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**'A Brilliant Young Mind'**

By Sophie Braccini

**A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND**

Photo provided

one able to connect with him and make him laugh, was killed in a car accident when he was little. Nathan's mother, longing to share emotions with her son, has more difficulty. Sally Hawkins who plays the mother gives a very subtle interpretation of her role. She is vulnerable, well intended and fragile. The depiction of her struggle to live a full life as a woman and a mother is shown with compassion, but could have been more developed.

Butterfield as Nathan is as socially challenged as expected, but with a charm and candor that connects with the audience. His difficulties to make sense of love, his fears and blockings are more moving than awkward, and one ends up feeling empathy for the young man.

Some scenes in the movie are funny; others are quite dramatic. As Nathan joins the group of young mathematicians in Taipei, he meets another boy on the spectrum. Nathan is never abused or taunted, while the other boy is. His oddities are not as charming somehow. What ensues makes the spectator wonder what society accepts and supports when it comes to eccentricity. Is one accepted because he is cuter, quieter, or more submissive to the norm? Audience members will find the end both moving and heart-warming.

"A Brilliant Young Mind" is part of the Orinda International Film Showcase and will run for one week beginning Jan. 29 at the Orinda Theatre. Beginning its sixth year, the showcase has been bringing

Understanding the inner workings of a teenage mind on the autistic spectrum is not easy, but in "A Brilliant Young Mind," British director Morgan Matthews manages to lift a corner of the veil, exposing the world of a young math genius on the spectrum, and allowing the audience to feel that they can reach out to this young man and accompany him on his journey. While the film, at times, tries a little too hard to manipulate the audience's emotions, this small weakness is amply compensated by the sensitive and remarkable performances of all of the actors involved.

Nathan (Asa Butterfield) is a teenage boy who was diagnosed with autism at a young age. Lacking the ability to understand emotions, he instead has an exceptional gift for mathematics. Nathan finds the security he needs in numbers and predictable sequences, and he says that there is nothing he likes more than mathematics. The young boy works with a private professor and is selected to go to Taipei, Taiwan, to train with other youth who want to be selected for the International Mathematical Olympiad. There he meets a Chinese girl mathematician, Zhang Mei, and is faced with a different type of challenge.

Throughout the movie, Nathan struggles with expressions of love. His father, who was the only

premieres of foreign films selected by Efi Lubliner and Jo Alice Canterbury to Orinda. "A Brilliant Young Mind" will be a Bay Area premiere.

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