

"Lost Years" connects composer to his ancestral roots

Scott Iwasaki, *The Park Record*

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When film-music composer Darren Fung begins a project, he prefers to speak with the director in emotional terms.

"One of the biggest frustrations of a film composer is a director that tries to speak in musical terms, because nine times out of 10, even if the directors are musicians, they probably don't know what they are talking about," Fung said during a telephone interview from his home in Los Angeles, Calif. "It makes it difficult, because they might mean something totally different than what they mean."

So, when Fung began working with filmmakers Kenda Gee and Tom Radford on the documentary "Lost Years: a People's Struggle for Justice," they made sure they understood what each other wanted.

"We went back and forth about the characters' music and how the character would feel certain times in the film," Fung said. "I would come up with a couple of themes and I'd give them an mp3 and we gave each other notes and we went back and forth."

"Lost Years" will screen Monday, May 28, at 12:30 p.m. and Saturday, June 2, at 12:30 p.m. in the Prospector Theater 3.

The film is a documentary about the redress and prejudice Chinese immigrants experienced in Canada.

For Fung, who is Chinese-Canadian, composing the score was more personal than any project he has worked on.

"My parents moved to Canada from China in the 1970s, which was way past that time documented in the film and I really didn't know about the story until after I had scored the music," he said. "To learn about Chinese-Canadian history was fascinating. I have always wanted to do a project that tied me back to my Chinese roots."

As a composer, the project also interested him because of the possibility to blend musical styles for the score.

"We introduced a Western score with Chinese elements in it," he said.

The score was recorded by the China National Symphony Orchestra in Beijing.

"That was a lot of fun because we were able to use an erhu (Chinese violin) and a pipa (Chinese lute)," Fung said. "I'm interested in melding the classical background with anything, including drum and bass, jazz or ethnic instruments."

Fung has composed film scores for nine years and started right after graduating from McGill University in Montreal.

"I am an anomaly when it comes to young film composers, because I cherish the idea of working with live musicians," he said. "Not that all young film composers don't like that opportunity, but I will go that extra mile to do that."

That desire emerged from his training.

"I did a film-score course and learned how to do things the old-fashioned way with stopwatches and click books, because I couldn't afford a computer," he said with a laugh. "When I finished that course, I would get a bunch of my friends and we would sneak into the concert hall at McGill and we'd bring in pizza and beer and make 20-piece orchestra film scores for students films."

Fung, who wrote his first piece of orchestral music when he was 15, grew up in Edmonton, Canada.

"The city has a program called the Young Composers Project where young musicians work with composers in

residence," he said. "I got the bug and was hooked and went to school to study composition."

The ninth annual Park City Film Music Festival will run from Friday, May 25, through Sunday, June 3, and will present screenings of independent films at the Egyptian Theatre, 328 Main St., and the Prospector Theatre, 2175 Sidewinder Dr. For more information and the schedule, visit <http://www.pcfmf.com/MainPage.html> .