

DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA & FILM PRESENTS

14th Annual

BRIDGES TO THE WORLD

*International
Film Festival*

Feb. 1–Mar. 1

Tuesdays at 7 p.m. | virtual

Towson University, with The World Artist Experiences and the International Division of Maryland's Office of the Secretary of State present the 14th edition of the international film festival. This month-long celebration features films chosen and sponsored by the embassies of five countries: France, Cambodia, Morocco, Guatemala and Bangladesh.

FIVE COUNTRIES

France: *Petit Paysan [Bloody Milk]* (2017)

Cambodia: *Num Banh Chok [Khmer Rice Noodles]* (2007)

Morocco: *L'Orchestre des Aveugles [The Blind Orchestra]* (2014)

Guatemala: *Guatemala: On the Edge of Discovery* (2018)

Bangladesh: *Guerrilla* (2011)

DATES

2/1: France

2/7: Cambodia

2/14: Morocco

2/21: Guatemala

3/1: Bangladesh



PETIT PAYSAN [BLOODY MILK] (2017)

France
Directed and co-written by Hubert Charuel
Running Time: 85 minutes
Introduced by Denis Quenelle,
Cultural Attaché

Petit paysan presents a naturalistic and yet suspenseful drama about the challenges faced by a young dairy farmer. This premise may seem rather unusual, but indelible performances by a strong cast

generate a low-key thriller and a socio-economic commentary. Pierre – played by two-time César award winner Swann Arlaud (Best Actor for *Petit paysan* and Best Supporting Actor for *Grâce à Dieu*) – discovers that one of his cows has contracted the highly contagious “Belgian disease.” If he reports this infection, his entire top-ranked herd will be slaughtered. Rather than lose his farm and livelihood, the conscientious and fiercely independent Pierre makes the risky decision to slaughter the sick cow himself and bury the carcass in his fields. His pragmatic sister (Sara Giraudeau), a local veterinarian, eventually realizes what Pierre has done and yet helps him cover-up the crime. Health inspectors, his prying mother, and an elderly neighbor who may have witnessed the misdeed, pressure Pierre to increasingly drastic measures and he soon finds himself behaving with the panicked recklessness of a killer covering up a murder. The film asks us to sympathize with Pierre even though he broke the law and consequently raises questions about individual authority, familial bonds, community health, and professional ethics.

The original French title, *Petit paysan*, literally translates as “little peasant” or “little farmer” and refers to the small scale operation of Pierre’s farm in a world of large scale agribusiness. The title may also function as an insult meaning “redneck” or “hillbilly” suggesting the inefficiency of Pierre’s old-school methods – preferring quality over quantity. The English title, *Bloody Milk*, seems to be an attempt to foreground the thriller aspects of the film.

Writer-director Hubert Charuel grew up on his parents' dairy farm but decided to study film at the prestigious French film school La Fémis (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Métiers de l’Image et du Son). After a number of shorts, *Petit paysan* was his first feature-length film and it is an impressive debut. It was shot on his family farm and not surprisingly incorporates autobiographical elements. *Petit paysan* was nominated for the Golden Camera Award at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival. It was also nominated for seven César Awards in 2018: Best First Feature Film (won), Best Original Screenplay, Best Director, Best Film, Best Actor (Swann Arlaud, won), Best Supporting Actress (Sara Giraudeau, won), Best Editing, and Best Original Music.

The film runs 100 minutes. Watch the trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0xM1ox-tJc>



NUM BANH CHOK [KHMER RICE NOODLES] (2007)

Cambodia
Directed by Chheng Sovanna
Running Time: 45 minutes
Introduced by Mr. Pok Borak, Director
of Cinema and Cultural Diffusion
Department of the Cambodian
Ministry of Culture & Fine Arts and
Mr. Huy Yaleng, actor/director.

Num Banh Chok is an compelling example of the “edutainment videos”

produced by the Women’s Media Center of Cambodia (WMC), a non-profit media organization established in 1995. The WMC uses film, television, and radio to promote social transformation in Cambodian society with a focus on the roles and rights of Cambodian women. WMC explores important contemporary issues such as domestic violence, gender equity, prostitution, community development, family health, and women's empowerment. Adapting popular genres such as comedy, melodrama, and documentary the WMC seeks to positively influence national audiences and enact social and cultural change.

Num Banh Chok is a family melodrama following the lives of a young couple as they expect the birth of their first child. Ryna, a shy seamstress who works from home, increasingly questions her husband’s behavior and the gender inequity of Khmer culture. Vuthy, an office clerk, can’t understand why his wife isn’t able to work, manage the household, and take care of his physical needs. This disparity leads to increasingly heated arguments regarding the expectations of married life touching on issues of money, sharing chores, sex, and fidelity. The film alternates between Ryna’s and Vuthy’s perspectives using interior monologues, sepia-tinted memories, and conversations with family members and colleagues. Fleeting moments of tenderness and reconciliation can’t offset Ryna’s mistrust of Vuthy’s frequent drinking and partying with “karaoke girls.” *Num Banh Chok* builds to a near tragedy that threatens to destroy their marriage. Can they recognize and transcend cultural proscriptions while developing a new understanding and respect for each other?

Vuthy is played by actor/director Huy Yaleng. He is best known for a number of horror films such as *Vikalcharet*, *The Torment of Ghost*, and *The Haunted House*. His most recent dramatic film, *Fathers* (2020), was selected as the Cambodian entry for the Best International Film at the 93rd Academy Awards. He is a passionate advocate for Cambodian film production – to tell Cambodian stories – as a means to counter the high number of imported films.

Num banh chok is also the name of the enormously popular – truly national – noodle dish found everywhere in Cambodia. Made of fermented rice noodles, it is served cold (or room temperature), topped with a yellow-green coconut-based fish gravy, and accompanied by fresh herbs, vegetables, and green fruits. Typical accompaniments include snake beans, banana blossom, mint, basil, water lily, and pickled cucumber. You will see this dish a number of times in tonight’s film. For this reason, we will also screen *Taste Cambodia: Culinary Adventures in the Kingdom* (2021) [5].



**L'ORCHESTRE DES
AVEUGLES
[THE BLIND ORCHESTRA]
(2014)**

Morocco
Written and directed by Mohamed
Mouftakir
Running Time: 110 minutes

L'Orchestre des aveugles traces the experiences of 8-year old Mimou (played by Ilyas El Jihani in his feature film debut) and his extended

family of musicians and dancers (shikhat). Set during the repressive “Years of Lead” under King Hussan II, the film provides a humorous and bittersweet glimpse at circa 1970 Morocco by exploring class, gender, cultural traditions, romance, infidelity, friendship, family, and politics. Mimou falls in love with Chama (Oulaya Amamra), the neighbor’s new maid, while trying to negotiate the educational expectations of his Francophile father Houcine (Younes Megri), the pro-democracy stance of his uncle Abdellah (Fehd Benchmesli), and the conservative values of his uncle, police inspector Mustapha (Mohamed Bastaoui). Everyone lives together in the house of Mimou’s mother, Halima (Mouna Fetou), and the interactions between this ensemble of eccentric and colorful inhabitants – sometimes comical, sometimes tragic – offer a cross-section of life in all its unexpected detours.

Consequently, the film can be seen as more of a character study than a traditional narrative. Through the foibles of everyday people, the film raises questions about cheating and lying and explores the repercussions that inevitably follow. This theme is encapsulated in the film’s title; L’Orchestre des aveugles refers to the deceit Houcine’s band employs so they can perform at parties reserved for women in conservative homes.

L’Orchestre des aveugles was directed by Mohamed Mouftakir, son of the great violinist Houcine Mouftakir. After studying English literature at the University of Casablanca, he became interested in cinema and first worked as an assistant director in TV and cinema. His first feature film, Pegasus (2010), won the Grand Prize at FESPACO African Film Festival. L’Orchestre des aveugles won top prize, the Wihr d’Or (Golden Lion), at the 8th International Oran Festival of Arab Film. His most recent film, L’Automne des pommiers (2020), won the Grand Prize at the Tangier International Film Festival. Mouftakir cites David Lynch as his favorite director and says that he “likes films that let the audience think for themselves, not spell it out for them. For me a good film is a film that is thought of and conceived in a cinematographic approach from the very beginning. The pure language of cinema has to be at its essence.” L’Orchestre des aveugles demonstrates this ideal – and adds a wonderful soundtrack of violin and Moroccan music. It is also semi-autobiographical, allowing Mouftakir to examine his experience and relationship with his father until his father’s death when he was 11 years old.

L’Orchestre des aveugles is dedicated to the well-known TV and film actor, Mohamed Bastaoui, who died soon after the film was completed. You can watch a trailer for L’Orchestre des aveugles at – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_Fmvmq61-



**GUATEMALA: ON THE EDGE
OF DISCOVERY (2018)**

Guatemala and U.S.
Directed by Brent Winebrenner with
assistance from Jose Antonio and
Emilio Faillace
Running Time: 80 minutes

Part travelogue, part anthropological study, and part archeological investigation, Guatemala: On the Edge of Discovery offers a bounty of striking images as it explores a region of Central America rich in

ancient culture and traditions. After surveying the geographical diversity of the country, the documentary explores the Mayan civilization, including the deciphering of the Mayan language and recent discoveries of Mayan cities. The film then discusses the impact of Catholicism on Mayan beliefs and the fascinating religious syncretism that developed such as the gigantic, 7,000 pound Holy Week floats of Antigua (carried by up to 60 men), shamanistic ceremonies, and the chain-smoking Maximón (aka San Simón). Maximón is revered as someone who can answer prayers perhaps too taboo (or too mundane) for conventional Catholic saints. His statue is moved to a new home every year; it’s considered the highest honor to host him. His cofrades, or followers, spend their days performing ceremonies and smoking by his side. Finally, the omniscient voice-over guide introduces us to two contemporary artists and local weaving/textile practices. Overall, Guatemala: On the Edge of Discovery reveals the beauty, tenacity, history, art, and spirituality of a country and people re-emerging in the 21st century. The film will provide valuable insights into a complex society and one of the world’s founding civilizations for a United States audience.

Guatemala: On the Edge of Discovery was directed by Brent Winebrenner. After earning a Masters degree in photography, he joined the faculty of the Brooks Institute and taught visual journalism. He has worked in more than 70 countries, shooting for a variety of editorial and corporate clients, including Rizzoli Publications, Kendall Jackson and Lonely Planet. His work has appeared in National Geographic Traveler, Islands, Newsweek, Santa Barbara Magazine, The Washington Post, and numerous Lonely Planet publications. He was the principle photographer on the Splendor of Cuba, a Rizzoli coffee table book that was recognized by The Washington Post and The Daily Beast as one of the ten best photo books of 2011. His experience and skill is clearly on display in this beautifully shot documentary.

You can watch a trailer at – <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/guatemaladocumentary>



GUERRILLA (2011)

Bangladesh
 Directed by Nasiruddin Yousuff
 Running Time: 140 minutes
 Introduced by M. Shahidul Islam,
 Bangladesh Ambassador to the
 United States

Guerrilla is an epic historical melodrama about the Bangladesh Liberation War, an armed conflict to win independence from Pakistan (Bangladesh was known as East Bengal/East Pakistan from 1947-1971). The war began when the Pakistani military launched the genocidal Operation

Searchlight against the people of East Pakistan on the night of 25 March 1971. This initiative pursued the systematic annihilation of civilians, students, intelligentsia, artists, nationalists, and religious minorities. Up to 3 million Bangladeshis were killed and approximately 10 million fled to neighboring India. The capital city, Dhaka, witnessed numerous massacres and rural areas experienced extensive fighting. The war of independence also saw a civil war between the Rajakars (who supported Pakistan) and the Muktis (who fought for political self-determination). Compounding this conflict was the ethnic/religious divide between Muslims and Hindus, which most egregiously manifested itself in genocidal rape. Between 200,000-400,000 women (mostly Hindu) were raped by the military and the Rajakars; these women are referred to as birangonas. The war ended on 16 December 1971 when the military forces of Pakistan surrendered in what remains to date the largest surrender of soldiers since World War II. December 2021 celebrated the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh independence.

Guerrilla is an adaptation of the novel Nishiddho Loban (1990) by Syed Shamsul Haq, a major Bangladeshi writer (a winner of the Bangla Academy Literary Award) augmented by the personal war experiences of director Yousuff. It follows the travails of Bilkis (played by the multi award-winning actor Joya Ahsan) and the heroic actions she takes to support the fight for freedom. The first part of the film occurs in Dhaka and depicts the guerilla operations in which she participates – including working with cultural hero and revolutionary song-writer Altaf Mahmud – while trying to find her disappeared husband. The second part of the film traces her dangerous journey to her home village to meet her brother, Khokon, leader of the local resistance. Through horrific events, fond memories, a nagging mother-in-law, new friendships, some humor, musical interludes, and tragedy, we are presented with a complex portrait of an ordinary middle class woman evolving into a dedicated Bangladeshi patriot.

Nasiruddin Yousuff is a well-known theatre and film director and recipient of the prestigious Ekushey Parak award for contributions to Bangladeshi culture. Guerrilla won 10 National Film Awards, including best film, director, actress, actor, and screenplay. It provides an excellent and dramatic historical review of the Bangladeshi war of independence and the traumatic impact it had on its citizens. You can watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYoDoBiZ5c0>.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Exhibition

**Nanette Carter / Robert Straight:
 FRAGMENTS, LAYERS, COMBINATIONS**
 Center for the Arts Gallery, CA 3040

Jan. 28 - Apr. 23 (closed Mar. 21 - 26)
 Center for the Arts Gallery, CA 3040

Two master artists create abstract images by building up layers and combining parts, utilizing paint and other materials. Nanette Carter addresses contemporary events and issues with an abstract vocabulary of form, line, color, and texture, while Robert Straight employs scientific and mathematical concepts to visualize macro and micro relationships.

FREE | EVENTS.TOWSON.EDU

Exhibition

**Exhibition | FOREVER INDONESIAN - A
 JOURNEY THROUGH ART**

works by Nico Gozal

Feb. 9 - May 14 (closed Mar. 21 - 26) | Asian Arts
 Gallery, CA 2037

Reception & Artist Talk: Wed., Feb., 9 at 7:30 p.m.

Afarin Nico Gozal is an Indonesian of Chinese descent who is also an American citizen. In sharing his unique silk painting that blends elements of Indonesian traditions with contemporary techniques, he shares the culture of his homeland, his experiences as an immigrant in the U.S., and his experiences balancing multiple cultures.

FREE | EVENTS.TOWSON.EDU

Asian Arts & Culture Center

SILK PAINTING DEMO

Tues., Feb., 22 at 7 p.m. | Virtual

Watch artist Nicol Gozal take you through the process of gutta / Serti silk painting to depict colorful images and scenes inspired by his homeland in this virtual demonstration via Zoom.

FREE W/ REGISTRATION | EVENTS.TOWSON.EDU

Concert | Dance

DANCE MAJORS PERFORMANCE PROJECT

Feb. 24-26 at 7 p.m. | Dance Studio Theatre, CA 1003

Student dancers perform newly choreographed works.

FREE | EVENTS.TOWSON.EDU

Concert | Music

TINY HOUSE CONCERT: MUSIC WITH MEANING

Sun., Feb 27 at 3 p.m. | Virtual

Back by popular demand, join Music faculty virtually for this diverse program of chamber music across multiple genres. Performers will discuss their musical selections and take questions from the on-line audience at the end of the performance. Streamed live from our venues at Towson as well as from faculty homes.

FREE | EVENTS.TOWSON.EDU

Music Concert

**Sō PERCUSSION with the guest artist
 Shodekeh**

Tues., Mar. 8 at 7:30 p.m.

Harold J. Kaplan Concert Hall, CA 3042

TU New Music Ensemble presents the world-renowned innovative percussion group, the Sō Percussion ensemble, concludes their residency with TU Percussion Ensemble students with a showcase performance, including portions of Jason Treuting's "Amid the Noise." Not-to-be-missed!

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An Operatic Regional Premiere

Michael Ching's

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Apr. 22 - 24 at 8 p.m. | Stephens Hall Theatre, ST217

Directed by Courtney Kalbacher

The Music for the Stage Ensemble presents the regional premiere of an operatic version of this classic by composer Michael Ching, with additional TU-commissioned orchestrations. The opera combines classic Shakespearean language and stunning visuals for a breath-based musical journey of lovers, lost in the woods.

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Play

PARADISE LOST by Erin Shields

Directed by Stephen Nunn

April 29 - May 7 | MainStage Theatre

Erin Shields turns Heaven and Hell upside down in this witty, modern, feminist retelling of John Milton's epic poem about the first battle between good and evil. Shields's wickedly smart and funny script questions the reasons of the universe, the slow process of evolution and the freedom of knowledge. The debate over right and wrong has never been so satisfying.

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