

**UWM French and  
the Union Theatre present  
The 24th Annual Festival of Films in French**

**February 12-21, 2021**

Covid oblige ....

The 24th Festival of Films in French is back this February.

It is a mini festival -- to be sure -- with 6 feature-length films and a short available for streaming from the currently virtual UWM Union cinema.

Music and dance permeate this year's festival that travels from the early 1960s to the late 2010s with films that reflect the pulse and breath of our times, register long-standing social unrest as well as engage our vulnerabilities and resistance with the short poetic allegory of the human predicament of *Mbas mi*. From rural to urbanscapes, rhythms, moves and languages transport us from Mali to Cuba, Burundi and Rwanda, Madagascar and France and the island of Gorée. The films and documentaries offer intimate portraits following a young single mother's struggle to school her daughter in Madagascar (*Haingosoa*), and a young boy witnessing the chaos of civil war supplanting his idyllic Burundian childhood (*Petit pays*). They document farmers in the Périgord region of France toiling to maintain their ancestral way of life in a world of industrial agriculture (*Après l'hiver, le printemps*), the recreation of the legendary Maravillas de Mali's musical trajectory in Cuba and post-colonial Mali (*Africa mia - La fabuleuse histoire des Maravillas de Mali*) and Jean-Pierre Thorn's fifty years of film-making starting alongside the 1968 strikers and coming up to the present with the *gilets jaunes*' protests (*L'âtre parfum des immortelles*).

The Festival runs 9am Friday to midnight Sunday on each weekend

First weekend - Friday 12 - Sunday 14 February

L'âcre parfum des immortelles (The Acrid Scent of Immortals)

Jean-Pierre Thorn, 79 min, France, 2019 (French)

A bitter-sweet love song from Jean-Pierre to Joëlle, his first love and to all those who have continued the *lutte* since 1968. Indelible, the past of *Oser lutter, Oser vaincre* is our present. As he revisits the militant unionised factory workers of 1968 and the 1970s with whom he worked on the factory floor as well as their sons and daughters – the urban graffiti and hip hop artists of *Faire kiffer les anges* and *93 la belle rebelle* – he comes full circle documenting the roundabout protests of the *gilets jaunes* to assemble a socially engaged collage that lingers in contemporary music and dance. – US premiere.



Trailer: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvzgBeqTwec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvzgBeqTwec)

Petit pays (Small Country)

Eric Barbier, 111 min, France/Belgium, 2020 (French, Kirundi, Swahili)

Set in the early 1990s, the screen adaptation of Gaël Faye's eponymous novel follows the childhood of Gabriel a 10 year old boy growing up in Bujumbura, Burundi with his younger sister Ana, their French father and Rwandan mother. He's always getting up to mischief with his five friends until the Rwandan conflict between Hutus and Tutsis reaches Burundi, making them choose sides and effectively putting an end to their childhood innocence. – US premiere.



*Small country*, the English translation of Gaël Faye's novel, can be purchased through Boswell Book Company, on Downer avenue or [at this link](#).

Trailer: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZL-NLhmBsU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZL-NLhmBsU)

Environmental Interlude - Wednesday 17 [9am] -Thursday 18 [midnight] February

Après l'hiver, le printemps (After Winter, Spring)  
Judith Lit, 74 min, France, 2013 (French, English)

The tenacious farmers of the Périgord in South West France confront the changes wrought by large scale, industrial agriculture and European Union regulations. The film's director, an American farmer's daughter transplanted there, portrays her neighbors, their age-old farming traditions, their knowledge systems and connections to the land to document a story of global proportions about the tenuous future of small farms.



*Co-sponsored by UWM Student Involvement*

Trailer: [vimeo.com/200877538](https://vimeo.com/200877538)

Second weekend - Friday 19 - Sunday 21 February  
Haingosoa

Edouard Jouveaud, 73 min, Madagascar, 2020 (Malagasy)

Awarded Best Narrative Feature at the 15th Harlem International Film Festival, 2020.

Haingo, a young single mother from Toliara, in southern Madagascar cannot pay for her daughter's schooling. When a dance company from the capital offers her a probationary contract, she jumps at the opportunity, leaves her family and travels to Antananarivo where she has but a few days to prove herself and learn a genre that is quite different from her traditional training.



Trailer: [vimeo.com/384548880](https://vimeo.com/384548880) | [Q&A with director \(in French\)](#)

Africa mia - La fabuleuse histoire des Maravillas de Mali (The Mali-Cuba Connection - Africa mia)

Edouard Salier, 81 min, France/Cuba/Mali, 2020 (Spanish, French)

Some twenty years ago, on New Year's eve, in Bamako, Mali, the French music producer Richard Minier met Dramane Coulibali, one of the members of the iconic ensemble: Los Maravillas de Mali (les Merveilles du Mali) and decides to bring the band back. This documentary which may be thought of as a prequel to the 1999 *Buena vista club*, recounts the story of the ten young Malians selected to study music in Cuba in 1964 and who created the Afro-Cuban sound that made Fidel Castro and Che Guevara dance and that resonated from Havana to Bamako and throughout Africa.

*Co-sponsored by the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies*



Trailer: [vimeo.com/474267205](https://vimeo.com/474267205)

Special Event: Mali-Cuba Connections: a FFF talkback with Paul Cebar; Thursday Feb 25, 5-6 pm.

Mbas mi (Pandemic)

Joseph Gai Ramaka, 8 min, Poetry film, Gorée, Senegal, 2020 (French, Wolof)

A manifest of our shared humanity, *Mbas Mi* is a guided walk through the streets and along the quays of Gorée Island, resonating with incantations from Albert Camus' *The Plague*, voiced by Sidiki Bakaba. Joseph Gai Ramaka's work includes *And What If Latif Was Right* (Best Documentary Film Award at the Vues d'Afrique Festival, Montreal 2006); *Karmen Gei* (2000); *Ainsi soit-il* (Short Film Prize at Vues d'Afrique, 1997). He established the New Orleans Afrikan Film Festival in 2007 and created Gorée Island Cinema (2013) which presents the Gorée Cinema Festival.



Trailer: [vimeo.com/463648133](https://vimeo.com/463648133)

In memory of Dr. Sheldon Stone

Special thanks to Lin Haggerty for her logistical support of the FFF and development of its website, and to Daniel Murphy for his dedication and efficacy in making this Festival happen.

All films are in French and other languages w/English subtitles.

All films are **FREE** and open to the public!