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**Friday October 19th, 2018**

**On Body and Soul (Cert 18)**

*dir:* **Ildikó Enyedi**

*starring:* **Géza Morcsányi, Alexandra Borbély**

*sponsor:* **Andrew Howard**

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**Synopsis.** Hungary, present day. Endre, a financial director of an industrial slaughterhouse meets Mária, a newly appointed quality inspector. He is drawn to her but she rebuffs him. After a theft, police are called to the factory. The workers are subject to a mental screening programme. Endre and Mária discover they share the same dream. This intrigues them and they spend time together. When the police suspect his friend Jenő, Endre tries to implicate another worker. He and Mária become closer: she attempts suicide. Endre tells her he loves her. They find they no longer share the same dream.

Lives lived in parallel evidently intrigue the Hungarian director Ildikó Enyedi. In her debut feature, *My 20th Century* (1989), twin sisters born in Budapest on the day that Thomas Edison first displays electric light are separated in childhood; one grows up to be a cunning vamp, the other a high-minded revolutionary, but their lives cross and mirror each other in paradoxical ways. Enyedi's follow-up, *Magic Hunter* (1994), cross-cut stories set in present day Hungary and mediaeval times. And in her most recent film, *On Body and Soul*, which was awarded the Golden Bear in Berlin, two people who lead similarly solitary, alienated lives discover that they've been sharing each other's dreams.

The gradual coming together of two individuals paralysed by shyness and inhibitions also links back to an earlier Enyedi film, *Tamas and Juli* (1997) - itself channeling "lonely folks" social comedies such as Delbert Mann's classic Paddy Chayefsky-scripted *Marty* (1955). The odd couple of the present film - Enyedi's first feature for 18 years - are Endre (Géza Morcsányi), the finance director of a large industrialized slaughterhouse, and Mária (Alexandra Borbély), a young woman newly appointed as its quality inspector. Endre, a middle aged man whose left arm is withered - we never learn the origin of this disability - lives alone, eating solitary dinners in cafes or in his apartment. His only friend, with whom he usually shares lunch in the works canteen, seems to be Jenő (Zoltán Schneider), the tubby and heavily married HR manager. Mária, a delicate blonde in her late 20s, apparently has no friends at all: painfully withdrawn to the point of autism, she lacks all social skills, rejects friendly overtures and hates being touched. Along with all this, she possesses total recall. Asked by a psychiatrist when she first menstruated, she responds unhesitatingly: "November 5th 1998."

The film opens, though, with neither of these two - or then again, perhaps with both. In a snow-covered wood, a stag and a deer wander together searching for food, occasionally nuzzling each other gently. Scenes of these two animals, intimately and appealingly shot, recur throughout the action, in startling counterpoint to the brutally blood-drenched, shit-stained killing process we see in the abattoir; only after some time do we discover (though we might have already guessed) that they are the spiritual personae, the avatars even, of Endre and Mária in their shared dreams. It's the discovery of this nocturnal sharing, via the sceptical psychiatrist, that brings them together - a turning point in the plot that, in the wrong hands could have felt intolerably cutesy. Enyedi, though, handles this along with the other stages in their hesitant, tentatively developing relationship with quiet subtlety, often depicting her solitary pair in their respective apartments with through-window night shots that record the paintings of Edward Hopper.

The director's sympathy for her characters doesn't preclude sly humour, often expressed through a meaningful use of close-ups - as when we're shown Mária's geometrically arranged dinner plate, an exact half circle of rice confronting four symmetrically fanned-out fish fingers. Much of the humour involves the deftly characterized supporting cast, not least Réka Tenki as the psychiatrist Klára, her in-your-face attitude - along with her full scarlet lips and voluptuous breasts (which she catches Endre staring at) - provide a striking contrast to the pale, reticent Mária. Pál Macsái makes a quirkily sardonic cop, grinning at the thought of some purloined cattle-mating powder causing guests at a 50th class reunion to "jump at each other like crazed animals", and there's a robustly profane turn from Itala Békés as an outspoken elderly cleaning lady.

The film is carried, though, by its two leads. Morcsányi - remarkably enough, here making his screen acting debut in his mid 60s - brings a rueful melancholia to his portrait of Endre, his long bearded face suggesting a lifetime of stoic disillusionment. But it's Borbély's Mária who traces the longest story arc, as she teaches herself social skills such as emoting and touching: we see her taking a stuffed black panther to bed with her, stroking a cow at the abattoir (much to the amusement of the other employees), pressing her hands down on a plate of mashed potato, watching porno movies and acting out conversations with the help of Lego characters. Perhaps the film's most ecstatic moment comes when, having wandered through a park gazing intrusively at the entwined couples lying on the grass, she lies down herself - and then the



sprinklers come on. Her look of wondering delight as she's suddenly showered encapsulates the film's lyrical, elliptical charm.

## Credits

<b>Mária Racz</b>	Alexandra Borbély
<b>Endre</b>	Géza Morcsányi
<b>Jenő</b>	Zoltán Schneider
<b>Sanyi</b>	Ervin Nagy
<b>Maria's doctor</b>	Tamás Jórán
<b>Zsuzsa</b>	Zsuzsa Járó
<b>Klára</b>	Réka Tenki
<b>Rózi</b>	Júlia Nyakó
<b>Zsóka</b>	Itala Békés
<b>Director</b>	Ildikó Enyedi
<b>Screenplay</b>	Ildikó Enyedi
<b>Cinematography</b>	Maté Herbai
<b>Editor</b>	Károly Szalai
<b>Original score</b>	Adám Balázs
<b>Sound</b>	Péter Lukács
<b>Costume</b>	Judit Sinkowics
<b>Production design</b>	Imola Láng

**Hungary/Germany 2017.**  
**115 mins**

## Another View

A stag trots slowly, majestically through a snowy woodland glade and sets its glistening eyes on a nearby doe. The two animals encircle one another, getting close but never quite connecting. Then suddenly, paff, it was all a dream.

The twist is, this nocturnal vision was being formed in two minds at the same time: one belongs to Endre (Géza Morcsányi), an awkward, middle-aged factory foreman with one working arm; the other is Maria (Alexandra Borbély), a young, quietly intense quality tester. Maybe the imagery that connects their inner consciousness is a result of the fact that they work in an abattoir and are in constant close quarters to mechanised animal slaughter – innocent creatures being sliced to pieces. Or, perhaps, they have a more robust psychic connection that can't be quantified?

Ildikó Enyedi's intriguing and original film (her first of the 21st century) examines this eccentric workplace relationship as it evolves from an uncomfortable acquaintance to the moment these two oddballs realise they may be part of something deeper. Yet the director grounds this potentially fantastical tale in the trappings of the mundane everyday, more interested in gauging how behaviour alters in public and private spheres. Enyedi isn't interested in building up a mythology or contriving a reason for it all, instead drafting the idea as a metaphorical marker of unlikely associations.

The film's second half offers a bold and bleak vision of depression caused by stifled feelings – the idea of not being able to amply express an emotion that's locked inside. Endre is a sad-sack who believes that he could never be physically attractive to a person of the opposite sex, while Maria has pre-existing issues which prevent her from acting on impulse.

Enyedi trips through these inner and outer lives, skipping from elation to devastation in the space of an edit. She seems completely enraptured by the infinite complexity of human biology and the crooked architecture of the mind.

## David Jenkins: Little White Lies

### Our next Screenings Sunday October 21st, 3pm

#### **The Draughtsman's Contract (UK 1982. Cert tbc)**

*The Draughtsman's Contract* was written and directed by Peter Greenaway – his first conventional feature film (following the feature-length mockumentary *The Falls*). Originally produced for Channel 4 the film is a form of murder mystery, set in rural Wiltshire in 1694 (during the reign of William III and Mary II). The period setting is reflected in Michael Nyman's score, which borrows widely from Henry Purcell and in the extensive and elaborate costume designs (which, for effect, slightly exaggerate those of the period).

The film represents our members' choice of archive classic, to help celebrate our 65th anniversary year.

### Friday October 26th, 7.30pm **Last Flag Flying (USA 2017. Cert 15)**

Directed by Richard Linklater, *Last Flag Flying* stars Steve Carell as Larry, a Vietnam veteran whose son has died while serving in Iraq in 2003. Enlisting the help of former army buddies Sal and Richard (Bryan Cranston and Laurence Fishburne), he seeks to learn more of what happened and retrieve the body for burial at home, but comes up against army regulations and the official version of events

Seen by some as having strong links to Hal Ashby's 1973 classic *The Last Detail* (it's co-written by that film's screenwriter Darryl Ponicsan, whose books provide the source material for both films), *Last Flag Flying* is a moving, genuinely entertaining human story that offers a meditation on USA foreign policy and how little it's changed since the 1970s.