



LITTLE SPARROWS

A film by Yu-Hsiu Camille Chen

**"Terrific! Mesmerizing! [Little Sparrow's] script is a gift to the actors who pay Chen back with seemingly effortless performances."
- Natasha Senjanovic, *The Hollywood Reporter***



Australia | 2010 | Drama | English | 88 min. | 1:2.35 | Dolby Digital

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FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

WINNER DigiSPAA Feature Film Competition 2010, The Screen Producers Association of Australia (SPAA)

OFFICIAL SELECTION

**Sydney Int'l Film Festival
Rome Int'l Film Festival
Melbourne Int'l Film Festival
Chennai Int'l Film Festival
Istanbul**

SYNOPSIS

In the middle of an Australian summer, we meet three sisters. Nina is widowed with two young children. Anna is an aspiring actress unhappily married to a filmmaker. Christine is a med student who has yet to fully come to terms with her sexuality. When their mother Susan's breast cancer returns, the family is faced with the reality of their last Christmas together. As each daughter confronts personal change and growth, Susan guides them by revealing a secret of her own.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Filmmaking is my way of asking questions. This is my passion. My intense curiosity about people and the essence deep inside everyone of us.

I want to ask simple questions, meaningful ones. *Little Sparrows* is a story of a journey - about women defining themselves and the flight for individual freedom and independence. A journey culminated by choices, with all the faults, responsibility, passion, and love. Somehow, behind all the confusion, pain and unfinished business, there is hope and a spark of optimism.

Little Sparrows is my voice as a filmmaker, a woman and a mother, and I am speaking it with urgency and sincerity.

As we commenced shooting, it was clear that we could and we were going to work very fast. As the director, I had to make very fast decisions about the camera and movements on set. It was organic and it was definitely about collaboration. Some of the scenes the actors had done it many times during rehearsals, it wasn't hard to replicate the scenes on location. But because of the presence of the camera, there was a completely new element to do it for the camera. It could be exciting or at the same time tedious.

Some of the most powerful and memorable performances were captured in one take. And that's all we needed to tell the story.

The performance was about the culmination of a process and about the rare moment of truth that everyone was aware of it.

BIOGRAPHIES & FILMOGRAPHIES

YU-HSIU CAMILLE CHEN

Director & writer

Born in 1975, Camille grew up in the city of I-Lan situated on the North East coast of Taiwan. After high school, she attended the University of Utah, in the United States, where she majored in film studies with an emphasis on writing and directing.

Camille's initial film career focused on TV commercials, music video and feature films working in Taiwan and China. In 2006, she set up Konnectfilms, a successful film production business specializing in high-end TV commercials for the Asian market. Now living in Western Australia with her family, Camille has decided to focus her energies on her directing career. Her pursuit of filmmaking is a passionate endeavor to express her views about life and people's adaptation to changing environments. In 2008, Camille co-founded Bolderpictures with Peter Thomas.

In 2009, Camille directed and produced short film *Conscience*, based on Italo Calvino's short story of the same title. *Little Sparrows* is Camille's debut feature film.

NICOLA BARTLETT

Susan

Nicola graduated from NIDA (National Institute of Dramatic Art, Australian most prodigious training ground for actors and performers) in 1986 and has been performing for stage and screen.

In 2007, Nicola won the Best Actress Award at the Equity Guild Awards for her performance in "The Goat, or Who is Sylvia."

JAMES HAGAN

James

James began his career at the Perth Playhouse in 1975. After spending seven years touring Britain and Europe with the acclaimed Australian theatre company, Triad Stage Alliance, he worked with English speaking theatres of Frankfurt (Germany) and Florence (Italy). Since returning to Australia in 1985, James has worked consistently in theatre, film and radio.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

In Conversation with Camille Chen, Director

How did you get into filmmaking?

According to my parents, I was obsessed with TV, music and movies from a young age. They called me a daydreamer. For hard-working Chinese parents like mine, they would have preferred I devoted my time to study rather than gluing myself to the TV set.

In my second year in high school, I developed this unbelievable crush on my art teacher who was a movie buff. So I started to research American and European art cinema to get his attention. Very soon, I was hooked.

Can you tell me about the film in your own words?

Little Sparrows is about change, and about the desire and journey for that change. The chance to be someone truer and stronger. That person is me, as a filmmaker, a mother and a woman.

I look back in my life, my choices and my faults, the people I loved and fallen out of love with, things I cherished and lost... I look back and I realise that I have taken few steps forward. I want to mark that awareness and reflection.

Can you tell me how you came up with the idea for the film?

It was born out of the desire to express and to communicate. When my father past away two years ago - when I felt no more enthusiasm to continue my commercial production business, when I couldn't bear the thought of simply resorting to suburban comfort - I felt I was exploding, burning inside with the desire to express and to communicate.

But I didn't know how. I was scared of failures amongst many other things. My partner, Peter, encouraged me to confront that fear. When I looked inward, I realised that I must say something truly genuine and sincere about me. I needed to make a movie about "love" - as I believe who and how we love ultimately shape who we are.

Did much of the film reflect your own life and experiences?

In essence yes, but not in actual events. I took inspiration from everyone and everywhere. That said, the starting point did come from a place close and dear to my heart.

What were the major challenges in shooting the film?

The challenge and also the best thing about making this film is how quickly we made it. It is scary, risky and very demanding, but there is also something to be said about making a movie so quickly. (We shot over 19 days in last December with less than two months in pre-production.)

It forces you to be extremely focused, precise and intuitive. I had to make choices on set very quickly and stick to my choices. Sometimes I would choose to shoot a scene a certain way for reasons I couldn't fully explain, but felt was right. The crew, particularly our DOP Jason Thomas, was extremely adaptable and could work with me under those highly demanding and stressful conditions. It wasn't until I was in the editing suite that I would finally understand why I made those specific choices.

How much did it cost to make?

As we funded the film out of our own pockets, I've been calling it a micro magic budget! Lower than a low-budget... most people donated their time and services - were incredibly grateful for that! We couldn't have done it without them - their confidence in me and my story.

Can you tell me a little about Bolderpictures and why you started this company?

Peter and I started Bolder in 2008. I am the creative mind and he handles the business. We wanted to bold and different, but essentially we wanted to produce high quality independent cinema.

I have had long history and network in Asia from my advertising days, so we also have an office in Shanghai. My personal and professional background always prompts me to think and strategise internationally - to come up with projects that best utilise the resources across many regions and appeal to those audiences.

When it comes to commercial operation - we are not limited to a specific funding path. We are very entrepreneurial. We are ambitious and we are also extremely pragmatic. Like any production business, it is all about concept, production quality, distribution and marketing. To be able to connect all these milestones and components, it takes a lot of learning, refining and the guts to take risk when you have to.

How do you feel about having your world premiere at the Sydney Film Festival?

We are thrilled, truly! The challenge of independent filmmaking is one has to constantly wrestle and balance with available resources and limitation. An established film festival like Sydney has provided an incredibly invaluable platform for our film. We remain humbled and diligent.

What do you want people to take away from the film?

I want them to really feel it. To think about it. And to reflect. I want people to take their time - love and express that love. And watch more good movies - there are plenty of them out there. And tell more people about *Little Sparrows*!

CREDITS

CREW

Director & writer	Yu-Hsiu Camille Chen
Producer	Yu-Hsiu Camille Chen
Producer	Eva Di Blasio
Executive	Producer Peter Thomas
Original Music	Tim Count, Ray Lamontagne, Keith Van Geyzel
Cinematography	Jason Thomas
Film Editor	Fil Baker
Costume Design	Michelle Ridley
Makeup	Michelle Ridley
Sound	Nathan Codner, Mark Donohoe, James Hewgill, Owen Hughes
Visual Effects	Steve Vojkovic

CAST

Susan	NICOLA BARTLETT
James	JAMES HAGAN
Nina	NINA DEASLEY
Anna	MELANIE MUNT
Christine	ARIELLE GRAY
Mark	SCOTT JACKSON
Rick	NICK CANDY
Rosie	WHITNEY RICHARDS
Simon	SIMON LOCKWOOD
Sophie	CHRISTIE SISTRUNK