

JACKMAN HALL
AT THE ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO
NOVEMBER 9TH TO 11TH, 2018

2018
SYRIA
FILM FESTIVAL
TORONTO

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OPENING NIGHT

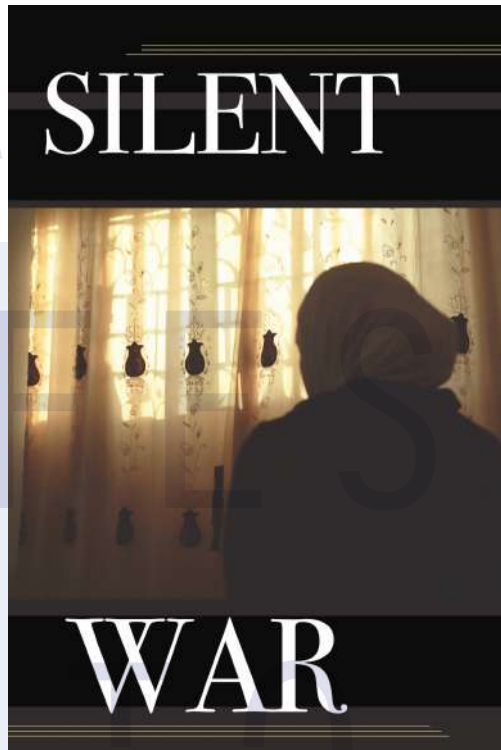


SOULALA (short) 2018 9 min

Director: Maha Moussa

Lana Fahmi is a passionate contemporary dancer. But now living in exile, how can she keep her passion for an art form so intimately connected to her former life in Syria?

SECOND NIGHT

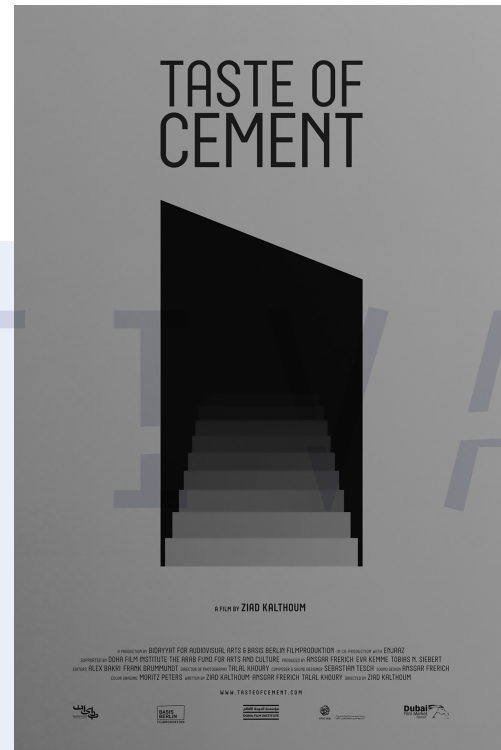


SILENT WAR 2017 72 min

Director: Manon Loizeau

The subject of sexual violence as a weapon of war in Syria gains new force in Manon Loizeau's powerful film "Silent War." This difficult but important film documents the stories of women sexually assaulted by regime soldiers and pro-government militias during Syria's now seven year long uprising against the government of Bashar al-Assad. We meet women like Mariam Khlef from the city of Hama, a civil servant turned first aid responder during the uprising. Shortly after her involvement in Hama's protests, regime forces arrested her, beat her, and used state-sanctioned rape to punish her actions. The film shows that the rape of women like Mariam becomes primarily an attack on the well-being of the victim, and secondly on her family and her culture. The film's courageous subjects leave the viewer with a deeper understanding of the consequences of this devastating crime against humanity. **Aisha Jamal**

CLOSING NIGHT



TASTE OF CEMENT 2017 85 min

Director: Ziad Kalthoum

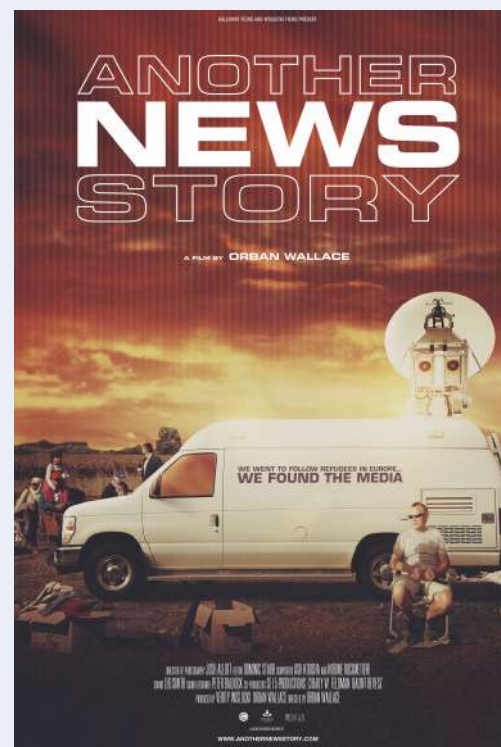
Rarely does a film treat the subject of Syrian refugees like Ziad Kalthoum's unique and artful documentary "Taste of Cement." The film focuses on Syrian construction workers, building Beirut's new commercial and residential towers by day, while sleeping in the unfinished basements of their workplace by night. In contemplative scenes, these nameless construction workers look out on a regenerating Beirut while reflecting on the destruction of their homeland mere kilometers away. In their nightly news binges, they must also face the reports of mounting racism against Syrian refugees spreading in Lebanon, a country still recovering from its own devastating years of civil war. Ultimately, the film's elaborate sound design, strong use of visual metaphor and striking but sparse voice-over works together to ruminate on the impulses of humans to build and destroy. **Aisha Jamal**



WAJD, SONGS OF SEPARATION 2018 87 min

Director: Amar Chebib

What began for director Amar Chebib as an exploration of Sufi music in pre-revolutionary Syria became over time the story of three artists in exile. Musicians Ibrahim, Abdulwahed, and Mohamed are forced to flee their homeland of Syria for Turkey and Holland, transforming not only their lives, but also their relationship with the music they play. Wajd shifts effortlessly between past and present, weaving together material filmed with the artists before and after their forced migration from their country. That separation from family, from culture, from home, is felt in every scene, expressed at its strongest in patient moments of music. The film offers many beautiful musical numbers as the artists indulge masterfully in their craft. Chabib skillfully relates the spiritual longing of Sufism with the longing for home for three artists connected by their craft and their struggle. **Anders Gatten**



ANOTHER NEWS STORY 2107 84 min

Director: Orban Wallace

Surrounded by thousands of refugees, each with their own harrowing and unique story, director Orban Wallace does the unthinkable: he opts to turn the lens on the journalists there to capture the contemporary migration crisis as it unfolds. In the face of war crimes, injustice and displacement, these nomadic storytellers thrust themselves into places others fear to imagine. The question arises if it is possible for those involved to maintain their humanity in these harrowing scenarios, or do these events and their subjects become just another news story? By juxtaposing the lives and experiences of journalists with the harrowing lives of Syrian refugees, Wallace ushers in a wider perspective that turns the lens on news media. **Josh Sousa**