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CAIFF CALIFORNIA INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL

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CAIFF Program Director Efi Lubliner, right, with theater co-owner Derek Zemrak at the Orinda Theatre. Photo Jeff Heyman

CAIFF 2022 - Beloved film festival returns to Orinda Theatre

By Sophie Braccini

It has been three years since Lamorinda experienced its own live film festival. The 22nd California Independent Film Festival will include a lineup expertly designed to bring families, movie buffs, classic film lovers, and others back to the silver screen, and experience exciting and glamorous events, close to home.

Comedies, drama, family movies, sing-alongs, documentaries – 24 acclaimed movies from 20 different countries, four U.S. premieres, seven Bay Area premieres and seven Contra Costa County premieres

will be shown in the span of just one week, with no movie overlapping another. The breadth is vast and the program director guarantees that “there is no lemon” in the 2022 CAIFF.

Opening night is Nov. 10 at the historic Orinda Theatre. This year Derek Zemrak, co-owner of the theater, has given Efi Lubliner the program director’s job. Lubliner had been part of the Jewish Film Festival for many years, and he is the co-director of the International Film Showcase that brings celebrated foreign films monthly to Orinda. Lubliner breathes movies; for years he has been attending film festivals and negotiating with distributors, which has given him access to acclaimed movies, new and old.

The film chosen for opening night is India’s selection for the 2023 Oscars, “The Last Film Show.” The movie that has just been released in India tells the coming of age story of a young boy who is all consumed by his love of movies. It is the semi-biographical story of director Pan Nalin. The storyline is somewhat reminiscent of “Cinema Paradiso,” the 1988 Oscar winner from Italian director Giuseppe Tornatore. Nalin said in an interview to DNA India that “Cinema Paradiso” was one of the greatest films he ever saw, and even when he watched the film, he felt there were certain scenes the director might have stolen from his own life. ... continued on Page A14

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AUHSD forums address candidate funding, academic excellence



Screenshot taken during Oct. 14 forum

By Sora O’Doherty

Acalanes Union High School District school board candidates recently met for two election forums. The first candidates’ night was held on Oct. 14 at the Del Valle Education Center in Walnut Creek. It was co-sponsored by the League of Women’s Voters Diablo Valley, the Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs; and the Parents Clubs of Acalanes, Campolindo, and Miramonte; Las Lomas high schools. The event was moderated by Janet Hoy of the League of Women

Voters, who neither lives nor votes in the district. The second, sponsored by the Lafayette Homeowners Council, was held via Zoom on Oct. 20 and was moderated by LHC president Bill Bucher.

During the Oct. 14 forum three of the candidates – Rene Nowac, Mark Woolway and Gabe Ledeen – were asked about contributions from donors outside the district to their campaigns.

A search of public records at the Contra Costa County Elections office revealed that these three candidates filed a joint Form 460 that lists 12 donors to their joint campaign, 10 of whom are

out of district. The highest donation was for \$1,000 from Los Angeles attorney Daniel Brunt, followed by \$500 from San Francisco attorney Patrick Tostado. Other contributions came from Pennsylvania, Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia. Total donations collected by the three candidates were listed as \$4,781 and total expenses as \$4,882.15 at the date of filing, Sept. 24.

Nowac, while stating that she had no idea who donated to her campaign nevertheless claimed that rumors of a \$25,000 donation to the campaign was “compete misinformation.” Woolway said he had received donations from friends and family, in and out of the state. He acknowledged that the three candidates had received a donation of \$250 from Virginia Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. He also opined that it was easy for incumbents to say that they haven’t accepted donations because incumbents generally don’t need to. Ledeen said that the information was publicly available and that he didn’t understand the question, but in an email received by Lamorinda Weekly after the forum, Ledeen

elaborated on the question. “It can be very challenging to fundraise for a first-time candidate with low name recognition in such a low profile local race ... so friends and family are a key source of donations,” wrote Ledeen, who grew up in the D.C. area. “The accusers point to a small \$250 donation by Ginni Thomas as further evidence of involvement in a conspiracy to take over the local school board. To answer this directly: I did not solicit from her and have not spoken with her, but I assume she donated simply because she’s an old friend of my family and wanted to show support. That’s it.” The AUHSD board consists of five elected board members and one student member. Candidates Christopher Severson and Nancy Kendzierski are incumbents running for reelection, and are challenged by Ledeen, Nowac, and Woolway in addition to candidates Jennifer Chen who participated in both candidates’ forums, and Clayton Gardner, who did not participate. Three seats are to be filled in the November general election. ... continued on Page A8

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