



SAN FRANCISCO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL 38

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sfjff.org

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BLESS MY HOMELAND FOREVER: AUSTRIA'S SORDID PAST AT THE 38TH SAN FRANCISCO JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

SAN FRANCISCO, June 19, 2018 - The 38th San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, presented annually by the Jewish Film Institute, will be presenting a special sidebar on Austria, screening three films that challenge the false narrative that casts Austria as the original "victim" of Hitler's imperialist expansion, despite the country's documented complicity with the Nazi war machine. These films will screen during the Festival, which returns to the Bay Area July 19th to August 5th.

"Taking its cue from the lyrics of the famous 'Edelweiss' from *The Sound of Music*, a film long associated with Austria in popular culture, this sidebar offers a compelling and nuanced examination of the country's self-image and the rise of populist demagoguery from the silent-film era of the 1920s through the post-WWII reckoning and into the late 20th century," said JFI Program Director Jay Rosenblatt.

The sidebar, *Bless My Homeland Forever: Austria's Sordid Past*, will present a trilogy of films that include:

The international premiere of **THE CITY WITHOUT JEWS**, a newly restored 1924 silent film replete with dystopian expressionism, a newly commissioned score, and presented with the San Francisco Silent Film Festival. The film will screen Sunday, July 22nd at 7:00PM at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco. Set in the mythical republic of Utopia, the economy is stagnant, the currency has become worthless, and with protests by the hordes of unemployed workers are growing by the day, the ruling party moves to expel all Jews from Utopia. Based on the novel of the same name by Hugo Bettauer, caused such a furor that Bettauer was assassinated by a fascist. Looking ahead ten years to what happened in Europe, this tongue-in-cheek "expulsion" foresaw the all-too real "extermination" of Jews. Viewers now have the opportunity to see this film and realize that thinking a happy ending could result from such a vile proposal is truly laughable. An original live score commissioned by SFJFF and composed by local musician Sascha Jacobsen will be performed by Jacobsen and the Musical Art Quintet during this one-time only screening.

The North American Premiere of **MURDER-ANATOMY OF A TRIAL**, a retelling of the dramatic courtroom records and political machinations of the 1963 ten-day trial of SS officer Franz

Murer, known as the “Butcher from Vilnius”, who was instrumental in decimating the vibrant Jewish community that once existed in Vilnius but virtually absolved from his crimes. The film will screen Monday, July 23rd at 8:25PM at the Castro Theatre in San Francisco, Wednesday, July 25th at 12:15PM at the CinéArts Theatre in Palo Alto, and Friday August 3rd at 8:10PM at the Piedmont Theatre in Oakland.

SFJFF’s Centerpiece Documentary **THE WALDHEIM WALTZ**, examines former U.N. Secretary General Kurt Waldheim’s 1986 election to the Austrian presidency, despite the revelations of his Nazi past. In response to the rise of populism in the 21st century, director Ruth Beckermann revisited footage that had been shot during the Waldheim era to craft this essential film. Director Ruth Beckermann will be in attendance for the first two screenings of the film Tuesday, July 24th at 6:10PM at the Castro Theater in San Francisco, and Wednesday, July 25th at 6:00PM at the CinéArts Theatre in Palo Alto. The Festival will host additional screenings Monday, July 30th at 6:00PM at the Albany Twin Theatre in Albany and Saturday, August 4th at 4:05PM at the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center in San Rafael.

Entering its 38th year, the Festival is expecting an audience of over 40,000 moviegoers at the following theaters; the Castro Theatre in San Francisco, the Albany Twin Theatre in Albany, the Piedmont Theatre in Oakland, the CinéArts Theatre in Palo Alto, and the Christopher B. Smith Rafael Film Center in San Rafael.

For general and ticket information, visit sfjff.org or email jewishfilm@sfjff.org. To contact the SFJFF Box Office directly, please email boxoffice@sfjff.org or call 415.621.0523.

For Festival logos, photos and press materials, visit jfi.org/press or sfjff.org/press. To request interviews or screeners, contact Larsen Associates.

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About the Jewish Film Institute

The Jewish Film Institute (JFI) is the premier curatorial voice for Jewish film and media and a leading arts and culture organization in the Bay Area. Presenter of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, JFI catalyzes and inspires communities in San Francisco and around the world to expand their understanding of Jewish life and culture through film, media, and dialogue. Year round, the Jewish Film Institute promotes awareness and appreciation of the diversity of the Jewish people through multiple mediums – including original online programming that reaches a global audience of over 2 million views. All of these services, along with artists’ support and educational initiatives, give audiences around the world even greater access to Jewish culture and the visionaries who shape it.

About the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival

The San Francisco Jewish Film Festival (SFJFF), presented by the Jewish Film Institute, is the largest and longest-running festival of its kind and a leader in the curation and presentation of new film and media exploring the complexities of Jewish life around the world. Presenting more than 65 films and 135 individual screenings, performances and events in five Bay Area cities (San Francisco, Palo Alto, San Rafael, Oakland, Albany), SFJFF attracts more than 40,000 filmgoers and industry professionals to its 18-day program.

San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 38 Sponsors

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