

## WIP R To Live To Sing



**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** China

**GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:** Drama | Digital Format | Mandarin | 100 mins

**DIRECTOR:**

Johnny MA

**PRODUCER:**

WU Xianjian

WANG Jing

Vincent WANG

**HAF GOALS:**

Funds, Sales agents, Pre-sales, Festival Screening

**BUDGET:**

US\$ 760,000

**SECURED BUDGET:**

US\$ 560,000

**DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY**

2016 *Old Stone*

**ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS**

A hot-tempered female Sichuan opera troupe manager, faced with demolition of her theatre, must find her troupe a new home before the "family" falls apart.

## SYNOPSIS

Zhao Li is the manager of a small Sichuan Opera troupe of 11 members, living and performing together in a rundown theatre located in the outskirts of Chengdu, China. But when she receives an order of demolition for the troupe theatre, Zhao Li hides the news from everyone else, fearing that this could spell the end of her opera troupe. Secretly, Zhao Li would not mind stopping since troupe life has become difficult over the years. But what else can she do? Besides demolition, she also worries that her 17-year-old niece, Dan Dan - the starlet of the troupe - will leave them for a better future in the city. To keep her troupe "family" together, Zhao Li begins to search for a new theatre for them to both sing and live in. As she struggles with modern government bureaucracy, her opera world slowly begins to seep into her real world. Just as Zhao Li uses opera performance as a way to escape from the troubles of her real life, soon characters from opera begin to show up in that real life...

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I first came across Zhao Li and her opera troupe back in 2013 when I watched a TV documentary depicting their daily lives. The images were hastily captured on a handi-cam but I was completely captivated by its larger than-life characters. I was reminded of one of my favorite Ozu films, *Floating Weeds* (1959). Just like the travelling troupe in that film, for Zhao Li and her troupe, performing was not only their job but it was also their way of life. I believe the only way for me to make this film is with the real troupe members depicting themselves. By placing the real opera troupe in the center of the film and giving them a chance to relive this alternative version of their own story, I hope to create a film where reality and fiction fuse together in a hybrid docu-fiction approach. I believe audiences both in China and abroad will be able to relate to the story in a larger context and global trend of the traditional family values colliding against the tide of modern change.

## DIRECTOR

### Johnny MA

Born in Shanghai, China, Johnny first immigrated to Toronto at the age of ten. He graduated from Columbia University and was a fellow at the Sundance Institute Screenwriting and Directing Lab in 2014. In 2012, Johnny moved back to China to make his thesis film, *A Grand Canal* (2013), which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival. *Old Stone* (2016), Johnny's directorial debut world premiered at the Berlinale. It was awarded the Best Canadian First Feature Award at Toronto International Film Festival and Best First Feature at Canadian Screen Awards.

## PRODUCER

### WU Xianjian

Wu transitioned to narrative filmmaking with his first feature film, *Old Stone* (2016) after many years as a high-end commercial producer in Shanghai.

### WANG Jing

Wang received her MFA in Creative Producing from Columbia University. Her feature debut as a producer, *Old Stone* (2016), premiered at the Berlinale and won Best Canadian First Feature Film at the Toronto International Film Festival. Her projects have participated in many festivals.

### Vincent WANG

Vincent Wang is a French-Taiwanese producer who founded the company House on Fire. His knowledge of both Western and Chinese cultures alongside his film production savoir-faire lead to the success of his Chinese-European productions: Tsai Ming-liang's *The Wayward Cloud* (2005), winner of Silver Bear Award at Berlin Film Festival, *Face* (2009), selected at Cannes Film Festival, and *Stray Dogs* (2013), Director Award in Venice Film Festival. Recently, Vincent produced Alireza Kahtami's *Oblivion Verses* (2017), Screenplay Award in Venice Orizzonti, *A Gentle Night* (2017) by Qiu Yang, Palme d'Or for Best Short at Cannes Film Festival, João Pedro Rodrigues' *The Ornithologist* (2016), Director Award in Locarno Film Festival and Midi Z's *the Road to Mandalay* (2016).

## PRODUCTION COMPANY

### IMAGE X Productions

Founded by Shanghai-based veteran producer Wu Xianjian, IMAGE X Productions is a full service production company specializing in high-end commercials. It has partnered with top agencies and created campaigns for clients like Coca Cola, Tiffany and Sony. In 2013, IMAGE X Productions partnered with Shanghai-born Canadian director Johnny Ma and since then transitioned to narrative filmmaking with *A Grand Canal* (2013), which premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and *Old Stone* (2016), world premiere at the Berlinale and won Best Canadian First Feature Film at Toronto International Film Festival.