

Scholar, Multi-Linguist, and Author Dr. Rory Palmieri to be Featured on Close Up Radio

BOWIE, MD, UNITED STATES, October 11, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Film historian and academic scholar Dr. Rory Palmieri is a man on a mission—a mission to bring long-overdue recognition to Miklós Jancsó, the Hungarian filmmaker who is the most under-appreciated major filmmaker of the 20th century. Despite devoting four and a half years of his life to this monumental project, Palmieri acknowledges he still has two more years to go before he can complete his manuscript. His primary hurdle? Mastering the notoriously difficult Hungarian language, an essential component for thorough research on Jancsó's work.



Palmieri's commitment to this project has tested not only his academic skills but also his perseverance and love for cinema. He shares, "I expected this would be my last year working on it, but Hungarian is so difficult; it's the most difficult language that I've tackled, and that's what much of the research is in. So, it has taken me longer than I expected."

A Lifelong Passion

Palmieri's life has been a tapestry interwoven with a love for languages, literature, and cinema. From a young age, he was drawn to the arts, learning French from the fourth grade and adding German during high school. His aptitude for languages turned into a profound tool for his academic and professional journey. "Learning a foreign language is like a really great complex, long-term word project," Palmieri explains. "It makes you see things from a different perspective."

After earning his doctorate in English with a dissertation on Sam Peckinpah, a once under appreciated figure in the world of cinema, Palmieri found himself naturally drawn to Miklós Jancsó. "Peckinpah is the master of montage," Palmieri notes, "while Jancsó is the master of the long take. These two filmmakers have greatly impacted my life, even from a young age."

A Career Shift and a Calling

Faced with hurdles in academia and the job market in the early 1980s, Palmieri transitioned to a career in government service, largely focusing on foreign language translation and reporting. It was an unexpected but invaluable training ground. "I worked nine languages in the 14 years I was there, and most of those were self-taught," he says. This rigorous language training has been instrumental in his research on Jancsó.

In 2016, Palmieri's life took another unexpected turn when he was diagnosed with chronic lymphocytic leukemia (CLL). The journey to finding effective treatment has been arduous and expensive, involving alternative therapies and international travel. Despite these personal challenges, Palmieri has remained steadfast in his dedication to his work on Jancsó.

Palmieri has been collecting Jancsó's films since 1979 and has amassed a collection that includes all of Jancsó's features and most of his shorts (many of them bootlegs from unofficial European sources, some unsubtitled)--the one major exception being his longest work by far, the ten-part 1984 tv miniseries, Doctor Faustus' Blissful Journey Through Hell--as well as most of the published critical material from around the



world. (This came in handy, because he has been at home in lockdown since 2020, due to COVID and a cancer-weakened immune system.) He has developed an unparalleled understanding and appreciation for the filmmaker's oeuvre, which was produced over the course of 60 years of filmmaking. "His films are like no one else's in the world," Palmieri says. "They are not just formally innovative but thematically rich. They explore Hungarian history in deep and unexpected ways." He believes they are as relevant today as when they were made, and to the world outside this small country as well. The oppression of people by those in power and the desire for revolution, the twin themes of this director's oeuvre, never go out of fashion.

The Quest for Recognition

Palmieri's goal is to elevate Jancsó to his rightful place in film history. He emphasizes that Jancsó's work is almost entirely unknown outside of Hungary, despite the filmmaker's critical acclaim domestically. "Jancsó's films are rarely seen; even scholars and critics who attended international film festivals often missed them. There's a lot of ignorance about this man's work," Palmieri laments. Although the director is mentioned and briefly discussed in numerous textbooks and articles in English, only a few early masterpieces have made it into film festivals and home video in the U.S., and that only recently. The bulk of this great artist's work is unavailable anywhere in the world, except perhaps in the Hungarian Film Archive in Budapest.

For Palmieri, his book is a call to action—to bring Jancsó into academic curricula, home video



releases, and broader public consciousness. "I want to promote Jancsó. I want to get his films out there and seen and discussed, because he is a major artist and has a lot of important things to say. He is unique. No one makes films like him and no one does the long take like him."

A Challenging Path

Exploring the complexity of Jancsó's work requires proficiency in multiple languages: primarily French, Italian, Romanian, and, crucially, Hungarian, with Spanish, German, Greek, and Polish useful for additional materials. "To complete this project, I need those languages," Palmieri says. "I may be the only film scholar in the world who has all these languages, which may be why there's no book on him yet in English, and only a couple in Hungarian, with a few monographs in Hungarian, Romanian, Italian, and French." He wants to include biographical information, material about the making of every film, and critical approaches to the entire oeuvre that have appeared in English and many other languages, as well as his own commentary on the films, all which will hopefully provide a solid basis for further analysis and a good resource for those wanting to supplement their viewings of the films. Ideally, this will lead to restorations and further releases of at least some of the many films still officially unavailable.

Despite the overwhelming challenges, Palmieri remains optimistic and committed. His work is both a scholarly endeavor and a deeply personal passion project. "I'm hoping and praying for the best," he says about his health. "My life seems to have led up to this project. I may be the only one who can do it."

About Dr. Rory Palmieri

Rory Palmieri is an accomplished film historian and language expert with a doctorate in English focused on American literature and film. He has worked in government service as a translator and has a long-standing passion for literature, cinema, and languages. In addition, he is an amateur filmmaker (two shorts, one feature) and has worked on other amateur films and as an extra on Hollywood productions. He is now dedicated to bringing attention to Miklós Jancsó, an obscure yet masterful filmmaker, through his upcoming manuscript, which he hopes to have published in 2026.

Close Up Radio will feature Dr. Rory A. Palmieri in an interview with Jim Masters on Tuesday, October 15th, Tuesday October 22nd, and Tuesday, October 29th at 12pm EST, and with Doug Llewelyn on Tuesday November 5th, Tuesday, November 12th, and Tuesday, November 19th at 12pm EST

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If you have any questions for our guest, please call (347) 996-3389

For more information about Dr. Rory A. Palmieri, please visit <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rory->

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