

# HIGHGATE FILM SOCIETY - SEASON 2020-21

## **24 September 2020 A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE**

*USA 1951 (re-released February 2020), 127 mins. Dir. Elia Kazan.*

*Starring Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter and Karl Malden*

Blanche DuBois, a faded Southern belle with pretensions to grandeur, arrives to start a new life in the New Orleans tenement building of her pregnant sister Stella and her boorish brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski. Tensions begin to rise in the steamy heat of summer as Blanche is cruelly taunted by Stanley, and her fragile sense of identity begins to crumble. Elia Kazan's legendary adaptation of Tennessee Williams' landmark Pulitzer Prize-winning play is famed for the simmering, unruly power of Brando's performance, while Vivien Leigh won an Academy Award for Best Actress for her sensitive portrayal of the troubled Blanche.

## **22 October 2020 SHOPLIFTERS**

*Japan 2018, 121 mins. Dir. Hirokazu Kore-eda.*

*Starring Sakura Ando and Lily Franky*

*In 2019 the Film Society showed Kore-eda's 'Our Little Sister', and in 2016 his 'Like Father, Like Son'.*

Arguably Kore-eda's finest film, *Shoplifters* is a profoundly moving drama about a poverty-stricken group of individuals who cohabit ostensibly as a family and who petty-thieve to make ends meet. One cold winter's night they come across a shivering little girl foraging for scraps and decide to take her in for just a few days. After noticing signs of abuse, however, they resolve to keep her and they all live happily, if scrappily, together until an unforeseen incident reveals the long-buried secrets which test the bonds that unite them. The film provides an affecting, bittersweet view of a side of modern Japan which is rarely seen on our screens.

## **19 November 2020 CESARE DEVE MORIRE (CAESAR MUST DIE)**

*Italy 2012, 77 mins. Dir. Paolo and Vittorio Taviani.*

*Starring Salvatore Striano, Cosimo Rega, Giovanni Arcuri and Antonio Frasca*

Set in Rebibbia Prison in Italy, this powerful, thought-provoking docudrama follows the auditioning of some of the country's most notorious prisoners through to their final performance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. As rehearsals progress, the inmates come to see the relevance of the play's themes to their own lives and attain some sense of the fulfilment and hope that artistic expression can bring.

## **17 December 2020 PAVAROTTI**

*USA 2019, 114 mins. Dir. Ron Howard.*

In this intimate documentary, Academy Award-winning film-maker Ron Howard examines the life, career and achievements of Luciano Pavarotti, the most celebrated operatic singer of the late 20th century. Featuring never-before-seen footage and exclusive interviews, as well as clips from the tenor's most iconic performances, *Pavarotti* gives us a rewarding and affectionate insight into the passionate, compelling and often contradictory man behind the music.

## **21 January 2021 WOMAN AT WAR**

*Iceland/Ukraine 2019, 101 mins. Dir. Benedikt Erlingsson.*

*Starring Halldora Geirhardsdottir, David Thor Jonsson and Magnus Trygvason Eliassen*

Halla is a mild-mannered Icelandic music teacher with a secret identity: she is also fearless environmental warrior 'Mountain Woman', whose mission is to disrupt the country's aluminium industry before it destroys the local environment. With huge Chinese investment on the horizon, however, the government is determined to track down this unknown vigilante, and the net begins to tighten. Things get even more complicated when her application to adopt a longed-for orphan is approved, and Halla must square a personal dilemma with her political activism. This is a captivating comedy-thriller which treats its serious subject with a quirky and deft lightness of touch.

### **18 February 2021 SINK OR SWIM**

*France 2018, 122 mins. Dir. Gilles Lellouche.*

*Starring Guillaume Canet, Virginie Efira, Mathieu Amalric, Leila Bekhti and Jean-Hugues Anglade*

A major hit in France, *Sink or Swim* follows a small group of variously troubled men who find purpose and solace in forming an unlikely all-male synchronised swimming team, coached by an acerbic former champion who is as lost as they are. Undeterred by their lack of fitness, the men push on with their training schedule, and - in the face of scepticism and ridicule from all quarters - set their sights on the World Championships in Norway. On the way they rediscover a little self-esteem and learn a lot about themselves and about each other. Charming, hilarious and full of heart, this film has been described as 'The Pool Monty'.

### **28 February 2021 at 2pm NEVER LOOK AWAY (AN HFS SPECIAL SHOWING - TICKETS £10)**

*Germany 2018, 188 mins. Dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck.*

*Starring Tom Schilling, Sebastian Koch and Paula Beer*

Ambitious in scope, ravishing to look at, and scored with warmth and sensitivity by Max Richter, *Never Look Away* is an unmissable masterpiece - an overview of modern German artistic history fictionalised from the life of photorealistic painter Gerhard Richter. Covering four decades, it charts a young artist's journey through East and West German art movements, tormented all the while by his experiences of growing up during the Nazi era. He is particularly affected by the state-ordered murder of his beautiful, schizophrenic aunt Elisabeth by a man whose life is completely different to yet runs in parallel with his own. And when the artist falls deeply in love and marries, it is to a woman - another Elisabeth - whose past holds a horrific secret which links them all. This is a rich and absorbing story which focuses on the big themes of love, art and death, and on an incredible life lived through turbulent times.

### **18 March 2021 YULI: THE CARLOS ACOSTA STORY**

*Spain/Cuba 2018, 115 mins. Dir. Iciar Bollain.*

*Starring Edilson Manuel Olbera Nunez, Keyvin Martinez, Santiago Alfonso and Carlos Acosta*

Adapted from his autobiography, this vibrant, emotionally-intelligent biopic chronicles the rise of Carlos Acosta - nicknamed Yuli or 'warrior' by his father - from impoverished tearaway growing up in Castro's Havana, to world-renowned ballet star. Edilson Manuel Olbera Nunez, who plays the young Carlos, is a true delight, while the present-day dance sequences choreographed by Acosta, who features in the film as his adult self, are breathtaking.

### **22 April 2021 BLACKKLANSMAN**

*USA 2018, 135 mins. Dir. Spike Lee.*

*Starring John David Washington and Adam Driver*

From visionary film-maker Spike Lee comes the incredible true story of an American hero. Ron Stallworth becomes the first African-American undercover detective in the Colorado Springs Police Department, where he encounters open hostility from the department rank and file. Undaunted, he sets out to infiltrate and expose the Ku Klux Klan with the help of his colleague, Flip Zimmerman. Together they set out to take down the organisation. Set during the time of the civil rights movement, the film offers an unflinching examination of race relations in 1970s America that is just as relevant in today's world.

### **20 May 2021 GRADUATION**

*Romania/France/Belgium 2016, 128 mins. Dir. Cristian Mungiu.*

*Starring Adrian Titeni, Lia Bugnar and Maria Dragus*

*Graduation* explores corruption in post-communist Romania and its corrosive effect, even on people who are fundamentally decent. The film introduces us to Romeo, a middle-aged doctor living with his estranged wife Magda and their daughter Eliza. Romeo is obsessed with making sure that Eliza leaves school with top grades so that she can take up a scholarship to Cambridge and make a life for herself abroad. The pressure intensifies when Eliza is attacked by an unknown assailant and left with a damaged right arm - is she going to be able to write the vital exam papers? Frantic with anxiety about his daughter's future, Romeo ignores his wife's protests and makes a corrupt deal with the local powers-that-be which will ensure his daughter's success.

**17 June 2021 CAPERNAUM**

*Lebanon 2018, 126 mins. Dir. Nadine Labaki.*

*Starring Zain al-Rafeea, Yordanos Shiferaw, Boluwatife Bankole and Kawthar al-Haddad*

Winner of the Jury Prize at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, this extraordinary film follows Zain, a feisty 12-year-old, as he flees from his negligent parents to fend for himself on the streets of Beirut. Along the way he is befriended by an Ethiopian refugee and - when she is detained as an illegal immigrant - becomes guardian to her one-year-old son Yonas. Zain and Yonas together make a remarkable double act - surely two of the most astonishing child performances in cinematic history - and keeping both of them safe takes all of Zain's considerable wits and ingenuity. While the film necessarily focuses on the harsh social reality of undocumented lives trapped in poverty, it is through the irrepressible Zain that we take from the film an overwhelming sense of moral decency, of humour, of optimism and of hope.