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July 07 – Watershed Podcast Notes

Welcome to Watershed's podcast.

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My name is Mark Cosgrove and I'm the Head of Programme and for the next few minutes will be talking about a couple of highlights we have coming up at Watershed and the Arnolfini in Bristol.

New Crowned Hope was a festival, which took place in Vienna late last year to mark the 250th birthday of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It was headed up by celebrated opera director and all round cultural animator Peter Sellars. Sellars is responsible for some of the most innovative operas of recent times including **Nixon** in China and the **Death of Klinghoffer**. I've heard him talk and he has quite an amazing progressive and passionate take on culture, art and the possibilities it can play in social change. He very much views art as a force for change and not simply to make you feel good about consuming some high culture. He very much brings these principles to bear in the **New Crowned Hope** event.

Rather than restaging, Sellars wanted to explore themes inherent in Mozart's great work – themes of magic and transformation, truth and reconciliation and ceremonies for the dead and to open them up to contemporary experience. He also wanted to move across the art forms and to this end enlisted the help of former Rotterdam Film Festival director Simon Field and producer Keith Griffiths. Under the **New Crowned Hope** banner they commissioned six of the most innovative young film directors from across the world including Apichatpong Weeresethakul from Thailand, Tsai Ming-Liang from Taiwan and Bahman Ghobadi from Iran.

The resulting films are a unique collection and contribution to world cinema. They do not use Mozart's music in the soundtrack but rather work with the themes and the inspiration of the music. From Fri 27 July we will be screening **Darratt** directed by Mahamat-Saleh Haroun from Chad, a fable-like tale exploring themes of forgiveness.

If you are interested in finding out more about Peter Sellars - and you should be - then we are premiering a documentary about him by Bristol-based filmmaker Mark Kidel at the Arnolfini on Wed 11th July. Mark will introduce and discuss the film. Peter has also chosen a season of films, which as he says 'changed or formed my life and work'. Among their pleasures is how demanding they are – they remind us of our true stature – testing the mind and re-awakening the senses they include such gems as Jean Luc Godards **Vivre sa Vie** and Sergei paradjanov's Legend of Suram Fortress. The films are screening throughout July. For more information go to arnolfini.org.uk

John Cassavetes is one of those names who conjures up a whole cinematic value system. Independent American cinema was a genre created for and by him. Cassavetes defines a whole style of American cinema – East Coast, New York personal and intimate about real people living their real ordinary extraordinary life. He absorbed the rhythms of bee-bop jazz, the literary beat of hipster New York and the authenticity of Italian neo-realism to create some of most distinctive and influential American cinema. The influence – well he said to a young Scorsese - come on make films about what you know – the result was mean streets and the birth of the real Scorsese.

Cassavetes impact and legacy continues, I'm sure young hipster harmony Korine owes something to him. Famously Cassavetes had to get recognition in Europe before getting acknowledgement in his own country. With his groundbreaking film **Shadows**, made on a shoestring in 1959, he couldn't get a U.S. distributor. Here was an edgy, atmospheric black and white film about Inter-racial relationships set in jazz soaked coffee houses of New York with a Charlie Mingus score. It went on to win the critic's award at that year's Venice Film Festival and was subsequently released in the states. Even though his uncompromising stance made him a difficult director for the studios to bankrole and he covered his costs in a successful acting career. Indeed he is probably most familiar to the cinema-going public for his role as Mia Farrow's duplicitous husband in **Rosmary's Baby**. However it is as a director he will be increasingly remembered and appreciated, his wonderful free form energy is still as infectious and influential.

A season of his films released on new prints plays at Watershed throughout July. For more information go to **watershed.co.uk**