



Gong Li (right) and Chen Daoming in Zhang Yimou's *Coming Home*

## *Coming Home*

**Director:** Zhang Yimou

**Starring:** Gong Li, Chen Daoming

Imagine you've been waiting for your beloved one for 20 years. You're standing at a railway station with a sign bearing your name – and, suddenly, there she is. You come to her and expect a long-awaited hug.

How might she respond?

Directed by acclaimed Chinese filmmaker Zhang Yimou, *Coming Home* is a period drama of contrasts that brings Chinese writer Yan Geling's novel *The Criminal* to the big screen. The tragic but beautiful film features a family of intellectuals separated by the Cultural Revolution. When this historical period of class struggle ends, wife Feng Wanyu (Gong Li) finds herself unable to move with the times.

Zhang structures his film by highlighting the major contrasts between ideals and reality. One such contrast is provided by the family's daughter Dan Dan (Zhang Huiwen), who has a passion for ballet and who betrays her parents by revealing to the authorities their plans to flee in exchange for the promise that she can play the part of Wu Qinghua, the main character in the Chinese ballet *Red Detachment of Women*. Born

the daughter of a peasant, Wu became the leader of the ballet; daughter of a professor, Dan Dan does not get the same opportunities despite her relative privilege.

Another contrast is provided between past and present. After 20 years of separation, Feng has been living with only memories of her husband Lu Yanshi (Chen Daoming). She could no longer identify him even though he has already come home. Lu has to accompany her as an ordinary "comrade" and wait in the hope that she can one day recognise him again.

The film ends with that scene of Lu and Feng, now with grey hair, meeting at the railway station in the heavy snow.

It seems Zhang wants to say that as time went by, the ideal of communism was only ever realised in things such as the *Red Detachment of Women*, and that in the days all families have been expecting is still yet to come.

- *Brian Yeung*

*The film opens in Hong Kong on June 12.*