

UNTEACHABLE

孺子不可教

rediscovering the joy of learning

a film by Shuling Yong and Lisa Teh



77 mins. | Singapore | 2019

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LOGLINE

Unteachable explores the question, 'What could the joy of learning look like?' through a young woman's journey to bring empathy back into classrooms. She introduces a new teaching method aimed at empowering teenagers to rise above the negative labels assigned to them, and rekindle their innate love for learning.

SYNOPSIS

Unteachable follows Teacher Meixi as she tries out Tutorial Relationships, a novel teaching method from Mexico, in Normal-Technical Stream classes in Singapore.

For Damian and his classmates, learning in Meixi's classroom is a deviation from what they're used to. But he soon discovers the challenges his teachers face, having had the chance to step into their shoes.

Teacher Meixi's attempt at helping her students find meaning in their learning is met with resistance and she struggles to find her place in the local system.

The director's vision and cinematographic acumen coolly observes the workings of an institution, and the nuts and bolts greasing its smooth but often cruel operation, exposing the pragmatism that exists alongside students' earnest ambitions.

Unteachable captures the labours of teaching and learning over a 4-year school period, giving a rare insight into the lives of teenagers seldom seen or heard, their fears of past failures, dreams for the future, and awareness of their place in society.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



I grew up in Singapore where academic performance is often pegged to one's self-worth. My parents seldom discussed anything other than my grades with me. I also remember attending after-school tuition classes thrice a week.

By the time I finished my O'level Examinations (a national high stakes standardized test), I had become so jaded and disinterested in mainstream school subjects that I begged my parents to let me apply to a polytechnic, seen as "second-rate" behind a junior college, to study Mass Communication and pursue my dreams. That's when my love for school changed.

It was only when I loved what I was learning and found it meaningful that I truly excelled. I want *Unteachable* to spark that shift and encourage audiences to think deeply about what the true purpose of an education is, and what it means to bring empathy and the joy of learning back into the classrooms.

– Shuling Yong

FILMMAKER BIOS

SHULING YONG – Director and Producer

Shuling Yong is a Singaporean documentary filmmaker with a passion for social change. She has over 10 years of documentary production experience, playing key crew positions on films such as *Becoming*, (Sound Recordist. Netflix, 2020), *The Feeling of Being Watched* (Director of Photography. Tribeca, 2018), *America To Me* (Location Sound Recordist. Sundance, 2018), *In Time To Come* (Associate Producer. Visions du Réel, 2017, dir. Tan Pin Pin), *Radical Grace* (Location Sound Recordist. Hot Docs, 2015) and *Growing Roots* (Director. Discovery Channel, 2015). Shuling does regular speaking engagements about documentary filmmaking, and has also been on the film jury of the Talking Pictures Festival in Chicago. Shuling is a Tribeca Film Institute Alumni, Kartemquin Films Diverse Voices in Docs Fellow, DocNet Southeast Asia Alumni, KOMAS Video for Change Fellow and Doc Society's Queer Impact Producers Lab Fellow. She was also selected as an honouree for DOC NYC's 40 Under 40 List 2019. *Unteachable* is Shuling's first feature-length documentary film as a director.

LISA TEH – Producer

Lisa Teh is a writer-producer based in Singapore. As a creative producer, Lisa's social-impact documentary, *Unteachable*, is the first-ever local film to win the coveted Audience Choice Award at the 30th Singapore International Film Festival. Lisa also produced *Growing Roots*, a documentary short which played on Discovery Channel. As a story editor at award-winning animation company, Omens Studios, Lisa worked with a team of writers to create engaging and educational content for preschool television, which include shows such as Counting with Paula and Leo the Wildlife Ranger. She has also written and produced branded content and commercials for government statutory boards and brands. Lisa is an alumnus of the Tribeca Film Institute, Good Pitch Southeast Asia, CNEX Chinese Documentary Forum, and Docs By The Sea.

MIRABELLE ANG – Editor

Mirabelle Ang's early introduction to cinema cultivated her love for storytelling. Through her work, she hopes to engage people across different sectors of society, build deeper understanding for differences and encourage greater empathy between communities. She has lived in the United States and Taiwan, and is currently based in Singapore. Mirabelle received her BFA and MFA from California Institute of the Arts and has worked on numerous award-winning broadcast and theatrical documentaries. Her work has screened at international film festivals and museums such as the Viennale, Cinema du Reel, Mar del Plata, Full Frame and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

ANDREW ECKLUND – Music Composer

Andrew Ecklund chose music as his calling at a young age. Through his schooling years he buried himself in records and musical studies, spending countless hours in rock bands and educational ensembles. This obsession led him to study Jazz Studies at Elmhurst College, where he honed his craft as a performer as well as a composer. Andrews scores can be heard accompanying some of the world's largest brands - Google, McDonalds, and Verizon to name a few. Andrew maintains a vibrant career as a performer, composer, and producer.

TAN PIN PIN – Executive Producer

Tan Pin Pin is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, who's films chronicle and question the gaps in history, memory and documentation. She has won or been nominated for more than 20 awards. In 2013, *To Singapore, with Love* won Best Director from Dubai International Film Festival. *Invisible City* (2007) won the Scam International Award at Cinéma du Réel. *Singapore GaGa* (2005) was voted Best Film by Singapore's The Straits Times. *Moving House* (2001), her thesis film, won the Student Academy Award for Best Documentary. In 2015, her short film *Pineapple Town* (2015) was one of seven in the *7 Letters* omnibus which was Singapore's submission to the Oscars. Pin Pin is on the "Asian Cinema 100" list of top 100 Directors compiled by Busan International Film Festival. She has been on film juries of Cinemanila, Jiffest, Busan and DMZDocs. She has mentored at labs like Docs Port Incheon. She has toured universities with her work, and had retrospectives at Memory Film Festival, Yangon and RIDM, Montreal. In 2018, she was admitted to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



MEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGE – Production Company

Media for Social Change was founded by Shuling Yong in 2009. It is a social enterprise dedicated to fostering positive community impact through audio-visual storytelling.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about *Unteachable*, please visit our website: <http://unteachablefilm.com/>

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CREDITS



directed by
SHULING YONG

produced by
LISA TEH
SHULING YONG

executive producers
TAN PIN PIN
VIOLET DU FENG

edited by
MIRABELLE ANG

director of photography
SHULING YONG

music composed by
ANDREW ECKLUND

Additional Camera	LOR HUI YUN
Location Sound	SHULING YONG LISA TEH
Demo Editor	CHARLENE CHONG
Editing Consultants	LESLIE SIMMER GORDON QUINN RABAB HAJ YAHYA LIZ KAAR MATT LAUTERBACH
Graphic Design	KENNETH HU LAM HUI JING
Motion Graphics	TANG WEI QI
Post-Production Services	11 DOLLAR BILL FLOODGATES
Post-Production Color	CLARK JACKSON
Post-Production Audio	JOE FLOOD
Piano Soloist	PAUL MUTZABAUGH
Music Recording Engineer	TYLER RICE
Music Recorded At	TRANSIENT SOUND, CHICAGO, IL
Music Mixed & Mastered By	BRIAN SCHWAB
Impact & Outreach Partners	REBEKAH LIN CHERYL CHONG
Good Pitch Outreach Coordinator	SAMANTHA CHOO

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