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film
society

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2017

notes

LATE CHANGE OF VENUE

King's School has a Parents' Evening at the Old Palace tonight so we have been moved to the **RECITAL HALL**. Entrance from The Gallery through the steel gates to the Hayward Theatre, then bear right at the end of the path. Stewards will be present.

Jimmy's Hall

Ken Loach, UK 2014

Screenplay by Paul Laverty from the play by Donal O'Kelly

Barry Ward Jimmy
Francis Magee Mossie
Aileen Henry Alice
Simone Kirby Oonagh
Stella McGill Stella
Sorcha Fox Molly
Martin Lucey Dessie
Mikel Murfi Tommy
Shane O'Brien Finn
Denise Gough Tess
Jim Norton Father Sheridan
Aisling Franciosi Marie
Seán T. Ó Meallaigh Journalist
Karl Geary Seán
Brían F. O'Byrne
... Commander O'Keefe

From *Cathy Come Home* and *Up The Junction* in the mid 1960s to his most recent Palme d'Or winner *Daniel Blake*, Ken Loach has always been recognised, lauded, awarded and vilified as a campaigner for social justice, even though his own stance has always been different. He believes that he simply makes films whose stories are important to be told and to be heard, because they should contribute to public debate and, where



necessary, express public outrage in a democracy.

In *Jimmy's Hall* Loach focuses this outrage on the Catholic church in County Leitrim which is opposed to Jimmy's setting up of a dance hall for the young people of his community. Jimmy has returned to his native Ireland from America in 1932, bringing with him a love of jazz and a belief in the power of socialism to liberate the people. His efforts make the hall

a hub not just for the enjoyment of music and dance, but also for political awareness and debate, especially among young people.

'Reputedly Ken Loach's farewell film – though by all accounts, he may change his mind yet – Jimmy's Hall finds the director in lyrical, but typically angry, form. It tells the true story of Jimmy Gralton (Barry Ward), an Irishman who was deported from his own country without trial in 1933.

His crime – to have set up a public hall in County Leitrim, a venue for education, community events and musical shindigs both traditional and featuring the jazz that Gralton had brought back from America. Gralton, a socialist, arouses the local forces of intolerance and shocked grumblings about “jazzy music ... pelvic thrusts” and “the ‘Losangelisation’ of our people”.

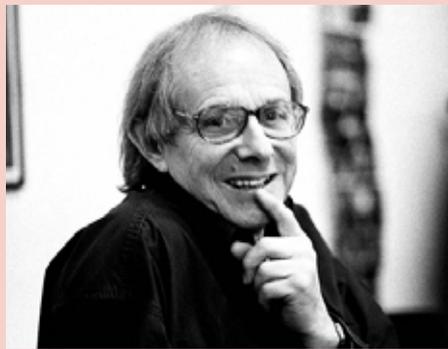
The setting and period make Jimmy’s Hall a minor-key pendant to Loach’s 2006 Palme d’Or-winning IRA epic *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*. The dialogue has something of the direct, explicatory flatness of old-school political theatre and, as often happens when Loach works with writer Paul Laverty, it can get heavy-handed at times. The approach is overtly dialectical, scrupulously presenting a position and its opposite: for example, when Andrew Scott’s reasonable priest counters the bigots with lines such as, “These are the tactics of the Ku Klux Klan.” However, something sparks thanks to Jim Norton’s robust but nuanced performance as the cantankerous, obsessive hardliner Father Sheridan, whom he brings to life with terrifying fire and not a little caustic humour.’

Jonathan Romney *The Observer*



A last word from Loach on his technical approach to the film:

‘We not only shot on film, we cut on film. It’s very good because it’s not as quick as digital cutting, so you consider what you do more carefully. It’s a much more human way of working. The film industry is like any other - it’s about speed and cutting the people doing the job. We’re going to carry on, cutting on film.’



“ What kind of views are you hoping your audience will have after seeing your film?

I hope they enjoy meeting Jimmy and the others, that they’d share and understand their dilemmas, because the same dilemmas occur time and time again when people try to do anything radical. How far do you pursue your principles even if it’s going to risk what you’ve already achieved and that’s the dilemma that Jimmy Gralton and co. face when they consider whether to actively get involved in reinstating a tenant who is being evicted. If they do that they make themselves vulnerable and if they don’t do it then they betray their principles. So it’s a dilemma and I think that’s a dilemma that people in radical organisations have all the time.

I hope they’d understand that and I hope that they’d see Jimmy Gralton in all the local campaigns that everybody can take a part in order to save a hospital, protect the NHS, to support the disabled or support the homeless, trade unionists trying to claim better wages or conditions. There are campaigns for better transport and old people, hundreds of campaigns over and over again, most of them are run by people like Jimmy Gralton who nourish the community.

In hearing about Jimmy’s story I hope that they’ll find a kinship with people who are doing equivalent work right now. Also relate to the times: we had a financial collapse in 1929 and we have one now, we’ve had a recession and mass unemployment then we’ve got one

now. The popular left hasn’t got itself organized the way it should and then we’ve had a decade of unemployment. The far right was on the march then and we’ve seen were that led in the 1930s and the far right is on the march now. So there’s lots of parallels and we need to look back and think what did they do wrong, how can we get it better. The good news now is that there are popular left movements. Syriza in Greece has done well and the parties in Spain have done well but we have been there before so I hope audiences could reflect on that.

[...] In Jimmy’s Hall, is the erotic element between Oonagh and Jimmy true? Is there evidence about it?

Not as far as we know. Oonagh is an imaginary character. But at the end of his life Jimmy got married in New York to an Irish woman who was from just a few miles away from where he lived in Ireland. So that’s really unusual.

[...] With regards to archive and its memory, how important is it for the society?

It’s central. It’s like the famous quote by Milan Kundera, “the struggle of memory against forgetting”: the struggle of the people against those in power. It’s about who writes the history and those in power write the history. So when you challenge their version of history, like we did in Ireland, they become apoplectic, they have a rage and a dedication to undermine anything that challenges their version of what happened. So keeping the record is absolutely central. ”

Ken Loach interviewed by Georgia Korossi 11polaroids.com

NEXT MONTH’S FILM IS TANGERINES (Zaza Urushadze, Georgia 2013) Monday 17 April

