

THE BETHEL CITIZEN

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# Katie Getchell and Marcel Polak bring Jewish Film Festival to Bethel

The Maine Film Festival runs Nov. 4-11 at the Gem Theater.

BY ROSE LINCOLN BETHEL CITIZEN



BETHEL — The Maine Film Festival’s first visit to Bethel will feature, “The Art of Silence,” a documentary on legendary mime Marcel Marceau that highlights his little known role saving hundreds of French Jewish children escape the Holocaust.

“This is the perfect film. It has universal appeal.” said Marcel Polak, of Woodstock, who with Katie Getchell, of Bethel, organized and funded the screening.

“Some of these partnerships are really hard ones ...,” said Getchell, “but The Gem Theater was a perfect fit. “The energy and community and network and partnership collaboration model that the Gem has brought to everything they do has made it a slam dunk.”

The Maine Film Festival runs Nov. 4-11. In addition to Bethel, the film will play in Portland, Brunswick and Bangor.

## The Art of Silence

Polak has personal connections to Marcel Marceau, to France and to the holocaust.



“I am here because somebody rescued my mother, he was a French priest...” Polak explains that while fascist France didn’t perform genocide as Germany did, the French government sent Jews to Germany to be killed. While his mother was rescued, his grandmother was murdered at Auschwitz.

“It was hard enough for Jews to survive during the Holocaust in France... He [Marcel Marceau] basically put himself at risk by saving hundreds of Jewish children. The film has archival footage, family conversations, and performance excerpts that tell Marceau’s story.

Polak and Leland Faulkner will speak briefly following the film on Nov. 5. Faulkner studied in the school of Marcel Marceau and developed his mime art at the under the mentorship of Tony Montanaro at the Celebration Barn Theater in Norway.

“Whenever we see discrimination of any minority group, we need to step forward... if we don’t help each other out, we’re going to be standing alone,” said Polak.

## Museum

Getchell is the Maine Jewish Museum Board Vice President. She recruited Polak, who is on the board, too.



The museum is in a 105 year-old synagogue at the bottom of Munjoy Hill in Portland’s East End. Contemporary art and historic exhibits fill the space. Entry and programming is free.

In 2008, the museum was created to celebrate and honor the contributions and diversity of Maine’s Jewish immigrants in the context of the American experience. One of the programs Getchell has worked on and learned from was called, “The Lost Synagogues.”

She said there were once 30 Jewish congregations in Maine, today there are half that number. The numbers began to decrease throughout the last century although in the last few years the Maine Jewish population has risen. Currently, 22, 600 Jews live in Maine (2019 census).

Getchell said she was horrified when she heard of the Israeli attack by Hamas. She said she has dear friends and loved ones living in Israel. Asked if they are o.k. She responded, “so far.”

She said the attack is a reminder of how polarized the world is. Her response, she said, is always to try bridge the differences of experience, tradition and understanding as she hopes the museum and the film screening will do.

*The Art of Silence will play at The Gem Theater, 48 Cross Street on Sunday, Nov. 5 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10; free to those 18 and under. All proceeds go to the Maine Jewish Film Festival.*



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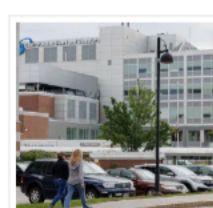
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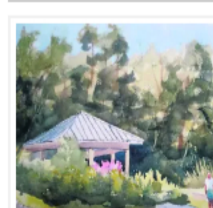


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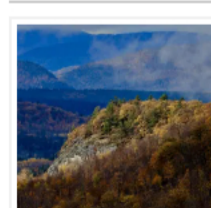
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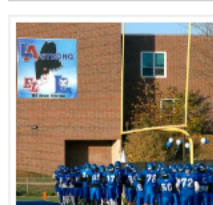


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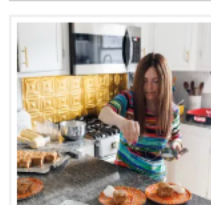
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