**Drifting Cloud Productions &** **Roast Beef Productions**

present

**THE DEPARTURE**

**A FILM BY LANA WILSON**

**\*\*World Premiere – Tribeca Film Festival 2017\*\***

**\*\*International Premiere – HotDocs 2017\*\***

**\*\*Additional Festivals – Maryland Film Festival, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Shanghai International Film Festival, Moscow International Film Festival, Bergen International Film Festival, Vancouver International Film Festival, Warsaw International Film Festival\*\***

2017 / USA / 87 minutes

Documentary / in Japanese with English subtitles

**Press Contact:**

SUSAN NORGET FILM PROMOTION

212-431-0090

publicity@norget.com

**LOGLINE**

A former punk-turned-Buddhist-priest in Japan who has made a career out of counseling suicidal people finds himself at a crossroads, leading him to confront the same question his patients ask him: what makes life worth living?

**SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Ittetsu Nemoto, a former punk-turned-Buddhist-priest in Japan, has made a career out of helping suicidal people find reasons to live. But this work has come increasingly at the cost of his own family and health, as he refuses to draw lines between those he counsels and himself. *The Departure* captures Nemoto at a crossroads, when his growing self-destructive tendencies lead him to confront the same question his patients ask him: what makes life worth living?

The second documentary by award-winning director Lana Wilson (*After Tiller*), *The Departure* is a poetic and deeply moving film that contemplates death as a way of better understanding how we should live.

**LONG SYNOPSIS**

Ittetsu Nemoto is a bad boy do-gooder.

A 44-year-old Tokyo native, Nemoto loves riding his motorcycle and dancing all night in clubs. But he’s also a Rinzai Zen priest, who lives with his wife, mother and baby son at a temple in the remote countryside of Gifu prefecture, Japan. There, over the last ten years, he has become famous for his work in combating suicide.

Nemoto’s approach to preventing suicide is unique. It includes not only one-on-one counseling sessions, but also parties, camping trips and experimental art projects. In his signature workshop, “The Departure,” participants imagine their own death. For Nemoto, there’s no manual or “one right way” for convincing someone not to commit suicide—rather, it’s whatever it takes. He relates to the men and women who come to him for help not as a professional, or a saintly spiritual figure bestowing wisdom from up on high—but instead, as one of them, a screwed-up individual full of pain and suffering, on a high-stakes mission to understand the purpose of being alive. Nemoto is remarkably successful in his career because he refuses to draw lines between suicidal people and himself—but that is also precisely why his problems begin.

Nemoto does not sleep, his phone is rarely silent and his temple is never empty. His days and nights consist of endless counseling sessions and retreats. He has dozens of “patients” but is only a one-man practice. To blow off steam, he pulls all-nighters at clubs, dancing and partying the night away.

This lifestyle becomes increasingly unsustainable as problems with Nemoto’s health emerge. His wife, Yukiko, understands the importance of Nemoto’s work—but she’s concerned that Nemoto not only doesn’t take care of himself, but also spends so little time with their two-year-old son. Nemoto’s mother, Chieko, thinks it’s hypocritical to give other people advice on their lives when you yourself are such a mess. Nemoto might be helping other people, but he’s self-destructing in the process.

The concerns raised by Nemoto’s family, though, only make him double down on his resolve to continue doing this work, no matter what. How can you say no to someone who otherwise might die? As Nemoto continues to rush from one counseling session to the next, the relationship between his work and his personal life becomes increasingly messy and interwoven and starts to spiral out of control. The tables are soon turned, and Nemoto must confront what’s perhaps most frightening of all—the meaning and value of his own life, and how he should be living it.

With astonishing access, and crafted with the artistry of a narrative film, *The Departure* is a moving and poetic contemplation of the human spirit.

*The Priest* – Ittetsu Nemoto

*His Wife* – Yukiko Nemoto

*His Mother* – Chieko Nemoto

*The Son* – Teppei Nemoto

**DIRECTOR’S STATEMENT**

In late 2013, I read a *New Yorker* magazine article about Ittetsu Nemoto, a Rinzai Zen priest renowned for his work in suicide prevention. I immediately wondered how he convinces desperate people to catch hold and move forward with their lives. I realized I wanted to be in the room for these life-and-death conversations.

I was especially captivated by one part of the article, describing a retreat Nemoto leads in which he has a group of suicidal people imagine their own deaths. On blank sheets of paper they write down the three most important objects in their life, the three most important people, and three wishes they have for the future. Then Nemoto leads them through a roleplay session in which they crumple and throw each one of these things away, because we have to say goodbye to everything when we die. The idea is that if you experience “dying,” you remember what’s most valuable about being alive.

It took a long time to gain the trust of Nemoto, his family, and the women and men who come to him for help. Ultimately, over the two-and-a-half years we spent shooting together, Nemoto and I became very close—even though I was just starting to learn Japanese, and he couldn’t speak a word of English. The more time I spent with him, the less I was interested in the counseling sessions, and the more I was interested in him.

Nemoto could understand suicidal people because he saw aspects of his own personality reflected in them. He had a history of health problems and felt most alive in extreme situations, so it soon became clear that his current professional and personal lives were headed towards a dramatic convergence. He understood that making this documentary was an opportunity for him to deeply evaluate his own life, with the crew and I as witnesses. In a way, the making of the film became like therapy for him. As his wife and mother increasingly asserted their opinions about what he was doing, he realized that although he was successful at giving other people advice on their problems, he had much more trouble seeing his own. This struggle forms the crux of *The Departure*—the way in which we simultaneously forget and remember our sense of self when confronted with the pain of others. This relationship is at the heart of our ability to relate to one another, and watching Nemoto embark on this journey in a forum as public as my documentary was a particularly intimate enterprise for us to capture.

For me, the filmis about the importance of human connection. The connection Nemoto has with those he counsels. The connection I had with him. The connection we all have with everyone in our lives. It’s about what makes life worth living, which is of course different for all of us—but fundamentally the same. It’s what you would write down on those blank sheets of paper.  *The Departure* is a blank canvas full of empty sheets for the audience; an invitation to go on the same journey with Nemoto that I embarked on when I first began filming, the impact of which, I’m certain, will never leave me.

**FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES**

**LANA WILSON (Director/Producer)** is an Emmy-winning filmmaker based in New York. Her first film, *After Tiller* (co-directed by Martha Shane), went inside the lives of the four most-targeted abortion providers in the country and was critically acclaimed for providing a moving and complex look at one of the most incendiary issues of our time. *After Tiller* premiered at Sundance in 2013 and was theatrically released by Oscilloscope in 50 U.S. cities. It was nationally broadcast on PBS’s POV and won a 2015 Emmy Award for Best Documentary. It was also nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary, four Cinema Eye Honors, a Satellite Award, and the Ridenhour Prize.

Recently, Wilson wrote and produced “Jacked,” the premiere episode of the National Geographic Channel miniseries *I Am Rebel*, executive-produced by Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*) and Matt Wolf (*Teenage*). “Jacked” is about Louis Moore, who hijacked a plane in 1972 to seek revenge on the City of Detroit for police brutality. While making *The Departure*, she also story produced segments for National Geographic *Explorer*, cable television’s longest-running documentary series*.* Wilson was previously the Film and Dance Curator for Performa, the New York biennial of new visual art performance, where she curated retrospectives including *Not Funny: Stand-Up Comedy and Visual Art*, *Futurism on Film*, and *Dance After Choreography*.

Wilson has taught master classes and workshops at UnionDocs and DCTV, and given lectures at a range of contemporary art and film institutions. She holds a B.A. in Film Studies and Dance from Wesleyan University.

**DAVID TEAGUE (Editor)** is a documentary film editor. Recent films include the Oscar-nominated and Sundance-winning *Life, Animated*, the Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning *Cutie and the Boxer* and the Sundance-winning *E-TEAM*. Other credits include the Oscar-winning *Freeheld*, the Emmy-winning Sesame Street primetime special *Growing Hope Against Hunger*, the Oscar-nominated films *Mondays at Racine* and *Sun Come Up*, and the Full Frame award-winner *Tocando la Luz*. Teague directed and edited the award-winning documentaries *Intifada NYC* (Rooftop Films 2009) and *Our House* (Hot Docs 2010, co-directed with Greg King). He has served as an editing mentor with the IFP Documentary Labs and the Karen Schmeer Film Editing Fellowship and is the author of two best-selling guides to film editing with Final Cut Pro.

**EMILY TOPPER (Cinematographer)** was born and raised in Baltimore, earned a BA from Swarthmore College in Literature, and an MFA from the USC School of Cinematic Arts. Topper began work in documentary as an intern at PBS, where she hovered around the camera team with envy. In subsequent years, she spent years training in lighting on Hollywood narrative films. Her cinematography feature credits include the 2015 Emmy winner for Best Documentary, *After Tiller*, *Ain't In it For My Health: A Film About Levon Helm*, *All Fall Down*, and *Elemental*. She also directed and produced *All Fall Down*, which premiered at CPH: DOX in 2014. She is currently shooting a multi-year film about the effects of climate change on mountain farmers in the Andes of Peru.

**ERI YOKOYAMA (Field Producer)** was born in Miyazaki, Japan, and studied filmmaking at New York Film Academy. She has worked on a number of film and video productions in New York City, including the Oscar-nominated feature documentary *Cutie and the Boxer*, the Japanese network television show *Morning Satellite*, and more. She was the writer/director/producer of *A Short Trip*, a narrative shortthat won the Best Drama award at the Carrboro Film Festival.

**SALLY JO FIFER (Executive Producer)** oversees a staff of 70+ and the funding, production and public television launch of more than 75 programs each year. Since taking the helm in 2001, Fifer has piloted ITVS through major programmatic expansion, launching the primetime Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens* and the organization’s first international venture, the Global Perspectives Project, which funded over 140 international independent documentary films for U.S. broadcast and digital distribution and distributed American films to over 100 million viewers in two dozen countries. Previously, Fifer served as executive director of the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC), a media and technology center which grew from $500,000 to $5 million in operations during her nine-year tenure.

**LILLY HARTLEY (Executive Producer)** was inspired to start Candescent Films, combining her passion for film and her desire to make a positive difference in the world. Hartley received a Goya Award with Javier Bardem for producing *Sons of the Clouds*. Among many films, she is a co-executive producer of award winning *The Queen of Versailles*, an executive producer of Emmy nominated *Private Violence*, and *Likeness*, an experimental short film starring Elle Fanning. Her supported films include Academy Award Shortlisted *3 1/2 Minutes*, *Ten Bullets* and *Art and Craft*, as well as Academy Award Nominated *Cartel Land*. She is an executive producer of the recent Sundance film, *Trophy*. Hartley is a member of the Screen Actors Guild and Producers Guild of America.

**MIKE LERNER (Executive Producer)** is an Oscar-nominated producer who has been making films since 1988, including *Afghan Star, Hell and Back Again, The Square, Smash & Grab - The Story of the Pink Panthers, A Whole Lott More, The Do Gooders, Tierra Caliente, Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*, and 2016 Sundance Grand Jury Prize-winner *The Russian Woodpecker*. Lerner has won a number of industry awards, including an Academy Award nomination for Best Documentary Feature, seven Sundance Awards, four Emmys, two Grierson Awards for Best Documentary, the Prix Italia, three Royal Television Society Award nominations, two IDA Award nominations, a Cinema Eye Honor, an Independent Spirit Award nomination, a Gotham Independent Film Award nomination, the Alfred Dupont Award, Best Documentary at the Moscow Film Festival, a BIFA for Best Documentary, and a Broadcast Award for Best Documentary of the Year.

**DIANE L. MAX (Executive Producer)** has a long-standing commitment to advancing reproductive health and rights. She has been a member of the board of Planned Parenthood of New York City since 2005. She served as Board Chair at PPNYC from 2009-2016 and currently serves on the Planned Parenthood Federation of America Board, where she is Chair of the Affiliate Development and Accreditation Committee. Her professional career was in entertainment marketing, where she was Director of Programming at CBS/Sony Direct Marketing and the Director of Creative Services at MGM/UA Home Entertainment. She has combined her interest in film and the philanthropic work she has done since "retiring" to raise her family nearly 25 years ago. In 2014, Max resumed her professional interest in film with a focus on social impact filmmaking. She was executive producer of *After Tiller*, for which she received an Emmy Award for Best Documentary, and was also an executive producer of *Trapped*.

**REGINA K. SCULLY (Executive Producer)** is a social-justice entrepreneur, media activist and award-winning documentary filmmaker. She has a growing legacy of building and producing successful premiere brands, projects and films that integrate cause-related issues, social media and outreach campaigns. Scully is an Academy Award-nominated and Emmy Award-winning producer of both *The Invisible War* (2012) and *The Hunting Ground* (2015). “Til it Happens to You,” sung by Lady Gaga, was the *Hunting Ground’s* Emmy Award-winning and Academy Award-nominated anthem song. In addition, Scully has helped produce a number of other award-winning films, such as *Dreamcatcher* (2015)*,* *Alive Inside* (2014), *Fed Up* (2014), and *After Tiller* (2013). Other films she has helped produce include: *Newtown, Audrie & Daisy, Miss Representation, Prophet’s Prey, Under the Gun, Hazing, Resilience, Trapped, The Mask You Live In, Be Natural, Alice Walker: Beauty in Truth, Anita Hill: Speaking Truth to Power, Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise,* and *The Eagle Huntress.* As Founder and CEO of Artemis Rising Foundation, a philanthropic organization, Scully is dedicated to developing and promoting media, education and the arts that transform our culture.

**JEFFREY TARRANT (Executive Producer)** is founder and CEO of Protégé Partners, a specialized asset management firm, and a founding partner of Candescent Films, through which he was a co-executive producer on *Queen of Versailles*, and an executive producer among others of *Trophy*, *Sons of the Clouds*, *Likeness*, and *Who is Dayani Cristal?* Prior to the formation of Candescent, Tarrant executive produced *Smash His Camera*, *The Third Wave* and *God Grew Tired of Us*. Tarrant is also Vice Chairman of ARK US (Absolute Return for Kids), an international charity with a mission to transform the lives of children, and serves on the board of Witness.

**NAO ABE (Field Producer and Head Translator)** was born in Osaka, Japan, and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and has worked in the documentary film and television industries in America and Japan. Her experience in both countries has proven especially valuable in productions that cross cultural boundaries. As a translator and production coordinator currently based in Tokyo, she is particularly dedicated to supporting filmmakers who have chosen to tell stories about Japan through unique perspectives.

**MAI MORIKAWA (Field Producer)** is a translator and yoga teacher based in Minokamo, Japan. She has studied and worked in Canada, the US, New Zealand, and Japan.

**ARIYA SASAKI (Field Producer)** is a Buddhist priestess and community organizer who currently works at Horenji Temple in Kyoto. She was born in 1987 in Kyoto, Japan, and raised in Berkeley, California. She graduated from the University of Chicago with a Bachelor of Arts in Geography in 2011.

**NATHAN MICHEL (Original Score)** is a composer, producer and multi-instrumentalist making all kinds of acoustic and electronic music, from pop to experimental and classical. His band, Hospitality, has released two full-length albums on Merge Records and toured worldwide. *Rolling Stone* named their debut album one of the top 50 records of 2012. Michel has also released four solo recordings of experimental electro-acoustic pop music on the labels Sonig, Tigerbeat6, Skipp, and Tomlab. A classically trained composer, he received a Ph.D. in composition from Princeton and also studied at Yale, The Royal Conservatory in The Netherlands (with Louis Andriessen) and Bowdoin College. Michel has received numerous awards for his music, including a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Naumburg Scholarship from Princeton and several Morton Gould Young composer awards from ASCAP.

**LAURA VIGILANTE (Associate Producer)** recently joined CNN Worldwide’s marketing and communications team after serving as an independent producer and consultant for documentary filmmakers. Her clients included Penny Lane (*NUTS!*), Jen Brea (*Unrest*), Vanessa Gould (*Obit*), Malika Zouhali-Worhall and David Osit (*Thank You For Playin*g), and Ruth Ann Harnisch (The Harnisch Foundation, EP of *The Hunting Ground*). Vigilante also served as Creative Executive at Candescent Films, where she supported films such as *Cartel Land* *and (T)error*. During her academic pursuits at Columbia University, Vigilante was an Associate Campaign Manager at Six Foot Chipmunk, where she worked on *The Square, American Promise, Escape Fire, Inequality for All,* and *God Loves Uganda*.

**CREDITS**

**Drifting Cloud Productions**

and **Roast Beef Productions** present

a co-production of **ITVS**

in association with **Candescent Films**

and **Artemis Rising Foundation**

***THE DEPARTURE***

Directed and Produced by

**Lana Wilson**

Edited by

**David Teague**

Cinematography by

**Emily Topper**

Co-Produced by

**Eri Yokoyama**

Executive Producers

**Sally Jo Fifer**

**Lilly Hartley**

**Mike Lerner**

**Diane L. Max**

**Regina K. Scully**

**Jeffrey Tarrant**

Co-Executive Producer

**Claire Silberman**

Field Producers

**Nao Abe**

**Mai Morikawa**

**Ariya Sasaki**

Supervising Producer

**Michael Kinomoto**

Original Score by

**Nathan Michel**

Additional Music by

**Rebecca Foon**

**Hildur Guðnadóttir**

and

**Ryuichi Sakamoto & Christian Fennesz**

Written by

**David Teague**

**Lana Wilson**

Associate Producer

**Laura Vigilante**

Associate Editor

**Christopher McNabb**

Additional Cinematography

**Takashi Abe**

**Hillary Spera**

Assistant Editors

**Michael Peterson**

**Rizky Rahadianto**

**Neo Sora**

**Anna Takayama**

Location Sound Mixer

**Lana Wilson**

Re-Recording Mixer

**Paul Hsu**

Mixed at

**c5, inc.**

Sound Editor

**Nicholas Schenck**

Assistant Sound Editor

**Zhanna Kugotova**

Head Translator

**Nao Abe**

Graphic Design

**Carl Williamson**

Digital Intermediate Colorist

**Will Cox**

Digital Intermediate Online Editor

**Drew Kilgore**

Digital Intermediate Producer

**Caitlin Tartaro**

Post Production Services

**Final Frame**

Fiscal Sponsors

**The Hartley Film Foundation**

**Independent Feature Project**

**Additional Music**

“Mono”

Written by Christian Fennesz & Ryuichi Sakamoto

Performed by Christian Fennesz & Ryuichi Sakamoto

Courtesy of Touch, Sony/ATV, Avex, and kab (kinetic art & business)

“Erupting Light”

Written by Hildur Guðnadóttir

Performed by Hildur Guðnadóttir

Courtesy of Touch

“0328”

Written by Christian Fennesz & Ryuichi Sakamoto

Performed by Christian Fennesz & Ryuichi Sakamoto

Courtesy of Touch, Sony/ATV, Avex, and kab (kinetic art & business)

“Overcast”

Written by Hildur Guðnadóttir

Performed by Hildur Guðnadóttir

Courtesy of Touch

“Dangerous”

Written by Bill Bottrell, Michael Jackson, and Teddy Riley

Performed by Michael Jackson

Released by Epic Records

“You Don’t Know (Neo Tune! Remix)”

Written by Roxor & Hardcore

Performed by Roxor & Hardcore

Courtesy of Central Stage of Music and Good Source

“0401”

Written by Christian Fennesz & Ryuichi Sakamoto

Performed by Christian Fennesz & Ryuichi Sakamoto

Courtesy of Touch, Sony/ATV, Avex, and kab (kinetic art & business)

“Bounce to the Beat (Mankee Remix)”

Written by Noisegate Project featuring Elaine Winter

Performed by Noisegate Project featuring Elaine Winter

Courtesy of Central Stage of Music and Good Source

**Supported By**

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Awesome Without Borders

Bertha Foundation

Candescent Films

Lisa Kleiner Chanoff

Chicken & Egg Pictures

Film Independent

Hartley Film Foundation

Independent Feature Project

ITVS

Diane and Adam E. Max

New York State Council on the Arts

Cathy Raphael

Regina K. Scully

Dr. Shelley Sella and Julie Litwin

Claire Silberman

Tribeca All Access

**World Sales**

**Dogwoof**

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