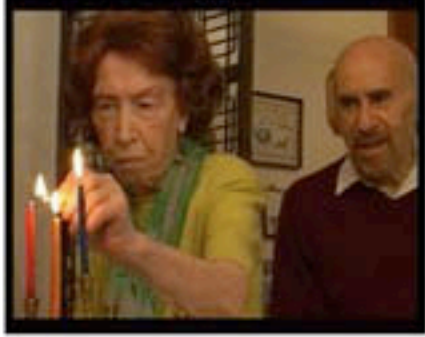


Film festival celebrates a decade of Jewish movies

By Christi Hang

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A still from the documentary "Yiddish Theater: A Love Story," which is one of the films that will be shown by special guest Ravit Markus when she is in Fairbanks.

Jewish Film Festival."

The 11 films were chosen by a six-member committee and came from a wide variety of sources including word-of-mouth, members traveling to well-known Jewish film festivals and reviews.

The 11 that made the cut were whittled down from about 40 to 50 films, committee member Leonard Kamerling said.

"This a great opportunity to bring films here that are unique and that people probably would never get to see otherwise," he said.

Kamerling has been a committee member since the festival first started a decade ago. He said the purpose was to bring strong world cinema to Fairbanks.

"It's for the Jewish community to make a singular contribution to the community," Kamerling said. "It also stresses human and Jewish values and universal struggle."

As part of the festival's mission, the committee purchases several films each year and donates them to the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Rasmusen Library so that they can be enjoyed by even more people over the years. Kamerling said currently the collection has more than 60 films.

To celebrate the festival's 10th anniversary Kamerling said Markus was invited to discuss her works. Three of her films, "Company Jasmine," "Out For Love ... Be Back Shortly" and "Yiddish," will be shown during the two-week festival.

Kamerling said having a filmmaker there to discuss her work provides more context and enriches the experience.

"Independent filmmakers have a burning desire to tell a story and get that story out," he said.

Markus is the president of New Love Films, a film production and distribution company. She founded the company with famed Israeli director Dan Katzir, who is the director of "Yiddish" and "Out for Love."

Markus said she has always loved the medium of film and graduated from the first high school film program in Israel.

"From the age of 15, I knew movies were going to be part of my life," she said.

After landing in Los Angeles, Markus said she connected with Katzir, an award-winning director who has been nominated for an Israeli Academy Award. He told her he was working on "Yiddish." She was hesitant at first because she didn't speak Yiddish and didn't have an interest in making documentaries, but the project grew on her.

"I absolutely fell in love with the heroine of the film," Markus said. "Her story needed to be told."

"Yiddish," like the other two films Markus has in the festival, has a bigger theme. "Jasmine" tells the story of the first women in Israeli military service who engage in combat.

And while it is personal, the film also confronts the big change in the army and Israeli society. The second film is "Out for Love," which intertwines Katzir's romantic relationship with the time of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination.

"The film is about the wings of history on one's life," Markus said.

The similar purpose of the festival and Markus' work is to appeal a wider audience, not just Jewish or world cinema fans.

"We want to make movies that are very moving and that have a love for humanity," Markus said.

Featured films:

- "The Giraffe," 5:30 p.m. Saturday, The Blue Loon. Repeats 8 p.m., March 1, The Blue Loon
- "Yiddish Theater: A Love Story," with a discussion with producer Ravit Markus, 8 p.m. Saturday, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "Company Jasmine," with a discussion with producer Ravit Markus, 7 p.m. Sunday, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "Out for Love ... Be Back Shortly" with a discussion with producer Ravit Markus, 8 p.m. Sunday, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "Dark Night," 7:30 p.m., March 1, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "Joseph and Maria," 8:30 p.m., March 1, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "The Last Jews of Libya," 7 p.m., March 2, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "Like A Fish Out of Water," 8 p.m., March 2, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "Rape of Europa," 7 p.m., March 5, Wood Center Ballroom, UAF. Repeats 7 p.m. March 13, Pioneer Park Civic Center
- "Dear Mr. Waldman," 7:30 p.m., March 8, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company
- "The Tribe: An Unorthodox History of the Jewish People and Barbie," 8:30 p.m., March 8, Alaska Coffee Roasting Company

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