

Bridges to the World International Film Festival

February 9 – March 9, 2018

7 p.m.

10th
ANNIVERSARY

Five Countries

Paraguay, *The Gate of Dreams* (1998)

Estonia, *Cherry Tobacco* (2014)

Jordan, *Captain Abu Raed* (2007)

Oman, *Arts of the Monsoon* (2016)

Bulgaria, *Monkey* (2016)

Six Venues

Annapolis

Bowie

Cumberland

Salisbury University

Saint Mary's City

Towson University

The World Artists Experiences and the International Division of Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State

present the tenth annual international film festival. This month-long celebration features films chosen and sponsored by the embassies of five countries: Paraguay, Estonia, Jordan, Oman, Bulgaria

Towson University Dates:

2/9 Paraguay, 2/16 Estonia, 2/23 Jordan, 3/2 Oman, 3/9 Bulgaria

Van Bokkelen Hall Auditorium

Free Admission

**If the university is closed, the film will be canceled*

410-704-3184

www.towson.edu/emf

STATE OF MARYLAND

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

LARRY HOGAN
GOVERNOR

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
LT. GOVERNOR



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
STATE HOUSE
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
(410) 974-5521
TOLL FREE: 888-874-0013
FAX (410) 974-5190
TDD: 800-735-2258

JOHN C. WOBENSMITH
SECRETARY OF STATE

February, 2018

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the World Artists Experiences/Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State International Division 10th anniversary international film festival. The theme, *Building Bridges to the World*, is in recognition of the State's global reach and a reflection of those connections here in Maryland.

The month-long celebration features films from five countries in the order in which they will be screened: Paraguay, Estonia, Jordan, Oman, and Bulgaria. All films are being screened in five distinct regions of Maryland: Salisbury, Annapolis, Cumberland, California, and Towson.

Our hope is that you will gain the spirit of each of the countries represented in the film. All films were selected in connection with and sponsored by the Embassy of each of the countries. Each film will be introduced, screened, and followed by a discussion.

We would like to sincerely thank the planning committee, Greg Faller, Mel D. Powell, June Krell-Salgado, and Linda Smith. We appreciate Dr. Faller's contribution of writing the essays. Also, we acknowledge all of the volunteers and in-kind sponsors who have generously contributed their time and resources to the festival, especially the host venue representatives who have shown tremendous hospitality throughout the planning and delivery of this event.

Sincerely yours,

John C. Wobensmith
Secretary of the State of Maryland

Betty McGinnis
President and Founder, World Artists
Experiences

World Artists Experiences is a non-profit organization which bridges international understanding through cultural and citizen diplomacy in schools, colleges, and communities to foster respect, trust, hope, and peace in the world. The organization's four goals are: Ambassador Series of World Experiences in communities; Cultural Immersion opportunities; International Education; and Sustainable Development. For further information, contact Betty McGinnis at wae@comcast.net; www.worldartists.org

The International Division for Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State strives to foster global awareness and increase the level and consistency of open dialogue and exchange between Maryland's citizens and institutions and their international counterparts. For more information contact Mary E. Nitsch, Director of International Affairs for the Office of the Secretary of State, mary.nitsch@maryland.gov

El Portón de los sueños (1998) ***(The Gate of Dreams)***

Paraguay

Written & Directed by Hugo Gamarra

Introduced by Dr. Lea Ramsdell
Department of Foreign Languages
Towson University



The Gate of Dreams follows Augusto Roa Bastos as he travels to his home town and reflects on his life, philosophy, novels and the culture and politics of Paraguay. He serves as an on-screen guide into the heart of the Paraguayan spirit; its language, rituals, food, history, and oral traditions. As we accompany Roa Bastos, we learn about the country and about him, Paraguay's most famous author; a writer the Washington Post called "the most complex and brilliant Latin American novelist of all." This impressionistic documentary utilizes the same type of ambiguity and magic realism Roa Bastos used in his celebrated novels such as *Son of Man* (1960) and *I, the Supreme* (1974) and makes us wonder about our own memories and dreams.

Born 13 June 1917, Augusto Antonio Roa Bastos became one of South America's most honored authors. Best known for his novels, he also wrote short-stories, poetry, screenplays, and newspaper articles. His writing uses symbols (often birds), myths, folklore, and multiple narratives to express the collective memory of the Paraguayan people, especially the indigenous Guaraní. A major theme of his writing is the drive towards a deep and universal humanism, often only made possible by suffering. His works also express a profound mistrust of power and a keen sense of justice for the poor and oppressed. A pacifist after witnessing the human devastation during the Chaco War in the early 1930s, he insisted that imagination should combat the abuse of power. He won a Guggenheim Prize in 1971, the prestigious Cervantes Prize for Literature in 1989, and has often been considered for the Nobel Prize.

Roa Bastos lived in exile for over 40 years primarily because of Alfredo Stroessner, Paraguay's ultra-conservative dictator from 1954-1989, the longest reign in South American history. *I, the Supreme*, one of the major texts of South American literature, is a historical novel about an earlier dictator, José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, who ruled Paraguay with an iron fist from 1814-1840 – but is also a commentary on the right-wing government of Stroessner. The book dissects the madness of absolute rule; the notion that when a dictatorship controls everything it will eventually self-destruct since no opposing voice is allowed. Later in his career, Roa Bastos directly examines Stroessner in his 1993 novel, *The Prosecutor*.

The Gate of Dreams ends with Roa Bastos beginning work on his last novel, *Counterlife* (1994), a book that once again explores Paraguay's geography, history, and people; that examines how human suffering is a lesson in grandeur and contains hope for rebirth in the face of destiny and nature. *The Gate of Dreams* depicts these themes and cultural passions as the soul of Paraguay.

The Gate of Dreams runs 90 minutes.

Kirsitubakas (2014) **(Cherry Tobacco)**

Estonia

Written & Directed by
Andres Maimik & Katrin Maimik

Introduced by Toivo Tagamets
Baltimore/Estonian Society



Is it possible to tell a story about the romantic desire shared by a bored teenage girl and an older man without raising questions about gender, power, sex, and ethics? A completely chaste film, *Cherry Tobacco* is nevertheless willing to rub up against societal norms. It explores the complex emotions and unrequited longings of platonic love in a culturally questionable yet innocent relationship. It delicately balances the tension between naïve ideas about romance and the frisson of actual physical attraction; between imaginary possibilities and real consequences; between personal fantasy and public responsibility. It succeeds in evoking the bittersweet sensations of a failed and impossible first love without raising too many stereotypes or psychological anxieties. It's a discrete, funny, awkward, and moving film that feels profoundly human.

Made by the husband and wife team of Andres and Katrin Maimik, *Cherry Tobacco* stars Maris Nõlvak as Laura and Gert Raudsep as Joosep. This was Nõlvak's debut film; she received excellent reviews for her nearly silent performance. Raudsep is an establish stage actor at Ugala Theatre and Theatre NO99. Nõlvak and Raudsep also worked together in the TV series *Kättemaksukontor* (2009-2017). Laura lives a dull life in a small town. She argues with her mother, tolerates a young suitor, and seems bored by and cynical of everything. She decides to join a friend on a hiking trip led by the eccentric and occasionally melodramatic Joosep. As the hike progresses, Laura begins to feel something and develops a confusing crush on Joosep. This experience helps Laura mature and recognize what can and cannot happen.

Cherry Tobacco was shot in the nature preserves of Estonia and beautifully captures the wild countryside. This setting contributes to the "primitive" emotions that emerge between Laura and Joosep; emotions that are constrained when they return to civilization. The film also examines how very ordinary things become significant and how memories often center on our senses – emphasized in the film with smell (*cherry tobacco*), taste (wild berries), touch (a peat bog), sounds (a Polish love song), and even a specific location (a bed of pine needles in the forest). The film also employs long duration takes where we can observe the wordless flirtations, betrayals, and power struggles through subtle glances, gestures, and brief moments of contact. *Cherry Tobacco* will elicit many questions including an obvious nostalgic one: what do you remember about your first love?

A happy birthday is in order – 24 February 2018 celebrates the centenary of the Republic of Estonia!

Cherry Tobacco runs 95 minutes; you can watch the trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WnZpFLHoiwQ>

Captain Abu Raed (2008)

Jordan

Written & Directed by Amin Matalqa

Introduced by Dr. Kimberly Katz
Department of History
Towson University



Captain Abu Raed ranks as a significant film for a number of reasons. It was the first feature length Jordanian film to enter the international cinema market. It was the first film from Jordan to be submitted to the Oscars for Best Foreign Film. It won 27 international festival awards including Sundance, the Seattle International Film Festival, the Dubai International Film Festival, and (closer to home) the Rehoboth Beach Independent Film Festival. It was the first film to be shot in the capital city of Amman. Although many films have used the rural and wild environs of Jordan (Petra and the Wadi Rum desert most commonly), none have explored Amman. Consequently, one of the many pleasures of *Captain Abu Raed* is seeing a “close-up” of the city (including the Roman ruins on Jabal al Qala'a) and the old hillside suburb of Salt for the first time. The other and more substantial pleasures of the film include Nadim Sawalha's performance as the captain, its surprisingly complex and poignant story, and its themes of faith, hope, and courage. It's been said that making an honest film about a good person – a kind, gentle, and caring person – would be boring and uninspiring. *Captain Abu Raed* proves that a false assertion; the film shows that the most unassuming and “insignificant” people can change lives, often with a single action.

The simple story line – Abu Raed, a janitor at the Queen Alia International Airport, finds a discarded Royal Jordanian captain's hat and, pretending to be a pilot, begins to tell stories of his imaginary adventures to the children in his neighborhood – actually establishes a sensitive core narrative that grows to encompass questions about socio-economic destiny, intergenerational friendship, the value of literature, the importance of providing dreams and opportunities for children, domestic violence, standing-up for what is right, and personal sacrifice. If this seems like too much material to weave into a cohesive whole, you'll be surprised by how well the film seamlessly combines these threads and the emotional charge they ultimately deliver.

Nadim Sawalha was born in 1935 into a Bedouin family. He left Jordan to study drama in London in 1950 and has done most of his work there; over 100 films and TV shows primarily as a character actor (including two James Bond films). *Captain Abu Raed* is his first lead role. Sawalha also performed with the Royal National Theatre, wrote radio dramas for the BBC, and translated some of Shakespeare's plays into Arabic. He is the father of Julia Sawalha, perhaps best known for her role as Saffy in *Absolutely Fabulous* and as the voice of Ginger in *Chicken Run* (2000).

Like Sawalha, director Amin Matalqa also has an international resume. He was born in Jordan and came to Ohio at age 13. He earned a BA in Business from Ohio State and an MFA in Directing from the American Film Institute. *Captain Abu Raed* was his first feature film which he followed with *The United* (2012), Disney's first Arabic language film. After two more live-action features (*Strangely in Love* [2014] and *The Rendezvous* [2016]), he is now working on an animated film, *Hump* (set in Jordan), for Pixar.

Captain Abu Raed runs 105 minutes; you can watch the trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cf4GSGkFAK8>.

Arts of the Monsoon (2016)

Oman

Directed by Dodge Billingsley



Introduced by Dr. Charles Schmitz
Department of Geography & Environmental Planning, Towson University
and Director Dodge Billingsley

Located on the southeastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Oman borders the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. A seafaring nation with access to three seas (the Arab Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea), Oman has always traded commercial goods (especially spices), crafts, and cultural traditions with India, Pakistan, China, and East Africa. This maritime exchange developed instead of land routes with Arab neighbors because of the vast expanse of surrounding desert. Starting in the 17th century, trade with East Africa, notably Zanzibar, eventually produced a unique artistic fusion that still exists today. *Arts of the Monsoon* explores this intimate cultural connection through interviews with artists, musicians, poets, filmmakers, architects, and cultural experts. This beautifully shot documentary takes us to infrequently visited locales to observe unfamiliar customs and festivals.

Nicole Shivers, the producer of the film and education specialist at the Smithsonian Museum of African Art, explains: “We want to invite audiences to gain a broader understanding of how Zanzibari and Omani history and culture has shaped and enriched the world. From the Swahili kanga, worn on the streets of Stone Town Zanzibar and Salalah Oman, to taarab music, to the carved wooden doors dominating Stone Town and the old homes of Muscat and Mizanfah, the film highlights the impact and influence the seafaring trade has had on dress, architecture, music, and culture in Zanzibar and Oman.” The film also reshapes our understanding of the region and the centuries-long influence of Oman and Zanzibar throughout Asia and the Middle East.

More than one artist talks about Zanzibar and Oman being like twins, using the term “Afro-Omani” to designate the multi-racial and multi-ethnic nature of the people and the culture. For example, taarab music combines Arabic scales with African rhythms; the kanga, a large piece of colorful cloth that originated in East Africa, is also worn in parts of Oman; people in both countries can easily switch between Arabic and Swahili – in fact, the word “Swahili” comes from “sawahil” which is Arabic for “coast.” Zanzibar may be the last true gem of the Swahili coast.

Arts of the Monsoon was made possible by the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center in Washington, DC. Established in 2005, the SQCC brings the culture, history, and heritage of Oman to the U.S., promotes mutual respect and understanding between the U.S. and Oman, and strives to educate a new generation of culturally sensitive and knowledgeable citizens in each society. The artists in the film make the argument that the various types of Afro-Omani cultural expression were possibly the first true examples of global art. *Arts of the Monsoon* runs 60 minutes; you can watch the trailer at <https://vimeo.com/188229516>

Maimuna (2016) **(Monkey)**

Bulgaria

Co-Written & Directed by Dimitar Kotzev



Introduced by Dr. Kalin Kirilov
Department of Music
Towson University

Films about teenagers often show adults as ridiculous or the teenagers themselves as irrational. *Monkey* does both and reveals the entire world as “completely bananas.” Creating its own easily accessible internal logic (including a mysterious Santa Claus), the film makes an important philosophical statement – it’s perfectly acceptable to be weird and eccentric. In fact, everyone is encouraged to appreciate and accept outlandish behavior: liberating a monkey from the zoo, parkouring through school, waiting for aliens, or cross-dressing to attend the opera. Even the usually dreary housing complexes of Sofia are presented in such a way to make them seem oddly enchanting. In this crazy world, half-sisters Iva and Maya are forced to begin their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Maya, the younger of the two sisters (wonderfully played by Alexandra Kostova in her screen debut), wears baggy clothes and has peculiar tastes, but is kind-hearted and willful; traits that will help her navigate the strangeness and sadness of her family situation. Iva, the older sister (skillfully played by popular TV actress Radina Borshosh), appears more “normal,” but cannot adjust as quickly to the unexpected twists of life. Together they acquire the courage to make a difficult life and death decision. As director Kotzev said, “people mature and grow through their losses;” Maya and Iva develop an even stronger sisterly bond in a curious filmic universe that depicts an enormous loss as a gift, as something weird and beautiful.

Dimitar Kotzev is an established TV and film director, best known for *Lora From Morning Till Evening* (2011) and the breakthrough TV series *The Fourth Estate* (2013). He sees his work as being influenced by Terry Gilliam, Miloš Forman, and Pedro Almodóvar – influences clearly noticeable in *Monkey*. In an interview with FilmDoo he stated, “I like to play with people’s expectations and with logic, and I think the best thing about a story is that... it keeps swerving in unexpected directions. Surprise is what people enjoy in cinema – no one wants to go and see something predictable.” In a film that addresses the difficulties of reality and confronts life and death, the humorous surprises and unexpected twists provide an original, warm, and crazy perspective on humanity.

Monkey runs 95 minutes. It won the Audience Award at the Sofia International Film Festival. You can watch the trailer at <https://vimeo.com/20066671>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Department of Art + Design, Art History, Art Education

Exhibition | From the Inside Out: Building the Silhouette

Center for the Arts Gallery, CA 3040

Tues., Jan. 30 – Sat., March 17

Gallery Hours: Tues. – Sat., 11 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Opening Reception: Thurs., Feb. 8, 7:30 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Co-curated by faculty members Erin Lehman and Julie Potter, this exhibition celebrates TU's extensive historical clothing collection. Visitors get a behind the scenes look at the undergarments and clothing that shaped the bodies of the past, answering the question, "How did they wear that?"

Free

Department of Electronic Media & Film

11th International WAMMFest

Van Bokkelen Hall Auditorium, VB 204

Fri., Feb. 23, – Sat., Feb. 24

The 11th International WAMMFest (Women and Minorities in Media Festival), presented by the Department of Electronic Media and Film, is an annual festival where films from all over the world are showcased. Our mission is to give women and minorities a chance to show the world their media- making talents.

wammtu.com

Department of Theatre Arts

How I Learned to Drive by Paula Vogel

Center for the Arts, Studio Theatre, CA 3060

Thurs., March 8, 7:30 p.m.;

Fri., March 9, and Sat., March 10, 8 p.m.; Sun., March 11, 2 p.m.;

Tues., March 13, Wed. March 14, and Thurs., March 15, 7:30 p.m.

Preview: Wed., March 7, 7:30 p.m.

Under the direction of faculty member Donna Fox, TU students present Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*. The memory play uses humor and sensitivity to take you through a journey dealing with issues of victimization, sexual abuse, alcoholism and ultimately, healing and forgiveness.

Presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York. May contain material recommended for mature audiences.

Proceeds benefit the TU Foundation

tuboffice.com \$20/15/10

Asian Arts & Culture Center

Koto 360°

Center for the Arts, Harold J. Kaplan Concert Hall, CA 3042

Sat., March 10, 7 p.m.

Experience Koto 360°, an exploration of the versatility and transformations of Japanese music, through the koto (13-string zither) and shakuhachi (bamboo flute) with newly composed music, unique instrument pairings and diverse collaborations.

tuboffice.com \$15/10/5

Department of Theatre Arts

Othello by William Shakespeare

Center for the Arts, Studio Theatre, CA 3060

Fri., Apr. 6 and Sat., Apr. 7, 8 p.m.; Sun., Apr. 8, 2 p.m.;

Fri., Apr. 13 and Sat., Apr. 14, 8 p.m.

Preview: Thurs., Apr. 5, 7:30 p.m.

Jealousy, driven by intrigues and suspicions, fuels Othello's tragic downfall in Shakespeare's epic tale of passion, love, betrayal and revenge. Under the direction of Steven Satta, TU students present this classic.

May contain material recommended for mature audiences. Proceeds benefit the TU Foundation

tuboffice.com \$20/15/10

www.events.towson.edu