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TIFF NEXT WAVE: DENISE'S TOP PICKS

February 19th, 2020 by Denise Reich [0 Comments](#)



TIFF's Next Wave film festival is programmed for those under 25 by those under 25.

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Shameless reviewer Denise Reich reviews her top picks:

House of Hummingbird (director by Kim Bora)

****Content warning: Domestic violence, physical abuse (depicted and mentioned) ****

“When will my life start to shine?” asks eighth-grader Eun-hee (Park Ji-hu), writing to her teacher. Living in Seoul in 1994, Eun-hee contends with an abusive home life and tenuous friendships.

The film's atmosphere is in turns charming and devastating, as Eun-hee moves from one heartbreak to the next. There are sweetly awkward attempts at romance with both girls and boys, and a best friend with whom friendship has its limits. Eun-hee's brother physically abuses her, and her parents seem indifferent to both her emotional needs and the abuse. One of her only coping mechanisms is her love of drawing, which is not encouraged by most around her.

Despite the grim circumstances, Eun-hee clings to the words of a supportive teacher (Kim Sae-byuk), and as the film ends, the viewer is led to believe that eventually, somehow, she just might be okay.



Still from House of Hummingbird. From tiff.net

And Then We Danced (directed by Levan Akin)

****Content warning: Several minutes of strobe lights during a club scene. ****

Merab (Levan Gelbakhiani) is a third-generation dancer with the Georgian National Ensemble. Despite being told that he is not the most talented, he persists, rehearsing at every opportunity and pushing to audition for the main company.

When a new dancer, Irakli (Bachi Valishvili), joins the company, Merab sees him first as a rival, then as a friend and finally, as a lover. His bond with Irakli and his journey of self-discovery put him at odds with the homophobia in his dance company and surrounding society.

Merab's deep love of dance is ever-present in the narrative and Gelbakhiani, a classically trained dancer, performs the choreography with passion and commitment. Despite confusion, inner turmoil and external opposition Merab finds support, and the film's

message perhaps mirrors its real-life reception in Georgia. Despite [threats to the production team and condemnation from right-wing entities](#), the film sold 5,000 tickets in 13 minutes when it premiered in Tbilisi.



Still from And Then We Danced. From musicboxfilms.com

About the Author: Denise Reich has contributed to Shameless for many years with interests in disability/chronic illness advocacy, Star Wars and classic media. She has danced since she was small.

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