International Film Series

Spring 2014

Thursday evenings, 7:30 p.m., in the
Dorothy and Lillian Gish Film Theater, BGSU

February 6
Nosferatu (Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens, 1922)
Germany, 84 minutes
Director: F.W. Murnau

An unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker’s Dracula, Nosferatu is the quintessential silent vampire film, crafted by German director F. W. Murnau. Rather than depicting Dracula as a shape-shifting monster or debonair gentleman, Murnau’s Graf Orlok is a nightmarish, spidery creature of bulbous head and taloned claws -- perhaps the most genuinely disturbing incarnation of vampirism yet envisioned. Nosferatu was an atypical expressionist film in that much of it was shot on location. While directors such as Lang and Lubitsch built vast forests and entire towns within the studio, Nosferatu’s landscapes, villages and castle were actual locations in the Carpathian Mountains. Murnau was thus able to infuse the story with the subtle tones of nature: both pure and fresh as well as twisted and sinister.

February 13
Canada, 75 minutes
Directors: Ben Addelman and Samir Mallal

Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, known in Lagos as Da Governor, is one of the most influential men in Nollywood, a term coined in the early 1990s for the world’s fastest-growing national cinema, surpassed only by its American and Indian counterparts. This critically acclaimed documentary is peppered with outrageously juicy movie clips and buoyed by a rousing score that fuses Afropop and traditional sounds. Nollywood Babylon celebrates the distinctive power of Nigerian cinema as it marvels in the magic of movies.
February 20

*Young Törless* (Der junge Törless, 1966)
Germany, 87 minutes
Director: Volker Schlöndorff

An adaptation of Robert Musil’s novel (written in 1906) about schoolboy sadism in turn-of-the-century Germany, notable for its stylish period evocation. As young Törless arrives at school, a new senior pupil shepherded by a fond mamma, he looks a likely candidate for persecution. As it turns out, another boy—a Jew, as it happens—becomes the victim after being caught stealing; and Törless watches with clinical interest as the hapless boy is driven to despair by fiendish tortures and humiliations. Only an accidental encounter during the holidays makes Törless realize that this is, after all, happening to a human being; he duly brings it to the attention of the school authorities as a matter of moral obligation, but remains chiefly concerned with justifying his position as an intellectual observer.

February 27

*Shall We Dance?* (Shall we dansu?, 1996)
Japan, 136 minutes
Director: Masayuki Suo

Before Richard Gere and Jennifer Lopez ever put on their dancing shoes, there was the original *Shall We Dance?*, the award-winning Japanese comedy that inspired the American remake. On the surface, Sugiyama Shohei seems to have it all: a supportive wife, a beautiful child, a nice house and a well-paying job. But for some reason, that certain “something” is missing from Sugiyama’s life. On his evening commute home, Sugiyama notices a beautiful woman staring out the window of a dance studio. One fateful night, he decides to get off the train and seek out this mystery woman, a decision that soon plunges him headlong into the competitive world of ballroom dancing.
March 20

*Suzhou River* (Suzhou he, 2000)
China, 83 minutes
Director: Ye Lou

Recalling both *Vertigo* (1958) and *Chungking Express* (1994), Chinese director Lou Ye spins this riveting tale of obsession and love. Marda, a motorcycle courier becomes obsessed with a beautiful young girl named Moudan, whom he falls in love with only to lose her in a botched kidnap attempt to gain money from her wealthy father. Moudan jumps into the murky waters of the Suzhou River and becomes lost forever. Marda is sentenced for three years, but upon his return he meets MeiMei, an identical look-alike whom he suspects is actually Moudan, or is she?

March 27

*Monsieur Lazhar* (2011)
Canada, 94 minutes
Director: Philippe Falardeau

In Montreal, an elementary school teacher dies abruptly. Having learned of the incident in the newspaper, Bachir Lazhar, a 55-year-old Algerian immigrant, goes to the school to offer his services as a substitute teacher. Quickly hired to replace the deceased, he finds himself in an establishment in crisis, while going through his own personal tragedy. The cultural gap between Bachir and his class is made immediately apparent when he gives them a dictation exercise that is beyond their reach. Little by little, Bachir learns to better know this group of shaken but endearing kids, among whom are Alice and Simon, two charismatic pupils particularly affected by their teacher’s death. While the class goes through the healing process, nobody in the school is aware of Bachir’s painful past; nor do they suspect that he is at risk of being deported at any moment.
April 3

*In the Fog (V tumane, 2012)*

Russia, 127 minutes
Director: Sergei Loznitsa

In 1942, the western frontier of the USSR is under German occupation, and local partisans are fighting a brutal resistance campaign. A train is derailed not far from the village, where Sushenya, a rail worker, lives with his family. Innocent Sushenya is arrested with a group of saboteurs, but the German officer makes a decision not to hang him with the others and sets him free. Rumours of Sushenya’s treason spread quickly, and partisans Burov and Voitik arrive from the forest to get revenge. As the partisans lead their victim through the forest, they are ambushed, and Sushenya finds himself one-to-one with his wounded enemy. Deep in an ancient forest, where there are neither friends nor enemies, and where the line between treason and heroism disappears, Sushenya is forced to make a moral choice under immoral circumstances.

April 10

*Pan’s Labyrinth (El laberinto del fauno, 2006)*

Mexico, 119 minutes
Director: Guillermo del Toro

This chilling fairytale is set against the backdrop of the fascist regime in 1944 Spain. A girl named Ofelia and her pregnant mother, Carmen, travel to a rural garrison under the iron command of Carmen’s second husband, Capt. Vidal. A walking embodiment of fascism, Vidal has pledged to exterminate the local Republican insurgency, unaware that the resistance has infiltrated the civilian personnel of the fort. Repelled by her brutal stepfather, Ofelia takes refuge in an eldritch but beautiful fairyland ruled by the nature god Pan. Sinister and charismatic by turns, the gigantic faun tells Ofelia that she’s a princess of the underworld, but gives her three terrifying magical tasks to complete before she can claim her throne. A poem feast for eye and heart alike, *Labyrinth* sets a new standard for the emotionally satisfying application of digital effects.