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‘The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared’

A funny, lighthearted International Film Showcase film

By Sophie Braccini

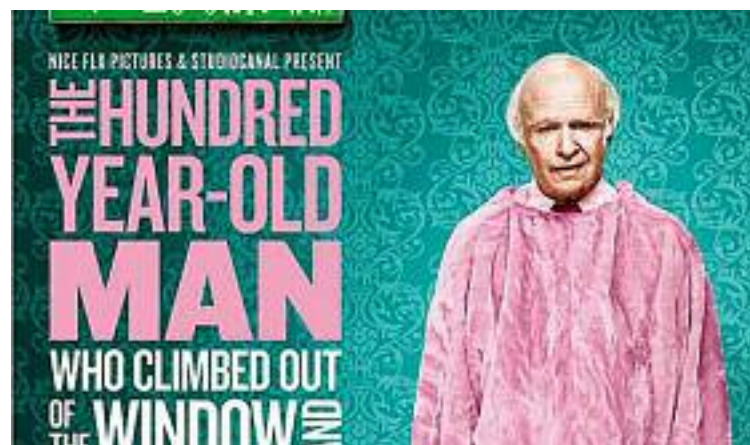


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The Orinda International Film Showcase has featured some great films recently, including “Timbuktu,” “The Miracle of Bern” and the exceptional “Tangerines.” This month’s Swedish film, “The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared,” may not be as profound, but it is light and fun, with an international historic backdrop many will enjoy.

The film opens in a decent retirement home in Sweden where a quite sane but bored old man, Allan Karlsson, is waiting for his 100th birthday celebration to begin. For whatever reason – maybe the smell of spring coming through the window or the sound of kids playing in a nearby playground – our old loner clumsily climbs out the window and disappears into the scenery.

The movie, based on the 2009 novel by Jonas Jonasson, is directed by Felix Herngren and follows the adventures of this Swedish Forrest Gump accompanied by the quirky characters that congregate around him as his journey spins out of control.

Along the way, flashbacks take the audience to earlier periods of Karlsson’s life. In spite of humble and challenging beginnings, the man who loves explosives and hard alcohol has an amazing life, meeting many of the major political figures of the 20th century. He interacts with Francisco Franco, Harry Truman, Joseph Stalin, Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachov and Mao Tse Dong, and is sometimes the involuntary catalyst to major historic events. He is involved in the development of the

atom bomb and international espionage, always with a mix of candor and a lack of scruples that leads to zany and ironical situations.

The old man’s journey can be viewed as a parable of the 20th century, with its craziness, its materialist pursuit and moral shortcomings, ending on an optimist note, just by chance.

During his contemporary adventure, he meets and befriends a group of crazy and cheeky characters. One is an elephant that helps him fight a gang of criminals who are chasing him and avoid a police force that manages to track him more by chance than wit.

History buffs should set aside their desire for pointed accuracy and simply enjoy the caricatures of world leaders presented in the movie. Of course all of Karlsson’s adventures, past or present, are highly improbable. But the rhythm of the movie draws the spectator into a funny spiral filled with pure delight.

Robert Gustafsson plays the role of Allan Karlsson, both as a young man and as the elderly version of himself. That may be the only off-key note of this film as the makeup of the older man is too pasty and not very convincing. Mia Skäringer plays Gunnilla, the only notable feminine character that adds a charming sweetness to the film.

“The 100-Year-Old Man” will open for one week starting May 15 at the Orinda Theatre. For more information, visit lamorindatheatre.com/index_orinda.asp or http://internationalshowcase.org.

San Francisco Opera Orchestra Musicians Star in ‘Whirlwind’

... continued from page B4

Whirlwind features several prominent San Francisco Opera Orchestra members, including Flutist and Piccoloist Stephanie McNab, Principal Oboe Mingjia Liu, and Principal Horn, Rivard. Supporting players include Freund-Striplen, Jennifer Culp, cello (formerly of the Kronos Quartet), Mark Wallace, bass, and Yana Reznik, piano. These musicians are part of the core ensemble and offer a strong musical connection.

“One of the signature aspects of a Gold Coast is the vibrant collaboration between the musicians. By carefully matching performers and programs this musical chemistry is always apparent. ‘Whirlwind’ adds another layer of connectivity by showcasing musicians from SF Opera orchestra who play together regularly and under the many challenging cir-

cumstances they encounter throughout the opera season,” said Freund-Striplen. “Some of the musicians have been playing together for over 25 years, and others for only a few. What is always thrilling for the audience is to see and hear great performers coming together in a slightly new configuration – great things always happen on stage, after all it is *live* music and being a part of this electric experience is what keeps people coming back.”

The Gold Coast Chamber Players are known for their engaging and vibrant performances. Seating is limited, so reserve early to avoid disappointment. Ticket price includes complimentary champagne, the pre-concert talk and a reception with the musicians following the performance. Tickets are available at www.gcplayers.org and by phone at (925) 283-3728. *J. Wake*



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