing on PBS for Asian Pacific Heritage Month.

Yang has also edited several feature films, including Joan Chen’s debut feature *Xiu Xiu, The Sent Down Girl*. The movie “[tells] a story that feels nearly mythic in its themes of betrayal, devotion and power,” wrote the *San Francisco Chronicle*. “Poetic in its images, devastating in its emotional impact,” the film premiered at the Berlin Festival in 1998 and went on to win seven Golden Horses, Taiwan’s equivalent of the Academy Award. Yang served as Associate Producer of the film. She also edited Chen’s first Hollywood feature, *Autumn in New York*, starring Richard Gere and Winona Ryder.

Yang was Series Editor for Bill Moyers’ *Becoming American - the Chinese Experience* (PBS, March 2003), supervising editing for the entire series, which received four Emmy nominations. She spent more than a year working closely with Moyers, producing, “a model documentary that gets almost everything right,” according to the *New York Times*.

Born in Hong Kong, she moved to San Francisco in 1977. She graduated from San Francisco Art Institute in Painting (BFA) and Filmmaking (MFA) and had been living in San Francisco before relocating to Beijing in 2004.

**Lambert Yam**

Producer

Lambert Yam is a pioneer in distributing and exhibiting feature films from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan in North America. A native of Hong Kong, he co-founded the Phoenix Cinematheque there. For ten years, he was in charge of a theatre chain in the United States and Canada, including the World Theatre in San Francisco, Sun Sing Theatre in New York and Garfield Theatre in Los Angeles. He created new openings for Asian film serving Chinatown and American audiences.

He was on the board of the San Francisco International Film Festival for nine years. A filmmaker himself, he produced both *Citizen Hong Kong* and *China 21*. In 2001 he received a scripting grant from the California Council for the Humanities for *A Moment in Time*, a documentary on movies and Chinatown. The project received production funding from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and Center for Asian American Media (CAAM).

**William Smock**

Executive Producer

William Smock was Executive Producer for *Citizen Hong Kong* and *China 21*, handling funder relations and publicity. Smock produced and edited the American Masters special *Isamu Noguchi: Stones and Paper*, originally broadcast in 1997, winner of Best Portrait in the Montreal Festival of Films on Art. More recently, he wrote and edited Jed Riffe's Independent Lens show *Who Owns the Past?* funded by Native American Public TV. His book, *The Bauhaus Ideal Then and Now* just came out in paperback.

**Jon Herbst**

Composer

Jon Herbst studied film scoring and jazz performance at Berklee College of Music in Boston. He plays jazz piano in small and large Bay Area ensembles. He has composed music for 25 TV shows and many award-winning films, including Rick Goldsmith's *Tell the Truth and Run* (Golden Spire award), *Deadly Deception*, Debra Chasnoff's Academy Award-winning documentary, the POV documentary *In the Light of Reverence*, directed by Toby McLeod, and Ruby Yang's *Citizen Hong Kong*.

## Production Stills

### A Moment in Time 01



Senior citizens wait outside San Francisco's Great Star Theatre for a screening of an old Cantonese opera film.

(Photo: Pamela Gentile)

### A Moment in Time 02



Producer Lambert Yam welcomes an elderly woman to a screening of "Legend of the Purple Hairpin", a classic Cantonese opera film.

(Photo/ Pamela Gentile)



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# A Moment in Time

## END CREDITS

*Directed by*  
Ruby Yang

*Producer*  
Lambert Yam

*Executive Producer*  
William Smock

### *Interviewees*

Larry Chin	Philip Choy
Amy Chung	Irene Dea Collier
Christopher Doyle	Norman Fong
Chuck Gee	Dr. William C. Hu
Dr. Alfred Lee	Jimmie Lee
David Lei	Andrew Leong
Marion Leong	Greg Li
Dr. Rolland Lowe	Bradford Lum
Vale	Cecilia Wong
John Woo	Frank Yee

### *Photography*

Sam Fung	Clarence Ting
K. C. Smith	Mike Shen
Lambert Yam	Ruby Yang

### *Editors*

Gary Wong & Ruby Yang

*Music by*  
Jon Herbst



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***Graphic & Animation***

Gary Wong & Frog Cui

***Associate Editors***

Paul Wang

Sharon Lu

***Assistant Editors***

Ju Dan

Henry H. S. Cheng

***Production Assistants***

Sean Frechette

Kevin Sun

Yang Yin Biao

***Post-Production Assistant***

Alexandra Mattholie

***Post-Production Interns***

Celine Cheung

Sara Hossaini

***Colorist***

Ed Rudolph

***Sound Mixer***

James LeBrecht

***Sound Editor***

Patti Tauscher

***Advisors***

Annie Cheng      Gordon Chang

Rey Chow      Him Mark Lai

Edith Kramer      Peter Kwong

Law Kar      Leung Ping-kwan

David Palumbo Liu



***Thanks to***

Terence Chang      Paul Fornoroff  
 Jerry Jew          Stanley Lai  
 Amien Lau         Jennie Lew  
 Gail Silva

***Special Thanks to***

Bede Cheng        Pam Gentile  
 Brian Lau         Roger Lee  
 Will Luan          Thomas Lennon

Baht Wo Association  
 Chinese Historical Society  
 Film Arts Foundation  
 Green String Chinese Opera Academy  
 Hong Kong Film Archive  
 Soo Yuen Benevolent Association  
 Wednesday Lunch Club

***Film Sources Courtesy of***

ATV Enterprises Ltd.

Celestial Pictures Ltd.	China Film Archive
Hong Kong Film Archive	Sil-Metropole Organisation Ltd.
Shim Shim Films Company	Bede Cheng
Li Shek Hung	Ng Boki
Cai Ming	Ben Wong

Footages of “*Ashes of Time*” and “*Fallen Angels*”  
 provided through the courtesy of Block 2 Distribution

***“Ashes of Time”***

1994 © Block 2 Pictures Inc. All Rights Reserved

***“Fallen Angels”***

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***Film Publicity Stills Courtesy of***

AMPAS      Lambert Yam

***Posters Collection***

Paul Fornoroff      K.Bik Films



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***Photographs Courtesy of***

Eric Chan    Christopher Doyle    Jerry Jew  
Jennifer Woodward Maderazo  
Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division  
National Archives & Records Administration  
San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

***Additional Music***

Kevin MacLeod  
Brian Keane

***Songs***

“*Till the End of Time*” written by Buddy Kaye and Ted Mossman  
Performed by Larry Ching, Forbidden City Records  
Courtesy of Ben Fong-Torres

“*Break it Up*” written by Jeanne Vikki, Jimmie Thomas and N. Nathan  
Performed by Googie Rene, Courtesy of Lynn Adajian  
By arrangement with Nola Leone/Ace Music Services LLC

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Chinese Performing Arts Foundation

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## Press Release

*A Moment in Time*, a new film by Oscar-winner Ruby Yang, is a one-hour documentary about the experience of the Chinese in America through the films they loved. It harkens back to a time when six movie theaters in San Francisco's Chinatown crystallized the memories, the beliefs, the sorrows and aspirations of Chinese immigrant families.

The principal speakers in *A Moment in Time* grew up here: Irene Dea Collier, Jimmie Lee, Chuck Gee, Cecilia Wong, Amy Chung, Norman Fong. As children they associated Chinese movies (and the Chinese language) with their parents' alien, backward world. Chinese mothers loved Cantonese Opera films in which tyrannical parents wrench young lovers apart. For them, movies were a rare break in an endless workweek. Chinese movies also translated national disasters – World War II, for example – into personal dramas of separation and loss. For Chinese immigrants they were true to life, unlike the sunny family shows on American TV.

The immigrants' American kids eventually found their own reasons to appreciate Chinese film. Partly in self defense -- because they were seen as Chinese -- the children developed a pride in Chinese things. The heartbeat of *A Moment in Time* is a series of clips from films that were hits in Chinatown. Hollywood Westerns were always popular. Wong Fei Hung, a Robin Hood character from Hong Kong, defended the weak with a smile and a bullwhip. Films from revolutionary mainland China sparked battles in Chinatown between long-haired youths and a conservative older generation. 1950s bobbysoxer films from Hong Kong proved that Chinese girls can be cool. 1960s martial arts films, notably those of Bruce Lee, sent Chinatown boys to kung fu school. Before long all American boys were going.

Chinatown movie theaters have closed. Chinese movies have broken into mainstream culture. Hong Kong directors like John Woo and Wong Kar Wai, movie stars like Chow Yun Fat and Jackie Chan are known around the world. *A Moment in Time* recalls the period when Chinese movie theaters marked a dividing line between the generations, but were also a school where American kids came to appreciate their Chinese roots.

Ruby Yang and her producer husband, Lambert Yam, are Americans born in Hong Kong. Lambert Yam managed the World Theater in San Francisco's Chinatown from 1985 to 1995, an interlude of dramatic change in Chinatown and in Chinese films. Ruby Yang's Oscar-winning documentary *The Blood of Yingzhou District*, produced by Thomas Lennon, was filmed in China, where she and Lambert Yam are now based. Yang has directed two other documentaries for American public TV – *China 21* and *Citizen Hong Kong*. She edited Bill Moyers' PBS series *Becoming American: The Chinese Experience* and Spencer Nakasako's Emmy-award-winning documentary *A.K.A. Don Bonus*. She edited two of Joan Chen's feature films, *Xiu Xiu* and *Autumn in New York*, and has worked on many other features and documentaries. For both Ruby Yang and Lambert Yam, *A Moment in Time* wraps up a great deal that is close to their hearts.

*A Moment in Time* was supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Council for the Humanities, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, the Creative Work Fund, the Chinese Performing Arts Foundation, and the Center for Asian American Media in association with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.



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