

## Document Citation

Title	<b>The road home</b>
Author(s)	
Source	<i>Larsen Associates</i>
Date	
Type	distributor materials
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	11
Subjects	Bao, Shi, China (Republic : 1949- ) Hou, Yong, China (Republic : 1949- ) Zhang, Yimou Kiarostami, Abbas (1940), Teheran, Iran
Film Subjects	Yi ge dou bu neg shao (Not one less), Zhang, Yimou, 1999 Yao a yao yao dao waipo qiao (Shanghai triad), Zhang, Yimou, 1995 Wo de fu qin mu qin (The road home), Zhang, Yimou, 1999



# THE ROAD HOME

a film by Zhang Yimou

A Sony Pictures Classics Release.

Rated G. 100 Minutes

-- PRODUCTION NOTES--

East Coast:

Wang & Gluck  
Norman Wang  
Sophie Gluck  
154 Mott St.  
New York, NY 10013  
Tel: (212) 226-3269  
Fax: (212) 941-1425

West Coast:

Block-Korenbrod  
Melody Korenbrot  
8271 Melrose Ave.  
Suite 200  
Los Angeles, CA 90046  
Tel: (323) 655-0593  
Fax: (323) 655-7302

Distributor:

Sony Pictures Classics  
Carmelo Pirrone  
Marissa Manne  
550 Madison Avenue  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10022  
Tel: (212) 833-8833  
Fax: (212) 833-8844

Visit the Sony Pictures Classics internet site at:  
**<http://www.sonyclassics.com>**

local contact:

**LARSEN ASSOCIATES**  
Karen Larsen / Tim Buckwalter /  
Caroline Hanni t:415-957-1205



# “The Road Home”

*Cast*

<b>Zhao Di (Youth)</b>	Zhang Ziyi
<b>Luo Yusheng</b>	Sun Honglei
<b>Luo Changyu</b>	Zheng Hao
<b>Zhao Di (Elderly)</b>	Zhao Yuelin
<b>Grandmother</b>	Li Bin
<b>Mayor (Elderly)</b>	Chang Guifa
<b>Mayor (Youth)</b>	Sung Wencheng
<b>Carpenter Xia (Elderly)</b>	Liu Qi
<b>Carpenter Xia (Youth)</b>	Ji Bo
<b>Crockery Repairman</b>	Zhang Zhongxi

# “The Road Home”

## *Credits*

<b>Director</b>	Zhang Yimou
<b>Screenplay</b>	Bao Shi
<b>Producer</b>	Zhao Yu
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Zhang Weiping
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Hou Yong
<b>Art Director</b>	Cao Jiuping
<b>Sound</b>	Wu Lala
<b>Composer</b>	San Bao
<b>Script Consultant</b>	Wang Bin
<b>Editor</b>	Zhai Ru
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	Xie Dong
	Ya Te
	Li Hong
<b>Production Managers</b>	Zhang Zhengyan
	Hu Xiaofeng
<b>2nd Cameraman</b>	Li Xiaoping
<b>Lighting</b>	Kang Xiaotian
<b>Assistant Art Director</b>	Huang Xinming
<b>Assistant Cameraman</b>	Zhao Zhigang
<b>Assistant Recording</b>	Wang Dong
<b>Production Assistant</b>	Hao Jiankuo
<b>Continuity</b>	Zhong Qing
<b>Still Photography</b>	Bai Xiaoyan
<b>Costume Design</b>	Dong Huamiao
<b>Prop Masters</b>	Leng Jianjun
	Chen Zhigang
<b>Makeup Artist</b>	Yang Dandan
<b>Set Masters</b>	Ma Ying
	Hu Zhongquan
<b>Catering</b>	Hu Zhong
	Ge Tianhui
<b>Director Assistants</b>	Hou Zhihua
	Xiao Han
<b>Camera Assistants</b>	Li Qiang
	Zhao Chuncheng
	Wang Licheng
	Ren Kaimeng



<b>Assistant Editors</b>	Zhang Wenjun
<b>Sound Editing</b>	Yang Shaoyu
<b>Sound Assistants</b>	Lin Qian
	Hou Shaohui
	Li Wen
<b>Wardrobe Assistant</b>	Zhao Shaoxia
<b>Set Master Assistants</b>	Lu Jianan
	Sun Lingjiang
<b>Documentary Director</b>	Ding Jiancheng
<b>Music</b>	Asia Aiyue Orchestra
<b>Equipment</b>	Salon Films (HK) Ltd.
<b>Film Processing</b>	Beijing Film Processing Laboratory
<b>Duration</b>	100 minutes
<b>Format</b>	1:1.23 (Cinemascope)/35MM/Color

**A Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia Presentation**  
**A Guangxi Film Studios & Beijing New Picture Distribution Company Production**  
**1999 People's Republic of China**



# **“The Road Home”**

## ***Synopsis – Long Form***

For the first time in many years businessman Luo Yusheng drives to Sanhetun, the village in North China where he was born. The district mayor called him to tell him that his father died suddenly, and Yusheng is rushing back to be with his mother. He finds her grief-stricken, keeping a sad vigil outside the decrepit village schoolhouse. But she is adamant that her husband’s funeral will follow age-old local customs, even if they are rarely observed nowadays. She will personally weave the funeral cloth on the village loom, and local men must carry the coffin from the hospital back to the village.

The mayor hopes that Yusheng will persuade his mother to be more ‘reasonable’ – for example, to allow the coffin to be driven rather than carried. He fears that even if he could find men willing to carry the coffin many miles through the winter snows, there would not be enough of them. Most of the young men of Sanhetun – like Yusheng himself – have left the village to work in faraway cities.

As he watches his mother weave the funeral cloth, Yusheng reflects on what he’s heard of his parents’ courtship. Everyone in the village knew the story at that time.

His mother Zhao Di was an 18-year-old (living with her blind, widowed mother) when the 20-year-old Luo Changyu arrived from East Gate to be the village schoolteacher. She was considered the prettiest girl in Sanhetun, and she set her sights on the handsome newcomer as soon as she saw him. When Changyu teamed up with the village men to build a new schoolhouse (and Zhao Di, following tradition, was nominated to weave the red cloth that would be wound around its rafters), she always hoped that Changyu would pick her dishes from the lunch-table provided communally by the women. And when the new school was opened, Zhao Di took to drawing water from the little-used old well – because that brought her close to the schoolhouse and gave her the chance of passing Changyu as he escorted pupils home.

Her efforts to attract the teacher’s attention were successful. By the time it was Zhao Di and her mother’s turn to invite Changyu to eat in their home, he was shyly showing his interest. And so it was a huge blow to Zhao Di when men arrived from the city to take Changyu away with them for questioning. Changyu snatched a moment to say goodbye to Zhao Di, promising to return as soon as possible and giving her a hairpin as a small gift. During Changyu’s protracted absence, Zhao Di went to the schoolhouse to clean it up and repair its paper windows. That was when the rest of the villagers realised that she and Changyu were in love. There was much talk, because arranged marriages were still the norm then. This was Sanhetun’s first “love match”.

Changyu was away for a long time. One day he was rumoured to be due back, but didn’t return. Zhao Di waited for him so long she became feverish and then set off through the snow and mist to look for him in the city. She was found collapsed in the snow and brought home with a bad



chill. She woke two days later to find that Changyu had come back, and had sat by her bedside for hours. It turned out that Changyu had sneaked away without permission from some political tribunal in the city specifically to see her. His disobedience was punished when he went back to the city, and he and Zhao Di were kept apart for two more years. When he finally came back along ‘The Road Home’ to Sanhetun, Zhao Di was there to greet him. And they were never separated again.

Back in the present, Yusheng realises that his mother’s wishes for Changyu’s funeral must be respected. He gives the mayor 5000 yuan to hire 32 men to carry the coffin in shifts and to keep them plied with cigarettes and rice-wine. But when the day of the funeral arrives, more than a hundred of Changyu’s former pupils turn up to carry his coffin, and none of them will accept payment. The coffin is laid to rest near the old well, overlooking the schoolhouse.

Next day Zhao Di takes Yusheng to the schoolhouse (due to be rebuilt next spring) and reminds him that his father always hoped that he would succeed him as the village teacher. And before he leaves to go back to his job in the city, Yusheng spends one day teaching the local children in the old building.

### ***Synopsis -- Short Form***

City businessman Luo Yusheng returns to his home village in North China for the funeral of his father, the village teacher. He finds his elderly mother insisting that all traditional burial customs be observed, despite that fact that times have changed so much. Observing his mother’s intransigence, Yusheng thinks back over the stories he heard as a boy about his parents’ courtship. His father, Luo Changyu, came to the village as the new teacher and soon fell in love with Zhao Di, considered the prettiest of local girls. But their developing romance was curtailed when Changyu was ordered back to the city for obscure political “mistakes”, and the would-be lovers were kept apart for more than two years. When finally reunited, they married and never separated again. Yusheng realizes that his mother’s wishes for the funeral must be respected, and so he provides money to hire men to carry his father’s coffin the many miles from the hospital to its final resting place in the village. On the day of the funeral, though, more than one hundred of Changyu’s former pupils turn up to carry the coffin – and none of them will accept payment. Before returning to the city, Yusheng symbolically honors his father’s dearest wish: he spends one day teaching in the village school.



## **“The Road Home”**

### Director Biography

Born in Xian, China in 1950, Zhang Yimou was in secondary school when the Cultural Revolution erupted in 1966. His studies were suspended and he was sent to work in the countryside in 1968, first on farms in Shanxi Province for three years, and from 1971 to 1978 as a laborer in a spinning mill. Interested in art and photography from an early age, Zhang pursued a hobby as a still photographer despite the scarcity of books and materials or the chance for his work to be published.

When the Beijing Film Academy held a nation-wide examination in 1978, Zhang enrolled and passed with high marks but was rejected because at age 27, he was five years beyond the accepted age limit. After two unsuccessful trips to Beijing to repeal the decision, he wrote directly to the Minister of Culture, pleading his case on the grounds that he had wasted ten years because of the Cultural Revolution. Two months later, he was accepted to study in the Film Academy's Department of Cinematography.

After graduating in 1982, he was assigned to work in the Guangxi Film Studio. In 1985 he moved to the Xian Film Studio and worked as a cinematographer on such films as ONE AND THE EIGHT (1982), directed by Zhang Junchao, YELLOW EARTH (1983) and THE BIG PARADE (1985), both directed by Chen Kaige.

Zhang made his directorial debut in 1988 with RED SORGHUM; starring Gong Li in her first film role. The film won the Golden Bear Award for Best Picture at the 1989 Berlin Film Festival. He went on to direct several more films with Gong Li including JU DOU (1990) which was nominated for an Oscar in 1991; RAISE THE RED LANTERN (1991) which was awarded the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival and was also nominated for an Academy Award; THE STORY OF QIU JU (1992) which won the Golden Lion at the 1992 Venice Film Festival; TO LIVE (1994) which won the Grand Jury Prize and Best Actor Award at the Cannes Film Festival; and SHANGHAI TRIAD, which was an Official Selection in Cannes in 1995. KEEP COOL was further premiered in competition in Venice in 1996. In 1997 he directed the Puccini opera TURANDOT in Florence, Italy with Zubin Mehta serving as conductor. In 1998, he and Mehta once again collaborated on a re-staging of the opera in Beijing's Forbidden City. His recent film NOT ONE LESS, the first feature from Sony Pictures Entertainment's Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia venture, was awarded the coveted Golden Lion, the top prize of the Venice Film Festival in 1999.



## “The Road Home”

### *About the Collaborators*

Cinematographer **Hou Yong** was born in 1960 and was Zhang Yimou’s classmate in the cinematography class of the Beijing Film Academy. He has worked on such films as **THE DAY THE SUN TURNED COLD** by Hong Kong director Yim Ho and Tian Zhuangzhuang’s **HORSE THIEF** and **THE BLUE KITE**. This is his second film with Zhang Yimou after **NOT ONE LESS**.

Art Director **Cao Jiuping** graduated from the Xian Art Institute in 1982 and has worked on all of Zhang Yimou’s films.

Soundman **Wu Lala** is a graduate of the Beijing Film Academy in Sound. His previous films include: **EAST PALACE**, **WEST PALACE** by Zhang Yuan, **EIGHTEEN SPRINGS** by Hong Kong director Ann Hui, **SPICY LOVE SOUP** by Zhang Ming and **NOT ONE LESS**.

Editor **Zhai Ru** is originally from Beijing and worked as continuity on the films **IN THE HEAT OF THE SUN** by Jiang Wen, **TEMPTRESS MOON** by Chen Kaige. She served as editor on Zhang Yimou’s **KEEP COOL** and **NOT ONE LESS** and Lu Yue’s Locarno Golden Leopard winner **MR. ZHAO**.

Music composer **San Bao** was born in Beijing in 1968 and is a graduate of the Beijing Music Institute. He has worked as composer on the films **THE DIVORCE**, **BE THERE OR BE SQUARE** and **NOT ONE LESS**.

Original screenwriter, **Bao Shi** was born in Heilongjiang Province in 1959. He was a farmer, teacher and majored in Dramatic Literature at the Heilongjiang Arts Academy. He is now based in Harbin and has written several novels, including **REINCARNATION**, **FANTASYLAND**, **BAI ZHUANG**, **FIELD OF DREAMS**, **COUNTRY MUSIC** and **SPRING AND AUTUMN MEMORIES**.



## **“The Road Home”**

*From an Interview with Zhang Yimou*

Chinese society has changed so fast that most people feel lost. The Chinese cinema reflects these developments. These days the market economy dominates everything and our cultural life has lost its way. Really vulgar commercial films dominate our screens. Directors who would once have been ashamed to make such films are nowadays proud to put their names to them. It's a sad state of affairs, and I find myself wondering if people really like such films. I made my last two films NOT ONE LESS and THE ROAD HOME as a reaction against the current tendencies in Chinese cinema, against the logic of the market. I wanted them to be simple, immediate and anchored in reality. I believe the public will accept them, since they address the viewer with real feelings and emotions.

The budgets for these two films were way below what I had for such films as SHANGHAI TRIAD. What I wanted to show was the thinking and dreams of ordinary people at the close of this century in which China is changing so radically in the wake of so many upheavals. The pressure of the market is intense. We want to remain true to ourselves, but how should we do that? In the 1980s, films found their audience naturally. Now it's much more difficult. But I'm proud to have made these two films. It's incumbent upon us to preserve the best traditions of the Chinese cinema. Look at the Italian Neo-realist movement or the French 'New Wave': they built something which has lasted and which belongs to a fine tradition. Chinese cinema shouldn't allow itself to be so much influenced by Hollywood.

I very much like Abbas Kiarostami's films, and I often discuss Iranian cinema with my friends. I say to them: "Look, we think we have it hard here in China, but the pressures of Islamic orthodoxy in Iran are far worse than anything we have to contend with here. But despite the pressures, Iranian directors succeed in making great films!" What really counts is not the circumstances we live in or the historical moment but the deepest wishes of the director, what he or she wants to show, the way of showing it, the underlying principles. In such respects, Iran shows us the way forward.

THE ROAD HOME, which is set in the present day, is very different from NOT ONE LESS. It's closer to another Chinese tradition, that of the poetic narrative. It's oriented towards a certain kind of beauty, very carefully framed in Cinemascope images.

Half of the actors in the film are non-professionals. I had as much trouble finding them as I did finding the non-professional cast for Not One Less. At the same time, the professional actors in the film are very young and don't have much experience that goes particularly for the two leads in the film's long flashback, both of them are 20 years old.

The film's storyline is very simple, built around the character that narrates it. He's a man who works in the city, far from the village where he was born. When his father dies he comes home



for the funeral. He spends three days with his mother, thinking back to the period in which his parents met and fell in love. There is a certain strand of autobiography running through this, although I'm not telling my own story in the film. My own father died in 1997, while I was working on TURANDOT for the Florence Opera. I wasn't with him when he died. I went back to Xian for his funeral.



# **“The Road Home”**

## ***Director’s Statement***

This is a film about love, about family and about the love between the members of a family. A simple village girl falls in love with a primary-school teacher, and their love story unfolds during a particularly difficult period in China’s modern history. In the past, artists have tended to deal with this period in a rather serious and analytic way, but I prefer to use more poetic and romantic methods to tell this pure and simple love story. It was just this kind of true love which enabled us to survive such difficult periods in our past.

In the film, the elements of history and present-day reality are both grounded in the notion of study. At the same time, the story shows the attitude of country people towards learning – essentially, an attitude of respect and veneration. All of this brings to mind the ways that Chinese people have reacted to ‘learning’ at two particular moments in our modern history. The first of these was several decades ago. For purely political reasons, learning was cruelly devalued. Intellectuals suffered physical abuse and were made to ‘disappear’. The second of these is today. Everyone now understands the principle that knowledge equals power, and yet so many of us are ultra-materialistic and obsessed with money. Learning is once again being devalued.

I want to use this film to take a fresh look at these fundamental issues in Chinese society and history.