

## ‘Hove’ Is Short In Length, Long On Symbolism

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By Anna Yukhananov

Special to the Mirror-Spectator

WATERTOWN, Mass. — The lecture hall of the Armenian Library and Museum (ALMA) was packed last Saturday afternoon — men in suede jackets and turtlenecks, women in bright patterns, a buzz of accents: Armenian, Middle Eastern, Bostonian. Members of the Armenian community had gathered for a screening of “Hove,” a short film about the aftereffects of the Armenian Genocide.

Alex Webb, the film’s writer and director, greeted the audience with “ench bess es,” or “how are you doing” in Armenian. “That’s about all I know,” Webb said. “I’m ABC — Armenian by Choice.”

Webb is also Armenian by marriage: his wife, Shirleyann Kaladjian, stars in the film alongside Oscar-winning actress Olympia Dukakis.

It was Webb’s immersion in the Armenian community that inspired him to write “Hove,” which means “The Wind.”

“Armenian history has somehow become my history as well,” Webb said. “And it’s pretty astounding to me that the history is still so little known, and must be constantly defended.”

The 10-minute film tells the story of two Armenian women, Nina and Zara, each affected in her own way by the legacy of the Armenian Genocide.

Webb said he wanted to eschew an “intellectual” approach to history, drawing instead on viewers’ sympathies for the main characters.

“There’s a tendency to put on your emotional armor and not really take it in,” Webb said about difficult topics like genocide. “The film tries to hit you in that place you know things, where it’s irrefutable in your heart.”

Webb’s previous film work was a psychological thriller, and “Hove” itself is intensely psychological. The film creates a powerful mood with colors and details: yellows like the sepia of old photographs, close-ups of faces and furrowed brows and long silences punctuated by brief dialogue.

When talking about the Genocide, “there is a lot in the silences between people,” Webb said. “They often don’t say things honestly. The important, painful things may not be spelled out completely.”

During the screening, one of the women watching the film whispered her own story.

“My mother was 16 in 1915,” she said. “She never talks about it. Whenever I bring it up, tears just run down her cheeks.”

In the film, Nina, the younger woman, played by Kaladjian, encapsulates one of the film’s themes when she says, “I feel alone. Everyone wants to pretend like it never happened.”

Most of the movie’s soundtrack is not music, but simply the wind, which is also the title of the film.

“Some cultures believe the wind is actually the voice of the ancestors,” Webb said. “It’s also something unseen, but very powerful — like this legacy that we carry, and either think about, or don’t. The wind seems like nothing, yet it scours rocks and changes the faces of mountains.”

“Hove” premiered at the 2009 Palm Springs Short Film Festival, and was also screened at the Boston Film Festival, the Los Angeles International Short Film Festival and the Montreal Film Festival.

Webb said that the movie will also be used as part of the curriculum of Facing History and Ourselves, an organization that focuses on genocide and mass violence to teach students about moral and ethical questions in history.

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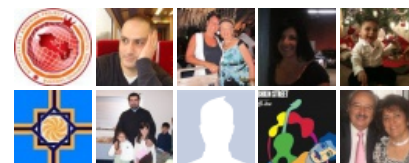
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**Mary Torossian**

September 26, 2010 at 7:49 pm

Hi Alex and Shirleyann,

I have been waiting for the film "Hove" to be shown in the metropolitan area of Detroit, Michigan. Will a showing of your film be shown in the near future in our area? I would be so thrilled to see this movie for many reasons.

Hopefully my wishes will be materialized in the very near future with an answer.

Mary Torossian

Caseville, Michigan

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