

Museum of Chinese Australian History and RMIT Culture present

Who's been telling our story?

Screen Presence 23, Sunday 29 January 2023, The Capitol – RMIT University



The Home Song Stories (2007)



Mao's Last Dancer (2007)



Floating Life (1996)

This new cinema event on the **Melbourne Chinese Lunar New Year** calendar, **Screen Presence 23** celebrates Chinese Australian stories on screen at **The Capitol** theatre. We welcome everyone to share the laughs, learnings, and heartaches of what it means to be Chinese Australian in complex times.

Special guests and leading members of the Australian film industry join filmmaker and host **Rosie Lourde** in a day featuring screenings, conversations and meditations on their experience, cultures and identity, the hurdles still being faced, and the discoveries being made as the Chinese Australian identity continues to evolve.

Opening with the inaugural **Screen Presence In-Conversation**, **Benjamin Law**, **Wenlei Ma**, **Corrie Chen** and **Adrian Danks** talk about representation in storytelling on screens of all sizes. The screening program sees broadcaster and screenwriter, **Benjamin Law** and actor **Fiona Choi** introduce *Shanghai Express* (1932), starring Marlene Dietrich and Anna May Wong, which premiered at The Capitol 90 years ago; filmmakers **Clara Law** and **Eddie Fong** present their film *Floating Life* (1996) described by Senses of Cinema as 'a turning point in Australian cinema'; author and artistic director of Queensland Ballet, **Li Cunxin AO**, speaks one of Australia's preeminent writers, **Jan Sardi AO** about their adaptation of his memoir *Mao's Last Dancer* (2009); and to conclude the evening industry icon **Tony Ayres** presents his autobiographical film *The Home Song Stories* (2007) and chats with the film's producer and life-long collaborator, **Michael McMahon** about championing underrepresented, diverse emerging filmmakers.

The day's celebrations close with the presentation and screening of the 2023 **NEXT GEN Filmmakers Award** winning film, presented by Tony Ayres with Mark Wang, Chinese Museum CEO.

Producer, writer, director and Screen Presence Curator, **Lisa Wang** is available for interviews.

Enquiries: projects@chinesemuseum.com.au

SCREEN PRESENCE 23

Sunday 29 January 2023, The Capitol – RMIT University

Full program follows.

Bookings <https://screen-presence23.eventbrite.com.au>

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Full Program – Sunday 29 January, 2023

10:00AM

SESSION 1 – SCREEN PRESENCE IN-CONVERSATION

While great strides have been made showcasing Asian voices through mainstage theatre, award-winning TV and viral online content, films about the Chinese Australian experiences are few and far between. If art is supposed to be a mirror of society, where are these stories? What more can be done to help Asian Australian filmmakers tell authentic stories that can help bridge cultural boundaries?

Cross-platform, multi-hyphenate filmmaker, Rosie Lourde - our MC for the day, will chair the discussion with:

- **Film and TV critic**, news.com.au and NSW Chair, Media Diversity Australia, **Wenlei Ma**
- **Stop Everything!** ABC radio host and screenwriter **Benjamin Law**
- **Melbourne Cinematheque** co-curator, School of Media & Communication, RMIT, Associate Professor **Adrian Danks**
- **Multi award-winning screenwriter, director** (*Wentworth, New Gold Mountain*) **Corrie Chen**

11:45AM

SESSION 2 – MISREPRESENTATION

Shanghai Express (1932) 82 mins

Ninety years ago, this Oscar-winning film directed by Josef von Sternberg premiered at The Capitol. Although set in China, few Chinese appear in the film. It stars Marlene Dietrich supported by Clive Brook, Anna May Wong, Warner Oland; most remembered for playing several Chinese and Chinese American characters: Dr Fu Manchu, Henry Chang in this film, and most notably Charlie Chan.

Considered the first Chinese American star in Hollywood, Wong was frustrated by the supporting roles she reluctantly played - 'why is it that the screen Chinese is nearly always the villain of the piece, and so cruel a villain - murderous, treacherous, a snake in the grass. We are not like that.'

After the screening, join writer and broadcaster **Benjamin Law** chat about the film with **Fiona Choi**, creator, writer, and lead of *Dragon Lady: The Many Lives and Deaths of Anna May Wong* for an insight into leading ladies and representation, then and now.

2:00PM

SESSION 3 – VISIBILITY

Floating Life (1996) 95mins

"*Floating Life* represents some kind of turning point in Australian cinema in that it establishes a signpost towards a still nascent movement in this country, which is the creation of an Asian-Australian cinema" – Stephen Teo, Senses of Cinema.

Moving East to West has turned their lives... upside down. *Floating Life* is a poignant and funny film about a Chinese family that falls apart after moving from Hong Kong to Australia. Gradually they find a way of coming together again.

Join writer, director **Clara Law** and co-writer **Eddie Fong** for a Q&A after the screening as they engage with the audience about the film and the experiences of the Asian diaspora.

SCREEN PRESENCE 23 is presented by



Full Program (continued) Sunday 29 January, 2023

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4:30PM

SESSION 4 – OUR STORIES

Mao's Last Dancer (2009) 117mins

"A beautiful translation of life and story to the big screen, director Bruce Beresford and screen-writer, Jan Sardi combines the amazing true story of noble ballerino Li Cunxin with exquisitely breathtaking performances of some of the world's most famous ballets – Dante's Inferno, Swan Lake and even Chinese ballets that were performed for Mrs Mao. Aiming for the heart and hitting it every time, Mao's Last Dancer is not only breathtaking, but meticulously enchanting." – Behind the Lens.

Mao's Last Dancer is a memoir written by Li Cunxin and first published in 2003. The book recounts his journey from a young, impoverished village boy destined to labour in the fields of China to a world-famous professional dancer.

After the screening, join author of *Mao's Last Dancer* and artistic director of Queensland Ballet, **Li Cunxin AO** and one of Australia's preeminent writers, **Jan Sardi AO** to talk about their collaboration from book to screen.

7:15PM

SESSION 5 – MASTERCLASS

The Home Song Stories (2007) 103mins

Join us to celebrate our Screen Presence prior to the screening of our feature – an opportunity to mingle with community and industry to celebrate what has been achieved and what is to come!

The Home Song Stories will screen at 8:00PM

Written and directed by Tony Ayres, SBS Movies described this film as *'beautifully shot and artfully designed, The Home Song Stories features strong performances and the kind of intimacy and honesty that you can only get from an autobiographical film.'*

Tony Ayres is one of Australia's most prolific and award-winning showrunners, writers and directors. One of the founding members of Matchbox Pictures with lawyer and screen content producer Michael McMahon, now owned by NBCU. In 2018 Tony established Tony Ayres Productions (TAP), to develop and produce feature films and television for global audiences and international marketplaces.

Join Tony for a Q&A with the film's producer, and director and executive producer of *Big and Little Films*, **Michael McMahon** after the screening and discover how they are actively championing underrepresented, diverse emerging filmmakers.

followed by

NEXT GEN Filmmakers Award 2023

Tony Ayres and **Mark Wang**, CEO, Museum of Chinese Australian History, will introduce some of our emerging filmmakers and present the *Next Gen Filmmaker Award 2023* to the recipient filmmaker, followed by a screening of their winning short film.

SCREEN PRESENCE 23

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