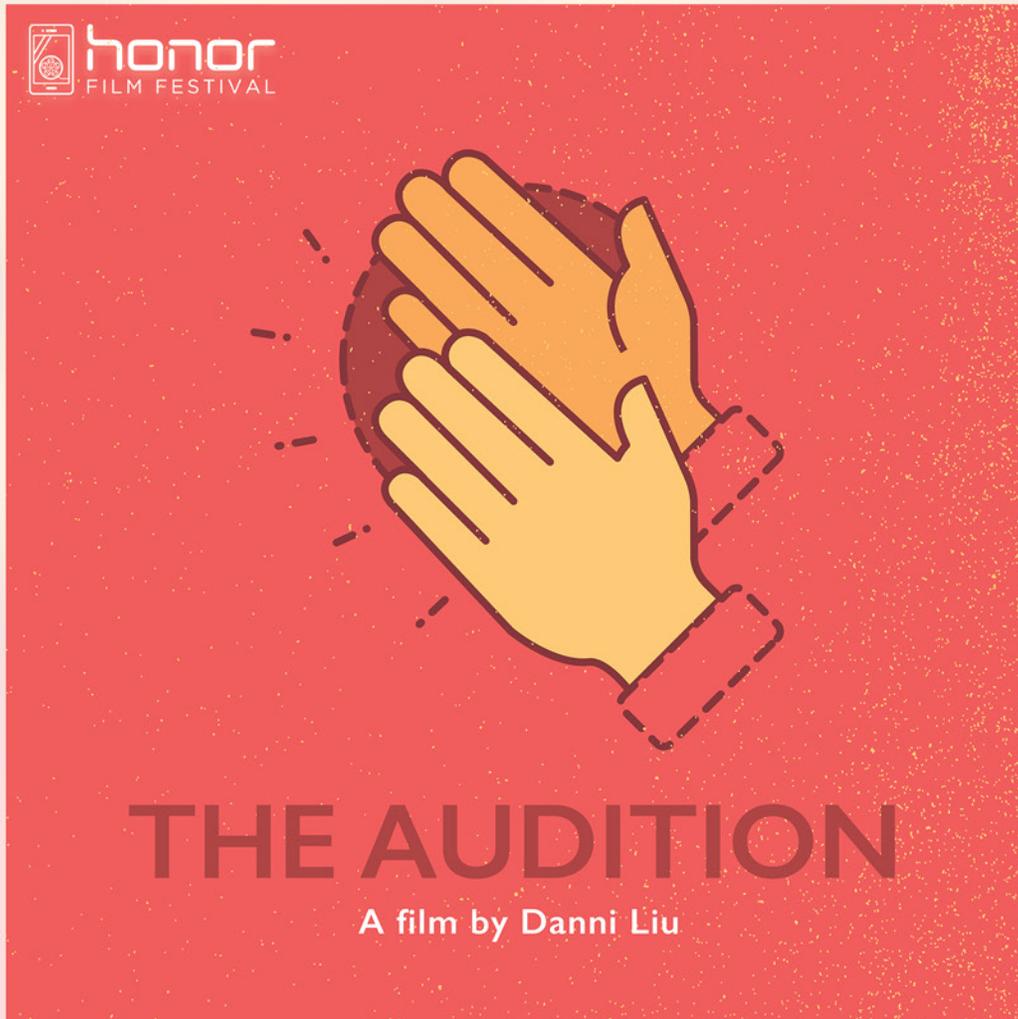


Top 10 Finalist



2016

A drop of sweat trickles from Sen's forehead as he races across the Brooklyn Bridge on an old bicycle through traffic. The 19-year-old boy is carrying a violin case. The side of the case is inscribed with handwritten letters: "For my best friend. Love, Betty."

Behind him in a car, a middle-aged man pounds on the horn impatiently. His wife sitting on the passenger seat yells at him: "you are letting him get away!"

The sound of the violin flows through the empty concert hall. Four judges sit at the front row watching the player. Upon finishing, he puts down his violin and bows.

Sen hastily turns at a busy street in Manhattan, abandoning his bike on the sidewalk. He rushes through the revolving doors under the sign "The Juilliard School". Immediately after, the middle-aged couple parks their car in front of the building. "He's going to miss the interview at Columbia playing his stupid violin here!" The wife exclaims.

A student standing next to the concert hall calls "Sen Yang" as Sen runs out of the elevator past 20 other candidates in the waiting room. He stops at the door to wipe off his sweat. The student nods good luck at him as he enters the hall.

"What do you mean we can't get in? He's our son!" Sen's mother, the middle-aged woman, argues with the student. "I'm sorry. He's already inside." He says.

Sen gets on the stage and takes out his violin. Suddenly, his phone starts to ring. "I'm sorry...I'll turn it off." He looks at the phone's screen. His expression changes from confusion to that of great concern. "I have to go."

Sen bursts out of the door, surprising the student and his parents. They exchange glances for a brief second before he runs past them without saying anything. "Hey! Where are you going now?" His mother yells as he disappears at the end of the hallway. She drags his dad to follow their son.

A 20-year-old girl hooked up to tubes lies on the hospital bed, eyes closed. "Betty!" Sen calls as he walks up to her bed. Betty's mom comes to him: "we thought you might like to say goodbye..."

Sen reaches for Betty's hand and holds it tightly. She doesn't respond. He solemnly opens his case and starts to play the violin. His parents rush in through the door. His mother opens her mouth but couldn't say anything. Everyone in the room stops and listens, as his bow glides through the strings effortlessly.

A montage sequence of Sen and Betty begins while the music continues. Sen as a child plays hopscotch with Betty; Sen receives the violin from her as his 12th birthday present; Sen as a teenager plays the violin for her in his room.

The music ends. Sen looks up. There are tears in his eyes.

He is at a concert hall full of audiences. The sound of their clapping resonates in the hall, loud as thunders.