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Something old, something new

August 29, 2017

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FROM THE late 1800s to the early 1900s, every movie in the world was silent. Very few of these movies still exist, most of them are gone for good, having been ravaged by time, war, and the elements.



BUSTER KEATON in a scene from The General

The International Silent Film Festival Manila (ISFF Manila) – which was the first of its kind in Asia – has, for a decade now, been featuring these quite relics of a forgotten age and has been giving them sound. The films are scored live by local and, on occasion, foreign bands and acts during their screenings at the festival.

In a twist, it has also been featuring silent movies that have been made long after the advent of sound on the silver screen.

Now on its 11th year, the ISFFM will open on Thursday, Aug. 31, and run until Sunday, Sept. 3 at the Shang Cineplex of the Shangri-La Plaza Mall in Mandaluyong City.

The festival will feature films from Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Austria the United States, Japan, and the Philippines. The film screenings are open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.

THE FESTIVAL FILMS

The ISFFM opens on Aug. 31, 8 p.m., with a screening by Instituto Cervantes of Jose de Togores' 1918 classic action/comedy *El Golfo*, a love story between a noble lady and a former pickpocket she helps send to school. The film will be accompanied by a live performance of

The second day will feature a screening of Anthony Asquith's *Underground*. The film was restored by the British Film Institute after the discovery of an alternative print at the Brussels Cinematheque Royale. The movie, which dates back to 1928, "is a silent romance that reveals 1920s London life in the underground tube system," a press release explains. Dub band Goodleaf will accompany the film, which is being presented by the British Council on Sept. 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Afterwards, French-Vietnamese harpist Heloise La Harpe, pianist Ryan Villamor, and percussionist Aldous Castro will provide the accompanying music for Marcel L'Herbier's *L'Inhumaine* (*The New Enchantment*) at 9:30 p.m. The story of love and deceit is presented by the Embassy of France to the Philippines.



Louise Brooks in *Pandora's Box*

Instrumental rock trio Tom's Story will perform during the world premiere of Filipino-Italian director Ruben Maria Soriquez' 2017 *Una Famiglia Perfetta* (*A Perfect Family*) at 3 p.m. on Sept. 2. The experimental silent film is presented by the Philippine Italian Association and the Embassy of Italy.

In a very different performance, noted Japanese *benshi* or silent film narrator/actor/storyteller Ichiro Kataoka will provide a live

– which is about life with the Yakuza in the 1930s – that same day at 5:30 p.m. The Celso Espejo Rondalla, which plays Filipino music on traditional string instruments, accompanies the screening and narration. The film is presented by the Japan Foundation, Manila.

Meanwhile, Lourd de Veyra’s “stoner-metal quartet” Kapitan Kulam will perform during the screening of Gym Lumbera’s 2012 two-person drama about infidelity, *Taglish*, at 8 p.m. that day.

At 3 p.m. of the last day of the festival, the Embassy of Austria will screen Gustav Ucicky’s 1927 movie *Café Elektric*, the last film made and released by pioneer major film studio Sascha-Film. Starring Marlene Dietrich in a tale of love between the rich and poor, the film will be scored live by Rivermaya, one of the country’s most enduring bands.

At 5:30 p.m., Raymund Marasigan’s band Sandwich will perform along to George Wilhelm Pabst’s 1929 masterpiece *Pandora’s Box* which was based on Frank Wedekind’s controversial play. The film, screened by Goethe-Institut Philippinen, features Louise Brooks in this story about the Roaring ’20s.

The festival closes at 8 p.m. with a performance by the Flippin Soul Stompers of Clyde Bruckman performing for Buster Keaton’s 1926 comedy *The General*. The film, which is presented by the US Embassy, stars Keaton as an “ill-fated railroad engineer” during the American Civil War.

As part of the festival, there will be an exhibit at the mall’s Atrium with partner-organization Para sa Sining. Creative collaborators from this community will also present Musika x Pelikula, contemporary silent films created by their members, scored live by emerging Filipino artists at 2 p.m., 7:15 p.m., and 9:30 p.m. on Sept. 3.

For details, visit the ISFFM Facebook page at [Facebook.com/InternationalSilentFilmFestivalManila](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSilentFilmFestivalManila). – **Susan Claire Agbayani**

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Dominguez says veto an 'option' if tax reform is watered down

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Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez speaks during a briefing at the Malacañan Palace on

ECONOMIC MANAGERS said they could ask the President to veto the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion bill if it is watered down further by legislators.

“That is an option,” Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III told reporters in his office last week when asked about the government’s options if the bill’s revenue-raising provisions fall short.

They also advised President Rodrigo R. Duterte not to sign Republic Act 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, claiming it would be unaffordable and is not adequately targeted to benefit the poor.

“It’s going to be very difficult. You have to remember that we have additional expenses. We have the (free) education (law),” Mr. Dominguez said.

He said that implementing the proposal would cost the government P50 billion in the first year, some P60 billion in the second year, and about P80 billion in the succeeding year.

According to Mr. Dominguez, a diluted tax reform program along with rising costs will push the fiscal deficit past levels deemed prudent for a government’s fiscal position.

“Where are we going to get the money? It’s not really the net revenue that we are looking at, it is the deficit. Anything above 3% (of gross domestic product) is not responsible,” said the Finance chief.

He also said that a weaker revenue version of the bill would only be able to fund about half of the infrastructure projects planned under the “Build Build Build” program.

Mr. Duterte urged Congress in his second State of the Nation Address to pass the Finance department-backed tax reform bill.

Analysts from Moody’s Investors Service and Credit Suisse have said that the tax bill could lead to a credit rating upgrade as it improves the state’s weak revenue effort, which has been one of their top concerns.

Asked whether a downgraded tax reform proposal would be credit-negative, Mr. Dominguez said: “We [will] certainly risk it.”

In its current configuration, the program is expected to yield P133.8 billion in the first year of implementation. The Department of Finance however supports a version backed by the Senate President Aquilino L. Pimentel III that would generate a higher P157 billion tax take.

The tax program features a reduction of personal income tax rates, a rationalization of estate and donor taxes, while withdrawing some value-added tax exemptions, raising excise taxes on petroleum and automobiles, and introducing a sugar-sweetened beverage tax.

The program would fund the government’s ambitious P8.4 trillion infrastructure spending over the medium term, leading to projected annual economic growth of 7-8% starting next year. — **Elijah Joseph C. Tubayan**

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