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Film director and Saint Paul High School student Anthony Perrotta looks forward to sitting down with a bag of popcorn to watch the best in Canadian film at the fifth Focus Niagara Film Festival. This year's event will screen films at Saint Paul and IMAX Theatre in Niagara Falls. *Eddie Chau*

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NIAGARA FALLS --- After the third year of the Focus Niagara Film Festival, filmmaker and festival organizer Anthony Perrotta started to see that the region was turning into a prime destination for movie buffs in need of "a fix for pictures."

"After year three we've had some good encouragement from the community," Perrotta said. "I always thought the novelty would fade, but the exact opposite happened. When I started to see other film events in Niagara, such as Shaw Festival Film Series last January, I knew there was a direct link to Focus Niagara. It brought back the excitement and passion for filmmaking in me."

Now celebrating its fifth anniversary, the direction of Focus Niagara hasn't changed. Perrotta said it's still all about showcasing contemporary, innovative, challenging and culturally aware Canadian films which "provoke, move, and most important, entertain" the audience.

Along with screening short film and video works, something new to the film festival this year are independent feature films. Over the Nov. 3-4 weekend, Canadian films will be celebrated, embraced, and appreciated, said Perrotta of things lost at major film festivals such as Toronto International and Sundance.

"They're more about Hollywood, it's for people hungry to see Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie," he said. "If Paris Hilton shows up to your film festival, you know something is wrong."

One of the films featured at Focus Niagara is Anita Doron's *The End of Silence*, a love story that follows the life of ballerina Darya, her lover Eddie, a young antique dealer, and his old love interest Nora. The story is filled with freedom, heartbreak and friendship. Doron will introduce her film during the festival's gala presentation Nov. 4 at 7:30 p.m.

"The entire production process of *The End of Silence* was very intimate," Doron said in a phone interview from Toronto. "The film was shot in 50 days and we needed to take our time to shoot. It was a very small production crew of a few people, and that added to the intimacy of the story."

Born in Transcarpathia of the former Soviet Union, Doron was one of the youngest published poets of the country. She filmed her first film at age 12 and decades after an illegal escape from the USSR, life in Israel and two years in the army, Doron's short films premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival.

The End of Silence is her first feature film and has won several international awards including Best Feature at 2006 Canadian Filmmakers Festival and Best In Show at 2006 Female Eye Film Festival.

Doron said she looks forward to speaking at the Gala night and answering questions from the audience after her film's screening. Though she's visited the Falls on numerous occasions, she said she looks forward to the day when she'll have the opportunity to film here.

Another feature film at Focus Niagara is Perrotta's film, *Music and Me*, documenting the life of former Saint Paul High School student and musician Paul Gigliotti, the former lead vocalist of *Wave*, as he resurrects his musical voice through the production of his upcoming solo album. Gigliotti explores the issues of art, identity and ambition through the course of the short film.

Perrotta, who is also a media teacher at Saint Paul, said his students were really appreciative of *Music and Me* when screened during a class. He said it's inspiring to see that the documentary genre is not lost with this generation's youth.

All films will be screened at Saint Paul and in the IMAX Theatre in Niagara Falls. Perrotta said there was a need for an authentic place to showcase films in the community and IMAX embraced what Focus Niagara is all about. Focus Niagara's Gala Presentation will take place in the theatre with screenings of *The End of Silence* and *Hardwood*, an Academy Award-nominated documentary about the personal journey of Hubert Davis, the son of a former Harlem Globetrotter, Mel Davis, and how his father's life affected his life and those of his extended family.

Tickets are \$5 for regular screenings and \$7 for the gala.

For showtimes and more information, visit www.focusniagarafest.com.

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