



For Immediate Release

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SAG HARBOR CINEMA PRESENTS
JIMMY STEWART IN 'THE MORTAL STORM' AND
'THE ART OF MARY STEWART' EXHIBIT

Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 6pm

The Cinema will screen Frank Borzage's *The Mortal Storm*, one of Hollywood's strongest indictments of Nazi Germany released before the American entry into World War II. Members of the Stewart family will join the Cinema for an intro and Q&A, followed by a reception for the opening of exhibit "The Art of Mary Stewart" on the Cinema's third floor.

Sag Harbor, NY - Jimmy Stewart returns to the Cinema's screens on March 22nd at 6pm with Frank Borzage's acclaimed *The Mortal Storm* (1940), one of the first Hollywood films to depict the deportation of Jewish people to concentration camps in Germany. The screening will be introduced by Kelly Stewart, daughter of Jimmy Stewart, via zoom and will be followed by an in-person Q&A with David Perry, nephew of Jimmy Stewart and son of artist Mary Stewart. After the Q&A, the Cinema will host the opening of a companion exhibit on the Cinema's third floor, *The Art of Mary Stewart*, which will showcase works by Jimmy Stewart's sister, an award-winning artist in her own right, whose work during World War II forms a parallel story to that of her movie star brother.

Borzage had already depicted the rise of Nazism in *Little Man, What Now?* (1934) and *Three Comrades* (1938). But his showcasing of the regime's brutality and persecution of the Jewish people in *The Mortal Storm*, released just a year before the US entered WWII, triggered a major International diplomatic incident and chief Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels' subsequent ban on all MGM films in Germany.



Adapted from Phyllis Bottome's 1937 cautionary novel of the same name, the film stars Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullavan as Martin and Freya, two childhood friends whose world is shaken as Nazism spreads through their Alpine village and threatens Freya's father. Her family is never actually identified as Jewish, only 'non-Aryan'; however, the film had a significant impact on American public opinion for exposing Nazi methods and portraying prisoners in concentration camps. Art director Wade B. Rubottom and a team of 150 workers created a replica of a concentration camp on "Lot 3" of Culver City relying on information provided by second unit director Richard Rosson who had been interned for a month in an Austrian Nazi camp, since documentation about the camps was practically nonexistent.

In the aftermath of *The Mortal Storm*, Jimmy Stewart was the first Hollywood star to enlist in WWII, in 1941. He soon became a decorated bomber pilot and squadron commander, flying 20 missions over enemy territory and winning two Distinguished Flying Crosses and The Croix de Guerre. During the war, his sister Mary Stewart, a trained artist whose work was influenced by the Ashcan School, embarked on *The War Orphans Series*, depicting the horrors of war for children separated from their families during deportations. Later, Mary designed powerful anti-Nazi propaganda posters.

"*The Mortal Storm* is not as well known as other highlights of Jimmy Stewart's career, such as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, but — as did Capra's film — it reflects Stewart's commitment to the ideals of democracy, personal integrity and tolerance. It is also one of Frank Borzage's great films, and a groundbreaking one from a political standpoint. I was thrilled when the Stewart family approached us with the idea of a screening, with Mary Stewart's accompanying art exhibit," says Sag Harbor Cinema's Artistic Director Giulia D'Agnolo Vallan.

"Mary Stewart was deeply disturbed by the deportations and family separations going on in Europe during World War II. *The War Orphans Series* she created at that time is still relevant today," says David Perry. The screening and Q&A will be followed by a reception on the third floor and the opening of the "*The Art of Mary Stewart*."

Tickets are available at the box office or sagharborcinema.org.

ABOUT THE FILM

THE MORTAL STORM

Directed by Frank Borzage

USA, 1940; 100 mins, in English

Professor Victor Roth (Frank Morgan) enjoys a tranquil life with his family in Germany. His daughter Freya (Margaret Sullavan) is courted both by Martin (James Stewart) and Fritz (Robert Young). However, when the Nazis take control of the country, all their lives are shaken. Martin must flee to Austria because of his political stance. Professor Roth loses his job and is sent to a concentration camp when he speaks out against Hitler. Meanwhile, Fritz joins the Nazis and is obliged to hunt down Freya.

ABOUT THE STEWARTS

JAMES STEWART: Jimmy Stewart is among Hollywood's most highly honored and deeply loved men. This is not only for his professional successes, but every bit as much for his integrity, his character, and his humanitarianism. Jimmy was summoned to Hollywood and after a screen test at MGM, at the age of 27, he signed a seven year contract. In his first film in 1935, he played a reporter in *The Murder Man*, with Spencer Tracy in the lead. His first leading man role was as Margaret Sullavan's husband in *Next Time We Love*, but the film that fans found him most endearing was in 1936's charming musical, *Born to Dance* where he was given the chance to sing and dance with tap dancer Eleanor Powell. Many reviewers of the time singled out Jimmy Stewart as "the screen's brightest discovery." He made a number of other hits including *Navy, Blue and Gold*, where Director Frank Capra first took notice of this great young actor. Capra then cast him in the hit *You Can't Take it with You*, which earned the Oscar for Best Film and Director. His second teaming with Capra catapulted Jimmy Stewart to superstar status for his acclaimed performance of idealistic Senator Jefferson Smith in Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. It was this film that earned him his first Oscar nomination.

In 1940, he won an Oscar for his off-beat performance as a self-loathing gossip columnist in *The Philadelphia Story*. At the height of his early career, Stewart shocked the studio heads at MGM by enlisting in the war. During World War II, Stewart flew twenty missions over Germany as a bomber pilot, rising from a private to colonel. Until his retirement from the service in 1968, he was a Brigadier General in the Air Force Reserve, the highest ranking entertainer in the Armed Forces. He returned to Hollywood, after the war, but not to his old studio MGM. He chose instead to support a small independent company, Capra's Liberty Films, by taking the role of George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life* which earned Stewart his third Oscar nomination and was his last teaming with Director Frank Capra.

In the early fifties, Stewart became one of the first Hollywood stars to elect to work for a percentage of the profits. A major breakthrough soon to be followed by every other major motion picture star, which signified the end of the "studio system." His first profit-sharing experience was the enormously successful *Winchester '73*, the film established him as a western hero and marked the beginning of his fruitful association with Director Anthony Mann. Throughout the fifties, Stewart's versatility was illustrated by his variety of performances in *Harvey*, his fourth



Oscar nomination for his portrayal of the charming inebriate whose constant companion is the invisible six-foot high white rabbit of the title; in Cecil B. DeMille's *The Greatest Show on Earth*; in Billy Wilder's *The Spirit of St. Louis* where he personified Charles A Lindberg; and in Otto Preminger's *Anatomy of a Murder* where he portrayed a shrewd small-time lawyer who takes on a shocking murder case, winning him the New York Film Critics Award and his fifth and last Oscar nomination. He also had leading roles in three of Hitchcock's masterworks, *Rear Window*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, and *Vertigo*.

MARY STEWART: Mary Wilson Stewart was born in Indiana in 1912. She was the middle child of three and was called Doddie. This nickname was attributed to the fact that her older brother, Jim, could not say the word Darling clearly. It came out Doddie and Doddie she stayed.

Mary and Jimmy set up a stage in their basement and performed plays. One of their earliest productions was Washington crossing the Delaware, starring Jimmy as Washington with Mary and her sister, Ginnie, as patriots with paddles.

Mary's first major career decision was in choosing to go to Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon) instead of Vassar. At Tech she was popular, successful and recognized because of her obvious artistic talents. Mary was influenced by the Ashcan School and many of her early drawings and paintings depicted the lives of people living in the mining towns around Indiana. She was influenced by the work of Robert Henri, John Sloan, William Glackens, George Luks and George Bellows who work portrayed scenes of daily life, often in the city's poorer neighborhoods.

In the early years of World War II, after her famous brother became the first Hollywood star to enter the military, Mary Stewart was in New York City teaching at the Arts Student's League. The war in Europe with the rise of Nazism and Fascism had a profound influence on her art. Mary felt that the real victims of all military arrogance were the youth. In her work she depicted the horrors to children that were taking place in Europe. Her art was influenced by but not derivative of the great German artist Kathe Kollwitz, whose work was suppressed by the Nazis. Mother and Child was a recurring theme in her work, ominous and disturbing.

After the war, she and her husband, Robert Perry, a classmate of Jimmy Stewart at Princeton, moved to Bucks County, PA where she continued to paint, draw and teach, while raising four sons.

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About Sag Harbor Cinema

As a not-for-profit 501(c)3, community-based organization, Sag Harbor Cinema is dedicated to presenting the past, present and future of the Movies and to preserving and educating about



films, filmmaking, and the film-going experience in its three state-of-the-art theaters. The Cinema engages its audiences and the community year-round through dialogue, discovery, and appreciation of the moving image – from blockbusters to student shorts and everything in between. Revitalized and reimagined through unprecedented community efforts to rebuild the iconic Main Street structure after a fire nearly destroyed it in 2016, SHC continues a long historic tradition of entertainment in the heart of Sag Harbor Village.