

presents

# Ilo Ilo

**A film by Anthony Chen**

*"Anthony Chen's portrait of a family in 1997 Singapore is one of those rare films that manages to capture an entire period within an intimate slice of life. Beautifully acted and precisely observed, ILO ILO is an amazing debut, full of heart and intelligence."*

- **Ang Lee**, Academy Award®-winning director

*"Anthony Chen's debut brims with love, humor and heartbreak."*

- Maggie Lee, **Variety**

*"A modern masterpiece!"* -Kwenton Bellette, **Twitchfilm.com**



Photo Credit: Han

**Singapore / 2013 / Drama / 99 min**

**English, Chinese and Tagalog with English Subtitles / [Official Film Webpage](#)**

Film Movement Press Contact:

Lisa Trifone | 109 W. 27th Street, Suite 9B | New York, NY 10001  
tel: (212) 941-7744 x 209 | fax: (212) 941-7812 | [lisa@filmmovement.com](mailto:lisa@filmmovement.com)

Film Movement Theatrical Contact:

Rebeca Conget | 109 W. 27th Street, Suite 9B | New York, NY 10001  
tel: (212) 941-7744 x 213 | fax: (212) 941-7812 | T[rebeca@filmmovement.com](mailto:rebeca@filmmovement.com)

## **FULL SYNOPSIS**

Set in Singapore during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Ilo Ilo chronicles the day-to-day drama of the Lim family - troublesome grade-schooler Jiale and his overstressed parents, Heck and Leng. Comfortably middleclass and with another baby on the way, they hire Teresa, a Filipino immigrant, as a live-in maid and nanny. An outsider in both the family and Singapore itself, Teresa initially struggles to manage Jiale's antics and find her footing in her new community. The two eventually form a unique bond, but just as Teresa becomes an unspoken part of the family, unforeseen circumstances in an uncertain economy will challenge the new normal yet again.

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Set in Singapore during the 1997 Asian financial crisis, Ilo Ilo chronicles the day-to-day drama of the Lim family and their live-in maid Teresa, a Filipino immigrant. An outsider in both the family and Singapore itself, Teresa initially struggles to find her footing in her new community. Just as Teresa becomes an unspoken part of the family, unforeseen circumstances in an uncertain economy will challenge the new normal yet again.

## **LOGLINE**

As Teresa, a live-in Filipino maid in Singapore, becomes an unspoken part of the Lim family, unforeseen circumstances in an uncertain economy will challenge the family's new normal.

## **ASSETS**

Official trailer for embedding/sharing:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mx8ybdED2Uc>

Downloadable hi-res images:

<http://www.filmmovement.com/filmcatalog/index.asp?MerchandiseID=346>

## FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

### Singapore's Official Entry into the Academy Awards, 2014

#### WINNER:

**Cannes Film Festival** - Camera D'Or

Vladivostok Pacific Meridian Film Festival – Grand Prize (Seashell Award)

Vladivostok Pacific Meridian Film Festival – Best Actress, Yeo Yann Yann

Vladivostok Pacific Meridian Film Festival – Best Film, NETPAC Jury

Golden Horse Award – Best Feature Film

Golden Horse Award – Best Actress

Golden Horse Award – Best Director

Golden Horse Award – Best Original Screenplay

#### OFFICIAL SELECTION:

Toronto International Film Festival

Vancouver International Film Festival

Hawaii International Film Festival

Atlanta Asian Film Festival

Philadelphia Film Festival

Palm Springs International Film Festival

Santa Barbara International Film Festival

Denver Film Festival

St. Louis International Film Festival

Sedona International Film Festival

CAAMFest



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I was much younger, my mother hired a Filipino maid to look after the children. Teresa was with us for a long 8 years until I was 12 years old. We called her Auntie Terry. When she left to return home, it was hard to bear, but we got used to her absence and somehow lost contact. The one thing that has stayed with me after all these years is the name of the place she was from, Iloilo, a province in the Philippines. That is how the title of the film came about.



My experience is probably similar to many other kids in Singapore and in the region, where hardworking parents spend their days at work, leaving the young ones in the hands of a hired stranger. In this case, having a maid is not a luxury of the bourgeoisie but a need for practical reasons.

There have not been many films made on the subject of such maids, at least not in Singapore. Yet more often than not, what the media portrays is usually of a negative kind – controversies of abuse concerning domestic helpers, where either the victims are the children they care for, or the maids become the victims of employers. What one forgets is that an entire generation of children has grown up in the hands of maids. This is more true today with most families having both parents working full-time.

I believe the universal experience of children growing up with maids is one of having a “surrogate” mother, a friend and a confidant. What is intriguing and never brought to light is the emotional inter-relations created, nurtured, cherished, and yet brutally taken away when circumstances change.

*Ilo Ilo* is inspired by my childhood - through vignettes and moments of the people close to me, particularly their mannerisms and words that have stuck in my head. All this set during a particular period in Singapore.

I am grateful that for my first feature, I have the opportunity to make a film that begins at home.

-Anthony Chen

## ***Nanny beloved from Iloilo now nanny, the movie***

**Nestor P Burgos Jr**

**PHILIPPINE DAILY ENQUIRER – September 8, 2013 - [FULL ARTICLE](#)**

ILOILO CITY, Philippines—Teresita Sajonia left Singapore 16 years ago as a nanny but returned to the city-state in August a celebrity.

On Aug. 24, Sajonia attended the gala premier at Marina Bay Sands Theater of the award-winning movie “Ilo Ilo,” a film inspired by her eight-year employment and relationship with a Singaporean family.

“Ilo Ilo,” which won the Camera d’Or (best first feature film award) in the prestigious Cannes Film Festival in May, was written and directed by Anthony Chen, 29, the eldest of three boys Sajonia took care of from 1988 to 1997.

“I’m very happy that they remembered the years we were together and that this was made into a movie,” Sajonia, 55, a native of San Miguel town in Iloilo province after which the movie was titled.

With Sajonia as guests of honor were Singaporean President Tony Tan Keng Yam, his wife, Mary Chee Bee Kiang, and Lawrence Wong, acting minister for culture, community and youth. Sajonia was accompanied by her partner, Juan Taguibe.

The audience gave “Ilo Ilo” a standing ovation, captured on a video posted on its official page on Facebook. After its screening in Singapore, the film is expected to be shown in the Philippines. It stars Filipino actor Angeli Bayani, who plays the role of Sajonia.

### **Singapore experience**

The youngest of six children and a midwifery graduate who failed to pass the board examination, Sajonia went to Singapore in 1986 because she could not find a job in Iloilo.

She first worked as a domestic helper. After her contract expired, she went to work for the Chen family in 1988. She sent part of her earnings to her own family in Iloilo.

Aside from doing household chores, Sajonia took care of her employers’ three children—Anthony, Justin and Christopher. She was closest to the youngest, Christopher, who was only a month old when she started to work for the family.

The children learned their first English words from “Auntie Terry,” as they called Sajonia. She also made them listen to her cassette collections of “Miss Saigon” and “Les Miserables.” At the height of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, Sajonia returned home after her fourth two-year contract with the Chens had expired.

She also thought she was ill, only to learn later that she was experiencing menopausal symptoms. Sajonia returned to farming and raising chickens in San Miguel, 14 kilometers southwest of Iloilo City.

For 13 years now, she has been living with Taguibe, 65, in their house in Sitio Onas in Barangay Santa Cruz, 5 kilometers from the town proper.

The Chens and Sajonia lost contact for 16 years. She wrote to the family once but she did not know that her letter never reached them because they had moved to a new place. But she kept pictures of her former wards. "Ilo Ilo," which has been screened in various international film festivals, led to the reunion of Sajonia and the three Singaporean children, now all grown up.

### **Search for Auntie Terry**

After his film had won the Cannes festival, he decided to find his former nanny. He traveled to the Philippines and in June he met public relations consultant Charles Lim, a Cebu-based Singaporean and chief executive officer of Selrahco Management and Consultancy Services, who offered to help him.

Lim requested media outlets in Iloilo to help trace Sajonia. But without her complete name and address, and only with photos taken when she was still in Singapore, the search took weeks.

"We do not have a television and our radio station is not working well," Sajonia said. In July, a nephew of Sajonia in Australia recognized her picture in a Facebook post of radio station Bombo Radyo. He contacted a cousin in Iloilo who, in turn, informed Sajonia about the search for her.

"When I learned that someone from Singapore was looking for me, I was concerned that I might have done something wrong and that they would arrest me," Sajonia said.

### **Reunion**



But on July 22, Anthony and Christopher Chen quietly arrived in Iloilo City and on the next day paid a surprise visit to their Auntie Terry at her home in San Miguel. At first, she did not recognize Anthony. "Who are you?" she asked him. But she recognized the now 24-year-old Christopher whom she last saw when he was 8.

"I embraced them and cried a little," she told the Inquirer. The brothers took their former nanny and Taguibe to Iloilo City to shop and stay overnight in a hotel before they returned to Singapore on July 24. Anthony said his family was overjoyed when they learned about the reunion.

"My family and I are completely overwhelmed by the goodwill coming from Iloilo and the Philippines in finding Auntie Terry. We honestly did not expect to hear any news so soon," he said in a statement.



## CREW BIOGRAPHIES

### **ANTHONY CHEN, Director**

Born in 1984 in Singapore, Anthony Chen enrolled in Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film and Media Studies at the age of 17 to pursue his passion for filmmaking. He graduated from film school with his graduation film, *G-23* which screened at multiple festivals worldwide and won awards in Europe and Asia. His second short film, *Ah Ma (Grandma)*, was nominated for the Palme d'Or for Short Film at the 60th Cannes Film Festival, and was awarded a Special Mention, the first time a Singaporean film was awarded in Cannes. *Haze* (2008), his next short screened in competition at the 58th Berlin International Film Festival.

Collectively, his shorts have screened at numerous prestigious film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, Rotterdam, Pusan, London, Sao Paulo, Stockholm, Sydney, Montreal, Melbourne, Chicago, Hawaii, etc. Anthony is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talent Campus and Golden Horse Film Academy.

In 2009, he was accorded the Young Artist Award by the National Arts Council of Singapore. In 2010, he completed his Masters in Film Directing at the National Film and Television School, UK with a scholarship from the Media Development Authority of Singapore. Anthony now works between London and Singapore. *Ilo Ilo* marks his feature film debut.

#### Filmography

##### **Short Films**

2012 *Karung Guni*  
2011 *The Reunion Dinner*  
2010 *Lighthouse*  
2010 *Distance*  
2009 *Hotel 66*  
2008 *Haze*  
2007 *Ah Ma (Grandma)*  
2004 *G-23*

##### **Feature Film**

2013 *Ilo Ilo*



## **BENOIT SOLER, Director of Photography**

Benoit grew up in Paris, where he studied graphic design and media studies before enrolling in cinematography at the National Film and Television School (NFTS) in the UK. At the NFTS, he began his collaboration with Anthony Chen, working on short films *Distance* and *Lighthouse*. Their graduation film *Lighthouse* was awarded National Winner at the Kodak Filmschool Competition and Best Cinematography at the Singapore Short Film Awards.

The films Benoit shot have won several awards and have been selected for international film festivals such as La Semaine de la Critique in Cannes, South by South West in Austin, BFI London Film Festival, Raindance (Best Film), Stuttgart (Best Film), Camerimage in Poland, Annecy, London Short film festival (Best Film) and Sheffield Doc/Fest. Benoit currently works on feature films, TV dramas and commercials between London and Paris.

## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **YEO YANN YANN (Mother)**

Yeo Yann Yann is a versatile and talented actor and theatre performer who has built a successful career across the mediums of film, television and theatre. She is one of those rare talents who enjoy both critical acclaim as well as popular star appeal.

A familiar name in Singapore and Malaysia, Yann Yann first secured her standing in the Singapore entertainment industry after a string of notable films such as Singapore box office hit *881, Singapore Dreaming* (New Screenwriters Award, San Sebastian Film Festival; Best Asian Film, Tokyo Film Festival), *Love Matters* and *Being Human*. She also won a Life! Theatre Best Actress award for her exceptional portrayal in the Chinese classic play, *Thunderstorm*. After returning to Malaysia, Yann Yann wowed the local audience with her leading role in the local drama series, *The Iron Lady*. Her performance won her many good reviews and compliments, which led her to win Best Female Actress in the first Golden Awards. Her other outstanding performances include Malaysia's first period martial arts comedy *Petaling Street Warriors*, blockbuster drama series *The Descendant* and comedy sitcom *Time FM*. She has been nominated twice for her performances at the Asian Television Awards.

This is Yann Yann's second collaboration with Anthony after short film *Ah Ma* (Special Mention, 60<sup>th</sup> Cannes Film Festival)



**CHEN TIAN WEN** (Father)

Chen Tian Wen is a household name in Singapore, a seasoned actor with over 20 years of experience. His popularity extends beyond Singapore, with several regional co-produced TV dramas under his belt, particularly in China where his role as a bubbly monk in *The Royal Monk* is still remembered by Singapore and Chinese viewers to this day. To date, Tian Wen has taken part in over 60 television productions; films and stage plays. Off screen, the sporty artiste holds a black belt in Taekwondo and is an avid golfer. *Ilo Ilo* marks Tian Wen's first major role in a feature film.

**ANGELI BAYANI** (Teresa)

Angeli began her professional theater career in 2002. Her film credits include *Ang Huling Araw Ng Linggo* (2006), *Adela* (2008), the Arte France telemovie, *Esclaves de Mers* (2009), and *Pink Halo-Halo* (2010).

Internationally, she is most known for her roles in Filipino auteur Lav Diaz's films. In 2008, Angeli was presented the Vic Silayan Award for Best Actress – International Category at the Dekada Cinemanila Awards for her second Lav Diaz film, *Melancholia* (2008). The 8-hour epic was awarded the Premio Orizzonti at the 65th Venice International Film Festival.

Along with her fellow actors in the film *Presa* (2010), she was presented the Gawad Tanglaw Award for Best Actress (Ensemble). She was also involved in "The Erotic Man" (2010) by Danish poet and film director, Jørgen Leth, friend and mentor to filmmaker Lars von Trier. She was nominated as Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Ka Oryang* (2011) in the Cinema One Originals 2011 and the 35th Gawad Urian. She recently starred in *Juana Change: The Movie*, a political satire film written by Rody Vera and directed by Jade Castro. This is Angeli Bayani's first film involvement outside the Philippines.

**KOH JIA LER** (Jiale)

11-year-old Jia Ler was discovered from over 8000 children during an arduous 10 month casting process. A primary six student at Nan Hua Primary School in Singapore, Jia Ler is well versed in Wushu (Chinese martial arts). *Ilo Ilo* marks Jia Ler's debut.

## CREDITS

### CREW

<b>Director</b>	Anthony Chen
<b>Scriptwriter</b>	Anthony Chen
<b>Producers</b>	Ang Hwee Sim Anthony Chen Wahyuni A. Hadi
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Benoit Soler
<b>Art Director</b>	Michael Wee
<b>Assistant Director</b>	Charlotte Lim
<b>Editors</b>	Hoping Chen Joanne Cheong
<b>Sound Designer</b>	Zhe Wu

### CAST

<b>Hwee Leng (Mother)</b>	Yeo Yann Yann
<b>Teck (Father)</b>	Chen Tianwen
<b>Teresa</b>	Angeli Bayani
<b>Jiale</b>	Koh Jia Ler
<b>Discipline Master</b>	Peter Wee
<b>School Principal</b>	Jo Kukathas
<b>English Teacher (Mrs. Ong)</b>	Naomi Toh
<b>Fat Boy</b>	Delwin Neo
<b>Mother's Colleague (Lisa)</b>	Jo Kwek
<b>Jimmy Goh</b>	Jim Goh
<b>Salon Owner</b>	Pamela Wildheart
<b>Hairdresser</b>	Judee Beniola
<b>IT Manager</b>	Donovon Lee
<b>Subordinate</b>	Michael Chua
<b>Job Interviewer</b>	Michael Foong
<b>Provision Shop Owner</b>	Elvin Leong
<b>Grandmother</b>	Yeo Siew Khim
<b>Elder Brother</b>	Kelvin Ho
<b>Elder Sister-In-Law</b>	Kelly Lim Lt
<b>Elder Sister</b>	Elena Chia
<b>Elder Brother-In-Law</b>	George Chew
<b>Younger Sister</b>	Zelda Tatiana NG
<b>Younger Brother-In-Law</b>	Goh Leng Yong
<b>Younger Brother</b>	Ricky Ong
<b>Younger Brother's Girlfriend</b>	Georgia Fun