

# A RELUCTANT CONNECTION

*Rust and Bone hits a quiet but poignant rhythm*

**RUST AND BONE:** Directed by Jacques Audiard. Screenplay by Audiard and Thomas Bidegain; story by Craig Davidson. Cinematography, Stéphane Fontaine. Editing, Juliette Welfling. Music, Alexandre Desplat. Starring Marion Cotillard and Matthias Schoenaerts. Sony Pictures Classics, 2012. R. 120 minutes. ★ ★ ★ ☆

Nearly every brief summary of Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone* borders on the absurd, or at least sounds mawkishly sentimental: A young man, mostly unemployed and recently in charge of his five-year-old son, strikes up a relationship with a killer-whale trainer who is terribly injured in a freak accident. It sounds like a story that will veer into sentimental territory early, overflowing with reminders about the fragility and beauty of life. But though *Rust and Bone* has those elements, it's far more layered and subtle than its summary suggests, thanks to the magical combination of Audiard's direction and Marion Cotillard's uninhibited, prickly, incredible performance.

Cotillard's role here is entirely the opposite of her Edith Piaf. Stephanie (Cotillard) meets Ali (Matthias Schoenaerts) during a nightclub altercation. He's the bouncer who drives her home; she's the beautiful woman who is, for reasons never specified, called a slut by a man who appears to have hit her. Stephanie's a little bit of a button-pusher. She invites Ali in, which aggravates the man she



lives with, but she doesn't intend anything specific by it. She's just seeing what will happen.

Ali has just landed in Antibes, France, with his 5-year-old son in tow. They live with Ali's gruff but affectionate sister, and Ali works as a bouncer and as a security guard before finding shadier ways to make money. He says little, except that he used to fight, and it's clear that having a child is new to him. Ali only really comes alive in moments of physicality, whether boxing or picking up women who seem willing to sleep with him after one brief bit of eye contact.

Ali has more screen time, but Stephanie's story propels *Rust and Bone*. The accident that takes her legs is vague; the scene in which it happens pulses with sympathy for the animals she trains. Audiard presents violence in a very specific way, taking out the too-loud wet thuds of a fight, the shots of frightened faces; he locates the horror and fear in the quietness, the sight of a limp floating body, a pale face, a simple bruise.

Once she's out of the hospital, Stephanie calls Ali. He comes to see her, and, unintentionally, drags her back into the world. He's not trying to be selfless; she's not trying to be saved. Their relationship is pliable but thin, as his life

continues and she adjusts to the new shape of hers, finding herself in her changed body. *Rust and Bone* is deeply physical; sex and violence are key to its characters and its story, but Audiard relocates these cinematic standbys in frames full of long shadows and glaring sunlight, Alexandre Desplat's graceful, understated score draped around the edges. Class awareness hovers within every frame; ragged and tender relationships fracture and are reset, the rhythms perfect, the ties complex.

Near the end of *Rust and Bone*, another terrible thing happens. The incident makes perfect sense; the outcome does what tragedy so often does, tugging the characters closer together, snapping the last traces of resistance. But it's a too-familiar narrative note in a film that's otherwise set in a different key. Cotillard and Schoenaerts, both giving interior, suggestive, powerful performances, embody the tempo and movement of the film: Reluctant connection drives their stories, giving them (or reminding them of) reasons to keep moving, keep walking, keep turning their faces to the sun. When the film makes that explicit, its quiet strength begins to ebb. ■

## MUSIC BY BRETT CAMPBELL

# HAPPY HOMECOMING

*A handful of UO music alumni return to perform in Eugene*

Eugene has incubated more than its share of strong performers who either studied at the UO (the band Oregon, jazz singer Nancy King, Portland Cello Project founder Douglas Jenkins) or won early acclaim here (Robert Cray, Curtis Salgado) and moved on to greener pastures. This month brings a few once familiar faces back.

The UO's acclaimed music school has spawned plenty of promising jazzers in recent years, and one of the best, trumpeter and composer **Douglas Detrick**, brings his innovative **AnyWhen** sax-trumpet-bassoon-cello-guitar-drum sextet to the Jazz Station on Sunday, Feb. 3. Now based in the jazz capital of New York City, Detrick will deliver his fascinating new 10-movement suite, *The Bright and Rushing World*. AnyWhen artfully combines spontaneity and structure with composition and improvisation more organically — and engagingly — than many of the old Third Stream and fusion attempts to harmonize the worlds of jazz and classical music.

The terrific double bill also includes a UO prodigy who *did* return — trumpeter **Brian McWhorter**, who went on to become one of the country's most acclaimed contemporary music trumpeters in New York with the Meridian Arts Ensemble before returning to the UO as a faculty member. McWhorter's ensemble **Beta Collide** will perform original arrangements of music by the died-too-young Canadian



ANYWHEN

world music singer Lhasa de Sela on trumpet, sax, piano, percussion, guitar and bass.

AnyWhen's concert will feature one of Detrick's old UO profs, bassoonist **Steve Vacchi**, and one of his UO jazzing buddies, saxophonist **Hashem Assadullahi**, who will lead his own sextet in a CD release concert for his splendid all-original album, *Pieces*, at the Jazz Station Feb. 8. Along with Assadullahi's bubbly sax and easygoing compositions, the album and concert will lean heavily on the vibrant textures (and a composition) of still another UO grad, electric guitarist **Justin Morell**, and the band includes pianist **James Miley**, bassist **Tyler Abbott**, drummer **Ryan Biesack** and Assadullahi's mentor, UO prof **Steve Owen** on tenor saxophone.

Another welcome returnee, the adventurous New Zealand born flutist **Tessa Brinckman**, who used to play frequently in the area, has spent the past few years performing in Ashland's Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), where she often played the music of longtime OSF

composer Todd Barton, who has also written for the Oregon Symphony, Kronos Quartet and many others. On Saturday, Feb. 9, at the Corvallis Arts Center, she'll play a solo program featuring five different flutes, including Barton's new "Sonus Sonorus" for Baroque flute and electronics, inspired by a work by 18th-century French composer Jean-Marie Leclair; her own new *Hüzün Nar*, inspired by her travels in Istanbul and the work of famed Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk; and music by Australian composer Ross Edwards and American composers Shirish Korde, Alex Shapiro and Jennifer Higdon.

Another musician who performed at the OSF Green Show for many years, guitarist **David Rogers**, enlists two more OSF vets, baroque dancers **Daniel Stephens** and **Judy Kennedy** (in period costume), along with Portland Baroque Orchestra cellist **Joanna Blendulf** and UO harpist **Laura Zaerr** to perform music by Lully and Beauchamps from the great French satirical playwright Moliere's first *comédie-ballet*, 1661's *Les Facheux*, on Feb. 10 at First United Methodist Church.

On Feb. 9 at Beall Hall, the **Oregon Mozart Players** perform early 20th-century chamber orchestra arrangements (sketched or completed by composer Arnold Schoenberg) of Gustav Mahler's most ravishing work, *The Song of the Earth* (based on Chinese poetry), and Claude Debussy's gentle, otherworldly *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, which was also the world-changing prelude to the musical upheaval of the 20th-century. On Feb. 11 at Beall, the **Eugene Symphonic Band** plays music by Shostakovich, Leonard Bernstein and more — including two band members, clarinetist **James Ragland** and euphonist **Donald Kelley**, another former Duck. On Feb. 6 at Beall, soprano **Laura Wayte** and pianist **David Riley** will perform a repertoire by the great Spanish impressionist Falla, Mozart and Chabrier, with help from fellow UO faculty members, bassoonist **Steve Vacchi** and oboist **Melissa Peña**, accompanied by art by Eugene's **Helen Liu**. ■