

Volume 25 Number 10  OCT 2022		Website <a href="https://www.williamstown-film-society.org">https://www.williamstown-film-society.org</a> Email michaeljslee58@gmail.com Phone 0478 624 528
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Council Chamber of the Town Hall, 104 Ferguson St, Williamstown, 7.30pm, Wednesday 26th October, 2022.

### 2022 Program

# My Octopus Teacher

“My Octopus Teacher,” a story of one man learning about life and love from an eight-tentacled mollusk, may sound like kid stuff. Don’t be fooled. In depicting his relationship with a creature regarded as an alien species relegated to horror flicks, South African filmmaker Craig Foster, who tracked the bush hunters of the Kalahari in “The Great Dance” and the trails of crocodiles in “Touching the Dragon,” finds his obsession and his heart.

Foster never details the “two years of absolute hell” that led him to seek an undersea balm for his soul. He puts all his focus on his costar. And she’s a beauty, a shy, simmering creature he discovers while freediving in the kelp forest near his Cape Town home. “I needed a radical change in my life,” says Foster, who had the crazy idea he’d heal by following her every day.

And so a whole new world opens to Foster and to us. At first, the octopus, hiding under a shield of shells, skitters away in fear. Then Foster investigates her environment, leaving a camera behind so she can become familiar with it. We see her hunt prey (crabs and lobsters) and the predators who hunt her, notably the pyjama shark who scarily slices off one of her tentacles. Still, her talent for camouflage and survival reveals a keen intelligence.

After a few weeks, the octopus learns to trust her visitor. In a moment of heart-piercing loveliness, she reaches out a tentacle to touch his finger and then grasp his hand. Foster is a goner and so are we as this octopus teacher establishes a level of connection and empathy her human pupil had previously thought scientifically impossible.

What Foster couldn’t capture himself is caught by cinematographer Roger Horrocks whose questing camera extends to the entire ecosystem. It’s an astonishment to behold. Foster, who swims without a wet suit, finds the cold water a bracing impetus to explore. At one point, Foster invites his school-age son Tom to swim with him and learn from the octopus teacher.

On land, the film necessarily feels more conventional, with directors Pippa Ehrlich and James Reed interviewing Foster or watching him stare out to sea. There’s no way what’s on top can match the wonders of what’s below. Prepare to be wowed by a world you never knew existed. There’s nothing academic or stuffy about this dazzling, deep-dive into interspecies communication. A wild octopus rarely lives longer than 18 months so Foster and his teacher are not fated for a sappy, Hollywood ending. Their connection is far more lyrical and lasting. You’ll laugh and cry your eyes out at the year’s most unorthodox and unforgettable love story.

**My Octopus Teacher** (South Africa, 2020, 85 mins, colour, documentary, M)

*By Peter Travers, 23rd April 2021, from the ABC News website (a 2 paragraph introduction relating to the Oscars was removed for reasons of space).*

To watch a trailer head to the program on our website

<http://www.williamstown-film-society.org>

## **Starbox Results**

	5	4	3	2	1	<b>Average</b>
<b>The Insult</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.5</b>