

**Speech by Frédéric Mitterrand, France's Minister of Culture,
delivered at the ceremony for the decoration of Linh-Dan PHAM with
the medal of Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters**

Paris, 5th April 2011

Dear Linh-Dan Pham,

Since the age of 16 you have pursued relentlessly your international artistic exploits, as a **polyglot globetrotter**, on one continent or another.

It all began when your father persuaded you to answer an advert in a restaurant in Paris' Chinatown "Seeking a girl for a feature film with Catherine Deneuve in Vietnam". Your first cinematic adventure allowed you, through the character of Camille in **INDOCHINE**, to rediscover the country of your birth. When the film was released you were living in Holland and you did not fully grasp the extent of success which brought a Best Foreign Film Oscar to Régis Wargnier's indochinese epic, as well as numerous Césars, let alone your **nomination for the César for Best Female Newcomer** in 1993. That same year you shot JAMILA in Central Asia, directed by Monica Teuber. After these dazzling beginnings, this slender French-Vietnamese star, uncertain, and worried about her future, disappeared from the French screen for ten years. Having gained a degree in business from the American University in Paris, you departed for **Vietnam** and then Singapore to work in marketing. To your great surprise, you were tracked down by casting directors who declared that they had been looking for you for some time.

You gave in to the desire and chose to return to the career of an actor; but this time you focused first on your training. Fascinated by the **Method of the Actors Studio**, you studied drama at the Lee Strasberg Theater Institute in New York. 2005 was the year of your grand return, with two films, both of them serious, tense and brutal: you first joined the workers in blue-collar Paris alongside Pascal Elbé and Simon Abkarian in *THE GAMBLERS (Les Mauvais Joueurs)* by Frédéric Ballekjian, and then were chosen by Jacques Audiard for **THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED (De Battre Mon Coeur S'est Arrêté)**, acting opposite the talented Romain Duris. You accepted that role because it was far from the stereotype of a young and silent beauty, and from stock ideas about the barriers of language and culture. The piano, which you play to a high standard, is the only means of communication between these two individuals, bereft of their roots. You threw yourself, body and soul, into this wonderful role and won the **César for Best Female Newcomer** in 2006.

Three years later you were Elisa, an ambitious scientist, in *DANTE 01* by Marc Caro, alongside Lambert Wilson. A film, as bold in its aesthetics as in its biblical and mythological references, which did not receive the recognition that it should

have from the general public. This was followed by *SUNNY SPELLS (Le Bruit Des Gens Autour)* by Diastème, and Maïwenn's kaleidoscope of self-parody on actresses, *THE ACTRESS' BALL (Le Bal Des Actrices)*.

From your filmography, *MR NOBODY* by Jaco van Dormael and **ADRIFT (Choi Voi)** by the Vietnamese director Bui Thac Chuyen, are worthy of mention. First as an unhappy wealthy housewife, then as a manipulative and sadistic writer adrift in a love triangle in a Hanoi family, you showed your demands of an eclectic range of cinema, which questions the confused individuality of the modern world.

THE SHAPE OF ART TO COME by Julien Levy, a work half way between cinema and **contemporary art**, and *DE FORCE*, a gangster film directed by an ex-convict which saw you exchange lines with Isabelle Adjani, Eric Cantona and Simon Abkarian, were characterised by the same intelligence and courage that you poured into the choice of each role.

Today, I would like to pay homage to the already brilliant international career of a young French Vietnamese actress, whose great talent makes one want to thank those who succeeded in convincing you to pursue the path of the moving image rather than business.

Dear Linh-Dan Pham, in the name of the Republic of France, I make you Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters.
