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“Refuge” Wins Two More Awards

CHICAGO – *The Indie Fest* (www.theindiefest.com), an international film festival, today announced winners, recognizing film professionals who demonstrate exceptional achievement in craft and creativity, and those who produce standout entertainment or contribute to profound social change. Michael O'Rourke's first short film “Refuge of Dragonflies” received two Awards of Merit. O'Rourke was recognized for his screenplay adaptation, and John Mazzei for his original score.

Based on characters in Victor Hugo's “Hunchback of Notre Dame.” O'Rourke's contemporary adaptation features an international cast and crew from 11 countries filmed on location in West Palm Beach. The film uses striking images and evocative scoring to tell the centuries-old story of the struggle between innocence and corruption, creativity and destruction, love and obsession.

“In winning these *Indies*, ‘Refuge of Dragonflies’ joins the ranks of high-profile winners of an internationally respected award,” says Thomas Baker, Ph.D., who chairs *The Indie Fest*. “Our goal is to help winners achieve the recognition they deserve.”

O'Rourke, executive producer for Shadow FX Films, earned a Master's at the University of Wyoming, worked 7 seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and co-founded Actors' Theatre (Ashland/Talent, OR) in 1982, where he served 13 years as producing artistic director. He now freelances in Chicago, and works as grant writer for the Midwest Independent Film Festival (www.midwestfilm.com). He has written 13 produced plays and the award-winning screenplay “In the Land Where Acorns Dance.”

He wrote, directed, and edited “Refuge” while attending Palm Beach Film School in West Palm Beach, Florida last year (See www.palmbeachfilmschool.com). Earlier this year O'Rourke won an *Accolade* Award of Merit for direction of his film. (See www.theacolade.net)

Mazzei has composed for film, TV, and theater and has traveled the world as an improvising accompanist for spiritual and inspirational gatherings. He first worked with O'Rourke at Actors' Theatre as music

director and accompanist for Leona Mitchell’s “Tribute to Judy Garland,” which premiered at Oregon Cabaret Theatre in 1990. “That show was a highlight for me. It taught me the value of collaboration with artists of other disciplines,” Mazzei says.

O’Rourke turned to Mazzei, now a composer for Harpo Productions, to write the original score for “Refuge.” “Michael always said ‘tell the story,’ and that has stuck with me,” Mazzei comments. “I was happy to work with him again to be able to help tell the story of our first film collaboration.” Mazzei recently completed the score for the independent feature “Meipporul,” which opened in May concurrently in the US and India. His piece “Summer Memories” was placed in episodes 1-10 of HBO’s “True Blood.” His music can be heard at www.johnmazzei.com.

“When we received news about the *The Indie Fest* awards,” O’Rourke says, “John and I were thrilled and a bit overwhelmed to be honored in the company of such amazing filmmakers from around the world.” Winning films came from Italy, Spain, France, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Spain, Brazil, Denmark, Italy, Peru, and the United States.

“Speaking of Brazil,” O’Rourke continues, “it was our great good fortune that Vilmar Borges, my film classmate and a Brazilian, agreed to be the director of photography on the project.”

“Michael and I met at film school,” Borges says in a very strong Portuguese accent, “and I remember on the first day of school we had to introduce ourselves, and this guy sitting at the back of the class—a slow talking kinda guy—telling about him and his ideas and so on and so forth. And I thought to myself, ‘Man, I think this guy eats books for breakfast.’ When we got deep into the course, I got to know Michael better, he saw my passion for cameras, and we became friends. He came to me and ask me if I wanted to be his DP, and I was very happy to accept. We did an awesome job.”

For information and photos about “Refuge,” visit www.sfxfilms.blogspot.com, or the IMDb title page at www.imdb.com/title/tt1409706/. O’Rourke can be contacted at (773) 279-9043.