WHOSE FILM EDUCATION?
LET KIDS TEACH US

By Frederike Migom

When I was fresh out of school and still working as an assistant at a production company, one of my favourite duties was to organise children's castings for several projects.

Every now and then, a child would strike me, telling me a story just with his demeanour or look, sometimes opening up in the safety of the casting room, breaking my heart on the way.

One of these children became the main character in my first short film MALAKIM. MALAKIM was not made specifically for a young audience, in those days I didn’t think of that being an option. But when I received by mail a certificate coming from India where a children’s jury had awarded the film a prize, I imagined these children on the other side of the world, observing the inner world of this Belgian child, maybe even identifying with him.

I started realising there was a desire – indeed, a need – for content made for young audiences, as well a need for easy access to it. So, shortly after the Flemish Audiovisual Fund created their very first funding pot for projects for youth, I decided to embark on the journey of my debut feature film BINTI.

During writing and researching BINTI, another child quite randomly struck me in a most powerful way. She stepped into my life with a story and an unconscious desire to share it to the world, to make people understand how she was feeling and why. Neither she nor I knew then that her story was to become a short youth documentary we would make together, SI-G.

I followed her for more than a year, and built up a very strong, personal relationship with her. If only she knew how much she has inspired me, through her honesty and her openness, I have also been inspired by the journey we have made showing the film in schools and youth organisations, talking to children and realising to what extent other children’s stories and struggles inspire them.

Children are fascinating creatures because they see life and the world presented to them in a purer form than adults do. Even though all adults have been children once, it sometimes is difficult to remember how as a child you were utterly puzzled by certain things, terribly hurt by some things, or in absolute awe of other things. I enjoy trying to relive these emotions, whether it is while creating or observing.

I’ve come to realise that personally, I don’t want to teach kids, I want them to teach me, by allowing me to see the world through their eyes. I therefore also believe that a good film for young audiences should also be good for adults.

I believe film education for children is essentially not that different from film education for adults. Generally speaking, I would understand it as: “providing easy access and stimulation to watch certain films”. I’ve never been opposed to film serving as entertainment, but simultaneously it’s important to acknowledge that film has the opportunity to allow a study of humankind. It provides access to lives, cultures, psychologies and emotions we may otherwise never approach, let alone understand, both to adults and children alike. By identifying with “the other,” a person might question themselves, society, or at least get a glimpse of different ways of life, in order for horizons to broaden. Again, it seems to me that this counts for children and adults alike. In my ideal world, film offers both insights and entertainment.

Looking back to my own childhood, access to films created for youth was limited and I got most of my views on the world from children’s books, rather than films. I can thus only be happy that the EFA is looking at films for children and youth, as well as film education, and that this world is expanding rapidly. I hope it will keep doing so; but also that films for youth might one day be treated as equal to films made for adults, both by the people who make and those who programme, sell and promote.

Brussels-based writer, director and actor Frederike Migom’s family feature Binti was launched theatrically in Belgium in April. Her previous work includes the shorts Malakim, Adam & Everything, Nkosi Coiffure, and SI-G.
SELMA VILHUNEN: “I DON’T REALLY THINK THERE IS ANY ONE WAY TO BE A YOUNG PERSON”

By Tara Karajica

Finnish filmmaker Selma Vilhunen viewed her first cinematic obsession, the 1982 Finnish live action fairytale THE KING WITHOUT A HEART by Paivi Hartzell and Liisa Helminen, three times in the cinema with her mother. Other films that made an impact on her youth include the heart-breaking dog story WHITE BIM BLACK EAR by Soviet director Stanislav Rostotsky (1977) and the 1985 Danish Silver Bear winner and box-office hit RONIA, THE ROBBER’S DAUGHTER directed by Tage Danielsson and adapted by the Pippi Longstocking writer Astrid Lindgren herself. Vilhunen was so attached to the latter film that she was inspired her to name her own daughter after the protagonist.

Much like in the films that impacted her adolescence, growth and evolution are key in her own films. Her work examines people of various ages who are always in a serious process of self-rediscovery and on a path to finding courage to embrace and share this insight. Teenagers, of course, are always in this process. Indeed, Vilhunen says there is something in the energy that teenagers carry that fascinates her and can only be conveyed in moving images.

Vilhunen was the first Finn to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film for DO I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING?, about a mother’s chaotic morning. Her fiction feature debut, LITTLE WING, which she also wrote, tells the story of a 12-year-old girl who searches for the father she has never met. The film premiered at Toronto 2016 to critical acclaim and later won the lucrative Nordic Council Film Prize. Then she also followed teenage girls – this time those obsessed with handmade hobbyhorse riding – for the feature documentary HOBBYHORSE REVOLUTION, which was nominated for the EFA Young Audience Award in 2018. Her latest fiction feature, STUPID YOUNG HEART, won the Crystal Bear at this year’s Berlinale; it tells the story of a teenage couple dealing with a surprise pregnancy.

How do you present young people’s lives onscreen accurately?

I don’t really think there is any one way to be a young person. I present them just like any character of any age. I try to study what is essential to that character and I try to cherish those features throughout the process. I also try to make space for characters to be contradictory and surprising, and not squeeze them into a dramatic mould that is too tight.

How do you collaborate with young people when you are developing a film?

In STUPID YOUNG HEART, my cast helped me create the nuances and the texture of the characters as well as the world of the film. I allowed the flow of information to be from the actors towards my camera. It involved a leap of faith because in some ways none of us knew exactly how a scene would come out. But we allowed ourselves to have fun and trust our gut feeling and the fact that the young actors knew the mental landscape where the story took place.

Do you think of young people as the audience for your films, or you also think of older audiences?

I don’t think that people of different ages are that different from one another, so I think of humans when I think of my audience. Having said that, I did want STUPID YOUNG HEART to have a certain rhythm and pace and perhaps there, I wanted to make sure that young audiences would have the patience to carry it through.
Why is it important that youths see themselves onscreen?

It is an act of love to offer people validation and an opportunity to reflect themselves through someone else’s eyes. A film is a powerful thing as it not only reflects reality, but it also creates a new, shared reality. Also, a film makes it possible for those who have a different experience to come really close to someone else’s experience. In their pursuit of connection, it is a great tool for a person to be able to refer to a film and say: “I am that person. I feel like they feel.”

What was it like for you to have HOBBYHORSE REVOLUTION nominated for the EFA Young Audience Award last year?

I was very happy and honoured to have the film nominated. The nomination spread the film across Europe. I was especially thrilled to see how the hobby itself inspired so many young people in countries such as Germany, Holland and the UK. In Erfurt, Germany, where the winner was announced, the reactions to the film were also refreshingly mixed. Some kids didn’t hide the fact that they had zero interest in the film, which I think is perfectly fine. On the other hand, I received some enthusiastic feedback, too. This reassured me about the universal value of the film’s themes.

How have young audiences responded to STUPID YOUNG HEART?

In Finland, young audiences went to see it in great numbers, which actually took me by surprise. They loved it! The characters and the film have a lot of fans and their love for the film touches me. It seems to me that for some people the film has really offered an important experience that holds a special place in their youth.

How does that compare to LITTLE WING?

LITTLE WING’s audience was more mature. I think the strongest feedback came from adults who saw their own childhood experiences or their experiences in their own parenthood reflected in the film.

You talked about film critics saying your three films are sort of a trilogy about teenagers. Can you elaborate on that?

These three films are indeed somehow intertwined, perhaps through a very organic process. They were made sometimes simultaneously and within a relatively short period of time. The effect of following the lives of real people in HOBBYHORSE REVOLUTION sprouted in the other two films in various ways. Because of spending so much time with young people in the documentary, I felt more at home in the teenage minds of the fictitious characters. The three films are also all partly located in the eastern part of Helsinki and the socioeconomic background of the people in the films is quite similar.

Do you think people look down on films about youth, or think they are less important? Do we need to change perceptions?

I do think people have a pre-conception that films about young characters somehow lack in depth. Of course, it is possible to make a really thin and bad film about young characters, but to have such a pre-conception is indeed limiting and even hurtful. I think that while adults must teach the young how to live life, it also goes the other way around. Our teaching becomes rigid and we forget what is really important if we refuse to listen to those who are new and who have fresh, fearless minds.

Belgrade-based film critic and journalist Tara Karajica has written for Film New Europe, Little White Lies, IndieWire, Screen International, Variety and many other publications. She is the founding editor of Fade to Her, a magazine for and about women in film.
HOW FILM LITERACY BEGINS WITH CHILD’S PLAY AND ENDS WITH CINEPHILES

By Stuart Kemp

The European film industry is paying more than lip service to the popular notion that “we could all learn from children”. When it comes to film literacy and education for young people and nurturing the cinema audiences of the future, there is a plethora of organisations putting this into practice.

“We do a lot of work consulting young people directly. It is hugely valuable for us to inform our work in the way we develop our policies and strategies,” says Paul Reeve, the CEO of IntoFilm, a UK-based charity that puts film at the heart of the educational and personal development of children and young people across the UK.

“We also work with specialist agencies to understand young people’s behaviours,” adds Reeve.

IntoFilm sets out to give “every child and young person aged five to 19 in the UK the chance to experience film creatively” and aims to support teachers and educators “to achieve a wide range of effective learning outcomes in their use of film.”

Age of innocence

Children are in the eye of a changing media storm. On tablets and mobile phones, YouTube, Netflix and other streaming services are capturing young eyes (and hearts). So, filmmakers face huge challenges to entice the next generation of cinema-goers.

“We are in the age of change from growing up with words to growing up with images,” says European Children’s Film Association (ECFA) president Margret Albers. “Audio-visual, moving images are surrounding us all permanently. Film literacy becomes even more important because grammar and the language of film has become so ubiquitous -- it is everywhere.”

ECFA – which has 125 member companies and organisations from 36 countries - has a vision that includes respecting children’s points of view, listening to what they think about film and cinema, to “enable them to cherish and enjoy film” while “stimulating their love for cinema.”

The film industry’s self-preservation strategies mean starting early to build in cinema-going habits and the communal consumption of film: Get ‘em and keep ‘em. “Watching the same thing at the same time, laughing together, screaming together, crying together,” says Reeve, “cinema is the gold standard.”

ECFA’s member companies and organisations come from as far afield as Australia, China and Canada, India, Israel and Japan as well as Europe. From distributors to festivals, film museums to cultural centres and exhibitors, all ECFA members are driven to ensure film isn’t lost as a valuable and often inspiring educational tool too.

While many ECFA member initiatives operate on national or regional levels, networking and knowledge sharing is essential and challenging in equal measure. “Language barriers are still an issue and in terms of how experience can travel,” Albers says, adding: “one shouldn’t underestimate it as an issue.”

Denmark, the Netherlands, Nordic territories and Germany are all leading lights in the film literacy and education field. Claus Hjorth, the head of the children and youth department at the Danish Film Institute, trumpets film as an “outstanding tool to create an open space for reflection.”

Denmark’s myriad initiatives include a dedicated cinema programme for schools in which one-third of the country’s youth take part annually. “We are aligned to the educational sector in coming up with these materials. We’re not just sending it out from the Danish Film Institute, we are in dialogue with the education sector to give them what they want,” Hjorth says.

The country also supports film programmes for children between the ages of three and six, dedicated film festival events and a targeted streaming service for schools, complete with learning materials, teaching plans and support materials for the children. “It is quite successful but we can do much better,” Hjorth adds. One ambition is to develop a nimbler business model for rights-holders to allow features to be used in schools more speedily and easily.

“You need to create better expectations between the rights-holders on one hand and the education sector on the other,” Hjorth says.
Important support

Albers, based in Leverkusen, cites the growing success of Germany’s Der Besondere Kinderfilm (Outstanding Films for Children) support programme, an initiative modelled on the Dutch production support plan Cinema Junior. Backed by regional funders, television stations and national funders and institutions including Germany’s cinema association and distributor society, it allocates up to €3 million per year to individual original pitches for films made for children from German production companies.

After being set up in 2013, the fourth film launched by the initiative is INCREDIBLY PERFECT FRIENDS, a doppelganger romp that arrived in cinemas in April. INVISIBLE SUE, a superhero film pitched at children aged eight and above, a co-production with Luxembourg with a budget of a little over €4 million, made its debut at CineKid in October 2018 in the Netherlands.

The communal experience

Everyone agrees that ensuring young people experience film screenings communally is a key element of success. But there are many models of how to achieve that.

IntoFilm’s work, like many of its counterparts across Europe, includes a network of extra-curricular film clubs, resources for use in clubs and in the classroom, training opportunities, a cinema-based film festival and an annual awards ceremony. The charity operates across all four nations in the U.K. and receives an annual National Lottery grant via the British Film Institute for £4.8 million to bring film to youngsters.

The IntoFilm festival attracted 400,000 children into film screenings over a two to three-week period across the whole of the UK in 2018. Some 560 venues participated, ranging from the big multiplex chains to smaller boutique chains and many independent cinemas. Each ticket is free of charge with the festival principally marketed to and through schools and colleges. The majority of screenings and events are on weekdays during the morning and early afternoon.

“It’s a fantastic thing to be able to offer those tickets for free. Based on a number of surveys we did during the festival, we can conclude that around 30,000 of those children had never been to the cinema, it was their first visit,” says Reeve. “And a significant percentage said they hardly ever go to the cinema.”

Inevitably such an event requires a great deal of support from the industry; both hard cash and in-kind funding. The exhibitors participate and open their cinemas and screens, distributors board to supply content and service companies help support the efforts.

Reeve explains, “These young people come and they’ve had a free experience. The challenge is to encourage them to return and develop a regular cinema-going habit. We do work with the exhibitors and distributors to provide them with incentives when we can. We are developing some new approaches right now such as ‘Bounce back vouchers’.”

If the children enjoyed their visit to the IntoFilm festival, they can use a token to subsidise a return to their local cinema. “Ultimately if young people are to develop a regular cinema-going habit and a love of film, they are going to have to find the money.”

And if they do find the money, they have to also decide what kind of film to spend that cash on.

One title that has proven a perennial favourite both in the UK and across Europe is Claude Barras’ Swiss-French stop-motion comedy drama MY LIFE AS A ZUCCHINI. It offers a great deal of scope as an educational tool across differing age groups.

Reeve says, “[MY LIFE AS A ZUCCHINI] is great for developing film literacy, there are so many things you can pick up on but most importantly of all is something that is much under discussed and underrated when talking about film literacy: Children really enjoy it. Enjoyment is sometimes under-recognised.”

London-based Stuart Kemp is a writer and editor specialising in the international entertainment industry. He is also an artist who creates bespoke biographical works using handmade pin badges mounted on canvas called MemoryPop.
YOUTH FILM FESTIVALS: INCLUSIVITY, ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

By Jennifer Green

The European film industry knows it needs to nurture a new generation of filmmakers, film-goers and film lovers to ensure its own continuity. But that’s a task easier said than done, especially in light of fast-evolving patterns of media creation and consumption. Youth-oriented festivals across Europe are on the frontlines of these developments, and they’re demonstrating how inclusivity, engagement and education are as essential as access in reaching young audiences.

“We are in an ever-changing society where things move a lot faster than they used to, so something that was hip six months ago is not hip any longer,” says Claudio Gubitosi, the founder (in 1970) and ongoing director of the vast Giffoni Experience, a year-round youth-oriented multimedia and educational platform in Italy that encompasses multiple activities, including an annual film festival.

“That’s why you need to keep talking to the kids to keep tabs on what they like and what they’re doing every day,” Gubitosi continues. “Otherwise you get stuck in the past. And what was good for them in the past isn’t good for them anymore.”

Maryanne Redpath, Head of the Generation section of the Berlinale, agrees engagement is key. “We are in a position at the Berlinale to invite filmmakers and their crews and casts to come and engage in conversation with the audiences after the screenings, and the feedback we get is extraordinary. Young people come to the cinema because they have the need to engage. And the filmmakers who discover the section for the first time, having maybe been a bit sceptical, discover these young audiences in return. So, there’s a kind of reciprocity.”

Youth-targeted events also have to make an effort to reach their audiences in new and different ways. “We’re trying to be as inclusive as possible in terms of kinds of media and kinds of kids,” says Erik Tijman, Film and Television Programmer for Holland’s Cinekid, which bills itself as the largest children’s media festival in the world. He gives the example of Cinekid’s MediaLab, which is “like a digital playground where kids can partake in workshops, games, apps, interactive art installations, all sorts of things that let kids actively learn and use new media.”

“Kids don’t really get enough media literacy tools to cope with all the new developments,” Tijman says, so children’s festivals can help “acquaint kids at an early stage in their lives with very diverse media products and often more interesting and original media products, and hopefully kindle a fire and an interest in exploring more of that.”

“KIDS DON’T REALLY GET ENOUGH MEDIA LITERACY TOOLS TO COPE WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS”

Erik Tijman

Evolving productions and audiences

Professionals cite a handful of other trends they’re seeing in the sector across the region. One is a growing interest in documentaries for children and youth – seen in niche events like Germany’s Doxs!, for example, and in this year’s Berlinale Generation programming, which Redpath notes also saw an increase in films by and about females.

There has been a notable uptick in children’s film production in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. For Gert Hermans, the Communication Officer for the European Children’s Film Association (ECFA), the old truth that children’s films offered a way around censorship has given way to a new reality, which is that “the market is opening.” Tijman suggests children’s films are especially appealing for small countries in that they can help cultivate national identities, facilitate co-productions based on shared regional tastes, and potentially travel further than other genres.

Lastly, festivals are involving youth in new ways – as programmers, for example, or organisers, as well as on juries, as creators, etc. – building on relationships where kids return year after year, eventually often taking on volunteer roles and even paid jobs as they grow up. “Inhabitants of Zlin have participated in our festival for 59 long years,” says Marketa Pasmova, Artistic Director of the Czech Republic’s Zlin Film Festival, Europe’s oldest children’s film festival turning 60 in 2020. “There’s a tradition in educating the new generations.”
Growing reach

It’s nearly impossible to pin down the exact number of local or regional festivals in Europe that are dedicated to youth or have youth-oriented sections. “For every country in Europe you can find at least one children’s festival,” suggests ECFA’s Hermans, who notes that of his organisation’s 150+ members, at least half of them are festivals.

The Youth Cinema Network (YCN) has around 27 member festivals from across Europe.

The reach of these events – most of which involve year-round activities, tours and in-school programs – is undeniable. Giffoni is estimated to reach around 300,000 people during its summer festival days and 800,000 young people with its year-round media events. It’s expecting more than 6,000 jurors from 52 countries for this summer’s film festival (19-27 July). Zlin saw more than 125,000 guests and 40,000 spectators for its 300 films from 55 countries last year.

Another truth: children’s events must and do constantly evolve to keep up with their audiences, who have a different relationship with media than generations before them, but who still learn about themselves and the world through audio-visual products. “It’s a big responsibility but also enriching,” says the Berlinale’s Redpath. “If we don’t challenge young people with our programming, they will challenge us back.”

Embodying this reality, Giffoni has evolved from the ‘Giffoni Film Festival’ to the more encompassing ‘Giffoni Experience,’ and on its 50th anniversary in 2020, will be rebranded ‘Giffoni Opportunity.’ The next year, Giffoni will start fresh as a brand new ‘first edition’ because, as director Gubitosi notes with the insight of his half-century in the business, “51st is a little heavy for young people.”

Jennifer Green, based in Madrid, is a contributor to The Hollywood Reporter.
FILM CAN HELP YOUNG PEOPLE REALISE WHAT WE HAVE IN COMMON

By Lucia Recalde

For 22 years, the MEDIA Programme has been supporting the European Film Academy. This long-standing partnership, in the context of an ever-changing and digitalised European audio-visual sector, tells you something about the values that we share.

The MEDIA Programme lays on a double intervention logic, where cultural diversity and the competitiveness of the audio-visual industry go hand in hand. Our core mission is to help films travel beyond their national borders, so that they can meet the audiences they deserve!

Educating young people to different types of storytelling is instrumental to give them a chance to discover and enjoy the unique richness of European films. Of course, creating an appetite for European works paves the way for an audience’s development, but the rationale for action goes even further, as European films are wonderful vehicles to share our common values.

European films have the power to shape up our minds, embody our past, instill a sense of a shared identity, and inspire a bright future for citizens. EFA, with its President Wim Wenders at the helm, is a precious partner and possibly one of the most important voices in Europe today in promoting cultural diversity and freedom of expression as key indispensable components of our societies and democracies.

As the Head of the MEDIA Programme, it is of paramount importance for me to support actions where we can make a real difference. While educational matters are primarily a national competence, the added value of our European action is in its capacity to bring together national and local stakeholders, and to develop a co-operative mind-set amongst them.

MEDIA’s support for networks and projects in the field of film education has brought proven structuring effects. The beneficiaries have developed a real culture of collaboration at a pan-European level. At the same time, their anchoring at grassroots level ensures a close relationship with local communities and audiences.

In addition, as of 2019, MEDIA will provide support to a curated catalogue of European films. We are glad to support an initiative which will no doubt allow European pupils become familiar with some of the best European classics, including, of course, films awarded by the European Film Academy. It is an opportunity to help young people realise what we, Europeans, have in common, beyond national borders.

Commissioner Gabriel, who is responsible for Digital Economy and Society at the European Commission, is highly committed to empowering each and every citizen to make free and informed choices, all the more in the context of the digitalisation of our society. Film education is essential to equip the young Europeans with the skills required to go beyond the surface and understand the moving image.

Wim Wenders once said that films can either confirm the idea that things are wonderful the way they are, or it can reinforce the belief that things can be changed. I take this opportunity to warmly thank the European Film Academy for making young Europeans understand through powerful and uncompromising storytelling, that they can shape our European societies for the better.

Lucia Recalde is Head of Unit “Audiovisual Industry and MEDIA programme” at the European Commission.
THE EFA YOUNG AUDIENCE AWARD: A TRUE SUCCESS STORY

By Marion Döring, director of EFA

Anyone who has the privilege of attending one of the EFA Young Audience Award (YAA) screenings and can witness the enthusiasm of the 12-to-14-year-olds in their role as members of the pan-European YAA jury, will confirm that there are many good reasons for being optimistic about the future of European cinema. The YAA, launched in 2012 by the European Film Academy and EFA Productions, proves that Europe can be fun and that there definitely is a young audience for European films. We just have to bring both together.

The YAA is a true success story and the reason for this success is young people’s passion for European films. When the award was launched in 2012, it was clear to us that the best jurors to decide on such an award would be the young viewers themselves (and not the EFA members, as in the other categories). And it was obvious that this young jury had to be European.

We started with six cities in six countries. It was a test: Would it be possible to keep the young audiences’ attention up for a whole day in the cinema? Watching three films together, discussing them with film education experts, taking decisions on the winner and transmitting the results to the YAA headquarters in Erfurt, Germany at a fixed hour by the end of the day, can be quite a challenge. And the films are not always easy films, most of the young viewers are accustomed to blockbusters, they do rather favour action (and horror) movies – as we repeatedly find out from their answer to our questionnaires. European films don’t really belong to their typical cinema experience, and for some the participation in the YAA even represents their first time in a cinema!

The test went far better than we had anticipated: They loved the experience! And quickly the news about this wonderful event spread around Europe and every year more and more partners in more and more countries wish to join.

A few days ago this inspiring film education event took place for the eighth time – again, breaking a record: A pan-European jury of 2,800 young film lovers in 55 cities in 34 countries awarded FIGHT GIRL from Netherlands/Belgium as EFA Young Audience Award winner 2019!

The ceremony was streamed online from Erfurt, where the nominated directors were present. Our Master of Ceremony was 16-year-old Ivana Noa from Antwerp (see interview page 11), the youngest filmmaker who ever had a film at Cannes’ Short Film Corner, and who was a jury speaker of the Belgian YAA jury in 2017.

And, also for the first time, the three nominated films were chosen this year by a jury of five 12-to-14-year-olds from five different countries. They chose the three finalists out of six films selected by a committee of youth film experts.

The three nominated films are translated into 30 European languages, so the kids in each city can watch the films with subtitles in their own language. The concept of simultaneous screenings for young audiences in so many countries and cities makes the YAA a unique initiative, providing a fresh and innovative way of experiencing cultural diversity.
A big network of cinémathèques, film festivals, film clubs and other institutions throughout Europe works closely with EFA on the organisation of the YAA. From day one, MDM, the Mitteldeutsche Filmförderung, has been a committed funding partner of EFA, while the partners in the 55 cities throughout Europe independently secure the needed support in their home territories.

Since 2018, the YAA also benefits from Creative Europe support, which opened the door to a new level: The event is now followed by a release of the nominated titles on a wide range of national and transnational VoD platforms in as many territories as possible. The 30 language versions of the films are delivered as multi-lingual packages to the platforms to ensure the widest possible coverage. Thus the nomination is serving as a label and quality seal and the collection of films under the YAA label is becoming a reliable source of films for teaching film education in schools or film clubs.

In the first editions of the YAA, the young jury members often complained about the fact that they couldn’t share their viewing experience with their friends and schoolmates because the films were not accessible in almost all of their countries. Now, with the films available in all territories from the day after the event, the films can be shared with their peers, parents and teachers and the communication about the films can go on. Thanks to the advanced communication skills of this generation, appreciation for their adored films leads to strong word of mouth, which results in a wider range of teenagers who want to see the films.

We shouldn’t miss connecting them with European cinema. They are the future.

YAA cities/countries/partners
https://yaa.europeanfilmawards.eu/en_EN/yaa-award
YAA films on VoD platforms

FIGHT GIRL IS 2019’S YAA CHAMPION

In a truly European vote, 12-14-year-olds in 55 cities across Europe and beyond elected Johan Timmers’ FIGHT GIRL as the winner of the EFA Young Audience Award 2019.

The Dutch film is about a 12-year-old girl, Bo (Aiko Beemsterboer), who starts kickboxing when her parents are going through an acrimonious divorce. When she approaches the championships, she needs to learn how to control her emotions and at the same time accept the fact she can’t control everything. Ineke Kanters and Jan van der Zanden produce the film for The film Kitchen, with Belgium’s A Private View as co-producer. Attraction Distribution handles sales.

“IT’S A REALLY GREAT STORY ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE TRYING TO FIND THEIR OWN LIVES,” said director Timmers.

“IT’S A FILM ABOUT GIRL POWER AND THIS IS INTERESTING, I THOUGHT IT COULD BE A VERY ENERGETIC FILM.”

Having watched the three nominated films (also including Christian Lo’s LOS BANDO and Toby MacDonald’s OLD BOYS), 2,800 young cinema-lovers across Europe had the opportunity to discuss the films before electing their favourite. The results were then reported via video conference to Erfurt (Germany) where former YAA juror Ivana Noa from Belgium moderated the award ceremony. Transmitted online as a live stream, the ceremony is still available as VOD on the website yaa.europeanfilmawards.eu

The YAA continues to include various platforms for the general public to watch the nominated films: EFA Productions, EFA’s in-house production company, brings the EFA Young Audience Award films out Europe-wide on VoD platforms like iTunes, Google Play, Microsoft and Pantaflix, on the regional Balkan-platform Cinesquare, as well as on local platforms like Filmin.

EFA Productions teamed up with Under The Milky Way for this initiative with the support of Creative Europe – MEDIA Programme of the European Union, to make the nominated films available for young viewers all year around. Those who could not participate in the EFA Young Audience Award event now have the possibility to watch the nominated films online. Find out where to watch them at yaa.europeanfilmawards.eu

Moderator Ivana Noa, winning director Johan Timmers and EFA Director Marion Döring (picture: Carlo Bansini)
EFA TALKS TO THREE YOUNG PEOPLE WITH PAST EXPERIENCE OF YAA

IVANA NOA, 16, BELGIUM

By Wendy Mitchell

Why did you want to be on the EFA YAA jury?

I've always thought that kids' movies should be judged and critiqued by kids. This is not the case most of the time. Adults are deciding whether children's movies are good or not. Kids should get the chance to tell the world what they think, instead of letting adults form an opinion for everyone. This is what YAA does and what it stands for: Movies for kids, critiqued by kids. YAA gave me the chance to form an opinion without barriers and without professionals telling me what to think.

What was the experience like, and what did you learn?

I was taught to assess a movie from all perspectives: story, sound, cinematography, editing, acting, production design, costumes. I also learned how to relate to a film – to appreciate all the work and all the people engaged. Belgium also has the unique situation of having three language areas: Dutch, French and German. Every language that we spoke brought something unique.

Do you think there are enough good films made for people of your age?

There should be a lot more. I think that there is a gap of films for ages 12-17. There are numerous films for small children and adults. The small number of coming-of-age films produced, reflecting the transition problems of kids becoming adults, carry a few stereotypes.

What would you like to see more films about in the future?

I would like to see children's talent taken more seriously. Every movie's plot involving a teenager is about the parents' conflict, serving as a catalyst for developing the teenager's talent. Kids are way past that point in my opinion. More and more kids are confronted with political, social and economic problems. It is not only the emotional side that makes the person. It is also the responsibility that this generation is taking. Give the characters a plot that really shapes them into who they are aside from the influence of the family environment.

What do you think is special about going to the cinema?

Maybe it is cliché to say this, but going to the cinema for me is something very special. From the popcorn to the upcoming 4D experience. The technical capacity is so much greater -- surround sound, the big overwhelming screen. The feeling that you are a part of the film, absorbing all of your attention.

Do you think cinema has a future even though we can also watch movies at home or on our phones?

Of course it has a future. Because of the TV being invented, we did not give up black and white photography, right? Experiencing AVATAR on VR could be seen as an alternative. Though we are probably decades away from a full experience. The closest and most approachable experience is cinema.

What has been your favourite film of 2019 so far?

I still need to see ROMA and GREEN BOOK. I absolutely adored the crazy cinematography in THE FAVOURITE. The risks of including scenes filmed with a fisheye lens are dramatic. Crazy directors are the greatest.
MILICA, 16, MONTENEGRO

By Wendy Mitchell

YAA 2018 participant and part of the 2019 nomination jury.

**Why did you want to be on the EFA YAA jury?**

I wanted to be on the jury because I really love this event and award, and all of the people that work there. And also because it sounded cool to take part, and it was!

**What was the experience like, and what did you learn?**

I met so many amazing people and friends because of this. And I learned that good movies don’t always have to be high-budget ones.

**What would you like to see more films about in the future?**

I would really love to see more fantasy or high-tech, sci-fi movies because I’m a total nerd for those.

**What do you think is special about going to the cinema?**

The special thing about going to the cinema for me is the people I’m going with. I’ve actually never gone to see a movie alone, I always go with someone, whether that is my friends or family. Because while the main thing about cinema is the movies, it is also about the way you experience things and who you experience that with.

**Do you think cinema has a future even though we can also watch movies at home or on our phones?**

Yes, we can watch movies at home and on our phones, but I think that the cinema will be alive and kicking when I get old. Are you really going to wait and watch a movie after a month? Like, there is no way I’m not going to the cinema immediately to watch AVENGERS: ENDGAME, I’m not that patient!

**What has been your favourite film of 2019 so far?**

It’s a tough battle between CAPTAIN MARVEL and ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL, I can’t really wait for the newest Star Wars movie (STAR WARS: EPISODE IX), and many more to come!
Participated in the YAA 2018 and served on the 2019 nomination jury

Why did you want to participate in EFA YAA?

Since I was very young I have always liked to watch movies and evaluate them in terms of quality involving concept, characters, sound and so on. So in EFA YAA, in addition to having the great opportunity to watch the movies, I was able to to give my opinion and see others’ opinions.

What was the experience like, and what did you learn?

I really liked this experience in many ways. I was able to share my views and examine other views. I was able to see many movies giving me understanding, knowledge and ideas. I learned a lot from other people’s views and that made me realise some small details I did not notice before and think about how I should start noticing them from now on. I was also able to find different ways to share the same message thanks to the communication happening.

Do you think there are enough good films made for people of your age?

In a way there are, but at the same time there aren’t. I am always capable of finding movies which I really like and love. But if I start comparing with the children’s and adults’ sections, it makes me feel the pre-teens and teenagers section is rather small. But many pre-teens and teens will watch films from the children’s and adult’s selections anyway.

What would you like to see more films about in the future?

In the future I would like to see more of certain things. One of them is comedies for teenagers. Many adults might think that comedy is for kids or that teenagers just like normal comedies made for adults. Neither of these two statements is right. I would also like to see more real romance – many of the romance films for teenagers take a rather superficial approach to love. In the movies the characters fall in love almost at first sight which is something I think teenagers look at with a little contempt. More mystery would also be appreciated, and more animation. Since I was very young and even now I have a passion for anime. Some adults think illustration is childish but I believe the contrary. Sometimes some messages and concepts can only be so well expressed because they are an illustration. Two examples I really like would be THE ANTHEM OF THE HEART and WOLF CHILDREN.

What do you think is special about going to the cinema?

We can see the movie on a really big screen. We also go there because it has a special feeling to it, it makes watching a movie feel like a special occasion. It’s fun and exciting.

Do you think cinema has a future even though we can also watch movies at home or on our phones?

Of course it has a future. Why do people go to restaurants if they can eat at home and cook food at home? It’s the same thing. Many people love to go to the cinema with their friends, family, and so on. Even if it’s not a special occasion, going to the cinema is special.

What has been your favourite film of 2019 so far?

There have been many movies that I liked or loved this year. The ones that I loved are HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD; GLASS and ALITA: BATTLE ANGEL.
EFA asks directors and producers, what was your first cinema experience and what was special about it?

**Jamila Wenske**, producer, One/Two Films (THE TALE, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL COUPLE, FREEDOM) Germany

My first movie was THE SINGING RINGING TREE (1957), an adaptation of the fairy tale by The Brothers Grimm.

It was a rainy day (in 1980) and it seems that our kindergarten teacher thought to go to the movies was must do in a child’s education. Obviously she wasn’t aware that for five-year-old kids, this movie was even more creepy than just listening to Grimms’ fairytales. Seeing the wicked dwarf and the big brown bear, who’s actually the bewitched Prince Charming, left a strong impression on me.

We went to a famous old cinema in Berlin, which was invented by the brothers Skladanowsky in 1895 in Berlin Pankow (formerly East Berlin). Because of gentrification, the site is now a Lidl supermarket.

From my memory it was huge room with a huge screen and very impressive with cosy red velvet seats. The moment when the lights faded out and the screen was illuminated with the DEFA logo, I kind of knew deep in my heart: this is magic!

**Eran Riklis**, director (LEMON TREE, ZAYTOUN) Israel

I was born in Jerusalem but grew up in the US and from an early age was exposed to films starring Danny Kaye and Jerry Lewis and TV shows like Rawhide. But I believe I experienced my first real movie on 22 November 1963. I was at school (in New Haven, Connecticut as my father was doing secret scientific research at Yale) and around midday a kid ran in the hallways and shouted “They shot the President! They shot the President!” I ran all the way to our house on Willow Street, my parents were at work so I watched the developing drama alone and at 2:38pm, Walter Cronkite announced on CBS that “President Kennedy died at 1pm Central Standard Time…” and then he paused dramatically, filled with emotion and grief. It was a real life, unbelievable movie that would develop into a never-ending story of deep emotions, conspiracy, intrigue, twists and turns, secrets and lies, that would all drive me into wanting to be a filmmaker who brings these kind of stories to the big screen.

**Valérie Delpierre**, producer Inicia Films (SUMMER 1993) Spain

I have a few films that I remember as young audience member.

One of the first I remember is E.T. THE EXTRA TERRESTRIAL and just a few months later I saw FLASHDANCE: A cinematographic transition from childhood to adolescence.

Both were special because they brought me to other universes I would have never experienced on my own. Meeting and saving an alien or being a dancer was not that common in my real life as an 11-year-old. The films in a way gave me the opportunity to experience other lives in a short time.

When I was 15, I saw BETTY BLUE by Jean-Jacques Beineix, and I remember it because it was one of the first times I experienced such strong emotions with a character that I didn’t identify with. Betty was far from me but I travelled and empathised totally with her. Later, when I saw BURNT BY THE SUN by Nikita Mikhalkov, I was fascinated by the camera. That was one of the first times I was so consciously aware of the importance of the visuals and camera work in order to express feelings.

**Konstantinos Kontovrakis**, producer, Heretic (SON OF SOFIA, STILL RIVER) Greece

I have vague memories of cartoons. Coyotes, roadrunners, some horses and lots of laughing lost in the haze of early childhood. Technically speaking this was my first cinema experience.

But then came E.T. THE EXTRA TERRESTRIAL: A film I saw when I was six years old. A film that I anticipated. First came the poster outside the cinema that instantly caught my attention. I think I made my father promise that he would take me to watch the film. Weeks or months later (or even a few days that felt like months) came the screening, with my father and my siblings. Then came the questions “Why did he have to go home?” “Why couldn’t he stay with his friends?” I kept watching it every Sunday on my visits to my best friend, who was also as much of a fan of the film as I was -- but wasn’t every kid back in the year of 1983? In short, it was pure magic. A magic I still feel every time I watch a good film. A magic that I still cherish every time I’m struggling to make a film.
Mariam Khatchvani, director (DEDE)
Georgia

"My first film experience in the cinema was watching short films THE WEDDING, MUSICIANS, and UMBRELLA by Mikheil Kobakhidze. It was a special screening for the director's birthday. I was 17 years old and it was the most wonderful day in my life."

Rajko Grlic, director
(THE BORDER POST, THE CONSTITUTION)
Croatia

I can’t remember which was the first movie I’ve ever seen. There are two or three that I suspect might have been that, but I can’t be sure. That’s why I’d rather tell a story of the first movie I really remember and I’ve seen more than once.

Zagreb, 1959

I was 12 when, in the cinema Mosor in our neighbourhood, in the Street of the Social Revolution, I saw a German western, FREDDY UNDER FOREIGN STARS starring Austrian singer Freddy Quinn.

On my way home, I realized I had lost my wallet. I ran back, I carefully searched the place but couldn’t find it.

For the next couple of days, I kept returning to the cinema hoping someone had returned it. In an attempt to comfort me, the guy at the entrance used to let me in without the ticket.

I never managed to find the wallet, but I saw the movie FREDDY UNDER FOREIGN STARS at least 10 times.

And yet, there is just one scene from that movie that I can still remember: a cowboy is sitting by the lake, playing the guitar and singing a very sad song, in German. The lake behind him is crystal clear, the sky is blue, and the mountain tops covered in snow. I remember the feeling that the sad sound and the happy image didn’t fit together.

New York, 1993

We are having dinner at Ljubica and Žarko’s, great connoisseurs and collectors of everything related to movies. And, bit by bit, we come to the movie FREDDY UNDER FOREIGN STARS.

Our host stands up, goes to the other room and returns with a single record. Freddy and his sad cowboy song in German fill the room. It’s snowing outside, Manhattan, illuminated in its winter luxury is right in front of us. Once again, I feel the gap between the image and the sound.

Munich, 2000

I’m mixing JOSEPHINE. I am on my way back to the hotel. It’s late. It’s raining. Hungry. I’m looking for a restaurant. I enter the first one which seems decent. It is full of aging Bavarians. Some of them are solo, some of them have company. It turns out it is a restaurant frequented largely by homosexuals of a certain age.

A melody emerges from the speakers. Indeed, it’s the eponymous cowboy Freddy and his plaintive song.

Forty-one years after I first heard it, the sound had finally found its proper image.
Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurðsson, director
(UNDER THE TREE, EITHER WAY)
Iceland

The first memory I have of going to the cinema is seeing the Icelandic comedy MED ALLT A HREINU (ON TOP) with my mother back in 1983. I must have been four and it was a thrilling experience. The film stars what was the most popular band at the time in Iceland and it has a fantastic soundtrack. It is also the highest-grossing film in Icelandic film history, selling 120,000 tickets, which is an incredible number since the total population of Iceland was around 250,000 at the time. I showed the film to my four-year-old daughter a few months ago and she immediately fell in love - we watched it eight times in one week. So this initial experience must have left its mark on my genes.

Nina Bisgaard, producer, Meta Film
(BORDER)
Denmark

In Skjern, on the very west and windy coast of Denmark, was once Denmark’s biggest cinema. At least that’s how I remember this place when, in 1989, I went in there with my mom and big brother. It was perhaps summer and my dad was busy harvesting. I was four or five years old at the time, and in my hand was a little freezer bag with candy we brought from home. The film we watched was WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT. I was very fascinated by the femme fatale cartoon woman in the red dress, and the mix of cartoon characters in the adult live action scenery … but other than that I’m not sure I understood the plot and what was really going on.

Dries Phlypo, producer, A Private View
(THE BEST OF DORIEN B, ZAGROS)
Belgium

The first film I ever saw in cinema was actually STAR WARS: RETURN OF THE JEDI in 1983 when I was six years old. My parents used to take me to theatre and concerts but never went to the cinema. So it was my aunt that took me to see films. She lived in Ostend close to the sea so I probably saw the film in the Rialto, a cinema complex that closed recently to make way for apartments (a real pity). I recall that I was completely blown away by the world that was created in STAR WARS. I completely imagined that one day I could fly one of those spaceships myself. RETURN OF THE JEDI remains one of my favourite films I have ever seen.

Alexei Popogrebsky, director
(HOW I ENDED THIS SUMMER)
Russia

I watched 8 1/2 when I was 7 1/2. It was at the Filmmakers’ House of Creativity (a mix of a resort and an artistic residence) in the rural Moscow area. I stayed there during winter holidays with my father, who was a screenwriter. In the evening they would screen films, mostly classics. I attended because there were few other pastime options - there weren’t other kids to play with at the time. What other films I watched I can’t recall, but Fellini’s 8 1/2, particularly one scene from it, remains emblazoned in my memory to this day. What I saw was a man wrapped in white sheet, a hat on his head and a whip in his hand, herding an assortment of diversely (semi) dressed women and driving them upstairs into the attic. “How wonderful and bizarre is the world of adults,” I thought. Years passed, and adult life did not quite live up to that early image, but that was certainly my first formative film experience. Naturally, 8 1/2 is one of my all-time favourites.

Stefan Arsenijevic, director
(LOVE AND OTHER CRIMES)
Serbia

When I was six, my father took me to a cinema near our house to watch STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. It blew my mind. At the end of the film, Han Solo was frozen into metal, Princess Leia enslaved and the guy in a black mask chopped Luke’s hand off only to tell him he is his father. I could feel my father’s awkwardness. As we were leaving the cinema, he told me: “Maybe this film was not for your age”. I just turned to him and asked if we could see it again tomorrow? We did. Now people say I’m making depressing Eastern European films.
RESOURCES FOR FILM EDUCATION, FILM LITERACY AND FILMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

KEY ORGANISATIONS

ABCinema
http://www.abcinemaproject.eu/

Association of Danish film clubs for children and young people (DaBUF)
www.dabuf.dk/

Center for Undervisningsmidle
www.ucn.dk/cfu

Children’s Film First
http://cff.ecfaweb.org/european-film-literacy-professionals/

CinEd
https://www.cined.eu/en

Creative Europe: Support for Film Education

Ecole et cinema (CNC)
https://www.cnc.fr/professionnels/enseignants/ecole-et-cinema

European Children's Film Association (ECFA)
https://www.ecfaweb.org/

European Film Academy's Young Audience Award
https://yaa.europeanfilmawards.eu/en_EN/

European Film Agency Directors
http://www.efads.eu/

Film Literacy Europe
http://www.filmliteracyeurope.org

German Children’s Media Foundation Golden Sparrow
www.goldenerspatz.de

Into Film
https://www.intofilm.org/

KIDS Regio
https://www.kids-regio.org/

Kinobuss
https://kinobuss.ee

YOUTH FILM FESTIVALS

Ale Kino!
Poland
Dec 1-8, 2019
alekino.com

Alice in the City
Italy
October 17-27, 2019
alice.mymovies.it

Berlinale Generation
Germany
February 2020
berlinale.de

BFI Future Film Festival
UK
February 2020
whatson.bfi.org.uk/futurefilmfestival/Online/

BUFF FilmFestival
Sweden
March 2020
www.buff.se

Buster (part of CPH:PIX)
Denmark
September 23-October 6, 2019
www.cphpix.dk/buster/busterforside

Camera Zizanio
Greece
November 30-December 7, 2019
www.camerazizanio.net

Castellinaria
Switzerland
Nov 16-23, 2019
www.castellinaria.ch

Children Kinofest
Ukraine
May 31-April 9, 2019
childrenkinofest.com

Cinekid
Netherlands
October 19-25, 2019
www.cinekid.nl

Cinemagic
Northern Ireland
October 1-30, 2019
cinemagic.org.uk/festivals/belfast

Cinemira
Hungary
April 2020
filmfreeway.com/Cinemira
YOUTH FILM FESTIVALS (CONTINUED)

Doxs! Documentaries for Children and Youth
Germany
November 4-10, 2019
www.do-xs.de

EducaTIFF
Romania
May 31-June 9, 2019
tiff.ro/educatiff

El Meu Primer – My First Festival
Spain
November 9-24, 2019
elmeuprimerfestival.com

FICX for Kids
Spain
November 2019
en.fic.gijon.es/page/14750-ficx-for-kids

File*Mon
Belgium
Oct 23-Nov 10, 2019
filemon.be

Financing Forum for Kids Content
March 2020
Sweden
thefinancingforum.com

Giffoni Film Festival
Italy
July 19-27, 2019
www.giffonifilmfestival.it

Glasgow Youth Film Festival
Scotland
September 13-15, 2019
glasgowfilm.org/what-we-do/festivals/glasgow-youth-film-festival

IndieJunior
Portugal
May 2-12, 2019
indielisboa.com/en/festival-indiejunior

International Young Audience Film Festival Ale
Junior Film Fleadh
Ireland
November 2019
junior.galwayfilmfleadh.com

Kino!
Poland
December 1-8, 2019
www.filmfreeway.com/alekinofestival

Kristiansand International Children’s Film Festival
Norway
April 2020
barnefilmfestivalen.no/en/program

Just Film
Estonia
November 16-December 2, 2019
www.justfilm.ee

KinderDocs
Greece
Through May 2019
kinderdocs.com

KINOdiseea
Romania
April 2020
www.kinodiseea.ro

Leeds Young Film Festival
UK
April 2020

Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People
Greece
December 2019
www.olympiafestival.gr

Oulu International Children’s and Youth Film Festival
Finland
November 2019
www.oulunelokuvakeskus.fi

Schlingel International Film Festival for Children and Young Audiences
Germany
October 7-13, 2019
ff-schlingel.de

Schweizer Jugendfilmtage
Switzerland
March 2020
jugendfilmtage.ch

Stockholm International Film Festival Junior
Sweden
April 2020
www.stockholmfilmfestival.se/en/junior-0

Universal Kids Film Festival
Turkey
October 24-30, 2019
filmfreeway.com/UNIVERSALKIDSFILMFESTIVAL

Vienna International Children’s Film Festival
Austria
November 16-24, 2019
www.kinderfilmfestival.at

Zlin Film Festival
Czech Republic
May 24-June 1, 2019
www.zlinfest.cz

EFA CLOSE-UP

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