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Actor, Director Jerzy Stuhr Opens Polish Film Festival



FRIDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2008 02:07 ADMINISTRATOR

Five of the Famed Thespian's Films to Be Screened Nov. 15 to 19



The Rochester N.Y. Polish Film Festival is hitting the big time. This year, the five-day festival will not only showcase some of Poland's best cinematic treasures as it has for the past dozen years, it also will bring to town one of Poland's most acclaimed actors, screenplay writers, and directors to headline the event. Jerzy Stuhr will introduce and discuss five films in which he played a leading role or that he directed.

"Jerzy Stuhr is Poland's Dustin Hoffman and Stephen Spielberg rolled into one," said Randall Stone, director of the University of Rochester's Skalny Center for Polish and Central European Studies, which is sponsoring the film festival. "Like Dustin Hoffman, Stuhr is an outstanding character actor, able to bring to life all kinds of roles, from comic to tragic; like Stephen Spielberg, his films are intensely entertaining but deeply serious."

Stuhr, who has won a host of Polish and international film awards, including the 2005 Life Achievement Award at the International Film Festival in Venice, is best known internationally for his role as the thick-witted hairdresser Jurek in

Kieślowski's *Three Colors: White*. In Poland, fans love his character Max from the 1985 cult comedy *Seksmisja*, while youngsters know him through the voice of Donkey in the Polish version of *Shrek*.

On Nov. 15, the opening day of the festival, Stuhr will participate in a panel discussion at the Little Theatre with three University professors: George Grella, associate professor of English and a film critic for *City Newspaper*, Ewa Hauser, adjunct associate professor of political science, and Jennifer Creech, assistant professor of modern languages and cultures.

Stuhr will meet with audiences after the Nov. 15, 16, and 17 screenings, and will hold a book signing on Nov. 17 at 9 p.m. On Monday, Nov. 17, Stuhr will visit the University campus. The event concludes on Nov. 19. In a sign of the festival's growing importance, the Skalny Center has attracted for the first time financial backing from the Polish Filmmakers Association.

Along with a strong Polish community, Rochester has a widely recognized reputation in film through the Eastman Kodak Co. and the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, explained Stone. That foundation, coupled with the growing popularity of the Rochester High Falls International Film Festival, makes the city an attractive home for a regional Polish film festival.

The films will be screened at the Little Theatre, 240 East Ave. and all will be shown with English subtitles. The ticket price is \$8.00 for the evening shows and \$6.00 for the matinee. Students and seniors pay \$5.00. Little Theatre Film Society members receive their membership discount. For details, visit <http://www.rochester.edu/college/psc/CPCES/PFF.htm> or contact the Skalny Center at (585)

275-9898.

A schedule of the films follows:

Nov. 15, 3 p.m. and Nov. 16, 7:30 p.m.

Camera Buff (Amator), 1979, Director: Krzysztof Kieślowski

In this political satire, Jerzy Stuhr plays Filip, a factory worker who, after the birth of his first child, buys an 8mm movie camera to record his daughter's first few years on film. Before long, Filip is obsessed with his new hobby, and he shoots footage of nearly everything he encounters. His zeal to record all that he sees soon runs him afoul of government officials who guard secrets they don't want revealed and of his wife who becomes fed up with his need to live life from behind the camera. Stuhr's Filip is a remarkable creation—a man who is at once inspiring, loving, and pathetic.

Stuhr will be available to speak with the audience after the *Camera Buff* screenings.

Nov. 15, 7:30 p.m. and Nov. 16, 3 p.m.

Twists of Fate (Korowód), 2007, Director: Jerzy Stuhr

This gripping film spans the moral attitudes of two generations and their complex entanglements. A former secret police officer under Polish Socialism faces the consequences for his past actions. Meanwhile, Bartek, a student who makes a career from lying and cheating, finds a briefcase and a coat containing a mobile phone on a train. When the phone begins to ring, Bartek doesn't hesitate to answer it, setting off a shocking series of events that changes the characters' lives forever.

A panel discussion with Jerzy Stuhr and local film experts will follow the Nov. 15 screening of *Twists of Fate*. Stuhr will also be available to speak to the audience after the Nov. 16 *Twists of Fate* screening.

Nov. 17, 7 p.m.

List of Lovers (Spis cudzołoznic), 1995, Director: Jerzy Stuhr

Jerzy Stuhr serves as the writer-director-star of this de lightful comedy, playing a shy Kraków academic given the job of showing a visiting Swedish professor around town. During their time together, Stuhr's woman-hungry companion pushes his tour guide to locate some female companionship. When Stuhr calls up an old flame, some unusual sparks fly.

A book signing with Jerzy Stuhr will follow the Nov. 17 screening of *List of Lovers*.



The Big Animal (Duże Zwierzę), 2000, Director: Jerzy Stuhr

Nov. 18, 7 p.m.

The Big Animal (Duże Zwierzę), 2000, Director: Jerzy Stuhr

Scripted by the late Krzysztof Kieślowski and shot in shimmering black-and-white by Paweł Edelman (the Oscar-nominated cinematographer for Roman Polański's *The Pianist*), *The Big Animal* is an inspiring film celebrating the most human of themes: love, tolerance, and sacrifice. The film's director Jerzy Stuhr stars as Zygmun Sawicki, an ordinary bank clerk in a small Polish town, who awakens one

morning to discover a camel outside his kitchen window. As he and his wife grow increasingly fond of their remarkable pet, the animal evokes their neighbors' jealousy and greed. *The Big Animal* is a charming fairy tale for grownups—a wise and cautionary parable about tolerance that is at once funny, compassionate and heartwarming.

Nov. 19, 7 p.m.

Three Colors – White (Trzy Kolory – Biały), 1994, Director: Krzysztof Kieslowski

This is the second of the *Three Colors* trilogy *Red*, *White*, and *Blue*; the colors symbolizing liberty, equality, and fraternity. *White*, therefore, was written around the destructive dynamics of a relationship based upon great inequality. Karol, a Polish hairdresser living in Paris, is divorced by his beautiful wife for his inability to consummate the marriage. Karol loses all of his earthly possessions and is literally driven out of France. Forced to begin anew, he returns to Poland and plans a clever scheme of revenge against her.

About the University of Rochester

The University of Rochester (www.rochester.edu) is one of the nation's leading private universities. Located in Rochester, N.Y., the University gives students exceptional opportunities for interdisciplinary study and close collaboration with faculty through its unique cluster-based curriculum. Its College of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering is complemented by the Eastman School of Music, Simon School of Business, Warner School of Education, Laboratory for Laser Energetics, School of Medicine and Dentistry, School of Nursing, and the Memorial Art Gallery.

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