



“Kincsem - Bet on Revenge” - an epic Hungarian film at the 23rd CAIFF

By Sophie Braccini

The 23rd California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF) opens at the Orinda Theatre Nov. 10 with India's selection for the 2023 Oscars, “Last Film Show.” Information about all the films and festival events can be found at <https://www.caiff.org/film-submissions>. “Kincsem - Bet on Revenge” is the Hungarian film that will close the festival on Nov. 17. The highly entertaining full feature will continue to play for a week at the Orinda Theatre after the lights of the festival have gone dark.

“Kincsem,” with its valiant cavalcades, ironclad characters, evil traitors and brave heroes, is a hymn to the indomitable character of a country, Hungary, to its men, women, and of course its horses. This movie is a must see if you have an interest in heroic stories and Conan style revenge.

There was once a real mare called Kincsem. She lived in Hungary from March 1874 to March 1887. During her four-season racing career she ran 54 races and

won them all. Kincsem holds the longest undefeated record of any racehorse. The movie that bears her name is otherwise purely fictional.

The story takes place in the late 19th century when Hungary was a part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, led by two different governments under the leadership of Austrian emperor Franz Joseph I. A few years prior, a Hungarian revolution had been crushed by Franz Joseph with the help of the Russian army. The resentment of the Hungarian people against the victors, and against the Hungarians that sided with the Emperor, is the backdrop of the story. There are two sides: the good ones who own Kincsem and are true Hungarians, and the traitors who would do anything to crush the brave horse that symbolizes the spirit and the revenge of an untamable country.

The beautifully filmed melodramatic period movie would not be complete without the harrowing love story that may develop between the hero and the daughter of the traitor. In the spirit of a

true cloak-and-dagger film, “Kincsem” includes many well choreographed action scenes. Spectators will be treated to duels as well as balls and love scenes.

Horse race enthusiasts will also appreciate the suspense created by the races. Several of these are filmed with mastery, and even if one thinks they know the ending, surprises are nicely introduced.

The feature film aimed at the general public is striking and directed with great efficiency by Gábor Herendi. Ernő Blaskovich is played by Ervin Nagy, while Andrea Petric portrays the bold and beautiful Klara von Oettingen.

The movie, released in Hungary in 2017, was the most successful Hungarian film of the last decade in that country. It has won several international awards including the Best International Film, the Best Cinematography and the Best Screenplay at the California Wine Country Film Festival.

Photo provided

Sweet Thursday Author Series features Author Barbara Quick

Submitted by Laurie Miles

Friends of the Lafayette Library presents author Barbara Quick at 7 p.m. Nov. 17 in the Don Tatzin Community Hall to discuss her book “What Disappears.” Winner of the Discover: Great New Writers Prize for “Northern Edge,” author of the 13-times translated international favorite “Vivaldi’s Virgins” (currently in development as a mini-series), and an

award-winning poet with a national platform, Quick has brought all her considerable artistry and skill together in her sumptuous fourth novel, a multi-generational saga peopled by the greatest dancers, artists, writers, designers, and trend-setters of the Belle Époque.

“What Disappears” begins in Tsarist Russia in the late 19th century and ends in Paris with the start of the First World War. One of two identical twins born to a Jewish

family in dire political and financial straits, Zaneta is spirited out of an orphanage by a Catholic family from France. The other twin, Sonya – raised to believe her sister died at birth – has her life and livelihood shattered by the horrific 1903 pogrom in Kishinev. The twins come face to face as 29-year-old identical strangers in the doorway of Anna Pavlova’s dressing-room when both find jobs in Paris with Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, one as a seamstress and the other as

a minor ballerina in the corps. The resulting complicated relationship brings to light the secrets they’ve kept even from themselves, affecting not only their lives but also the lives and fates of Sonya’s three daughters. A meticulously researched page-turner of displacement, family dynamics, and cultural loss, “What Disappears” resonates for contemporary readers with its fast-moving plot and deep dive into the ways in which girls and women define their iden-

tity and search for meaning.

This free event is sponsored by the Friends of the Lafayette Library although registration is required and seating is limited. Register at tinyurl.com/Sweet-Nov22 for either in-person or Zoom attendance. The DTCH doors will be open at 6:45 p.m. for coffee and sweets before the talk. Orinda Books will be on site selling copies of the book. Please wear a facial mask, if you are not fully vaccinated.

Surprising discovery unearthed amongst the dried weeds at Los Perales



Photos Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

Doing its part to participate in wildfire mitigation measures, the folks at Los Perales Ele-

mentary School in Moraga made an unusual and historic discovery.

During the process of performing fire abatement work

in the lower field of the campus, the crew discovered a bronze plaque affixed to a medium-sized boulder at the foot of a huge eucalyptus tree. Turning green around the edges thanks to its exposure to the elements, the plaque reads: “Bicentennial Heritage Tree, Eucalyptus Globulus, The Tree Was Planted Circa 1895, Dedicated April 11, 1976.”

Administrative Assistant Krystal White, who often takes a walk around the entire campus, took this reporter to the site of the tree and plaque. Neither could find any other clues or markings that might add details as to what organization or individual made the commemoration or how they knew when the tree was planted.

According to “Images of America: Moraga” by Susan K. Skilton, tall trees such as the eucalyptus were planted by farmers and ranchers to help break up occasional wind gusts. “The land where the tree still grows once belonged to rancher James Marion Daley, onetime superintendent of the Moraga School.”

As to who placed the commemorative plaque at the base of the tree, Skilton’s book explains, “The Moraga Town Council designated this eucalyptus, which dates from at least 1910, the Bicentennial

Heritage Tree. At the time of the dedication, the girth of the eucalyptus tree was estimated to be 28 feet and the height 65 feet.”

This reporter’s search through Moraga Historical Society’s Los Perales files did not uncover any additional particulars, and no one at the school has any further information about the 127-year-old tree whose, pardon the pun, roots come from Australia.

Giving a tree the designation of a “Heritage Tree” is not just a whim, according to the Phytosphere Research website. “Individual trees may be considered important community resources because of unique or noteworthy characteristics or values. Such trees have been described in ordinances as heritage, historic, landmark, legacy, special interest, significant, or specimen



trees. In some ordinances, trees are simply labeled protected trees.” There are several possible criteria used when giving a tree “Heritage” status: size, species, age, historic significance, ecological value, aesthetics, location, required plantings and retained trees, just to name a few.

An odd footnote to the saga is that the tree was planted on land now called Los Perales; English translation: “The Pear Trees”.

Special thanks to the Moraga Historical Society.

Lamorinda Weekly

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