

Monsters, deadly secrets and live opera

 By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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In *Before I Fall* a popular teen girl is killed in a car crash and relives the critical day seven times, making changes in an attempt to affect the outcome; a single man raising a brilliant child prodigy and wants her to lead a normal life in *The Gifted*; *The Mummy* brings a surprising intensity and balance of wonder and thrills in an imaginative new take that ushers in a new world of gods and monsters; the quest for the truth unearths deadly secrets in the courtroom drama *The Whole Truth*; a father and daughter clash head-on when they try to rekindle their family bond in the outlandish German film *Toni Erdmann*; and opera buffs can see Renée Fleming singing her final performances of one of her signature roles in The Met Opera's lushes production of Strauss' tragicomic romance *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Before I Fall

When a popular teen girl (Zoey Deutch) is killed in a car crash, she relives the critical day seven times and makes changes in an attempt to affect the outcome; in the process, she changes as she tries to make up for previous heartless, self-absorbed behaviour and gains a better understanding of herself and others. As she evolves and makes the connections necessary to save a bullied, depressed girl's life, she comes to accept her own fate.

It is directed by Ry Russo-Young and written by Maria Maggenti, based on the 2010 novel of same name by Lauren Oliver. While there is romance and humour, this is a tale that delves deeper than most teen dramas. "Part of what was exciting to me about making a movie that takes place at this particular age is that it's a time of intensity and drama," said Russo-Young. "It's a moment when your peer relationships feel like life or death. And because of this, I think teens are often more connected to what it means to be alive than we are at other times in life."

Gifted

Frank Adler (Chris Evans) is a single man raising his spirited young niece Mary (Mckenna Grace) in a coastal town in Florida. But Mary is a brilliant child prodigy and Frank's intention that she lead a normal life are thwarted when the seven-year-old's command of mathematics comes to the attention of his formidable mother Evelyn (Lindsay Duncan) – a wealthy Bostonian whose plans for her granddaughter threaten to separate Mary and Frank. As family tensions and disconnections flare, uncle and niece find support in Roberta (Octavia Spencer), their protective landlady and best friend, and Mary's teacher Bonnie (Jenny Slate), a young woman whose concern for her student soon develops into a relationship with her

uncle as well.

It is director Marc Webb's first original film since *500 Days of Summer*. Webb is particularly pleased that *Gifted* is a movie in which all the intellectual powerhouses are women. "It's a movie where women are really brilliant and it's not done as a stunt. It's something that feels weirdly rare, I don't know why. I love the idea of having girls who are good at math, women who are good at math. A woman just won the Fields Medal in mathematics [Note: In 2014, Maryam Mirzakhani, a math professor at Sanford University, was the first woman to win the most prestigious prize in her field also known as the Nobel Prize of Mathematics.] I mean, it happens in the world but we just don't always recognise that in cinema."

Webb also thinks that fathers will respond to the message of the film, if his own reaction is any example: "I'm a forty-year-old dude, and I got choked up. All the burly grips hid behind the duvateen (light blocking fabric) because they were crying. I think men are not encouraged to feel, which I think is one of the challenges that Frank has to face, but of course men are emotional creatures too."

The Whole Truth

Defence attorney Richard Ramsay (Keanu Reeves) takes on a personal case when he swears to his widowed friend, Loretta Lassiter (Renée Zellweger), that he will keep her son Mike (Gabriel Basso) out of prison. Charged with murdering his father, Mike initially confesses to the crime. But as the trial proceeds, chilling evidence about the kind of man that Boone Lassiter (Jim Belushi) really was comes to light. While Ramsay uses the evidence to get his client acquitted, his new colleague Janelle (Gugu Mbatha-Raw) tries to dig deeper – and begins to realise that the whole truth is something she alone can uncover.

It is directed by Courtney Hunt and written by Nicholas Kazan. "What sparked my interest in *The Whole Truth* was the opportunity to stay in the point of view of a defence attorney as he tries a case where the defendant refuses to speak and, in so doing, forces the attorney even more deeply into the mindset of his client, not just being his voice in the courtroom, but being the sole voice of his defence," says Hunt.

"Every killer kills for a reason. A soldier at war is not guilty of murder when he kills the enemy, but who is to say, really, that a family home cannot become a battlefield with the enemy living under the same roof – even sharing a bedroom."

The Mummy

Tom Cruise headlines a spectacular, all-new cinematic version of the legend that has fascinated cultures all over the world since the dawn of civilisation. Thought safely entombed deep beneath the unforgiving desert, an ancient princess (Sofia Boutella of *Kingsman: The Secret Service* and *Star Trek Beyond*) whose destiny was unjustly taken from her is awakened in our current day, bringing with her malevolence grown over millennia and terrors that defy human comprehension. From the sweeping sands of the Middle East through hidden labyrinths under modern-day London, *The Mummy* brings a surprising intensity and balance of wonder and thrills in an imaginative new take that ushers in a new world of gods and monsters.

Directed by Alex Kurtzman, from a screenplay by David Koepp (*Mission: Impossible*, *War of the Worlds*) and Academy

Award winner Christopher McQuarrie (*The Usual Suspects*, *Mission: Impossible* series) and Dylan Kussman, from a screen story by Jon Spaihts (*Prometheus*, *Doctor Strange*) and Kurtzman and Jenny Lumet (*Rachel Getting Married*).

Over the course of development of *The Mummy*, global superstar Tom Cruise, who portrays soldier of fortune Nick Morton, joined the production as star and creative partner. Cruise offers that he grew up watching monster movies, and that not only inspired him to become an entertainer, but it is what drove him to this particular labour of love. "I love *The Wolf Man*, *Dracula* and *The Mummy*," he says. "It was terrifying as a child seeing these films. This movie is genuinely terrifying as well, yet it has the kind of scope and elegance of the original ones."

In their initial conversations, Cruise and his producers made a pact to honour the tradition of these monster movies, and respect what the characters mean to audiences... while giving them something entirely unexpected. Explains Cruise: "You want to see the monsters win. That's what is interesting about the way these stories are told. They both terrify us and yet you feel sympathy for them. It's transcendent."

Toni Erdmann

Director Maren Ade's outlandish and outstanding third feature film focuses on eccentric music teacher, father and practical joker Winfried Conradi (Peter Simonischek).

Following the death of his old dog, and suddenly student-less, he decides to surprise his corporate-ladder climbing daughter Ines (played by Sandra Hüller) by visiting her in Bucharest. The geographical change doesn't help the two to see eye to eye. All Winfried's corny pranks and snide jabs at her routine lifestyle of long meetings, hotel bars and performance reports do is to annoy Ines more. In an effort to rekindle their family bond, Winfried infiltrates the multinational company where Ines is a corporate strategist, disguised as her CEO's life coach, Toni Erdmann – and Winfried's alter-ego! The film is in German with English sub-titles.

Director Maren Ade and actors Peter Simonischek and Sandra Hüller discuss the film:

Der Rosenkavalier

Strauss's tragicomic romance is the final opera in the current Met: Live in HD season and is the Met's first new staging of the piece since 1969.

The opera premiered at the Court Opera, Dresden, in 1911. Set in an idealised Vienna of the past, Strauss's most popular opera concerns a wise woman of the world who is involved with a much younger lover, but ultimately is forced to accept the

laws of time, giving him up to a pretty young heiress. Hofmannsthal's fascinating libretto deftly combines comedy, dreamy nostalgic fantasy, genuine human drama, and light but striking touches of philosophy and social commentary.

The dream cast of Renée Fleming singing in her final performances of one of her signature roles as the Marschallin, and Elīna Garanča in her Met role debut as the Marschallin's young lover, Octavian, star in Strauss's grandest opera. This production also features Günther Groissböck as Baron Ochs, the Marschallin's oafish cousin; Erin Morley as Sophie, the innocent young woman who comes between the Marschallin and Octavian; Marcus Brück in his Met debut as Sophie's father, Faninal; and Matthew Polenzani as the Italian Singer.

It releases exclusively at Nouveau and select Ster-Kinekor cinemas on Saturday, 10 June for limited screenings.

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