



## Programmers' Day

Thursday

February 16<sup>th</sup>

Light House Cinema



# Aquarius

**Brazil, France 2016**

**145 mins DCP Colour**

**Director:** Kleber Mendonça Filho

**Producers:** Émilie Lesclaux, Saïd Ben Saïd, Michel Merkt

**Script:** Kleber Mendonça Filho

**Cinematography:** Pedro Sotero, Fabricio Tadeu

**Editing:** Eduardo Serrano

**Sound:** Ricardo Cutz

**Cast:** Sônia Braga, Maeve Jinkings, Irhandir Santos, Humberto Carrão



Kleber Mendonça Filho's richly absorbing and boldly realised new film takes its name from a Recife apartment block overlooking one of the city's most popular beaches. To Clara, a widowed music critic who has resided here for nearly four decades, *Aquarius* is home; but to a slick property developer determined to transform the site into luxury flats it is an investment opportunity. The developers want Clara out, by fair means or foul, but she won't budge.

Building on the dazzling achievement of Mendonça Filho's *Neighbouring Sounds* (2012), this is a rousing parable of individual resistance and an exquisite exploration of the way architecture, like cinema, can be a repository of cherished memories, full of secret meanings and intimate echoes of the past.

*Aquarius* is a film of closely observed subtlety, swoony passion and sly political anger, and commanding it all, as emphatically as Clara leaves her signature on her apartment, is Sonia Braga. An electrifying blend of fierceness, vulnerability and proud sensuality, it is one of the performances of the year. – *BFI London Film Festival 2016*

**Kleber Mendonça Filho** is a director, producer and screenwriter whose narrative feature debut, *Neighbouring Sounds* (12), won the FIPRESCI Prize at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in that year. His filmography includes an extensive body of lauded documentaries and short films. *Aquarius* (16) is his second feature.

# Graduation

(Bacalaureat)

Romania, France, Belgium 2016

128 mins DCP Colour

**Director:** Cristian Mungiu

**Producer:** Cristian Mungiu

**Script:** Cristian Mungiu

**Cinematography:** Tudor Vladimir Panduru

**Editing:** Mircea Olteanu

**Sound:** Mircea Olteanu

**Cast:** Adrian Titieni, Maria-Victoria Dragus, Vlad Ivanov, Rares Andrici, Lia Bugnar, Malina Manovici

**Cristian Mungiu** was born in Iași, Romania in 1968. Before studying film, he worked as a teacher and journalist for the press, radio and TV. His debut film, *West (Occident)*, premiered in the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes in 2002. In 2007, his second feature, *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days*, was awarded the Palme d'Or in Cannes. The film also won the European Film Academy awards for best film and best director. He returned to Cannes in 2009 as a writer-producer-co-director with the collective episodic film *Tales from the Golden Age*, and as a writer-director in 2012 with *Beyond the Hills*, which was double-awarded for Best Screenplay and Best Actresses. *Graduation* (16) is his fifth film and won him the Best Director at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival (Joint Winner with *Personal Shopper*).



Romeo (Titieni) is a doctor living in a shabby Transylvanian town, characterised by shabby apartment blocks, rampant crime, stray dogs and systemic corruption. He has a wife and a mistress, but most of his attentions are focused on his teenage daughter, Eliza, who has lately won a scholarship to study psychology in the UK.

As *Graduation* opens, a brick is thrown through the physician's window, the first of a series of misfortunes that make one think someone is out to get him. These niggling anxieties are overtaken when, on the eve of her final exams, Eliza is sexually assaulted. Romeo remains determined that the girl should sit her finals, lest she lose her one chance to get out of this far-flung place. He rues the day, post 1991, when he and his wife returned there: "We thought that we could change things," he laments, "We thought that we could move mountains."

Understandably, the traumatised Eliza messes up the test. Thus begins an epic struggle of lesser-evilism. If Romeo can just do this one favour for the godfather of a guy who works at the police station. And if the exam supervisor can just do this one favour for him. And so on. Then maybe these small fiddles will allow his daughter to escape to a life not dominated by fiddling.

The brilliant Romanian director Cristian Mungiu has plenty of Cannes Film Festival form: in 2007, *4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days* won the Palm d'Or; in 2012, he won Best Screenplay with the modern exorcism drama, *Beyond the Hills*. *Graduation* sees the auteur returning to the societal crookedness explored in *Tales from the Golden Age*, the blackly comic 2009 portmanteau of sketches from Communist Romania. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss: more than a quarter of a century later the same cronyism persists. In this new world everybody wants something from everybody else. Eliza's mother Magda may protest about her husband's interventions, but, as Romeo notes, even she realises that "in life there are winners and losers".

Up-and-coming DOP Tudor Vladimir Panduru turns grimy exteriors and cluttering interiors into engaging compositions. Adrian Titieni is outstanding as the flawed hero. This isn't as hard-hitting as Mungiu's other Cannes contenders, but the subtleties of quiet backslapping and knowing-a-guy turn out to be plenty dramatic. – Tara Brady, *The Irish Times Cannes Film Festival 2016*

# Handsome Devil

Ireland 2016

95 mins DCP Colour

**Director:** John Butler

**Producers:** Rebecca O'Flanagan,  
Robert Walpole

**Script:** John Butler

**Cinematography:** Cathal Watters

**Editing:** John O'Connor

**Sound:** Hugh Fox

**Music:** John McPhillips

**Cast:** Fionn O'Shea, Nicholas Galitzine, Andrew Scott, Michael McElhatton, Moe Dunford, Ruairí O'Connor, Mark Lavery, Eoin Griffin, Jamie Hallahan, Amy Huberman, Ardal O'Hanlon

**John Butler** is a writer-director who was born in Dublin. His debut novel *The Tenderloin*, was published in 2011 and shortlisted for Best Newcomer at the Irish Book Awards. He directed short films and television before making his feature debut with *The Stag* (13), which screened at the Toronto International Film Festival. *Handsome Devil* (16) is his second feature.



The eternal quest to be true to yourself sings out loud and proud in *Handsome Devil*, an immensely likeable, coming of age/coming out charmer from writer/director John Butler. The film retains the brash energy of Butler's debut *The Stag* (2013) but is a less cartoonish, more polished affair that should warm the hearts of an even bigger audience and shine a light on talented young stars Fionn O'Shea and Nicholas Galitzine.

O'Shea is a particular delight as gawky, sixteen year-old Ned, a bright, artistic lad who discovers his own hell on earth at an all-boys Irish boarding school where the manly pursuit of rugby is a religion. Any non-believer is condemned to suffer relentless ridicule.

Lonely Ned is resigned to his status as the school outsider and the constant insinuations about his sexuality. Everything changes with the arrival of his new roommate Conor (Galitzine), a star player in the rugby team, and English teacher Dan Sherry (Andrew Scott) whose presence evokes *The Dead Poets Society* as he asks the boys: "If you spend your whole life being someone else, who is going to be you?"

*Handsome Devil* boasts bright dialogue and a lively directorial hand that uses split screen and an often eye-popping colour scheme to ensure that the attention never wavers. What gives it substance and some poignancy is the unlikely friendship between Ned and Conor when the school ethos suggests they should be sworn enemies. They bond over a shared love of music, but the friendship comes at a price to Conor as the rugby coach questions his commitment to the game and teammates suggest he chooses his friends more carefully.

*Handsome Devil* bounces confidently from the nonchalant cool of an American indie like *Rushmore* to the feel good factor of a *Bend It Like Beckham*. There may be something very traditional in the structure of a countdown to a big decisive game but the emotional upheavals facing the teenagers and the constant questioning of narrow macho values keeps it thoroughly engaging. – Allan Hunter, *Screen International*



# Lady Macbeth

**United Kingdom 2016**

**89 mins DCP Colour**

**Director:** William Oldroyd

**Producer:** Fodhla Cronin O'Reilly

**Script:** Alice Birch

**Cinematography:** Ari Wegner

**Editing:** Nick Emerson

**Sound:** Dan Jones, Ben Baird

**Cast:** Florence Pugh, Cosmo Jarvis,  
Paul Hilton, Naomi Ackie, Christopher  
Fairbank



Swiftly emerging from the pack as a true breakout discovery of the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival, the stunning feature debut from theater director William Oldroyd firmly declares the presence of a singular filmmaking voice.

Strictly confined to her absentee husband's gothic estate in 1865 England's countryside, young Lady Katherine has been trapped in a loveless marriage of convenience. Imprisoned by the harsh tongue and severe scrutiny of her father-in-law, a steely fire of determination burns within her. When a brutish new servant ensnares her interest, their lascivious affair tears down the status quo, awakening a murderous desire to break free of her chains and inflict vengeance, no matter the price.

Swirling around the absolutely mesmerizing performance of the steely-eyed Florence Pugh in the title role, this fiery adaptation by Oldroyd and screenwriter Alice Birch (based on Nikolai Leskov's novel) invokes a masterful command of tonal control and breathtaking beauty, whose every frame feels utterly alive.

– *Sundance Film Festival 2017*

**William Oldroyd** studied directing at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. After becoming Director in Residence at the Young Vic Theatre, he went on to international success as a theatre and opera director. His first short film, *Christ Dog* (12), was nominated for Best Short Film at the Hamburg International Independent Film Festival. His second short, *Best* (13), won the 2013 Sundance London Short Film Competition and then screened at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. *Lady Macbeth* (16) is his first feature.

*Winner – FIPRESCI Prize, San Sebastián International Film Festival 2016*

*Winner – Critics' Choice Award, Zurich Film Festival 2016*

# The Secret Scripture

Ireland 2016

108 mins DCP Colour

**Director:** Jim Sheridan

**Producers:** Noel Pearson, Jim Sheridan, Rob Quigley

**Script:** Jim Sheridan, Johnny Ferguson

**Cinematography:** Mikhail Krichman

**Editing:** Dermot Diskin

**Sound:** Dan Birch

**Music:** Brian Byrne

**Cast:** Rooney Mara, Vanessa Redgrave, Jack Reynor, Theo James, Eric Bana

**Jim Sheridan** is an Irish film writer-director who has achieved extraordinary commercial and critical success from a relatively small number of films. His first film, *My Left Foot* (89), won Oscars for actors Daniel Day Lewis and Brenda Fricker. His films *The Field* (90) and *In the Name of the Father* (93) earned Best Actor Academy Award nominations for Richard Harris and Daniel Day Lewis respectively. His best-known films have been recognisably Irish in subject matter, while attempting to attract a wider audience in their structure and story-telling style. His other films include *The Boxer* (97), *In America* (03), *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* (05) and *Brothers* (10). *The Secret Scripture* (16) is his latest film.



Based on Sebastian Barry's acclaimed 2008 novel, the latest film from Academy Award-nominated director Jim Sheridan draws us into a woman's mysterious story, long hidden by time and trauma. Starring Rooney Mara (also at this year's Festival in *Lion* and *Una*), Oscar winner Vanessa Redgrave, Jack Reynor, and Eric Bana, *The Secret Scripture* is a powerful story of love, loss, and belated redemption.

Roseanne McNulty (Redgrave) must vacate the soon-to-be demolished mental institution in Roscommon, Ireland that she's called home for over 50 years. The hospital's psychiatrist, Dr. William Grene (Bana), is called in to assess her condition. He finds himself intrigued by Roseanne's seemingly inscrutable rituals and tics, and her fierce attachment to her Bible, which she has over the decades transformed into a palimpsest of scripture, drawings, and cryptic diary entries. As Grene delves deeper into Roseanne's past, we see her as a young woman (Mara), whose charisma proves seductive. We learn that she moved to Sligo to work in her aunt's café, fell in love with a dashing fighter pilot (Reynor), and that a local priest (Theo James) fell tragically in love with her.

The interplay between Redgrave and Mara's performances of the same character decades apart makes for fascinating viewing: Redgrave's Roseanne is a woman nearly broken by injustice and bereavement, while Mara's is young and passionate, unaware of any misfortune to come.

Shifting elegantly between past and present, *The Secret Scripture* chronicles Roseanne's distressing life while immersing us in the history of Ireland's political tensions and the struggles women have confronted there. – *Toronto International Film Festival 2016*

# Tanna

Australia, Vanuatu 2015

104 mins DCP Colour

**Directors:** Bentley Dean, Martin Butler

**Producers:** Martin Butler, Bentley Dean, Carolyn Johnson

**Script:** Martin Butler, John Collee, Bentley Dean in collaboration with the people of Yakel

**Cinematography:** Bentley Dean

**Editing:** Tania Michel Nehme

**Sound:** Emma Bortignon

**Music:** Antony Partos

**Cast:** Mungau Dain, Marie Wawa, Marceline Rofit, Chief Charlie Kahla, Albi Nangia, Lingai Kowia



High among the virtues of film is its ability to transport us. Documentarians Bentley Dean and Martin Butler are artist-adventurers of the best kind, fascinated and engaged with the world around them. In their first fiction feature, they set us down on the small South Pacific island that gives the film its title. It's a wondrous place and host to tribes of people who have rejected what we call modernity for the traditional ways of their heritage. In this environment, captured in rich detail, the film's story unfolds.

It's a great story too, one of love and violent conflict and ancient custom, all working to mark the destinies of its tribal characters. Those include a feisty adolescent girl, two opposed chiefs, an old shaman and young lovers who are tested by the bounds of tradition and obligation. Best of all, this tale, inspired by true events, was formed in collaboration between the directors, co-writer John Collee and the people of the village of Yakel. This is ethnographic cinema of a high calibre, beautiful to behold and great entertainment to boot. – *Vancouver International Film Festival 2016*

"[A] soulful olktale encompassing both tragedy and hope. Told with captivating simplicity and yet richly cinematic, it combines ethnographic and spiritual elements in a haunting love story with classic undertones, affording a glimpse into a little-known culture." – *Hollywood Reporter*

**Bentley Dean and Martin Butler** are award-winning documentary directors / producers whose first narrative feature is *Tanna*. Their documentary *First Footprints* (13) explored Australia's 50,000-year Aboriginal history. They have been making *Tanna* (15) since then.