

MINH NGOC NGUYEN KRIS DUANGPHUNG BEN BELA BOEHM



THE GOLDEN PIN

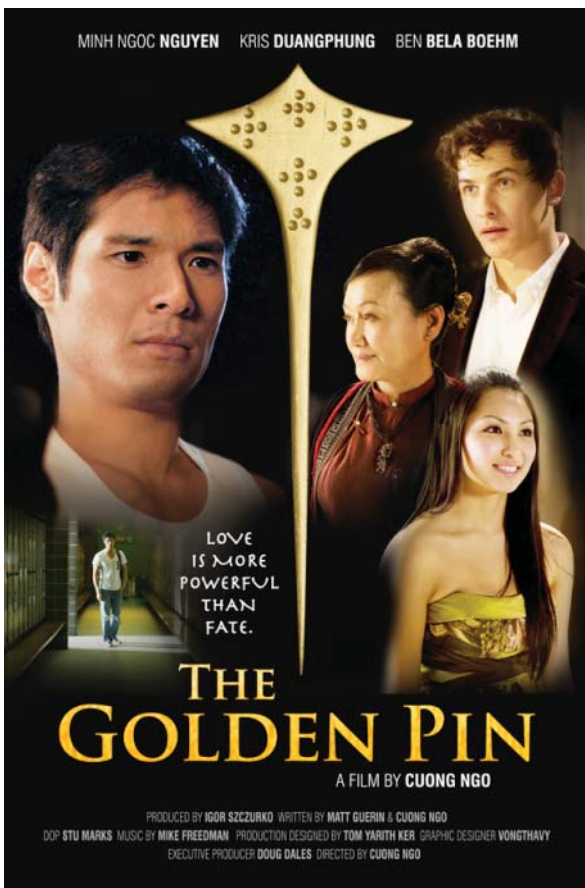
A FILM BY CUONG NGO

PRODUCED BY IGOR SZCZURKO WRITTEN BY MATT GUERIN & CUONG NGO
DOP STU MARKS MUSIC BY MIKE FREEDMAN PRODUCTION DESIGNED BY TOM YARITH KER GRAPHIC DESIGNER VONGTHAVY
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DOUG DALES DIRECTED BY CUONG NGO

THE GOLDEN PIN

PRESS KIT

THE FILM AND ITS RELEASE



'The Golden Pin' is the latest film from writer/director Cuong Ngo (*The Hitchhiker Project*). It is a modern drama about a young Vietnamese-Canadian swimmer who finds himself struggling between the expectations of his Asian family and the demands of his heart. Filled with romance and simmering conflict, the film explores the consequences of burying one's own needs in matters of the heart. The film is set to a beautiful score and stars a sexy and stellar cast. *'The Golden Pin'* will screen at the 2009 Inside Out LGBT Film & Video Festival during the 'Hogtown Homos' screening on May 20th at 7:15 pm at the Isabel Bader Theatre, located at 93 Charles Street West in Toronto, ON. Other festival screenings to follow.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Set in Canada's multicultural milieu, Long, an avid swimmer, finds himself struggling between the expectations of his Asian family and the demands of his heart. His father wants him to marry soon, but his mother, haunted by a past romance, hopes her son will stand up for what he believes. Told with great honesty and compassion, *The Golden Pin* asks the question, *'Is love more powerful than fate?'*



FILM SPECIFICATIONS

Running Time: 15 Minutes

Country, Year: Canada, 2009

Format/Ratio: Anamorphic, 2.35: 1 / Color

Language: English/Vietnamese with English Subtitle

Screening Formats: 35mm, DigiBeta, Beta SP, HDCam, DVD

Sound: Stereo

Genre: Gay/Romance/Drama/Short

Rating: Unrated

Filmed in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in December 2008

PRINCIPAL CREW



Director/Writer: Cuong Ngo

Producer: Igor Szczurko

Writer/ Associate Producer: Matt Guerin

Executive Producer - Doug Dales

Cinematographer - Stu Marks

Editor - Cuong Ngo

Sound Designers: Arthur Zaragoza & Alex Zaragoza

Art Director - Tom Yarith Ker

Composer - Mike Freedman

PRINCIPAL CAST



Long – Kris Duangphung

Ryan – Ben Bela Boehm

Linh, Long's mother – Minh Ngoc Nguyen

Phong, Long's father – Viet Tien Nguyen

Vanessa – Lily Nguyen

KRIS DUANGPHUNG AS LONG



This native German of Chinese and Thai descent has made his mark on the international modeling scene and will soon do the same as an actor after his starring role as Long in Cuong Ngo's 2009 film *'The Golden Pin'*.

Born and raised in Fulda, Germany, Duangphung was first discovered in 1997 by a popular Thai magazine called "Image" (the "Vogue" of Thailand). He was featured with Thai celebrity Luket in one of the magazine's main spreads. After that, other popular Thai magazines, such as Pujing and Maew, hired Duangphung.

In 1999, Kris won the title of "Mr. Germany," leading to more international magazine work with "Fit and Fun," "Men's Health," "Men's Folio," "DNA," "Elle Magazine," "Cleo," and many others. He also had many German television appearances on channels Pro 7, RTL and SAT1 and much commercial work.

Duangphung's international success in modeling gave him the confidence to pursue his passion for acting. In 2005, while studying Acting at TVI in New York City, he was discovered by Wilhelmina Agency, the top U.S. modeling and commercial, runway and theatrical agency. He's continued to work in Germany, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Africa, Finland, Poland and New York with clients such as BMW, Nokia, Mercedes Benz, Sony, Sennheisser, Lays Chips, and BMW mini.

In 2007, Kris transferred to Wilhelmina Los Angeles where he is currently based. In recent years, he has done fashion shows and print ads for high profile clients such as Ed Hardy, Mercedes Benz, Smash Box Fashion Week, TG Bedhead Show, Wilkes Bashford, Elle Fashion Show, Reebok, Macy's, and Mazda.

BEN BELA BOEHM AS RYAN



Ben Bela Boehm fell in love with Toronto while shooting *'The Golden Pin'* in December 2008, but wonders how anyone can cope with the weather. Ben studied acting at the Conservatory of Music and Drama in Berne, Switzerland, followed by three years of repertory theatre at the National Theatre of Brunswick, Germany where his credits included *Amadeus* and *Bash*.

He's had several parts as a regular/lead in German/British TV series, as well as parts in movies *Angels and Demons*, *Morris: A Life With Bells On* and *The Red Box*. Ben lives in Los Angeles.

MINH NGOC NGUYEN AS LINH, LONG'S MOTHER



The recipient of more than 30 awards in literature and theater, Minh Ngoc Nguyen has taught traditional acting at Tran Huu Trang Theatre in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She was one of the founders of the Experimental Theatre of Ho Chi Minh City.

She was also a member of the Executive Committee of The Ho Chi Minh City Theatrical Association from 1989 to 1995 and again from 2000 to 2005. She has also taught acting and drama at the Ho Chi Minh City College of Theatre and Cinema. In addition, she's taught Vietnam Theatre History at the Social Science and Humanities College of the Ho Chi Minh City University.

Her work in theatre and film is extensive. She has written about 70 traditional and contemporary plays, and has directed about 30 traditional and contemporary plays. She's written about 30 screenplays, including documentaries and feature films. Among these screenplays: *"Hai Nguyet"* won the Best Picture Award of the Vietnam National Cinema Association and participated in the Three Continents Festival in Nantes, France (1998); her *"Living in Fear"* won the Screenplay Award from the Vietnam National Cinema Association and won the Best Picture Award in the Shanghai Film Festival (2006).

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She's published 12 short story collections and novels and was selected as Vietnam's 2004 Artist of the Year in by the Vietnam Television Network. She performed in the "River of many sides," with three Chicago artists and two Vietnamese artists in the U.S. in 2004, and performed in 'The Missing Woman' in New York in 2008.

Minh played the role of Linh, a woman haunted by a past romance, in Cuong Ngo's 2009 short film, 'The Golden Pin'. Her exquisite performance perfectly embodied that of a woman torn between tradition and what she feels is right for her son.

LILY NGUYEN AS VANESSA



Born in Thailand. Lily relocated to Kitchener Ontario, Canada at the age of 1. Lily has always wanted to experience being a part of the modeling and entertainment industry. Lily's natural characteristics led her to many modeling and acting opportunities, in which she was selected as the 2008 Herbal Essences Pose Winner. This once in a lifetime opportunity gave her a glimpse of the fascinating and exciting entertainment industry. Her first opportunity in acting came when she was approached by Cuong Ngo the director of "The Golden Pin" through a modeling organization that she was a part of. The Golden Pin will be Lily's screen debut. Having fulfilled the opportunity in being a part of a film, Lily still aspires to land more opportunities in the entertainment industry.

VIET TIEN NGUYEN AS LONG'S FATHER



Viet Tien has been a broadcaster, actor and journalist for almost 20 years. He hosts 'TV Viet Tien', a very famous Vietnamese TV program in Canada. Viet Tien is also a stringer for Voice of America, and freelances for the BBC and RFI.

He left Vietnam for Canada when he was very young. After graduating from university, he moved to London, England and worked for the BBC. Since then he has been developing his acting career and has appeared in several TV series and films.

As the host of his own TV show, Viet Tien has focused more of his attention in recent years on journalism than acting. However, after appearing in Cuong Ngo's "The Golden Pin", his desire to participate more in the movie industry has become stronger again.

MATT GUERIN

WRITER/ASSOCIATE PRODUCER



Matt Guerin is a Toronto-based screenwriter, freelance journalist, TV news archivist, and blogger. Born and raised in Guelph, Ontario, Guerin graduated with a political science degree from University of Guelph, followed by a journalism certificate from Humber College. Guerin has freelanced on and off as a writer for Xtra Magazine in Toronto since 1995. He also worked as a political staffer for a variety of progressive politicians at Queen's Park from 1999 to 2004. He currently works at the CBC in Toronto as a TV news archivist.

But film and screenwriting are his main passion. He worked with Dublin-based ClearLight Films in 2006 on a short film he scripted entitled, 'Coughing Fit.' He also wrote two feature screenplays for Toronto's Moving Headshot Productions from 2005 to 2007. He then partnered in 2008 with Toronto-based director Cuong Ngo to co-write 'The Golden Pin,' for which he also served as Associate Producer. Future plans include co-producing with Ngo, Igor Szczurko and Tom Yarith Ker a feature adaptation of 'The Golden Pin' in 2010, which Guerin will also co-write with Ngo.

TOM YARITH KER

ART DIRECTOR



Born and raised in Cambodia where genocide war under Khmer rouge regime was just ended in 1979. At early age, he witnessed his family and country had to restart to live their lives, embraced their cultures, tradition, and religion through out poverty during time. Growing up in an artistic environment where Tom's uncles, architects, and an aunt, a royal ballet classical dancer which has profoundly influenced him in the fields of arts, music, and dance. Having travelled with family to some parts of the world, Tom has studied and observed people's lives that transformed the philosophy of real lives issues into art forms: visual arts and creative ideas.

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Resided in Montreal, Tom has compiled his studied in visual arts, cultural studies, literature, and as well as holding his degree in Bachelor of Commerce, 2004, Concordia University. Beginning 2005, Tom moved to Toronto to learn about multi-cultural city and its diversity. Throughout years of experiences in banking as Operational Business Analyst, Tom continues experimenting and exploring visual arts and philosophy from analysis of social issues that we are facing within the societal and cultural infrastructure. In recent years, Tom has worked as Creative Director and fashion coordinator in various entertainment productions. In 2008, he acted as an Art Director for Cuong Ngo's short film, 'The Golden Pin', released 2009.

Currently, he is working as an Art Director for upcoming short film, 'The Metronome', directed by Ashley Monti. Tom Y. Ker has found his dream in the journey of filmmaking. Future plans include co-producing with Ngo, Igor Szczurko and Matt Guerin a feature adaptation of 'The Golden Pin' in 2010, with Tom also acting as Production Designer.

ZARAGONZA BROTHERS SOUND DESIGNERS



Brothers Arthur Zaragoza and Alexandre Zaragoza were both born and raised in Brazil. Fortunate to be sheltered from the country's disastrous poverty, they grew up in a musical and artistic household, they quickly developed an interest for music and started playing in garage bands with other teenagers from the neighborhood.

In 1997 their father was offered a job as an engineer in Toronto, Canada. The whole family then immigrated to Canada. With their musical inclination unchanged, the brothers quickly started playing with Canadian musicians, even before learning to speak the English language.

Arthur then decided to pursue a carrier as an audio engineer, graduating from Harris Institute of Arts in Toronto. While Alexandre decided to study science, graduating with a degree in molecular biology from York University. Despite taking very different academic paths, the brothers continued developing their musical skills together, composing and recording in collaboration with other local musicians.

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Today, together they form a successful audio production team: The Zaragoza Brothers. They compose for film, television, recording artists as well as for video games. Out of their downtown Toronto studio and other large Toronto facilities they established partners in Europe, North America and Asia. They have the ability to provide top-level services as diverse as original compositions, sound design and mixing for their clients worldwide. Their original work has been featured in several short and feature films as well as a number of record releases. At the moment the brothers are looking to get more involved in the film industry, providing support at the post production stage.

www.zaragozabros.com

MIKE FREEDMAN MUSIC COMPOSER



Mike Freedman is a composer, guitarist/keyboardist and producer based out of Toronto, Ontario. Mike received formal training through the Royal Conservatory of Music and graduated from Berklee College of Music with a degree in film scoring in 1990. Mike has scored two feature films, as well as many short films, which have played at international and local film festivals. In addition, Mike has done the music for several commercials, through the company Big Ears, based out of Los Angeles. Mike is involved in producing albums, both his own and other artists and he is currently producing two albums for the singer, Lilac Cana. Mike has also produced and recorded two CD's of his own material as a singer/songwriter and one CD of instrumental guitar music. Mike has had his songs placed in TV and film, including the show, Dawson's Creek.

www.mikefreedman.com

STU MARKS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY



Born and raised in Toronto. His involvement in film and video goes back to his high school days, and culminated in his graduation from York University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film Production. He is a cinematographer, screenwriter, and actor.

IGOR SZCZURKO PRODUCER



Acting in folk theatre from the age of five Igor Szczurko found his desire to pursue the dramatic arts, achieving success as a young actor. Since then Igor has studied Political Science and Philosophy at the University of Guelph after which he re-found his true passion to be behind the camera.

In 2007 Igor Szczurko founded SIA Pictures, a Toronto based Production Company. He has co-written and directed the TV Pilot “Rude Awakening” (2007) for an anthology TV Series in the spirit of the Twilight Zone. He has also co-wrote and produced “The Hitchhiker Project” (2008) and produced “The Golden Pin” (2008) with all three playing on the Film Festival circuit and receiving positive reviews. Currently Igor works as a Writer, Producer and Director in Toronto. Truly inspired by the story, Igor Szczurko’s goal is to turn The Golden Pin into a feature film together with Matt Guerin, Tom Yarith Ker, and Ngo.

CUONG NGO DIRECTOR/WRITER



Born in Saigon, Vietnam and graduated at the Cinema and Theatre University of Ho Chi Minh City, BFA (02) before pursuing his second degree in Film Production at York University in Toronto, BFA (09). Inspired by Giuseppe Tornatore’s “Nuovo Cinema Paradiso” at an early age, he found his passion in Directing.

Cuong directed 2 award winning short comedies in the years of 2003 and 2004 while studying Writing and Linguistic at International Royal Melbourne Institute of Technologies University. During school, he divided his study schedule working freelance in various Theatre & Film Productions as an Actor, Production Design Assistant and Production Assistant. He worked as Casting Director for Creative Television Production and taught performance arts for fashion models for Elite Model Management.

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As well as picture editing for short films and MTV, his latest writing credits includes **The Cello Tutor** (09) and **The Metronome** (09). Cuong has also directed short films, documentaries and video arts such as: **Oops!** (06), **The White Day** (07), **Dana** (07), **Visual Poetry** (08) **The Hitchhiker Project** (08), **Cultural Anthropology, National Identity through Ukrainian Dance** (08). Cuong Ngo's **The Hitchhiker Project** (08) was officially selected for presentation at numerous prestige International Film Festivals. His most recent film **The Golden Pin** (09) will be world premiered at Toronto Inside Out Film Festival in May, 2009. Together with his friends, he's on a development phase of a feature film.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

It started with all the bedtime stories that my mother read for my sister and I when we were little kids. My mother's narrative voice was hand in hand with the blue moon light made its way through my bedroom's window and led me to the story world, my imagination world. Growing up, I submerged into comic books and fictional books. At an early age, I found myself into literature, visual arts, and spending time watching cartoons and films on a black and white 14-inch TV. Increasing the interest of storytelling via different art forms, I attended all the local performance & artistic events.

I got a full scholarship for Performing Arts Study at Theatre and Cinema College of Ho Chi Minh City where I studied performing arts with professors not only from Vietnam but also France, Britain, Russia, America and Australia. With years of formal training and work in Theatre and International Film Productions based in Vietnam, my passion strongly gradually developed into the field of Directing.

Film is the window opening to the new world which houses different fascinating cultures that speak to your identity. Being deeply into humanities and cultural anthropology, they reinforce me into not only becoming a visual storyteller but also through my films, I hope, the story world can represent for someone out there who could not speak for themselves or could not free themselves out of the environment surrounding by the force of power and authority.

The term 'discrimination' does not exist in my world. Let love speak its language. Witnessing the suffering that the world faces everyday, I would love to be part of world creative construction workers who everyday quietly keep building the world into a better place for everyone. And therefore, let our film speaks its purpose. I hope after watching the movie, each audience member will bring home something that's significant so that when we wake up and look at ourselves in the mirror, we believe we are not alone in this world. We, ourselves, are holding our own fates. Let destinies bring us closer together.

The Golden Pin does not only serve queer politics on the silver screen but also it speaks to the beauty of interracial human relationships and the struggle between familial obligation and tradition and loved ones, especially between male-to-male relationships in a North American diverse city like Toronto.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR CUONG NGO

What inspired you to make 'The Golden Pin'?

Love is a great force that drives me to make 'The Golden Pin'.

What is your writing process?

Writing is a painful process but very interesting. Luckily, I didn't write it alone. I co-write with Matt Guerin. We started writing it since July 2008 until the shooting script went to principal photography on Dec 10-14, 2008, approximately 6 months. John Greyson was my professor so he acted as our script advisor. Together with John Board and Minh Ngoc who kindly read the script and gave us a lot of constructive feedback.

Is 'The Golden Pin' based on personal experiences?

Yes and No, at a personal level, I believe forbidden love is an adventurous journey. It's like a secret garden where you have to go find the hidden gem. To me, love has no limit or border, it speaks a universal language that everyone in every corner around the world can speak or can see his or her image in it. Different people have his or her own definition of love. We human beings always wonder what love is. Love is love. Love has no difference in terms of genders or social difference or races. Love is stronger than fate because love can change our fate. Fate is the term just happens with lazy people. Love is the driving force that makes us human. Love is as essential as food, drink and sex. Everybody wants to love and to be loved. It's the beauty of human relationship. I'm always interested in human relationships. Film is the window open to different cultures that make us understand each other and therefore can bring us closer to each other.

How did you approach the casting of the film?

I'm interested in human faces and body language. In the process of creating the character world, I like to work with actors who look or act different than our characters. If an actor is just playing a character out of himself, there will be no depth & innovation in the creation of the character. Therefore, I like straight actors to play/portray gay characters so that the actors have to do a lot of actor homework in order to make it more believable. A fine actor is the one who can transform himself or herself into different characters.

What was your production design strategy for the film?

The marriage between Western culture and Eastern culture must be painted throughout the film. I worked with my Art Director, Tom Yarith Ker, who was born in Cambodia and grew up in different parts of Asia and Canada. Therefore, he can understand the story world and with his strong creativity and cultural awareness, he brought my imagination to life.

What was the hardest part of making this film?

Writing and Funding.

So what was the hardest part of the shoot?

Children, Special Effects, Animal, Sex scenes and Water are challenging elements that most of Directors are very afraid of to deal with, including me. In my film, I worked with a swim team. I saw my Gaffer, key grips and electricians were running around the swimming pool to set up the lighting while eight of your actors were in the pool for the shot. I just prayed silently 'God, please be with me, please get us through this...'

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INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR CUONG NGO

How do you direct your actors to perform well under such stressful conditions?

Pre-production is the best time for my actors and me to discuss the scenes and experiment. Also, during the pre-production, I have talked with my actors over the phone prior to principal photography since they reside in Los Angeles and North Dakota. Between me and Kris, we talked over the phone almost every night, just went through scene by scene and discussed about it. Kris is a fine and hardworking actor who is really serious with my craft. Minh Ngoc is the source of my inspiration, I learned a lot from her experience and historical knowledge. Ben is fun and collaborative to work with. Lily is first time acting in front of the camera but she already showed truly great potential if she would pursue her acting career in the future.

So despite it all, did you have a good time directing the film?

Yes, the feeling of directing is like you're a conductor who's orchestrating a symphony in an operatic theatre. The reward is we can see all the music notes ecstatically dancing in the air.

What has been the most important lesson that you have learned as a director so far?

Working within a limited budget, as a Director you dream big and you want everything to be perfect. Beside the crucial of the science of cinematography, art direction is very important because it speaks to who I am as an artist. Mise en scene is what I'm after for, probably I'm inspired deeply with painting. So I demanded a lot of stuff but my Producer showed up and asked if it's okay to find the creative way to work within the budget. Then, you have to step back and think something more creative that cost less. You learn a lot from that because if you showed up on set and saw the scene was not designed as I wished or imagined, I punched most of the shots into close up shots or tighter shots. Let the audience imagine of the space or story physical world. So, the lesson I learnt is "LISTEN", listen to your intuition and others who, the same as you, care pretty much for your project and the final outcome. Before we leave home for work, we have to put our ego into a shoebox, seal it and put it under the bed. Because: egocentrism leads to negative energy that permeated in the working environment. The final product is what we all care for.

Tell us more about the Producer and Director relationship?

I met my Producer, Igor Szczerko when we worked on a set in the Summer of 2007. I had a script and I brought him in to co-write with me. We really inspire each other. Our creativity just sparkles like a firework whenever we get together to work on a project. We fought with each other sometimes just because we both care so much for the ultimate goals and the projects. After our first project together, we put true commitment into our friendship and working relationship. With the kindred spirit, sometime we remind each other that we can consider ourselves like the Coen Brothers since we both really like the way they work, they both write with each other and then one produce and another one is direct.

What are your plans for future projects?

Inspired by this story, my writer, Matt Guerin has been in the process of drafting a screenplay adapted from this short film. We are looking forward to getting it made as a feature film. So, we created a production team including Matt Guerin, Tom Yarith Ker, Igor Szczerko and I. Fantastic Four! I've also been on a development phase for a dramatic feature film, calls "Lost in Forbidden Citadel", written by Minh Ngoc Nguyen.



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