

-PROGRAM-

About the event "A Week of French Language Cinema"

March 18th - 23rd

For the thirteenth year, we work in collaboration with the Consulates of France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, the Quebec Government Office in Los Angeles, and Le Lycée Français de Los Angeles to present A Week of French Language Cinema, with nightly screenings of critically acclaimed French language films, from Friday, March 18 through Wednesday, March 23, 2022.

This collection of feature films celebrates the richness and diversity of the global French-speaking population, and relishes in the variety of stories told in one language across all five continents. A Week of French Language Cinema is celebrated every year in conjunction with International Organization of La Francophonie (OIF)'s annual celebration of French language and Francophone cultures on March 20th.

This evening Belgium is honored with the film *Playground* and, we are thankful to the **Ambassador, Consul General of Belgium in Los Angeles, Mr. Gunther Sleuwagen** his opening remarks.

On-site exhibition of paintings and works on paper by **Renée Caouette**, a local artist of French descent.

Find out more about our **next screenings for this week**, our **sponsors**, and our **upcoming events** at the end of the program.

About tonight's film "PLAYGROUND" (*Un Monde*)

Belgium / 2021 / 1h12min

"Two children, Abel and his little sister Nora, are starting a new school. Soon, Abel falls prey to a small gang of children who bully him day after day. To his sister who first tried to alert the adults, Abel urged her to not say a word, and she obeyed at first. When she finally decides to speak out, she too finds herself being bullied by the school bullies."

Playground is a portrait of schoolyard bullying which, following the IndieWIRE, "shows recess for the war zone it really is". Indeed, this film directed by Laura Wandel is a lesson on the



genesis and effects of abuse - how one bullied child becomes the bully, in a never-ending cycle of harm - captured with an alarming sense of authenticity, to the point where her film could almost be confused for a documentary.

Tonight, you will see that makes the strength of the film is that it is a real immersion in a child's point of view, as the camera never points down at Nora, the 7-year-old main character played by Maya Vanderbeque, but is positioned at her eye level, as if it were another child. Thus, it is a forced return to childhood, in the narrow world of Nora, sometimes so incomprehensible that it becomes absurd in its harshness, and where girls and boys are turned into students, playmates, friends, adversaries, future citizens and dutiful workers. But her experience is also telling a story that in its piercing, sensitive detail and life-shaping arc is as familiar as yours and mine. The director, Laura Wandel, is interested in the lifecycle of bullying, and the violence we're taught to use as a defense mechanism at a young age. Wandel's previous shorts *O Negatif* (2011) which also observes the ways that cruelty begets violence, here between a mother and her distant daughter. In "Playground," Wandel employs a verité style, inherited largely from fellow Belgians Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, whom she cites as an influence, getting as close as possible to Nora's perspective as we said before. This effect, captured by director of photography Frédéric Noirhomme is known as the "Peanuts" effect, a name referring to Charlie Brown's comic strip, when adults' height renders them out of frame, and is used in this feature film to emphasize grown-ups' inability to understand the complexities of the playground, and their impotence when it comes to stopping bullying and violence, most of which they witness too late. In 2022, for his work, Frédéric Noirhomme was nominated for the Best Photography Award for the Magritte Awards, a highly prestigious Belgian ceremony that reward to recognize cinematic achievement in the film industry, and he obtained the Prize for the Best Image at the Dublin Film Critics' Circle. It wasn't his first nomination for the Magritte Awards, because he already received this honor in 2016 for Antoine Cuypers' movie *Prejudice*, starring Nathalie Baye. In addition, still for the 11th Magritte ceremony that took place in 2022, Laura's Wandel was not only nominated but she received the prize for Best First Film. It is not surprising, when see the amazing acting performance eleven-year-old actress Maya Vanderbeque is giving, since it is her first role which lead her to be nominated for the Magritte Award for most promising actress. In general, Wandel's movie knew a huge success as well as at this ceremony, as it was nominated in a total of seven categories, as in the Cannes Festival where the film obtained the the FIPRESCI Critics Award in Un Certain regard Category.

Enjoy the show!

Awards

FIPRESCI Prize of Cannes Festival's section « Un certain regard »

Sarajevo Film Festival 2021: section Kinoscope, Special Award for promoting gender equality: Special Jury Mention.

Guanajuato International Film Festival (GIFF) 2021: Best International Film

Haifa International Film Festival 2021: Golden Anchor of the Best First Film

BFI London Film Festival 2021: Sutherland Award

Pingyao International Film Festival: People's Choice Award - Best Film

Festival cine por mujeres, Madrid: Best Interational Film



Maya Vanderbeque (Nora) and Gunter Duret (Abel)



Laura Wandel,
The Director -



Frédéric Noirhomme,
The photography director -

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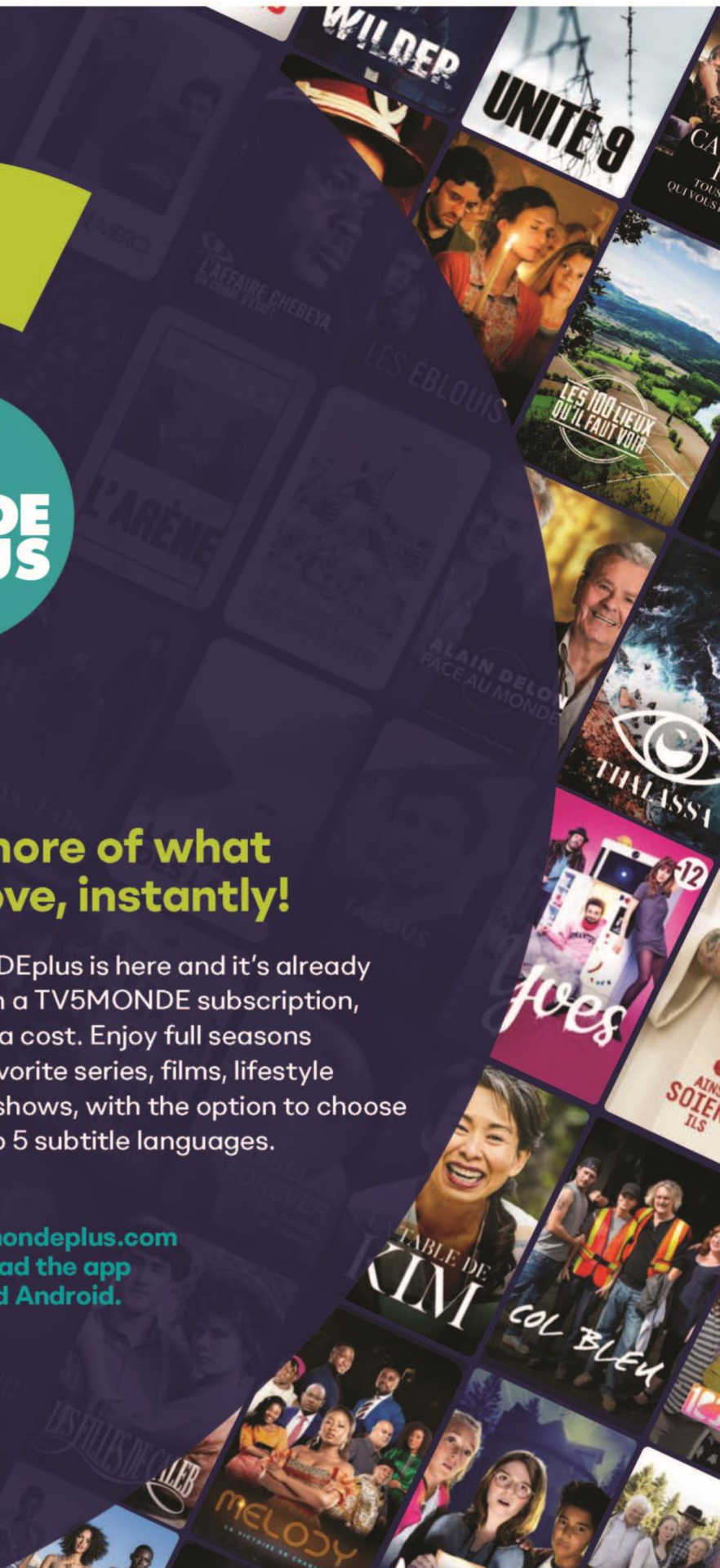
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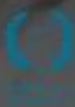
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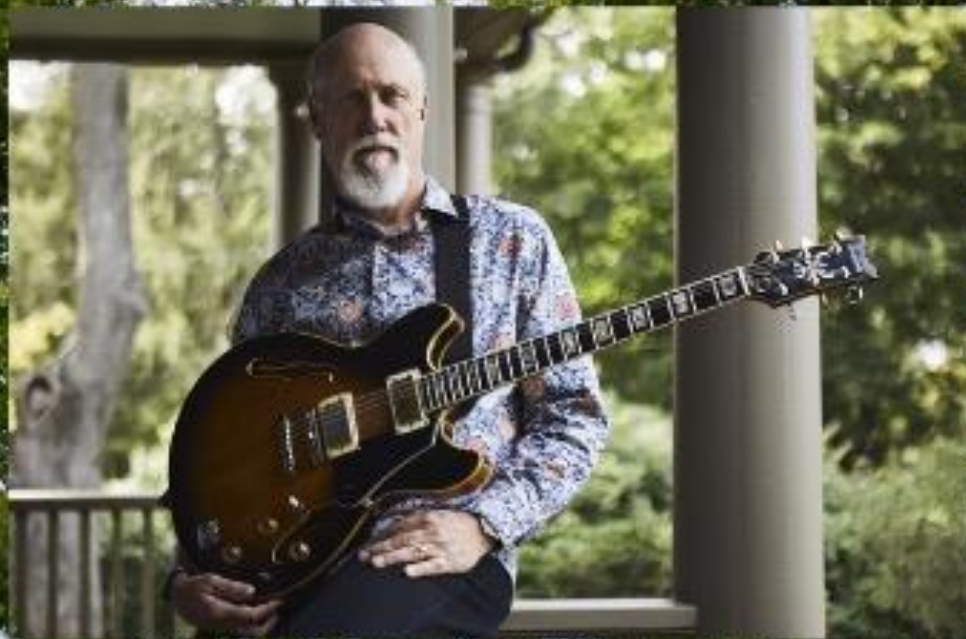


A still from the film Elsewhere. Directed and Choreographed by Mike Tyus & Madison Olandt, 2021.

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