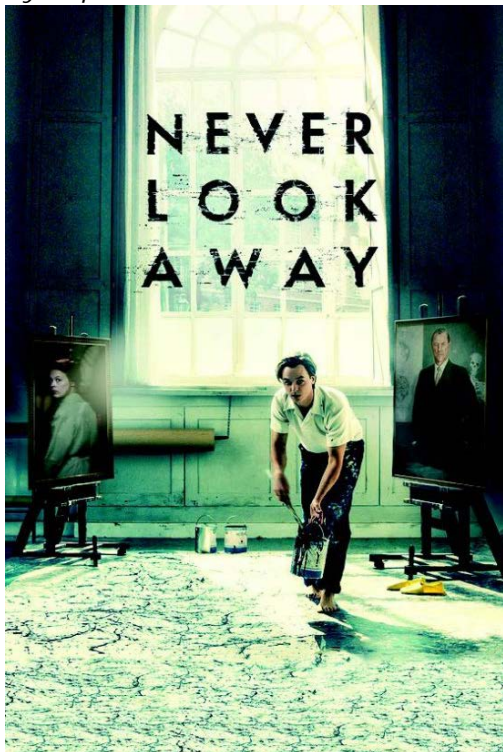


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## Acclaimed film 'Never Look Away' showing at Orinda and Rheem

By Sophie Braccini



The movie being shown as part of the International Film Showcase this month is certainly one of the best of the year - one to remember, one to savor, like a work of art. "Never Look Away" is a historical saga developing over a large part of the 20th century, rich in emotions, reflections, metaphors. The film can be cruel; it shows humanity at its worst and its best. It is a story of courage, of memories and is a tribute to the power of art that can transcend lies and reach the core of the human heart. It was inspired by actual stories.

A 2018 German film by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, who won the 2006 Oscar with "The Lives of Others," "Never Look Away" was nominated for a Golden Globe and for two Academy Awards in the Best Foreign Language Film and Best Cinematography categories. It is a drama where one of the central characters is an incarnation of rational evil that collides with a wonderfully powerful love story. Von Donnersmarck does not hesitate to humorously describe the world of art either, whether it is formulated by a communist party or led by the extravagance of the avant-garde.

The film starts in 1931 Germany and follows two families during 30 of the most turbulent years in Europe. Dresden, where the movie is first situated, is a rather prosperous German city that readily succumbs to the fascination of the Third Reich, is turned into rubble at the end of the Second World War, before being stifled by the communist ideology that reigned over East Germany.

Some prosper and skillfully ride the waves of the different dictatorships, while others get crushed.

At the center of this all, an artist tries to stay true to the sacred nature of life and find his inner truth. His struggle is painful at times, he stumbles, gives in, tries again - led by a powerful flame inside him that was lit by a young aunt who opened him to the world of art as a child. Swirling and colliding within him is the dark figure of evil that he must leave behind. The two feminine figures of the movie have the same name, Elisabeth - the fullness of God - symbolizing the redemption of man.

The film is three hours long, but that should not be a deterrent; at no time does the spectator feel bored or tired. That pace is needed to unravel the story and participate in the development of the characters.

The actors chosen by Henckel von Donnersmarck are beautiful and archetypal; they add to the beauty of the film, from a purely esthetic perspective, and all give excellent performances.

"Never Look Away" will show at the Orinda Theatre through May 16, followed by a one-week showing at the Rheem Theatre starting May 17.

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[back](#)

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