

## **Asian 204**

### **Unit 07: Not One Less**

#### **Basic Information**

Chinese Title: *Yige dou bu neng shao* 一個都不能少

Date of Release: 1998

Production Company: Guangxi Film Studios & Beijing New

Picture Distribution Company

Director: Zhang Yimou 張藝謀

Screenplay: Shi Xiangsheng

#### **CAST**

Wei Minzhi

Zhang Huike

Tian Zhenda

Gao Enman

Sun Zhimei

#### **Zhang Yimou**

- Born in Xi'an, 1950
- Education cut short by Cultural Revolution, 1966
- Sent to countryside, 1968
- Enters Beijing Film Academy, 1978
- Member of "Fifth Generation" of Chinese filmmakers

#### **The Fifth Generation**

- First class to graduate from Beijing Film Academy after the Cultural Revolution
- Prominent figures include
  - Zhang Yimou
  - Chen Kaige (b. 1952)
- A distinct "generation" of filmmakers
  - Personal histories
  - Training and education

- Exposure to world cinema
- Post-graduation jobs at smaller studios
- Begin producing films in early 1980s

**Fifth Generation Film: *Yellow Earth*, Chen Kaige, 1984**

- Story
  - Northern China, 1939
  - Party member fails to save peasant girl
- Visual style
  - Bleak landscapes
  - "Painterly" palette
- Ideological implications
  - Revisionist view of sacred Party history
- Success abroad
  - Hong Kong Film Festival, 1985
  - Overseas festivals and art house circuit
- Conflicts at home
  - Criticism from authorities
    - "Negative" portrayal of Chinese peasants
    - "Confusing" and "uninteresting" style
  - Limited circulation

**Fifth Generation Activity through the early 1990s**

- Chen Kaige
  - *King of Children*, 1988
  - *Farewell My Concubine*, 1993
- Zhang Yimou
  - Cinematographer for *Yellow Earth*
  - Directorial debut: *Red Sorghum*, 1988
  - *Raise the Red Lantern*, 1991
- Success at international film festivals
- Censorship and limited interest at home

## **The Arts in the Post-Mao "New Era"**

- Background: the Arts under Mao
  - Literature and the arts essential propaganda tools
  - Tightly controlled by the Party
    - Drawback:
      - Limitations on artistic expression
    - Advantages:
      - State support for the arts
      - Arts an essential part of the national discourse
- New Era Policies
  - Economic growth over ideology
    - Deng Xiaoping: "It doesn't matter if it's a white cat or a black cat, if it catches mice, it's a good cat."
  - Modernization
    - Opening to outside world
    - Social and economic liberalization
    - From central planning to market economy
- New Era Reforms and Chinese Society
  - Economic prosperity
  - Increased personal choice
  - Unevenness of economic development
    - Urban wealth, rural poverty
    - The "Floating Population" of migrant workers
      - Rural workers migrating to the city
      - Menial jobs, no social safety net
      - Discrimination and suspicion from urban residents
      - Betrayal of Party's historic commitment to the rural masses

- New Era Reforms and the Arts
  - The crisis: marginalization
    - Shrinking ideological importance
    - Disappearance of state economic support
    - Competition from the “cultural marketplace”
  - Responses
    - Commercialization
    - Elite and avant-garde art
    - Turning to overseas support and audiences