



MEMORIES OF HER YOUTH

Exhibition by the French-born wife of a Chinese actor recaptures lives and times of early 2000s Beijing folk scene

Photos of Chinese folk singer-songwriter Wan Xiaoli taken by French photographer Anais Martane. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By CHEN NAN

chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

She is now known as the wife of Chinese actor Liu Ye and a mother of two adorable kids, who have gained lots of fans after appearing in the popular TV show *Where Are We Going, Dad?* But, beyond that, she is a photographer.

Anais Martane, born into a Jewish family in Nice, France, began learning Chinese at age 14 and continued to study the language at the French National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations.

In 2001, she arrived in China as a foreign student at Beijing Normal University and started taking photographs as a hobby.

The same year, she met some Beijing-based folk singer-songwriters and started photographing them on and off the stage.

The photos, taken from 2002 to 2004, have been on display in her photo exhibition, titled *Warm-up — Anais Martane's Photography Solo Exhibition*, at Beijing's Three Shadows +3 Gallery, since Oct 28. The exhibition runs until Feb 27.

Rong Rong, the exhibition's curator, who was touched by Martane's photos when she first saw them in early 2017, said: "This is a series of works brimming with warmth and authenticity. These scenes are now gone forever, but photography documents them with sincerity."

Martane also gave a concert at the gallery on Jan 12, performing along with some of those indie musicians, such as Guo Long, Xiao He and Wan Xiaoli, who are considered pioneers of the country's indie music scene.

At the concert, Martane performed about 15 songs, including



Chinese indie rock band Meihaoyaodian (literally translated as good pharmacy).

It's Not My Name, written by Xiao He, and *Lonely Bird*, written by Wan, as well as *Coo Coo Dove*, a Mexican folk song written by Tomas Mendez, and a French song, *Cafe Du Canal*, by Pierre Perret.

"The concert and the photo exhibition are closely connected, as I became friends with these musicians about 15 years ago," Martane said: "We've had some great times together, and now we are all grown up."

"It feels warm to get back together with them and sing."

"Xiao He and I initiated the idea of the concert together. I used to sing a few songs at their shows in small bars in the 2000s, but I had never done a concert before."

She said she started performing with the musicians at a bar in the capital's Sanlitun area in 2001.

The performers there were a band called Wild Children, from Lanzhou in Northwest China's Gansu province.

The band, known for its fusion of local folk songs played on Western instruments, was founded in 1995 by Suo Wenjun — who died in 2004 at age 34 — and Zhang Quan.

"My friend talked with the band after the show and learned that they had a bar on the same street. 'Come!' they said, and that was how I became a fan of their music," said Martane.

"I had never listened to such music before. They had found freedom in

their passion and their hard work."

Separately, Martane also listened to Chinese songs, such as those by rock musician Xu Wei, to learn Chinese.

Singer-songwriter Zhang Weiwei said of Martane: "We were about the same age, poor and far away from home. So we soon became friends."

Martane called the series of photographs *Them* from the moment she started the project in 2002.

"Now we all have kids and our own lives. But when we meet, the emotion of our shared youth is still and always will be alive," she said.

Martane later went on to work as a press photographer for several French and foreign publications like



French photographer Anais Martane.

Liberation, Le Monde, Telerama, Elle and Marie Claire.

In 2004, she started to work for *Time* magazine, which led to her first book, *Chinese Portraits*, published in both French and English and distributed worldwide, in which she documented Chinese society and people from all walks of life.

In 2009, she married actor Liu Ye, and in 2010 and 2014 she gave birth to her son and daughter, respectively.

Now she works as a movie producer and in theater.

"In France, it is rare to hear Chinese songs. So I want to promote those songs. But I plan to translate them into French first," said Martane.