



American Sterling Productions Presents

In Association with Saltmill LLC

# **DARK MATTER**

Directed by Chen Shi-Zheng

Screenplay by Billy Shebar

Story by Chen Shi-Zheng and Billy Shebar

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**DARK MATTER**

## Synopsis

The feature film debut of renowned opera and theater director Chen Shi-Zheng, Dark Matter delves into the world of Liu Xing (Chinese for “Shooting Star”), a Chinese science student pursuing a Ph.D. in the United States in the early 1990s. Driven by ambition, yet unable to navigate academic politics, Liu Xing is inexorably pushed to the margins of American life, until he loses his way.

Liu Xing (Liu Ye) arrives at a big Western university with plans to study the origins of the universe. At first, his experience is a heady rush of expectation and optimism. He finds other Chinese students to share a cheap apartment with him, and flirts with an attractive American girl who works in a local tea shop. When the head of the department, Jacob Reiser (Aidan Quinn), welcomes Liu Xing into his select cosmology group, it seems that only hard work stands between him and a bright future in American science. At an orientation for foreigners sponsored by a local church, Joanna Silver (Meryl Streep), a wealthy patron of the university, notices the earnest student. An unspoken bond forms between them.

Liu Xing becomes Reiser’s protégé, accompanying him to a prestigious conference where he makes an impressive debut. He is drawn to the study of dark matter, an unseen substance that shapes the universe, but it soon becomes clear that his developing theories threaten Reiser’s conflicting theories and well-established studies. Excited by the possibility of a breakthrough, Liu Xing is deaf to warnings that he must first pay his dues. When he is eclipsed within the department by Laurence, a more dutiful Chinese student, Liu Xing is forced to go behind Reiser’s back to publish his discoveries. When the article draws ire instead of accolades, he turns to Joanna, who naively encourages him on his collision course.

Liu Xing clings to the idea of American science as a free market of ideas, and American society as wide open to immigrants. But in the end, his dissertation is rejected, and the girl in the tea shop brushes him off. His roommates find jobs, leaving him behind. Too proud to accept help from Joanna, and unwilling to return home to his parents, Liu Xing becomes a ghost-like presence at the university. Left alone with his shattered dreams, he explodes in a final act of violence.

Inspired by actual events, Dark Matter was written by Billy Shebar with a story by Shebar and Chen Shi-Zheng. The film was financed by American Sterling Productions, and produced by Janet Yang of American Sterling Productions and Mary Salter and Andrea Miller of Saltmill LLC. Kirk D’Amico and Linda Chiu are executive producers. Dark Matter was the Alfred P. Sloan prize winner at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival.

# **DARK MATTER**

Cast  
(in order of appearance)

Joanna Silver	MERYL STREEP
Liu Xing	LIU YE
Mama	CHI PENG
Baba	WANG YONGGUI
Jacob Reiser	AIDAN QUINN
Hildy	BLAIR BROWN
Zhang Ming	TSAO LEI
Wang Ying	SHAN JING
Old Wu	HE YU
Little Square	LI BO
Reverend Hollings	BORIS McGIVER
Hal Silver	BILL IRWIN
Monkey King	ZHANG HUI
Jackie	TAYLOR SCHILLING
Professor Colby	JOE GRIFASI
Gary Small	ROB CAMPBELL
Claire Reiser	JODI RUSSELL
Professor Gazda	ERIC AVARI
Laurence Feng	LLOYD SUH
Cindy Feng	QIAN YI
Rene	JOHNNY ROTHMAN
Laundry Worker	HONG YING
Neighbor Girl	ZENG HUI
Selim	SENA AMEDSON

# DARK MATTER

## CREW

Directed by	Chen Shi-Zheng
Story by	Chen Shi-Zheng and Billy Shebar
Screenplay by	Billy Shebar
Produced by	Janet Yang Mary Salter Andrea Miller
Executive Producers	Kirk D'Amico Linda Chiu
Line Producer	Jeff T. Miller
Casting by	Ellen Parks, C.S.A.
Costume Designer	Elizabeth Caitlin Ward
Music Supervisor	Hal Willner
Music by	Van Dyke Parks
Edited by	Pam Wise, A.C.E. Michael Berenbaum
Production Designer	Dina Goldman
Director of Photography	Oliver Bokelberg
Unit Production Manager	Jeff T. Miller
First Assistant Director	Craig Steiner
Second Assistant Director	Heather Toone
Stunt Coordinator	Frank Bare
Stunts	Jeff Chumas Doug Coleman Kathy Jarvis
Stand-Ins	Chuck Manuele Carmen Merry
2 <sup>nd</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant Director	Cody Harbaugh
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Camera	Brian LeGrady
2 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant Camera	Matthew Haskins
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant "B" Camera	Jesse Evans Mike Lookinland Jason Painter
2 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant "B" Camera	Ty Arnold Travis Cline David Forester Joel Remke Josh Wood
"B" Camera Operators	T.C. Christensen Brian LeGrady
Loader	Nabil Rahme
Crane Operator	Bob Conder
Camera PA	Adam Bahr

Special Effects Coordinator	Dave Kelsey
Post-Production Supervisors	Maureen Norton Jeff Rose Paul A. Levin Kelly Thomas
Assistant Editors	Joel T. Pashby Nikko Tsiotsias Roger Cooper Carrie Puchkoff Russ Senzatimore Steven C. Laneri
Sound Mixer	Les Udy
Boom Operator	Les M. Boothe
Set Decorator	Mike Higgins
Lead Man	Katherine Brim
On Set Dresser	Sandi Longhurst
Art Dept. Coordinator	Chad Davis
Scenic Painters	Eric Robinson Cindy Neibaur
Shopper	Ryan Davis
Swing	Ryan Jensen Jacob A. Jessop Malcolm Sonsire
Property Master	Joel McKee
Assistant Prop Master	Cindy Ingram
Props	Michael Osten
Gaffer	David Stoddard
Best Boy Electric	Mike Cook Alan Stoddard
Electrician	Alex Boynton Rhett Fernsten Rob McDowell
Electrician Day Players	William Boaz Brock Rosenblatt Mark Stoddard Mike Stoddard Tyson Treff Mark Watson
Electrician Intern	Bryce Newell
Key Grip	Mitch Stelling
Best Boy Grip	Allen Dial
Dolly Grip	Brandon Ellsworth
Grips	Eric Beck K.C. Olson

Grip Day Players	Tim Reynolds Richard Schmit Laina Thomas
Grip Intern	Lance Olson
Costume Supervisor	Jacqueline Newell
Costume Assistant	Kirstin Tobiasson
On-Set Costumer	Shantelle Guy
Wardrobe Assistant	Elisabeth Vastola
Hair Department Head	Jenna Kilgrow
Makeup Department Head	R. Troy Lunt
Hair Department Co-Head	Edwin Matsu
Assistant Makeup	Jodie Gleave
Hair/Makeup for Ms. Streep	J. Roy Helland
Makup Day Player	Amber Hilton
Hair Day Player	Anna Mower
Script Supervisor	Kelly Lookinland
Location Manager	Alan Oakes
Location Assistant	Jason Luthman
Production Coordinator	Brooke Redmon
Asst. Production Coordinator	Kate Holland
Production Accountant	Brian R. Kubricky
Production Assistants	Danny Cheng Adam Johnson Nathan Lee
Key Set PA	Jason Allred Eva-Marie Howard Ryan Pederson
Intern PA	Julian Acosta
Assistants to Larry Dodge	Jan Thrower Gwen Berry
Assistants to Janet Yang	Soozie Eastman Angel An
Assistant to Mary Salter and Andrea Miller	Jenny Chiurco
Local Casting	Jeff Johnson
Extras Casting	Aaron Yun
Dialect Coach	Stephen Gabis
Dialect Consultant / Translator to Liu Ye	Kelly Cha
Translator	Gao Ai
Set Translator	Liang Jingdong
Cast Translator	Lou Xiaopeng
Publicists	Weiman Seid, Fat Dot Chris Libby, BWR Chris Regan, BWR Kate Payne, BWR

Unit Publicist	Jenny Lawhorn
EPK	Jason Conforto
	Patrick Lovell
Video Assists	Gaylen Nebeker
	Loren Nebeker
Music Coordinator	Ted Hinckley
Still Photographer	Matthew Margolin
Add'l. Still Photography	Tyler Meiners
Transportation Coordinator	Brett Miller
Transportation Captain	Eric Solomonson
Drivers	Coby Broyles
	Lisa Crowder
	Scott Doletto
	David Hannah
	David Harris
	Brandon Malmstrom
	Bill Phelps
	Lamond Reynolds
	Dean Starkey
	Wesley Warner
	Austin Webb
	Rick Webb
Catering by	Scott Adams, Silver Screen Catering
Assistant Caterer	Ernesto Hernandez
Craft Services	Don L. Draper
Craft Services Assistant	Perry L. Coomans
Set Medic Coordinator	Jeff Midgley
Payroll Services provided by	Above/Below the Line

#### CHINA UNIT

Unit Production Manager	Ada Shen
Production Liaison	Deng Meng
Director of Photography	Wang Yu
Production Designer	Han Chunlin
Production Sound	Wang Xue Yi
Costume Designer	Laurence Xu
Hair/Makeup	Li Zhuozhuo
Prop Master	Luo Xiaorong
Casting	Mo Lan
Assistant Casting	Guo Wei
Casting Coordinators	Cathy McClure
	Narenhua
Hong Kong Casting	Cathy Shen
Location Manager	Lei Long
1st Assistant Director	Su Haoqi

Script Supervisor	Meng Zimu
Gaffer	Hao Feng
Dolly Grip	Wu Guangdong
Key Set PA	Sheng Wenbin
Set PA	Lai Linyi
	Qu Zhongxiang
	Zhao Peng
Production Supervisor	Qu Chenggen
Camera Operator	Guo Wei
Camera Assistant	Kong Yue
Production Accountant	Du Guixue
Assistant Props	Tang Baojin
Assistant Art Department	Yank Kaiqiang
Assistant Hair/Makeup	Zhao Yi
Assistant Wardrobe	Zhang Peng
Boom Operator	Chen Zewei
	Wu Jingjing
Post-Production Sound by	Departure Studios, Hollywood CA
Supervising Sound Editor	Christopher Sheldon
Re-recording Mixer	Gary J. Coppola, C.S.A.
Sound Effects Editor	Tom Younkman
ADR Mixer	Yagmur Kaplan
First Assistant Sound Editor	David Warburton
Foley Artist	Michael Brown
Foley Mixer	John Fairlamb
Post-Production Facility Mgr.	Sylvain Louiseau
Dolby Consultant	Trevor Ward
“Dark Matter Rap”	
Courtesy of	David Weinberg
Music Editors	Eric Liljestrang
	Yagmur Kaplan
Recordist and Assistant to	
Van Dyke Parks	Matt Cartsonis
Music Clearance	Rachel Fox
Digital Visual Effects by	Look Effects, Inc.
VFX Supervisor	Henrik Fett
VFX Coordinator	Andy Simonson
VFX Editor	Migs Rustia
Digital Composers	Cyntia Buell
	Christopher Ivins
	Buddy Gheen
	Michel Collins
	Danny Kim
	Chad Buehler
	Victor Rodriguez





## Music Credits

### Nostalgia

Performed by Beijing Angelic Choir  
From the album "Praying"  
Under License from Wind Music

### Square Wheels

Written by Simon Stewart  
Published by DeWolfe Music (ASCAP)  
Under License from DeWolfe Music

### Gettin' It On

Written by Richard Boisson  
Published by ZFC Music (ASCAP)  
Under License from FirstCom Music, a  
unit of  
Zomba Enterprises, Inc.  
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J. S. Bach  
Performed by Concerto Italiano and  
Rinaldo Alessandrini  
Under License from Naïve Music

### High Noon

Production music provided by APM  
Music LLC

### Hot Desert

Written by Tim Souster  
Published by Hudson Music (ASCAP)  
Under License from DeWolfe Music

### Hombre

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Published by Hudson Music (ASCAP)  
Under License from DeWolfe Music

### Red River Valley

Arranged by Bryan Bowers  
Performed by Bryan Bowers  
Under License from Flying Fish /  
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### Old Black Joe

Performed by Beijing Angelic Choir  
From the album "Praying"  
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### Guantanamera

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### Movement 1, Symphony No. 29 in A Major K. 201

W. A. Mozart  
Performed by the Unique Tracks Radio  
Orchestra  
Under license from Unique Tracks  
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### Cappucino

Under license from 5 Alarm Music

### Deep Thought

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### Tosca, Act III, "E Lucevan le stelle" Puccini

Performed by Jussi Bjorling  
From the album "O Paradiso"  
Under License from Sony/BMG

### From the Bench

Production music provided by Lazy  
Bones Records

### Bird Gehrl

Composed by Antony Hegarty  
© Rebis Music (ASCAP) / Kobalt 2005  
Performed by Antony and the Johnsons  
From the album "I am a Bird Now" /  
Secretly Canadian 2005

### Shenandoah

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Performed by Beijing Angelic Choir  
From the album "Beautiful Dreamer"  
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La Rejouissance  
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Performed by VooDoo & Serano  
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Written by Reinhard Raith and Andreas  
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Soft Black Stars  
Composed by David Tibet (PRS)  
Performed by Antony and the Johnsons  
From the single "I Fell in Love with a  
Dead Boy" / Rebis Music 2001

Bach Cantata #82, "Ich habe genug"  
J. S. Bach  
Performed by Emmanuel Music  
Orchestra  
Featuring Lorraine Hunt Lieberson  
Conducted by Craig Smith  
Under License from Nonesuch Records /  
Warner Music Group

Long, Long Ago  
Performed by Beijing Angelic Choir  
From the album "Praying"  
Under License from Wind Music

Serenade  
Franz Schubert  
Performed by Beijing Angelic Choir  
From the album "Beautiful Dreamer"  
Courtesy of Wind Music

This Land is Your Land  
Written by Woody Guthrie  
Published by Ludlow Music, Inc. (BMI)  
Performed by Sharon Jones  
Under License from Daptone Records

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Utah Department of Transportation  
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Utah Valley State College*

# **DARK MATTER**

## **Director's Statement by Chen Shi-Zheng**

I grew up during the Cultural Revolution in Hunan, China, at a time when the performing arts were strictly for propaganda, much of it anti-American. When the political climate shifted, I was able to support myself by becoming a Chinese opera singer. I longed to come to America, and finally had the opportunity in 1987. When I arrived here, I experienced the sense of dislocation and culture clash—sometimes humorous, sometimes heartbreaking—felt by many young Chinese who come to this country, and by this film's protagonist, Liu Xing. I see Dark Matter as an opportunity to explore the mysterious and powerful forces unleashed when a young Chinese immigrant strives to make his mark in a culture that is at once seductive and impenetrable.

The Chinese students who came to America in the 1980s and early 1990s were the cream of the crop. Only the very brightest—one in a million—were allowed to pursue their Ph.D.'s in this country. One of them went on a shooting spree at an American university in 1991. The media reduced this incident to the boilerplate story of a social misfit driven off the deep end by competitive pressures. I knew there was more to it than this. This promising young student was my peer; I wanted to explore in greater depth the forces that gave rise to such violence.

I asked writer Billy Shebar to start with two premises: there is no villain, and the murderer is not insane. I wanted Shebar to make both Liu Xing and his American mentors well-rounded characters with the best intentions. The tragedy lies in their failure to connect, despite all their intelligence and good will.

In directing Dark Matter, I wanted to create a cinematic landscape in which ideas and reality never intersect. The film freely alternates between Liu Xing's fantasy of American life and the stark realism of his situation. Liu Xing's correspondence with his parents in China is a narrative thread in which America is painted in the saturated colors of a hand-tinted post-card. At the other extreme are naturalistic scenes portraying the competitive, workaholic life of a Chinese graduate student at a large American university. This clash of visual elements produces the atmosphere of kinetic and comical strangeness out of which Liu Xing's terrible act of violence arises.

As an opera director, I work intensively with designers and performers to evoke a powerful emotional response within the four walls of the theater. I have always been excited by the possibility of breaking out of those walls, and telling a contemporary story of life and death on film. Dark Matter is a story of operatic proportions played out in the real world. Only film can move fluidly through the many strata of Liu Xing's experience in America and his family's life in China. I wanted to create the cinematic equivalent of a Chinese scroll painting, depicting Liu Xing's comedic rise and tragic fall against a richly textured American landscape.

To many Chinese students in the early 1990s, the tragic shooting that spawned the idea for this film mirrored their own struggles to thrive in a new and unwelcoming culture. These students had shrunk their American dreams to fit American realities, and when one student refused to compromise, the eventual outcome was one of great tragedy. So it is with the protagonist of Dark Matter. Liu Xing's illusions are his life's blood; when they die, he dies with them.

# **DARK MATTER**

## **About the Production**

*Within him lay the universe's finest seed.  
But since the universe was crippled, his way was tortuous.*  
- Meng Chiao (751-814)

In 1987, Chen Shi-Zheng was a young performer and opera director who had emigrated to the U.S. from China in pursuit of artistic freedom. By 1997, Chen had established himself as a world-renowned theater and opera director, known for his startling visual style who felt ready to break free of the theater medium's four walls and direct his first film.

For his feature debut, Chen turned to writer Billy Shebar as a collaborator on a fictional story loosely inspired by the real-life event of a young scientist whose fateful shooting spree in 1991 provoked soul-searching in both the U.S. and China. To many, these acts of violence were unthinkable. To others, it crystallized the feelings of alienation and anger felt by thousands of Chinese students aspiring to a better life in America. For Chen, it was an emotionally ambiguous tale that had resonated with him for years.

To help shape their story, the filmmakers chose cosmology for the lead character's field of study. Shebar hit on the idea of using dark matter – the unseen substance whose gravitational force shapes the universe – as the guiding metaphor for the script. “Dark matter struck me as a perfect metaphor for the often invisible foreign graduate students whose hard work brings glory to their American advisors,” says Shebar.

The idea of dark matter also resonated with Chen: “In China, we are taught that the most profound things are invisible. This is the reverse of Western values. We love the stars, moon, and sun, and are scared of the things we can’t see. We fear discovering the darkness of our own hearts.”

Shebar’s script was based on extensive research and hours of conversation with Chen over a period of years. Starting in 1997, Shebar conducted interviews with dozens of Chinese science students and professors, traveling to Penn State and Dartmouth to get a picture of their lives on campus. In 1999, he traveled to China with Chen, shooting a documentary of the making of Chen’s epic production of The Peony Pavilion. Observing this cross-cultural theater production and getting to know the performers gave Shebar another window on the complex interaction of Chinese and American cultures.

Not long after Shebar and Chen began work on the story, Chen met producer Andrea Miller of Saltmill LLC at a party in Hong Kong, where Chen was performing in the opera Marco Polo. “He told me he had a story he wanted to tell on film,” remembers Miller. “I was impressed with Chen’s vision of the story, which focused on the frustrations of not being able to communicate, and highly aware of the autobiographical element.”

In New York in 2001, Chen re-connected with Miller. Miller had just partnered with New York producer, Mary Salter, who had well-established connections to the New York acting community. Both were intrigued by Shebar’s first draft of the script and by Chen’s take on the material. “Shi-Zheng had produced some visually engaging theater pieces and articulated some very interesting theories about the execution of the film,” noted Salter.



Saltmill submitted the screenplay into the Producer's Lab of the Independent Feature Project. It was accepted, and Miller pitched the project to a panel that was moderated by Janet Yang. The IFP labs pair new producers with seasoned professionals, and it was more than fortuitous that Miller was assigned to Yang. Yang, whose parents left China for the United States as grad students in the 1940s, recalls feeling an overwhelming sense of resonance when she first read the script: "The story represented a rare opportunity for me to join two very disparate worlds that I inhabit, both personally and professionally. Not since The Joy Luck Club have I felt such a sense of destiny about being involved with a project."

As a Chinese-American growing up in the States, Yang was keenly aware of how perceptions of Asians are heavily influenced by the stereotypical images found in American movies. As a film producer, she always strives to find human, accessible stories that happen to have Asian characters, such as when she generated the idea for Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story as an executive at Universal. "Having traveled frequently to China for over more than three decades, and having seen so many of my relatives from China, including my own parents, come to this country and struggle to make it on their own, I was inextricably drawn to this story. I felt that, on the one hand, being set in an American university the film becomes accessible and relatable to an American audience. That it delves into the inner sanctum of Chinese students, who are here in astounding numbers, should add an element of discovery and edge. My hope is that through this movie we are able to show the transcendence and challenge of people reaching out to each other."

It was Yang's reputation in the Asian-American community that prompted executive producer Linda Chiu to phone her one day. "I was working at Myriad Pictures," recalls Chiu. "My boss Kirk D'Amico and I were having a tough time casting an Asian male lead for a movie called Little Fish. I hadn't met Janet Yang, I looked up to her, and it just felt natural to reach out to her. The Joy Luck Club was seminal -- I can't begin to tell you how many of my girlfriends watched that movie and thought for the first time, 'I'm identifying with someone on that screen.'"

Over lunch, Chiu picked Yang's thoughts about casting, and they talked about projects, including Dark Matter. Chiu recalls, "It just had that special something. You don't know why you respond, and you can't help what you respond to. Janet gave me the script, I read it that night – and called her the next morning." Myriad Pictures came on board as the international sales agent.

It wasn't until the film's completion that Chiu realized why she was drawn to the story. "For me, the story is about language...and my mother. It explores how – if you don't have something as rudimentary as language skills – then you'll never be fully engaged with any experience – big, small, career, romantic, a conversation in a grocery store. No matter how talented you are, if you can't communicate, if people can't understand you, then you're at a loss. This hit my core."

Beyond the personal identification, Chiu thought highly of Chen and Shebar as dramatists. "Shi-Zheng and Billy created this canvas against which these big emotions and big ideas play messily and gorgeously together. One boy's personal story told in a universal way; add to that, Shakespearean themes and a Chinese immigrant experience that isn't cliché-ridden. This was something I'd never seen before."

During the five years it took to get the movie made and the many times it fell apart, in the eleventh hour, it was Yang – newly appointed President and COO of American Sterling Productions – who brought the project to American Sterling CEO Larry Dodge. They were seeking high-quality, commercially viable projects that bring humanity and insight to the global marketplace. Dark Matter perfectly fit the bill. American Sterling Productions ultimately financed the film and produced in association with Saltmill.

One of the turning points in ultimately getting Dark Matter made was when Academy Award-winning actress Meryl Streep became interested in the key role of Joanna, a university patron with a passion for Chinese culture. “Meryl was drawn to this story of the complexity of real cultural exchange and how hard it is to communicate with people from other cultures,” explains Salter, who was the first to see the role as an ideal one for Streep. “The film also takes a bit of a harsh look at our own culture. These aspects interested Meryl from the beginning.” “It was Meryl’s steadfast commitment and generosity through the thick and thin that kept us going – on empty sometimes – until we got this movie made,” adds Chiu. “Joanna isn’t the lead role, but she’s the spiritual centerpiece.”

Chen remembers his first meeting with the legendary actress at her Greenwich Village apartment. “Meryl accidentally knocked over a big Chinese vase as she opened the door, and it shattered in a million pieces. She was very embarrassed, but I explained that Chinese people would consider this an auspicious beginning.” Chen adds, “She is an amazing human being in every way. It’s like witnessing a great master class each time

you watch her transform herself. Working with her is a blessing; it is perhaps one of the highlights of my life.”

For the role of Professor Reiser, the filmmakers wanted an actor who would – with his presence alone – serve as a counterpoint to Liu Xing, the central character. Aidan Quinn (Legends of the Fall, Nine Lives) fit the bill perfectly, choosing to play Reiser as a rock-star professor. He possesses a combination of charm and aggression – and this is what seduces and ultimately destroys Liu Xing. Quinn sees Dark Matter as “a beautifully rendered piece about the culture clash experienced by Chinese students living in America. Jacob Reiser is an academic who perhaps got a little complacent sitting on his laurels and is unwittingly jealous of young minds like Liu Xing who have the drive to reach for new ideas.”

On set, Quinn recalls developing an instant rapport with Liu Ye. “Liu Ye is a huge talent, very funny and moving. He has a tremendous ability to be a clown. It’s always enjoyable to work when there’s lightheartedness on the set.”

Dark Matter is the first time that Quinn and Streep have worked together since they co-starred in Music of the Heart. “Meryl is the reason I’m here,” says Quinn. “She suggested me for the part of Reiser, and I’m honored. She’s an international treasure, and I love working with her. Her sense of play is extraordinary. She’s divine.”

Casting the film’s Asian actors, especially Liu Ye, proved to be a more challenging process. “We needed extraordinary actors to play these Chinese students-- very young, but nonetheless exceptionally well trained, capable of an emotional range that encompassed both the dramatic and comedic, extremely comfortable with improvisation,” recalls casting director Ellen Parks. “Chen Shi-Zheng required true

fluency in Mandarin as well as some skill with English, and certain roles also demanded highly specialized musical skills. Most importantly, the actors had to have the confidence, presence and charisma to hold their own opposite Meryl and Aidan.”

The search encompassed all major US cities, as well as Toronto, Vancouver, London, Singapore, Beijing and as far away as Australia. Parks consulted with teachers of Chinese language and culture, finding herself scouring Asian theater, dance and opera companies, tai chi and Shaolin Kung Fu classes, Chinese radio stations and newspapers, Asian Film Festivals and street festivals, the Miss Chinatown, Miss Asia Royal Princess and Miss Hong Kong beauty pageants and many cultural and social organizations serving the Chinese community. She even held open calls at New York University and Columbia University.

The role of Liu Xing ultimately went to Chinese actor Liu Ye, (Zhang Yimou’s Curse of the Golden Flower, Balzac and The Little Chinese Seamstress) a rising star of contemporary Chinese cinema. Liu Ye had won the Golden Horse for Best Actor, the Chinese equivalent of the Oscar, for his portrayal of a college student who falls in love with an older businessman in Lan Yu. “I had seen Liu Ye’s performance in an obscure Mainland Chinese movie, and located him with the aid of the American promoter and distributor, David Buckley. He became by far our top choice - the poignancy, depth and resonance of his performance really clinched it for us,” recalls Parks.

Liu Ye had never been to the United States, and as director, Chen relished the idea that Liu’s newness to American ways would help him depict his character’s troubled attempts at connecting with the people around him. “Liu Ye is one of the most

expressive actors I have ever worked with,” says Chen. “He infuses his character, Liu Xing, with incredible texture.”

Due to citizenship and visa problems, the roles of Liu Xing’s fellow Chinese students fell primarily to those who’d been born in China but were now living in the U.S. Parks found these actors to “have had extensive professional performing arts experience in China, despite the fact they were working in the U.S. in unrelated jobs – restaurant worker, truck driver, computer programmer, singing teacher. True to the story of Dark Matter, their dreams were set aside to meet the demands of an immigrant’s harsher reality.”

The production team considered more than twenty shooting locations in the U.S. and Canada before deciding on Utah. The area around Salt Lake City provided the vast American landscape that Chen had always envisioned. Much of the film takes place at Utah Valley State College – a school with modern architecture surrounded by majestic, snow-capped mountains. “We wanted to set the film in a place that felt typically western, typically American,” says Salter, “and we wanted a place that projected a sense of isolation, because the story is about a boy separated from his culture, trying to figure out what is going on. The college we chose is very modern, not cozy.”

The school’s proximity to mountains also resonated with the script, in which Liu Xing explains the importance of dark matter by comparing the universe to a mountain range, where only the highest peaks get snow. “Utah Valley State College is full of large glass windows, clean lines and open spaces,” says Chen. “A student coming from an overpopulated city like Beijing would find these surroundings beautiful but harsh. The

open space and absence of crowds give the stranger a desolate feeling. You feel more sympathy for the character.”

On May 31, 2006, Dark Matter began principal photography. “There was a great sense of adventure on this set,” says Blair Brown, who plays Hildy, Professor Reiser’s all-knowing assistant. “We’re tapping into something so current – the immigrant experience and the disconnect between American dreams and American reality. And we’re doing it side by side with Chinese actors, processing this together.”

The dialogue for Liu Ye and his Chinese roommates, originally in English, was translated into Chinese and further elaborated and improvised by Chen and the Chinese-speaking actors. Three translators and several bilingual crew members facilitated communication. Miller explains, “We had real Chinese actors struggling to speak English, because that is the context of the film – and you hear the effort. We also hear the American actors struggling to understand and speak Chinese. We hope the film will illustrate internationally one culture talking to another culture. That is really our dream.”

Streep, known for her ear for languages, mastered her Chinese dialogue, including a Chinese tongue-twister. Chiu says, “Meryl knows all languages, yet, one of the first things she said was, don’t worry about the language. It’s all about intent. If the intent is genuine, then you’ll be ok. This pure clarity she has – it’s what makes her talent borderless. Her essence just translates, and she makes you aspire.”

Streep developed a special rapport with Liu Ye, reflected in the growing intensity of their scenes as the movie progresses. “She is so sensitive to other actors and connected with Liu Ye with a genuine affection, much like their characters,” says Salter. Aidan Quinn, meanwhile, was inspired by Chen’s spirit of creative collaboration. “Shi-Zheng

has the ability to create and change on the spot and incorporate new ideas – and he encourages good actors to bring ideas to the table.”

The filmmakers’ hope is that the film’s story and international cast will be one that audiences wish to experience. “Liu Ye moves, smiles and walks like a silent film actor. We’re really excited that he will be introduced to American audiences,” says Chiu. “Meryl is one of handful of American actors that Chinese audiences, especially women – young and old – respond to in a big way. Everyone in China has seen Kramer vs. Kramer and The Bridges of Madison County.”

Current events -- China’s heightened role on the world stage along with international headlines about immigration -- have come together to make Dark Matter a timely film. “Global communication is the mantra of business and politics today,” says Larry Dodge. “But what does it really involve? Dark Matter is a story about cultural interaction on a very human level. China is a very intriguing culture that we’re only beginning to understand.” Salter agrees. “The promise of America and of democracy is a grand promise. It is a difficult promise to keep. This movie gives us a snapshot of what the complications really are; of how expectation and ability to deliver are not always on the same page.”

“Dark Matter definitely has a cross-cultural, humanistic appeal for both American and Chinese audiences,” says Chen Shi-Zheng. “I don’t want this film to fall into a slot-comedy or tragedy. It is about a young person coming to America and the rollercoaster ride of emotions he experiences. I like to call it a Spaghetti Eastern with a lot of music, and very animated characters. Much of the humor comes from the awkward cultural exchanges with language and social protocols. I think the message of Dark Matter is that



both cultures can benefit if we know how to talk to each other and understand our differences. For Western audiences, I hope they can experience this Chinese protagonist as a human being instead of a hero or villain or Kung Fu master. In China, I hope people will expand their one-dimensional view of America.”

“This is a first,” says Janet Yang, “a Chinese protagonist played by a Chinese actor in an American movie. Some of the dialogue is Chinese, some is English, and some is an intentionally jarring mixture. I couldn’t have imagined a project like this coming to pass just a few years ago. It took an extraordinary combination of talent, timing, and determination to bring this project together.”

## DARK MATTER

### About the Cast

#### **MERYL STREEP (Joanna Silver)**

Meryl Streep's empathy for her characters and the diversity of women she has chosen to portray have distinguished her work in film, television, and theatre for almost three decades. For these achievements, she has received an unmatched thirteen Academy Award nominations and won the Oscar twice. She also won the Emmy, Golden Globe, and Screen Actor's Guild awards for playing four roles in Tony Kushner's highly acclaimed epic Angels In America on HBO, and she received the American Film Institute's 32nd Lifetime Achievement Award, joining the five women (and twenty-six men) who have been so honored. In 2007, she appeared in Rendition opposite Jake Gyllenhaal and Reese Witherspoon, Robert Redford's Lions for Lambs, and will star in the upcoming musical Mamma Mia!. The previous year, her roles included Robert Altman's A Prairie Home Companion, and the film adaptation of The Devil Wears Prada, for which she just received a Golden Globe Award. Her other roles include Oscar-nominated turns in The Deer Hunter, The French Lieutenant's Woman, Silkwood, Out of Africa, Ironweed, A Cry in the Dark, Postcards from the Edge, The Bridges of Madison County, One True Thing, Music of the Heart and Adaptation. She received the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress in Kramer vs. Kramer and Best Actress in Sophie's Choice.

Streep was a co-founder of Mothers and Others, a consumer advocacy group that worked successfully for twelve years to change the way toxins in the environment were regulated, and to promote what has become easy access to organic and sustainably grown food. She continues her advocacy work with the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School, Scenic Hudson, the Children's Health and Environmental Coalition, and Equality Now, a campaign for the rights of women and girls worldwide. She has been married to sculptor Don Gummer for twenty-eight years; they are the parents of four children.

#### **LIU YE (Liu Xing)**

Having recently starred in the Sony Pictures Classic release Curse of the Golden Flower, Liu Ye has amassed an impressive roster of credits and international fan base since beginning his movie career as a 20-year-old performing arts major at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing. He was nominated for Best Supporting Actor for his very first film, Postmen in the Mountains at China's Golden Rooster Awards in 1999. Shortly after graduation from the Academy, Liu Ye won Best Actor at Taiwan's 38th Golden Horse Awards for his bold performance as a gentle, sensitive homosexual in Lan Yu, directed by Stanley Kwan. The film was also an official selection at the Cannes Film

Festival. He won the Golden Rooster again three years later for his performance in the movie Foliage.

Liu Ye's talent has subsequently attracted the attention of some of the most famous directors in the world. He appeared in Chen Kaige's acclaimed The Promise, which was released in the U.S. in 2006 by Warner Independent Pictures. In Zhang Yimou's epic martial arts romance Curse of the Golden Flower, Liu stars opposite Gong Li and Chow Yun-Fat. His other credits include Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress, The Lover from the Heavens and Purple Butterfly, all of which have been nominated for various awards at international film festivals. Last year he appeared in Blood Brothers for producer John Woo.

### **AIDAN QUINN (Jacob Reiser)**

Aidan Quinn started his acting career on the Chicago stage and went on to play the title role in the modern-day Hamlet directed by Robert Falls. In New York, he starred on Broadway in A Streetcar Named Desire, and Off Broadway in Sam Shepherd's Fool For Love and Lie Of The Mind. Most recently, Quinn was seen Off Broadway in Salome, directed by Estelle Parsons with Al Pacino, and The Exonerated, which he also performed this year on London's West End.

Quinn's television credits include the ground-breaking drama An Early Frost, for which he received an Emmy nomination; See You In My Dreams, based on the short stories of Sam Shepherd opposite Marcia Gay Harden; the Independent Spirit Award-nominated Cavedweller; and HBO's Empire Falls opposite Paul Newman and Ed Harris. He most recently starred in the critically acclaimed Book Of Daniel in the title character for NBC.

Quinn has starred in more than 25 feature films, including Desperately Seeking Susan, Avalon, At Play in the Fields of the Lord, The Playboys, Benny and Joon, Legends of the Fall, Michael Collins and The Assignment. In Ireland, he produced and starred in the acclaimed This is My Father, written and directed by brother Paul Quinn and filmed by brother Declan Quinn, an award winning cinematographer. Also in Ireland, Aidan starred in Song for a Raggy Boy, for which he was nominated for Best Actor in the Irish Film Awards.

### **BLAIR BROWN (Hildy)**

Blair Brown starred in John Caird's production of Humble Boy with Jared Harris for the Manhattan Theatre Club. In 2002, she played Prospera in The Tempest directed by Emily Mann at the McCarter Theatre and starred in Mark Brokaw's acclaimed revival of A Little Night Music during the Kennedy Center's Stephen Sondheim Festival. Brown won the Tony Award for her performance in Michael Frayn's Copenhagen directed by Michael Blakemore in 2000. Other Broadway credits include Sam Mendes' and Rob Marshall's Cabaret for the Roundabout Theatre; Richard Nelson's James Joyce's The

Dead with Christopher Walken for Playwrights' Horizons; Tom Stoppard's Arcadia directed by Trevor Nunn for Lincoln Center Theatre with Billy Crudup and Robert Sean Leonard; David Hare's The Secret Rapture and Richard Foreman's The Threepenny Opera for Joe Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival.

Brown's favorite film credits include Lars Von Trier's film Dogville starring Nicole Kidman, Clint Eastwood's Space Cowboy; Victor Nunez's A Flash Of Green with Ed Harris and Richard Jordan; The Astronaut's Wife with Johnny Depp; Ken Russell's Altered States with William Hurt; Michael Apted's Continental Divide with John Belushi; Stealing Home with Jodie Foster; David Hare's Strapless with Bruno Ganz and Bridget Fonda; and Loverboy directed by Kevin Bacon. In television she is best known for the title role in "The Days And Nights Of Molly Dodd," created by Jay Tarses for NBC and Lifetime Television for which she received four Emmy nominations and the Cable Ace Award. Recent television appearances include the NBC dramas "ER" and "Law & Order: SVU," the WB series "Smallville" with John Glover, the CBS drama "CSI: Miami," and the WB pilot "Dark Shadows" produced by John Wells. She most recently appeared in The Sentinel with Michael Douglas. She recently made her New York directing debut with Lovely Day Leslie Ayvazian at The Play Company.

Brown is on the board of People for the American Way and served with Christopher Reeve as co-president of The Creative Coalition, an educational and advocacy group made up of people in the entertainment industry.

# **DARK MATTER**

## **About the Filmmakers**

### **CHEN SHI-ZHENG (Director/ Story by)**

Chen Shi-Zheng is a China-born, New York-based director, internationally renowned for his innovative and provocative staging of operas as diverse as Monteverdi's Orfeo, Wagner's The Flying Dutchman, and Tang Xianxu's The Peony Pavilion. He most recently conceived, wrote and directed a stage production of Monkey: Journey to the West, executed in collaboration with creators of the virtual rock band Gorillaz and currently on tour. Mr. Chen makes his film directorial debut with Dark Matter.

As a child in Changsha, Hunan during the Cultural Revolution, he was taken under the wing of traditional funeral singers, who were among some of the great masters of Chinese opera. He became a leading young opera actor, performing until his mid-20s in many productions throughout China. He simultaneously recorded albums of folksongs and contemporary pop music. He emigrated to the United States in 1987, and has since established a crossover career in which he explores his own artistic expression that transcends an East/West divide and erases the boundaries between music, theatre, dance and film. In 2000, Mr. Chen was awarded the title Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture.

In 1999, his landmark 19-hour production of The Peony Pavilion was hailed as one of the most important theatrical events of the 20th century. The Peony Pavilion premiered as the centerpiece of Lincoln Center Festival in New York and at Festival d'Automne in Paris, and toured to Piccolo Teatro in Milan, Perth International Arts Festival, Aarhus Festival in Denmark, Berlin Festival, Vienna Festival and at the Esplanade Centre in Singapore. It has been filmed for home video distribution by RM Associates.

A selection of Mr. Chen's other directing credits includes Mercury Light World (Berlin Festival); My life as a fairy tale (Lincoln Center Festival, New York, and Aarhus Festival, Denmark); a trilogy of contemporary theater works based on Chinese classics – Orphan of Zhao in two versions (Lincoln Center Theater & Lincoln Center Festival), Snow in June (American Repertory Theatre), and Peach Blossom Fan (RedCat); Dido and Aeneas in two versions (Handel & Hayden Society, Spoleto Festival USA); The Flying Dutchman (Spoleto Festival USA); Night Banquet (co-commissioned by Festival d'Automne à Paris, Kunstenfestival des Arts in Brussels, Hebbel-Theater in Berlin, and the Ensemble Modern in Frankfurt, and Lincoln Center Festival); the documentary film Cultural Warriors of The Revolution (TV France 3); Così fan tutte (Aix-en Provence Festival and Théâtre des Champs Élysées, Paris); and Alley (New Zealand Festival of the Arts). He made his directorial debut in 1996 with The Bacchae (China National Beijing Opera Company, Hong Kong International Arts Festival and Athens Festival).

Monkey: Journey to the West premiered at Manchester International Festival and Theatre du Chatelet in Paris in summer and fall 2007, and will be on tour to Spoleto Festival USA and other venues during 2008. He also premiered The Coronation of Poppea for English National Opera in fall 2007 as part of a complete Monteverdi cycle that he began with Vespers of 1610 and continued with Orfeo (nominated for a Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Opera Production, 2006). Upcoming directing projects are The Bonesetter's Daughter by Amy Tan with music by Stewart Wallace for San Francisco Opera to open September 2008; and commissioned works with the Rome Opera and others in Europe as well as collaborations with early music specialist Jordi Savall, and the contemporary experimental music group Kronos Quartet. His first feature film, Dark Matter was an official entry at the Sundance 2007 Film Festival, where it won an Alfred P. Sloan Prize. It will be released to American cinemas in April 2008.

### **BILLY SHEBAR (Writer/ Story by)**

Dark Matter is Billy Shebar's first produced screenplay. In 1998, his 50 Ways to a Better Memory won the Grand Prize at the 1998 CineStory Screenwriting Competition, and was given a reading at Nuyorican Poets' Café's acclaimed Fifth Night series. In 1995, Shebar wrote and directed the 16mm comedy Guts, starring Kristen Johnston. The film won Best Short Film at the Long Island Film Festival, was selected for the Goteborg International Film Festival, and was broadcast on public television's New York Independents. In 1999, he created two short films for on-stage projection in Meredith Monk's Magic Frequencies, which premiered at New York's Joyce Theater in 1999, and toured the U.S. and Europe in 2000.

An Emmy-nominated documentary filmmaker, Shebar has written, directed, and photographed films for such PBS programs as Currents, The Eleventh Hour, Edge (a BBC co-production), Media Matters, and In the Life. His documentary Endangered Species (2000), about street prostitutes in San Francisco, was featured on Salon.com and on Oprah.

In addition to his work in film, Shebar has written numerous articles for Life, Harvard Magazine, and Theater Week. His 1987 article for Life on nuclear disarmament won an Olive Branch Award for outstanding journalism on issues of war and peace. Shebar is also a published poet, whose work was selected by Ted Hughes for inclusion in the Arts Council of Great Britain's prestigious New Poetry series and read on BBC Radio.

### **JANET YANG (Producer)**

Janet Yang has recently been named President and COO of American Sterling Productions. Led by CEO Larry Dodge and Yang, ASP finances and produces movies and television. Dark Matter is their first film. They have just completed production of a documentary, The Defector, based on the true story of a high-profile Soviet defector under the Stalin regime, and the son he had with a beautiful American socialite.

Prior to American Sterling, Yang produced films under her banner, The Manifest Film Company. Among them are Carl Franklin's High Crimes, and The Weight of Water, directed by Kathryn Bigelow and starring Sean Penn. From 1989 to 1996, Yang served as president of Ixtlan, the company she had with Academy Award-winning writer/director Oliver Stone, spearheading all aspects of the company's development and production. At Ixtlan, she produced the acclaimed The People vs. Larry Flynt, directed by Milos Forman and starring Woody Harrelson and Ed Norton. Additionally, Yang served as executive producer of the groundbreaking film directed by Wayne Wang, The Joy Luck Club, based on the best-selling novel by Amy Tan. She is also a recipient of both the Emmy and Golden Globe Awards for Best Made for Television Movie for Indictment: The McMartin Trial.

Before her association with Oliver Stone, Yang worked closely with Steven Spielberg and his Amblin Entertainment as a production executive at MCA/Universal. In 1986, she served as Spielberg's liaison in China, facilitating the historic production of Empire of the Sun (Warner Bros). While at Universal, she also initiated the project Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story. From 1985 to 1987, she functioned as a link between major Hollywood studios and China. Representing Universal, Paramount, and MGM/UA, Yang brokered the sale of the first American studio movies sold in the Chinese market. Before joining MCA/Universal, Yang was president of World Entertainment in San Francisco, a domestic distributor of films from Hong Kong and China.

Yang holds a B.A. from Brown University in Chinese studies as well as an M.B.A. from Columbia University. She is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, a board member of the Committee of 100, an organization of prominent Chinese-Americans, and an advisory board member of Asia Society Southern California. She also has taught production and filmmaking at the Sundance Institute and the Independent Feature Project.

#### **ANDREA MILLER (Producer)**

In 2001, Andrea Miller, along with Mary Salter, founded the company Saltmill in order to realize film and television projects with specific historic, ethnic, or political content. She was formerly a television executive with experience in both sales and programming and worked for many years in the international arena. She served as Senior VP, International Sales and Co-Production, for Sony Wonder, the children's division of Sony Music from 1998-2001. Prior to this, she lived in Asia for eight years where she was head of programming for TNT and Cartoon Network Asia. She also served as the first General Manger of Cartoon Network, Japan.

Throughout her career, Miller has been involved in numerous start-ups, not only launching the Turner networks in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, India, Australia and New Zealand but also creating programming for the launches of CNBC, HA!, and Comedy Central in New York. She produced the first season of Comedy Central's Indecision, which pioneered humor in the delivery of political news. As a

freelancer, she also produced the Emmy Award winning Pee-Wee's Playhouse, the long running PBS hit Shining Time Station, and the syndicated show Everyday with Joan Lunden. An art historian by training, Miller serves on the boards of the Flea Theater and Independent Curators International. She is currently pursuing new Saltmill projects and working to establish a fund focusing on documentaries for the family audience.

### **MARY SALTER (Producer)**

Before founding Saltmill with Andrea Miller in 2001, Mary Salter served as Executive Producer at MTV for four years. Prior to this term, Salter had a production deal with Paramount Television where she developed Lateline for NBC. From 1989 until 1993 she was Vice President of Production at Comedy Central. While at Comedy Central she supervised more than twenty series including talk shows, sketch comedies, documentaries and stand-up. Most notable during her tenure was Comedy Central's seminal coverage of the 1992 presidential campaign, Indecision '92. These thirty-four hours of live, multifeed comedy coverage were praised by the press, admired by the major networks that were the competition and whole-heartedly enjoyed by the politicians who served as subjects, victims and comedians. While at Comedy Central, Salter received twelve Cable Ace nominations, the Monitor Award and two Broadcast Design Awards for the shows she herself produced.

In the late eighties, Salter worked exclusively with Broadway Video. During this period, she produced prime-time comedy specials for CBS including Looney Tunes 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Special. She was a development consultant for Kids in the Hall and Night Music. As Film Producer for Saturday Night Live, Salter served as line-producer and creative producer for both Lorne Michaels and Dick Ebersol from 1979 through 1987. She received a Golden Lion from the Cannes Film Festival for the parody commercials produced at SNL.

During her early career, Salter produced rock videos and music specials for many groups including The Rolling Stones and Paul Simon. And in the very beginning, Mary worked as assistant film editor, directed and produced documentaries and industrials, served as production manager on the cult hit Swamp Thing and assisted Karel Reisz on The French Lieutenant's Woman.

### **KIRK D'AMICO (Executive Producer)**

Kirk D'Amico is President of Myriad Pictures, one of the major independent film companies today, with offices in Santa Monica. Myriad specializes in financing,



producing and distributing motion pictures and television programming for the worldwide market. As well as serving as Executive Producer and Producer on a string of successful theatrical feature films, D'Amico oversees and manages all aspects of this dynamic and rapidly growing company.

Since D'Amico founded the company in 1998, Myriad has produced or represented more than 30 feature films, including highlights such as: award-winning Kinsey starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, released by Fox Searchlight Pictures; The Good Girl starring Jennifer Aniston, also released by Fox Searchlight; People I Know starring Al Pacino, released by Miramax Films; National Lampoon's Van Wilder: Party Liaison starring Ryan Reynolds and Tara Reid, released by Artisan Entertainment; and Jeepers Creeper 2, the sequel to the highly successful original, which opened at No.1 at the US box office when released by MGM/UA in 2003.

The most recent titles executive produced by D'Amico include the acclaimed drama Little Fish starring Academy Award winner Cate Blanchett and Hugo Weaving; the romantic drama Death Defying Acts starring Catherine Zeta Jones and Guy Pearce; and Factory Girl starring Sienna Miller. Additionally, D'Amico produced the ensemble comedy Eulogy, starring Ray Romano and Debra Winger. Lionsgate released the film in 2004 following its debut at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival.

#### **LINDA CHIU (Executive Producer)**

A graduate of USC's Cinema School with a BFA in Writing, Linda Chiu began her entertainment career as an assistant to Robert L. Friedman, President of AMC Entertainment's Motion Picture Group. Under Friedman's tutelage, Chiu learned the ropes of the theatrical distribution business for the domestic and international markets.

In 2000, Chiu branched out to the talent side, joining the management firm Brillstein-Grey Entertainment and working directly with the CEO, Brad Grey. Under Grey, Chiu discovered a skill for managing artists while learning the nuances and dynamics for navigating the talent world. During her three year tenure, she worked with the various divisions under the BGE moniker, including Brillstein-Grey Management (In Memoriam: New York City With Mayor Giuliani), Brad Grey Pictures (City by the Sea) and Brad Grey Television (The Sopranos).

With a growing interest in independent film financing and production, Chiu joined Myriad Pictures in 2003, working with the President, Kirk D'Amico. Of the films Chiu shepherded at Myriad, she is especially proud of Little Fish, Death Defying Acts and Dark Matter. In January 2007, Chiu joined IFDC Inc. (International Film Distribution Consultants) as Vice President, spearheading the company's expansion into production. Since 1991, IFDC has established itself as a leading consulting firm in film acquisition, financing and distribution (Total Recall, The Grudge 2, Hannibal Rising). Working with the President, Jerome Bliach, Chiu will focus on arranging international financing for commercial motion pictures.

## **About the Production Companies**

### **American Sterling Productions (Producer/Financier)**

Led by CEO Larry Dodge and President and COO Janet Yang, American Sterling Productions (ASP) finances and produces independent feature films, documentaries, and television. In addition to Dark Matter, ASP has just completed production on a documentary called The Defector. A love story, murder mystery, historical epic and father-son story, the film follows a man who discovers that his biological father, whom he barely knows, is one of the greatest whistleblowers in history – Victor Kravchenko, a “Stalin-blasters” and best-selling author who squandered two sons with a beautiful American socialite before going into hiding, and eventually being found dead in his Manhattan apartment.

ASP is a division of the American Sterling Group, a privately held enterprise with operating divisions in banking, insurance, real estate, entertainment and technology. The American Sterling Group supports ASP in arranging financing, joint partnerships and revenue sharing arrangements. Consistent with the American Sterling values, ASP is interested in material that contributes to the enrichment of society and the global community.

### **Saltmill Productions, LLC (Producer)**

Saltmill LLC is a New York-based development and production company dedicated to realizing films that reflect significant historic, political, or cultural experience. Principals Mary Salter (Viacom, Paramount, MTV Networks) and Andrea Miller (Sony Wonder, TNT & Cartoon Network, MTV Networks) share an interest in discovering directors and writers who bring new energy and perspective to the cinematic medium. This is the company’s first film.

### **Myriad Pictures (International Sales Agent)**

Based in Santa Monica, Myriad Pictures is involved in financing, production and worldwide sales of major motion pictures and television programming. Helmed by Kirk D’Amico, the company has risen in the ranks as one of the top independent entertainment companies and holds an impressive and diverse library of filmed programming, including acclaimed dramas The Good Girl, Kinsey, and Little Fish.

### **First Independent Pictures (Distributor)**

Former Artisan and October Film executive Gary Rubin formed First Independent Pictures, designed to release 4 to 8 films a year to the theatrical marketplace. FIP releases include the David Mamet-penned Edmond starring William H. Macy and Julia Stiles;

Danny Leiner's (Harold and Kumar) The Great New Wonderful starring Maggie Gyllenhaal, Tony Shalhoub, and Edie Falco; the acclaimed Sundance selection New York Doll and Everything's Gone Green, the first screenplay by Douglas Coupland, author of Generation X. FIP continues in its commitment to seeing unique films with large voices reach the big screen.