

Interview, Audio: Artistic Director Mimi Plauché on 53rd Chicago International Film Festival

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 12, 2017 - 4:48pm

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CHICAGO – In May of this year, Cinema/Chicago – the parent organization of the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival (CIFF) – announced that Mimi Plauché was the new Artistic Director of the Fest. She assumed the position that had formally been held by CIFF founder Michael Kutza, who continues as President and CEO.

Mimi Plauché grew up in a film-loving family, but ended up in Asian studies during college, focusing on a doctorate in Japanese literature and film. She joined CIFF as a programmer in 2006, and was Programming Director before her promotion. As Artistic Director, she is responsible for all film programming at the Chicago International Film Festival, Cinema/Chicago's year-round film slate, and community partnering. She also identifies established and emerging filmmakers for inclusion into the festival, and has already represented CIFF at other festivals throughout the world.



Mimi Plauché, the New Artistic Director for the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival

Photo credit: Timothy M. Schmidt for Cinema/Chicago

As the 53rd edition of the Film Festival opens on October 12th, 2017, Mimi Plauché sat down with HollywoodChicago.com for an in-depth interview about her new role, and her general background in the world of cinema.

HollywoodChicago.com: You had been a programmer for years, but now you take the reins of the festival as Artistic Director. Within your sense of that responsibility, what did this transition mean to you?

Mimi Plauché: The transition had been happening over time, but over the last year – although I believe through the programming team that it is a collaborative effort – I’ve been more focused on the overall shape of the programming, as far as what we’re trying to achieve, whether it’s within a particular genre or in the whole Festival. I have felt that responsibility, in determining that direction.

I’ve always been thinking about, ‘what is the smart way for the Festival to grow?’ How do what we do better in serving audiences and the local filmmaking community? We did that by establishing ‘Industry Days’ as part of the Festival three years ago, but how do we think about that in relationship to, and in context of, the Festival?

HollywoodChicago.com: The next question is a cliché, but what do you find exciting overall about the film year 2017, and the choices for the Chicago International Film Festival, in your first year as Artistic Director?

Plauché: The Festival has always been conscious of programming broadly, making sure different types of filmmakers and different styles of filmmaking are represented. Especially this year, and this may have happened subconsciously, but half of the New Directors competition this year are women, and that’s exciting.

Also exciting is the strength of the Chicago filmmaker’s community, going beyond documentary and short films, with more features this year than ever. Who is staying here to work, and as importantly who is coming here to work, international filmmakers are coming here to do their

productions.

We also open with ‘Marshall,’ and close with ‘The Shape of Water,’ which are two films that are very strong, which showcases the upcoming awards season.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is your life philosophy about film? What do you personally think makes it unique as an art form over and maybe even above all the other forms of art and media?

Plauché: For me, it’s about the immersion. We go into a dark theater with a large screen and amazing sound, and become absorbed in the art in front of you. Whether it’s experimental, to take us to another mindset, or international, to take us to another culture, it enables us to understand new ideas and empathize with other world citizens. As Roger Ebert said, ‘film is an empathy machine,’ and that is what has always attracted me to it as an art form, in the way we become absorbed in it.



The 53rd Chicago International Film Festival runs October 12th-26th, 2017

Photo credit: Chicago International Film Festival

HollywoodChicago.com: Your background, interestingly enough, is in Japanese studies. What in that pathway led you to film analysis?

Plauché: I grew up with film-loving parents. When I started working with the Film Festival, I actually asked my parents what foreign language film was I first exposed to, and they told me it was an Ingmar Bergman film when I was six years old. [laughs] Their approach as film lovers was that if they were going to go, my brother and I were going to go. Even if that involved age-inappropriate films, it was about the exposure to what they loved. We were happy to go along for the ride. That’s where it started.

Ever since I was a kid, I’ve been fascinated with adventure, and I remember meeting people who traveled a lot, and how interesting that was for me. I wanted to do something where I could live or work abroad, that’s why I headed to Japan for my post graduate work. I wanted to be introduced to another place, and you learn as much about yourself as the place itself. So I focused on Japanese literature and film, and that immersion was influential as well.

In the audio portion of the interview, Mimi Plauché talks about Japanese culture, the transition from film as entertainment to becoming a programmer, and and the pitch to everyone to experience the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival.

The Opening Night Film for the 53rd Chicago International Film Festival is “Marshall” on October 12th, 2017, at the AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois Street, Chicago. The Festival will take place October 12th to October 26th, 2017. [Click here](#) [24] for film schedules, information and to purchase tickets.



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Source URL (retrieved on *Apr 20 2024 - 1:20am*):

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