FIGHTERS, PRANKSTERS, OLIVE FARMS, AND RYAN GOSLING

GALWAY FILM SOCIETY'S WINTER/SPRING 2017 SEASON

BY KERNAN ANDREWS

CHAMPION BOXERS, mischievous neighbours, Poland under threat from Russia at the end of WWI, a young girl's determination to win back her grandfather's olive farm, and a musical with Hollywood stars like Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone - it's all in the Galway Film Society's winter/spring 2017 season.

The season, which runs from January to April, will see 10 films screened at the Town Hall Theatre on Sundays at 8pm, opening with Oscar and Golden Globes nominated Finnish film, ***The Fencer*** , on January 22.

In the early 1950s, Finnish champion fencer Endel Nelis, takes up a teaching position in a remote Estonian School. Initially standoffish and unwilling to engage, he eventually warms to the traumatised children of the school, many of whom have been left orphaned by WWII or the Soviet occupation. Realising the children need an outlet for hope and self expression he decides to teach them how to fence and in doing so becomes their father figure.

The Innocents , set in Poland at the end of WWII, and based on real events, is a sensitive and emotional drama, about Mathilde, a young French Red Cross doctor, who comes to the aid of a group of nuns, many of whom have been violated by Soviet soldiers. Mathilde protects them from further attacks and from the convent's hierarchy who try to conceal the scandal at all costs.

The film is screened on January 29. It won the Los Angeles ColCoa Audience Award for Best French Film; the FIPRESCI Prize at the Valladolid International Film Festival 2016; and the Andreas Award at the Norwegian International Film Festival 2016.

Jim Jarmusch's most recent film ***Paterson*** , will be screened on February 5. An episodic fable about the fragile, fruitful, yet fraught relationship between creativity and everyday life, it tells the story of a week in the life of Paterson, a bus-driver and amateur poet whose home happens to be Paterson, New Jersey – home to William Carlos Williams and Allen Ginsberg - and the everyday things that get him thinking about a new poem to write.

Irish actor Liam Cunningham stars in ***The Childhood Of A Leader*** , which won the Luigi De Laurentiis Award and the Best Director award at the 2015 Venice Film Festival. Screened on February 19, it also features a soundtrack by Scott Walker.

In 1918, a US diplomat (Cunningham) is in France for the Treaty of Versailles negotiations. His wife (Bérénice Bejo) is alarmed by their son's (Tom Sweets) increasingly destructive behaviour. Divided into three chapters, each dealing with the aggressive and manipulative tantrums of the boy, it is a study of processes that suggest the development of a fascist future. Sweets' performance as the young aggressor is chilling, menacing, and brilliant.

French film, ***Things To Come*** , starring Isabelle Huppert in one of her finest performances, and winner of Best Director at the 2016 Berlin International Film Festival, will be shown on February 26. Philosophy teacher Nathlie (Huppert) suddenly finds herself alone and socially isolated. She must draw on reserves of strength she has accumulated over years of contemplation to deal with an existential crisis of a life caught in sudden change. Donald Clarke in *The Irish Times*, called it "a rich, beautiful, oblique drama".

Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone usher the musical into the 21st century in the award winning ***La La Land*** , to be screened on March 5. An ambitious jazz pianist (Gosling) and an aspiring actress (Stone) fall in love while pursuing their dreams of stardom, in this dazzlingly stylized homage to the classic Hollywood musical from *Whiplash* director Damien Chazelle. It won the People's Choice Award at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival.

Toni Erdmann , the third feature film by German director Maren Ade, will be screened on March 12. This comedy centres on Winfried (Peter Simonischek), a retired piano teacher and divorce who loves playing pranks and doing impersonations which alienate (and occasionally alarm) his neighbours. His daughter Ines, (Sandra Hüller), is a high-ranking management consultant in Bucharest who is as controlled and rigid as her father is impish, leading to a major clash of opposites when Winifred visits her for a weekend.

The Happiest Day in The Life Of Olli Maki , inspired by the true story of Finland's most successful boxer of the 1960s, will be shown on March 19. Shot in black and white with scrupulous attention to period detail, it centres on the prelude to Mäki's historic fight in Helsinki with American Davey Moore, the bantamweight champion. Olli's manager, a hyperbolic showman who promises a world-historic event worthy of the Americans. A rueful yet delightfully disarming ode to lost innocence, it won the top prize in the Un Certain Regard section at the 2016 Cannes festival.

Also showing that evening will be *Adulting*, the award winning short film was shot in Galway city and Connemara, and directed by Linda Bhreathnach and Justin Davey.

From the pen of Paul Laverty, comes a heartfelt and warm family drama about reconciliation and hope. ***The Olive Tree*** , which will be screened on March 26. Lena's family are struggling in austerity-hit Spain. Her grandfather once the proud owner of an olive farm has withdrawn into himself. Her father and uncles fight about what the future might hold. Impulsively, Lena sets forth on a journey to recover her grandfather's 1,000 year old olive tree, which has been encased in the headquarters of a soulless multinational. Variety called the film, "universally appealing, grafting gentle comedy with bristling social consciousness tragedy".

The season concludes with a surprise film on April 2. Tickets (season and individual film) are via the Town Hall on 091 - 569777 or www.tht.ie. See also www.gfs.ie. See also www.advertiser.ie/galway/entertainment/cinema for trailers for each of the above films.

La La Land.

The Fencer.

The Olive Tree.

Things To Come.

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All news items must be in by 12 noon on Monday.