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In the Supper Room, Town Hall, Ferguson St St Williamstown, at 7.30 pm, last Wednesday of the month.

2021 Program

Swallows of Kabul

This beautiful, graphically rich animated film is adapted from the best-selling novel by Algerian author Yasmina Khadra, which has been adapted by French filmmakers Zabou Breitman and Eléa Gobbé-Mévellec.

Set in 1998, it tells of life under Taliban control in the Afghan capital, highlighted a dangerous act of humanity during a grim and violent time via the stories of two couples whose fates become intertwined through death, imprisonment, and remarkable self-sacrifice.

Historian Mohsen (voiced by Swann Arlaud) and artist Zunaira (Zita Hanrot) are still young and in love. They remain hopeful that they will once again be able to live as they choose in their beloved country. In contrast, the despair-filled prison warden Atiq (Simon Abkarian) and his terminally-ill wife Mussarat (Hiam Abbass) live as if they are already dead. Stoic war veteran Atiq has seen too much horror in his time fighting the soviets and is unable to express to his wife how much she means to him. She, meanwhile, suffers because she can't fulfill her wifely functions of shopping, cleaning, and cooking, and because she never bore him a child.

Marking her fifth feature as director, Breitman, who is also a popular actress and director of television and theater, decided to capture her voice cast during live performance rather than simply as voices standing at a mic. This approach lends extra authenticity to the sound and rhythms of the acting, which will be more difficult to replicate if sold to other territories where dubbing is common.

The sound design of 'The Swallows of Kabul' emphasises the background noise to establish mood and setting - a town filled with violence and unrest, kept at a steady volume to indicate the constant repression and fear. Scenes such as the initial execution of a woman in the town square by stoning could have been a cruel and action-packed, however, the viewer is frozen when nothing but the sound of rocks hitting the woman and then her falling to the ground is presented.

The story speaks to us of the human being's capacity for resistance at a time when hope has disappeared. How to give body, gesture and color to a story about the fading of these three elements precisely? Breitman as director and Gobbé-Mévellec as animation specialist have thought a lot about these questions and the delicacy with which they have translated Khadra's words into images leads us to think that behind there is a considerable ethical and artistic effort. There is a close gesture, full of humanity in the outline of the drawings that make up the film and this is due to the technical process used, by which the actors have been filmed first to better paint their interpretations later. The evocative tone of the watercolor stains, a pictorial technique not usually associated with the cinematographic, tints an already sad story with melancholy and at the same time gives it a sufficient halo of light that makes us think of other types of emotions, in the possibility of surviving the ruin.

See the trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLufPM45OIs>

Colour Running time: 81 mins

Starbox Results

	5	4	3	2	1	Average
Miss Saigon	24	9	3	0	0	4.6