

â??Amy Tan: Unintended Memoirâ?• Enthralls Pleasantly

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HollywoodGlee inside the Sundance Film Festival Headquarters at the Park City Marriott on January 23, 2019, in Park City, Utah, the day before the opening of the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. (Photo credit: Larry Gleeson/HollywoodGlee)

Posted by Larry Gleeson

The most pleasant surprise of my 2021 Sundance Film Festival screenings goes to Jamie Redfordâ??s *Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir*. I was deeply saddened upon hearing Redford passed away before the filmâ??s screening. *Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir* was produced by Karen Pritzker and is a PBS American Masters Picture Production. Tan is most recognized for her *Joy Luck Club* work. The 1993 film, directed by Wayne Wang, spoke volumes to what was lost between generations illuminated through the onscreen conflict between Chinese-American daughters and their immigrant mothers. The film was based on Tanâ??s 1989 novel, *The* Joy *Luck Club*. To date, Tan has written two widely acclaimed novels, the aforementioned *Joy Luck Club* and the 1991 *The Bonesetterâ??s Daughter*,

based on Tanâ??s own relationship with her mother and the stories of her grandmother. In addition, Tan has written and published two childrenâ??s books, six fiction novels, a few short stories, and several non-fiction books including *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003) and the 2017 *Where The Past Begins: A Writerâ??s Memoir.*

Itâ??s one thing for me to simply reflect and write about Tanâ??s body of work. Itâ??s entirely another issue for me to delve into Redfordâ??s approach. Utilizing traditional documentary techniques of voice-over narration (in this case Tanâ??s), archival footage and photos, film clips, direct interviews, personal testimony, and the more recent animation technique, Redford reveals a writerâ??s life in all its fullness and in all its complexities. As consumers, we all often believe writers simply write and occasionally have to deal with the infamous and godforsaken â??writerâ??s block.â?•

Furthermore, Tanâ??s openness in sharing her familyâ??s history, especially the womenâ??s side of it, her own personal process, and professional writing history, allowed Redford to provide a very intimate look into Tanâ??s impressive body of work and into her psyche. For example, Amy Tan began her career as a technical writer and she found it paid well yet unfulfilling from a humanistic viewpoint. So, in her pursuit of some sort of self-actualization, she became a fiction writer as she felt fiction would actually allow for a more expansive expression of the truth. I suspect, other than her mother, that anyone would have guessed the impact her writing *The Joy Luck Club* would have on her life, and on audiences here in America and around the world. It was a bonafide game-changer.

I found Redfordâ??s work, *Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir,* inspiring and heartwarming. On a deeper personal level, I felt I understood how Tan had become one of our most beloved contemporary authors â?? she learned to listen! Simultaneously, I identified with Tanâ??s immense intellectual curiosity and her overwhelming desire to express her world experience. Facing racism, misogyny, and intergenerational conflict of growing up in a new world separate and distinct from her motherâ??s she managed to also write for truth. I was so enthralled after watching *Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir*, I ordered and purchased two of her books. Currently, Tan has embarked on painting artistry from her home base in the Bay Area of San Francisco, California. *Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir*, a fascinating portrait of a deeply beloved and deeply poetic American author. Highly recommended!

Until next time. I look forward to seeing you at the moviesâ?¦


Rainbow Portal at

Cabrillo Ballpark in Santa Barbara, Calif.

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Date Created
February 14, 2021
Author
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