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JAN. 11 — JAN. 17

## Film

Mike Hale

The premise of **"GETTING HOME,"** a gently mordant comedy from the Chinese director Zhang Yang, is halfway between "As I Lay Dying" and "Weekend at Bernie's": a migrant worker tries to keep a promise to a friend by lugging the friend's corpse hundreds of miles across the countryside so it can be given a proper burial in his home village. The picaresque tale, which won a jury award at the 2007 Berlin International Film Festival, combines the social commentary almost inevitable in a contemporary Chinese film — the

pair's reverse migration carries them from the industrial megalopolis of Shenzhen to a soon-to-be-submerged hamlet near the Three Gorges Dam — with a canny Western-style whimsicality. The protagonist, Zhao (Zhao Benshan), faces robbery and humiliation with the same stunned surprise that he welcomes kindness and the possibility of love; he presents his dead friend, Liu (Hong Qiwen, in a brave, silent performance), as a drunk, a vegetable, a blind beggar and a scarecrow while he tries to trick or cajole a ride, a meal or a few yuan out of the people he encounters along the way.

Mr. Zhang, whose previous films include "Shower," "Quitting" and "Sunflower," based "Getting Home" on a true story that divided Chinese opinion: was the worker a hero or a disturbing symbol of a polarized culture? In the film, which is part of the Museum of Modern Art's Global Lens series, he's both hero and symbol, and no one seems disturbed by either possibility. *Thursday at 6 p.m. and Jan. 24 at 4:30 p.m., Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters, (212) 708-9400, moma.org; \$10.*



MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Zhao Benshan and, as his dead friend, Hong Qiwen in "Getting Home."