BEYOND YELLOWFACE
A film by Jennifer Lin

THE FILM
Racial stereotypes abound in beloved ballets—hiding in plain sight in this centuries-old art form. These caricatures perpetuate prejudice and hobble ballet’s efforts to appeal to modern audiences. But change is coming.

BEYOND YELLOWFACE follows New York dancers Phil Chan and Georgina Pazcoguin as they challenge the global dance world to rid such classics as The Nutcracker and La Bayadère of outdated stereotypes of Asians and make ballet more inclusive.

The documentary brings viewers behind the scenes to witness the work of the pair as they push for change in the ballet world. We see the Scottish Ballet unveil a new version of the Chinese dance from The Nutcracker, and join Chan as he boldly reimagines the classic ballet La Bayadère, taking it out of a Hindu temple and into Hollywood in the 1920s. By focusing on Asians, BEYOND YELLOWFACE explores the tension and pushback within the ballet world as an art form descended from European kings attempts to become more relevant to diverse audiences today.

WHY NOW?
In the wake of #StopAsianHate and #BlackLives-Matter, the ballet community is looking in the mirror at how it represents other cultures on stage. “This is a moment in time to speak boldly about our ballet heritage,” says Christopher Hampson of the Scottish Ballet. Phil and Georgina have created a Final Bow for Yellowface pledge to eliminate outdated stereotypes of Asians from productions. More than 50 ballet companies—including the New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theatre and Royal Ballet—have signed the pledge, as well as more than a thousand dancers and choreographers.

“The sharp rise in reports of anti-Asian hate crimes during the pandemic, as well as a recent focus on the legacy of discrimination in dance, opera and classical music, have brought fresh urgency to the effort.”

— Javier C. Hernández, New York Times

CONTACT: Jennifer Lin • (267) 254-4451 • jenniferlin1100@yahoo.com
“If all audiences see is the bobbing and shuffling coolie from a bygone era as the only representation of Asians on stage, what message does that send to our Asian students who dream of dancing the Swan Queen?”
—Phil Chan & Georgina Pazcoguin

DISTRIBUTION GOAL
We will connect BEYOND YELLOWFACE with a broad audience through traditional venues, while at the same time making it a priority to contribute to vital conversations around cultural representation in ballet, the arts, and education. Our multi-pronged distribution strategy includes:

- Benefit screenings and Q&As at universities and conservatories with dance programs
- Outreach to schools, libraries and Asian American organizations during Asian American & Pacific Islander Heritage Month
- National PBS broadcast with coast-to-coast coverage

“While all the Act II variations in the Nutcracker are caricatures and based on stereotypes to varying degrees, I found the ‘Chinese’ one insulting.”
—Adam Sklute, Ballet West

“I’ve always felt consciously uncomfortable how ‘yellow, black and brown’ people are portrayed in classical dance—even at 13 years old.”
—Misty Copeland, American Ballet Theatre

THE CAST
Phil Chan and Georgina Pazcoguin are the dancers behind the Final Bow for Yellowface campaign. Chan is an author, arts administrator, educator and dance producer. He is working on a new staging of the ballet La Bayadère. Pazcoguin is a soloist for the New York City Ballet and author of Swan Dive: The Making of a Rogue Ballerina.

THE FILMMAKERS
Jennifer Lin, director/producer, created the documentary Beethoven in Beijing, which premiered nationally on PBS’s Great Performances.

Jon Funabiki, producer, advocates for media equity following a career spanning journalism, teaching and philanthropy.

Cory Stieg, consulting producer, studied dance at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts and writes about ballet.

Paul Van Haute, director of photography, worked on such documentaries as Beethoven in Beijing and the Emmy-winning series Philadelphia: The Great Experiment.

CONTACT: Jennifer Lin • (267) 254-4451 • jenniferlin1100@yahoo.com