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EDMONTON COMPOSER SUCCESS IS MUSIC TO EARS OF CBC TV DOCUMENTARY SERIES

Darren Fung : “Without question, the highlight was conducting the China National Symphony Orchestra in Beijing for a production that was produced in Alberta ... and will be seen around the world...”

EDMONTON - When viewers tuned into the documentary journey of CBC TV's *Lost Years* special last Saturday, they were treated to the haunting and inspirational strains of Los Angeles-based composer Darren Fung, whose own career has come full circle, having grown up in the suburbs of Edmonton.

Born and raised in Edmonton, to parents who emigrated to the city from Hong Kong in the 1970s, via Minnesota where his dad first found work, Fung's earliest grounding in music came through a prestigious internship with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra.

Thereafter, the 30-ish Fung moved east to train in music composition at McGill University in Montreal where he spent time in summer workshops, before working the film and television industry which he has been doing since, for almost a decade now. Success soon followed, with commissions varying from CTV to re-arrange Canada's Hockey Anthem for TSN to Bell Media's gi-normous commercial campaign during the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

When *Lost Year's* Co-Producer Kenda Gee contacted him, two years ago, Fung says he approached the project with great trepidation at first. “I knew it was going to be a special challenge,” says Fung.

“On a personal level, I was excited by the prospect of composing a Chinese-themed production, an opportunity for which I had waited most of my life. On the other hand, the enormity of an epic production produced within a very narrow timeframe seemed crazy,” says Fung, of the time-line.

“I had also just moved from Montreal to Los Angeles, with my newly-wed wife and life in town, in a UHaul about two days before starting the project, so you can imagine me setting up a basic table with my studio and fishing out stuff from my boxes!”

Gee says he never doubted they had hired the right person to score *Lost Years: A People's Struggle for Justice*, which is broadcast on television as a 2-part documentary mini series. The 2nd episode airs next Saturday, August 27th, at 7 PM in the prime-time summer slot on CBC TV in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

“Tom (Radford, Co-Producer) and I had narrowed down our names to three people. When I read Darren's background and listened to his music, it blew me away, and I immediately had to tell Tom, ‘this is THE Guy’ we've been dreaming about.”

“And for one of the few times,” says Gee modestly, “I was right.”

Gee says that Fung had the passion and emotional commitment for the production, and the constant drive to get the job done. “Lost Years is possible only because the creative team and production staff worked their ends 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There was never any break for anyone. Our team had already been blessed by an overload of amazing talent, really. Non-stop. For two years.”

Fung still recalls both his most memorable and scariest moments during the post-production of the documentary mini-series.

“Without question, the highlight was conducting the China National Symphony Orchestra in Beijing for a production that was produced in Alberta, my home province, and will be seen around the world, including China,” states Fung.

“But, Frank, our contractor had tried to convince me not to record the piano in Beijing as the piano in the studio was what we call a Frankenstein piano: they had used different pieces and strings from other pianos to create one. We had a piano tuner there for the whole day, tuning the piano on the hour, every hour and it STILL managed to get out of tune!”

Fung still cringes when he thinks back, but is over-joyed with the overwhelming positive response that has hit the producers since the first Episode aired on the weekend on CBC TV.

“Once we brought in the erhu player, with the orchestra, I have to admit, her sound just melted my heart. As a modern film composer, I rely heavily on computer and MIDI samples to come up with mockups, I have never had the pleasure of working with a live erhu player. And, when she played her first note, I got goose-bumps on the conductor's podium.”

After production is completed, Fung will be working on a forthcoming Los Angeles indie-feature film, and then a documentary for the National Film Board.

Episode 2 of Lost Years airs on CBC TV in Alberta and Saskatchewan on Saturday, August 27th, at 7 PM.

The 2-part epic documentary mini-series will also be broadcast in China, with possible broadcast dates in New Zealand, Australia and the United States. A series of theatrical screenings across Canada is also planned.

Lost Years touches upon 150 years of the Chinese diaspora, including the community history in Canada, from the earliest Chinese arrivals in the 1840s to the modern era which saw the federal government offer a formal apology for historic injustices in 2006. It was filmed by Director of Photography, Rene Jean Collins, and edited by award-winning editor, Brenda Terning.

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