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利希慎基金  
LEE HYSAN  
FOUNDATION



# MY VOICE, MY LIFE

Directed by Ruby Yang

## PRESS PACKET

**Running Time:** 91 minutes

**Language:** Cantonese with English subtitles

**Rating:** IIA (Hong Kong)

**Theatrical Release:** October 16, 2014 (Hong Kong)

**For More Info:** [www.myvoicemylifemovie.com](http://www.myvoicemylifemovie.com)  
[www.facebook.com/mvmlmovie](https://www.facebook.com/mvmlmovie)  
[www.youtube.com/mvmlhk](https://www.youtube.com/mvmlhk)

**Contact:** [mvmlhk@gmail.com](mailto:mvmlhk@gmail.com)



MY VOICE, MY LIFE

## Synopsis

### Short Synopsis

*"My Voice, My Life,"* a Hong Kong documentary directed by Oscar winner Ruby Yang, chronicles the trials and tribulations of a group of underprivileged middle and high school students as they underwent six months of vigorous training to produce a musical on stage. A life-affirming journey of self-discovery and growth, the stories of these young people will challenge every parent, teacher and policy maker to reflect on our way of nurturing the young.

The film is presented by the L plus H Creations Foundation, in association with the Lee Hysan Foundation.

### 250-Word Synopsis

Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker Ruby Yang's newest film, *"My Voice, My Life"* follows an unlikely group of misfit students from four Hong Kong middle and high schools cast in a musical theater performance. From low self-esteem to blindness, each student confronts unique personal challenges in the process of developing his or her character.

Many of the musical theater troupe's students come from Hong Kong's underprivileged schools, which admit the territory's academically underperforming students. Others come from a school for the blind that seeks to teach its students how to perform basic tasks and function in the sighted world.

Bad boy Jason regularly cuts class, smokes, and is generally a troublemaker. Coby feels she is mediocre at everything, and struggles to stay focused. Tsz Nok lost his eyesight last year, and confronts his family's disgrace at his blindness. Wing Wing immigrated to Hong Kong two years ago, and just wants to fit in. Fat Yin is repeating a grade in school, and hides behind a tough guy attitude. Tabitha feels immense shame that unlike her other friends, she did not make the cut for the top tier secondary schools. High school dropout Jessica is an 18-year-old who went back to grade 8 in the hope of getting her life back on track.

Brought together to sing, dance, and act, the students question their own abilities and balk at the spotlight. Teachers and administrators question whether this ragtag band will be able to work together, much less put on a successful musical. But Nick Ho, director of the production, holds onto hope that his tough love approach will unite the students and bring out their inner performers.

The film is presented by the L plus H Creations Foundation, in association with the Lee Hysan Foundation.

The net proceeds from the film's ticket sales will go towards youth educational programs.



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## Director's statement

### Director Ruby Yang

When L plus H Creations Foundation decided to put on a musical, I proposed that they train a group of high school students who, through their own youthful perspectives, would film the whole process. Six student filmmakers were chosen to participate.

Several months later, I went to observe the rehearsals for the musical. The first thing I spotted was music director Emily Chung coaching Tsz Nok, a student who had recently lost his vision, on his singing. With great effort he read the Braille using both hands, and I could feel the strength and immense effort he put into singing. I found it deeply affecting. After much deliberation, I finally decided to return to Hong Kong to direct the documentary.

The students chosen for the production were from underprivileged secondary schools. I do not regard them differently from their higher-achieving peers but question why this label of "low-performance" has been forced upon them.

During the course of filming "*My Voice, My Life*," I was with these young people on a daily basis. To a few students, I served as their counselor. By filming them, the camera became kind of a therapeutic tool. At the same time, I witnessed their personal growth that the musical training has given them. Strong bonds were being formed with the school principals and teachers.

At the same time, the student filmmakers continued to help film the rehearsals as they built their skills. I have incorporated their footage into the final film and it has been a joy to work with them.

### Documenting Personal Transformations

Although filming of the documentary is over, this is just the beginning of a new chapter in the students' lives. Whether they will take charge of their lives remains to be seen, but it is undeniable that the seeds of personal growth have been planted in their minds, waiting to bear fruit.

For example, 16-year-old Jacky Cheung, one of the student filmmakers, struggled with dyslexia and poor reading ability, and found it difficult to express himself. During the course of filming "*My Voice, My Life*," Jacky finally discovered his passions and learned new skills, and now has enrolled in video-making classes. 18-year-old Sau Yan Wong is a recent immigrant to Hong Kong, and she discovered her love of the stage during the filming process. She applied to film school in Taiwan. These are perfect examples of the impact one's life can have on another: one's own decision affects oneself, and also influences those around him or her.





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## About Director & Producer

### Director & Producer Ruby Yang

Ruby Yang is a noted Chinese American filmmaker whose work in documentary and dramatic film has earned her an Academy Award, two Academy nominations, and numerous other international awards, including an Emmy, the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Journalism Award, and the Global Health Council Media Award.

Along with Producer Thomas Lennon, Yang founded the Chang Ai Media Project in 2003. Since then, the organization's documentaries and public service announcements promoting AIDS awareness have been seen more than 900 million times. Chang Ai's trilogy of short documentary films about modern China, all directed by Yang, include *"The Blood of Yingzhou District,"* which won an Oscar in 2007, *"The Warriors of Qiugang,"* which received an Academy Award nomination for best documentary short in 2011, and *"Tongzhi in Love,"* which was short-listed in the same category in 2008.

Prior to her work in Beijing, Yang directed the 1997 production *"Citizen Hong Kong,"* which the Chicago Reader called "unflinching in its honesty, vivid in its kaleidoscopic imagery." *"Citizen Hong Kong"* aired on PBS during Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month, as did two of Yang's other films: *"China 21"* (2001), and *"A Moment in Time"* (2009). All three productions went on to be shown in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and across Europe.

Yang has also edited several feature films, including Joan Chen's debut feature *"Xiu Xiu: The Sent Down Girl."* The movie tells a story "that feels nearly mythic in its themes of betrayal, devotion, and power," according to the San Francisco Chronicle. "Poetic in its images, devastating in its emotional impact," the film premiered at the Berlin Festival in 1998 and went on to win seven Golden Horses, Taiwan's equivalent of the Academy Award. As well as Editor, Yang also served as the film's Associate Producer. Yang went on to edit Chen's first Hollywood feature, *"Autumn in New York,"* starring Richard Gere and Winona Ryder.

As Series Editor for Bill Moyers' *"Becoming American - the Chinese Experience"* (PBS, March 2003), Yang supervised editing for the entire series, which received four Emmy nominations. She spent more than a year working closely with Moyers, producing what the New York Times called "a model documentary that gets almost everything right."

Born in Hong Kong, Yang moved to San Francisco in 1977. She graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute with a BFA in painting and an MFA in filmmaking. She relocated to Beijing in 2004.

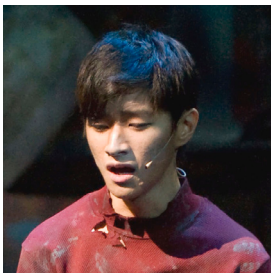
She now joins The University of Hong Kong as Hung Leung Hau Ling Distinguished Fellow in Humanities at the Journalism and Media Studies Centre.

Yang is a member of the Directors Guild of America and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



### Jason Chow

A self-proclaimed bad boy, Jason defies authority at every turn. Teachers and administrators admire his big personality, but worry that his bad habits and miscreant behavior will influence his peers.



### Tsz Nok Lin

A student whose vision degenerated to the point of total blindness last year, Tsz Nok faces the challenge of adapting to life without eyesight while confronting his family's shame about his disability.



### Tabitha Chan

Tabitha was the only one among her friends not being admitted to a top tier secondary school. She constantly feels she can't measure up to her friends at better schools, and is ashamed to be in an academically underperforming secondary school.



### Ho Yin Hui

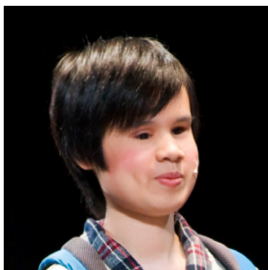
Like Tabitha, Ho Yin did not make the cut for the top tier secondary schools, but puts on a strong front and creates mischief to avoid acknowledging his true feelings of shame at having repeated a year of school.





### **Calvin Chu**

Calvin is indifferent towards everything, especially his studies. His participation in the musical requires him to commit himself in ways he never has before.



### **Sio Fan Lam**

Sio Fan may not be able to see, but her hard work proves to her peers and instructors that her blindness is not a disability.



### **Coby Wong**

"Talented" is possibly the last word Coby would use to describe herself. When she was cast as the lead in the show, she fears her lack of self-confidence and inability to concentrate will inhibit her ability to perform.



### **Wing Wing Chan**

A recent immigrant from mainland China, Wing Wing wishes she could find someone to turn to. Out of place among her Cantonese-speaking classmates and frequently at odds with her parents, Wing Wing longs to feel included.



### **Jessica Kwok**

A high school dropout, Jessica avoided academics and hard work. Now, she has realized the importance of acquiring an education, and has returned to school to start eighth grade.



### **Nick Ho**

Nick, a teacher turned playwright and producer, believes in the transformative power of musical theater, and challenges the students in the musical troupe to embrace their unique characters wholeheartedly.



### **Ken Kwan**

Ken, musical director, encourages the students to utilize their personal experiences to connect with their characters. He pushes each student to get outside of his or her comfort zone and take the stage without fear.



### **Emily Chung**

Emily, music director, sets a bold example of self-expression through song.

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## MY VOICE, MY LIFE

### Captions for stills

#### ***"My Voice, My Life"* - production still 1**

The students of the musical *"The Awakening"* have an impromptu practice session at a park of a nearby public housing estate.



#### ***"My Voice, My Life"* - production still 2**

Jason Chow, one of the main characters in *"My Voice, My Life"* is interviewed at home with his family.



#### ***"My Voice, My Life"* - production still 3**

To help Tsz Nok sing boldly and confidently on stage, Emily Chung, the music director, designs a series of training lessons for him.







***"My Voice, My Life" -  
production still 4***

Tsz Nok pushes past his obstacles and finds courage to share his experience on stage.



***"My Voice, My Life" -  
production still 5***

More than a hundred people from the cast and crew of musical *"The Awakening"* on stage at the Kwai Tsing Theatre where the performances took place.



***"My Voice, My Life" -  
production still 6***

With hopes to encourage potential film talents to pursue documentary filmmaking careers, Director Ruby Yang mentors several up-and-coming cinematographers and four high school students from the participating schools of the musical.





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## About the production team

### Producer Ada Ho

Ada Ho is currently the Executive Director of L plus H Fashion, a community interest company established in 2009 to create job opportunities for under-served people. With the vision in building up a modern factory manufacturing for world brands and its own brand driven by strong product development and industrial engineering, L plus H incubates a new generation of fashion designers, technicians, garment workers and entrepreneurs for Hong Kong. In the process, the label "Made in Hong Kong" is constantly being re-vitalized and re-defined.



In 2013, L plus H Creations Foundation was founded. The mission of the Foundation is using professional theatrical performances (musicals, drama, filming) to strengthen underprivileged teenagers' self-confidence, discipline, motivation and team spirit. The performing art training is integrated with positive values and character education. Ho is also Producer for the annual large-scale musical and for the documentary film "*My Voice, My Life*."

Ho previously worked in the business sector in strategic planning, management consulting, and currency derivatives trading at various international corporations. In response to the 8.0-magnitude earthquake of Sichuan in May 2008, she founded the Hong Kong Special Music Squad that provided music and play therapy to almost 20,000 victims within a month. She then rolled out an experimental community reconstruction program that aimed to create community engagement, build social capital, and generate local leadership in pilot settlement areas of the hardest-hit regions. In recognition of her social innovation in Sichuan, Ho was honored with the "Humanitarian Award" in 2008 by the Women's International Film and Television Showcase in Los Angeles.

She is a weekly columnist at the *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, and in 2008 published a book "*Out of the Wilderness: the Art of Leadership*."

Ho holds a Master in Public Policy degree at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service degree at Georgetown University.

### Associate Producer Candy Chan

Candy Chan graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism from San Francisco State University. She worked for several overseas Chinese media platforms, including television productions, radio, newspapers and other related industries. Prior to working as Associate Producer on the documentary, "*My Voice, My Life*," she served as the Assistant PR & Event Manager with the Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum.







## Main Cinematographer Siu Ki Yip

Siu Ki Yip studied photography at the HK Polytechnic Swire School of Design. He has worked at ATV, NBC, The Standard, and Next Magazine, etc., and founded the SKY Workshop Ltd. in 2000. Yip has taught part-time at multiple universities. Yip was a judge at the 2007 Macau Film Festival and at the 33rd Hong Kong film awards, and became an executive committee member of the HK Society of Cinematographers in 2014.



## Editor Man Chung Ma

Experienced documentary editor, Man Chung Ma came across film when he began working as editor for Hong Kong Communications Television (CTN), editing newsreels, documentaries, feature films and commercials. "My Voice, My Life" is Ma's fourth collaboration with Director Ruby Yang. Ma also edited Yang's "The Blood of Yingzhou District," "The Warriors of Qiugang" and "Julia's Story."



## Composer Brian Keane

Brian Keane is an award-winning American composer, music producer, musician and guitarist. Collectively, Keane has scored over a hundred award-winning documentaries and films, including sixteen Emmy winners for best documentary or series, nine Peabody Award winning films, five Oscar nominated films, and one Academy Award winning film. Keane was the composer for Director Ruby Yang's "The Blood of Yingzhou District."



## Composer Robert Ellis-Geiger

Robert Ellis-Geiger is a multiple award nominee, Hong Kong-based film composer, conductor, musician and score producer. He has been twice nominated for Hong Kong Golden Bauhinia film awards for his work on the critically acclaimed Director Johnnie To's "Election 2" (2006) and Patrick Tam's "After This Our Exile" (2006).





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## About

### Presented By:



L plus H Creations Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, works with underprivileged teenagers to build their positive values and purposes of life through arts and character education. Professional performing art training which is grounded firmly on positive values and healthy youth development is used to strengthen underprivileged teenagers' self-confidence, motivation and team-spirit.

A full-length Cantonese-speaking musical, "*Against the Wind*" – a motivational musical performance that encouraged young people to explore their full potential and reach for their dreams, was staged at Kwai Tsing Theatre in September 2014. This is the second production of L plus H Creations, following the success of "*The Awakening*," the first full-length musical performance in 2013. Music maestros Peter Kam and Steve Ip, along with other well-known art practitioners, provided professional performing art training to 80 students with no prior stage experience, and together they embark a life-transformational journey.

### In Association With:



Lee Hysan Foundation is a private family foundation established in Hong Kong in 1973. For over 40 years the Foundation has actively supported meaningful and impactful charity initiatives in Hong Kong, covering various sectors including (i) Education, (ii) Arts and Culture, (iii) Environment, and (iv) Health and Social Welfare.

The Foundation's focus is on initiatives that benefit Hong Kong in a precise, identifiable and catalytic manner, in particular projects that fill service gaps in government welfare and services of mainstream non-profit organizations.

Lee Hysan Foundation hopes to kick-start a positive social movement based on the messages that "*My Voice, My Life*" carries. The documentary challenges the audience to re-evaluate their views on the education system — is Hong Kong too 'academically' focused? Should educators focus on a more all-rounded, team and character building approach with Arts education as an effective platform? Should we encourage and enhance the element of 'positivity' in the relationships between students, teachers and parents?

Being a keen supporter of Chinese documentaries, Lee Hysan Foundation believes a documentary like "*My Voice, My Life*" can facilitate cultural exchange between Hong Kong and the rest of the world, reflecting on the reality of its culture and people. The Foundation's aim is to support platforms that will give voice to individuals who have poured their hearts and souls into capturing social issues on film and to promote these meaningful films to a much wider audience.

Cecilia Ho, President of Lee Hysan Foundation, says, "We believe that a high quality documentary like "*My Voice, My Life*" can touch people's hearts, making them reflect on their lives and take constructive action. Instead of actors playing scripted parts, a documentary stars real people with real stories, making the reality and messages conveyed all the more powerful."





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## End Credits

<b>Presented By</b>	L plus H Creations Foundation
<b>Directed and Edited By</b>	Ruby Yang
<b>Producers</b>	Ruby Yang Ada Ho
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Yuen Foundation Victor Chu Charles Chong Daniel Wong
<b>In Association With</b>	Lee Hysan Foundation
<b>Special Acknowledgement</b>	Mr. Andy Lau
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Candy Chan
<b>Cinematographers</b>	Siu Ki Yip Mike Mak Him Chow Qing Meng
<b>Time Lapse</b>	Nelson Yuen
<b>Editor</b>	Man Chung Ma
<b>Composers</b>	Brian Keane Robert Ellis-Geiger
<b>Creative Consultants</b>	Lambert Yam Muriel Ma
<b>Characters</b>	Jason Chow Nick Ho Tsz Nok Lin Ken Kwan Tabitha Chan Emily Chung Ho Yin Hui Calvin Chu Sio Fan Lam Coby Wong Wing Wing Chan Jessica Kwok



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## Special thanks

**We would like to thank the following schools, their teachers and students for their participation in the film:**

HKSKH Bishop Hall Secondary School  
SKH Tsoi Kung Po Secondary School  
Ebenezer School & Home for the Visually Impaired  
SKH Holy Carpenter Secondary School  
Baptist Lui Ming Choi Secondary School

### **We would also like to thank:**

The cast and crew of the musical "*The Awakening*"  
All the people who have given support to this film and L plus H Creations Foundation  
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Professor Yuen Ying Chan  
Shun Hing College, HKU  
Robert Black College, HKU  
Professor Kai-ming Cheng  
Ms. Bernadette Tsui  
Kwai Tsing Theatre  
Donaldson & Callif  
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~ End ~