

# Faith and Forgiveness



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Two men from vastly different walks of life want to win gold attempting the three-day Dusi Canoe Marathon in the local film, *Beyond The River*. Three lifelong buddies plan to rob the very bank that absconded with their pension fund money in the comedy, *Going In Style*. After suffering a family tragedy, a man spirals into a deep depression causing him to question his innermost beliefs and faces a crisis of faith in, *The Shack*. An undercover police officer is caught in a high stakes web of corrupt cops and the mob-controlled casino underground in, *Sleepless*. The sports drama, *Bleed For This* tells the incredible true story of one of boxing's most charismatic and colourful champions, "The Pazmanian Devil." Opera lovers can watch South African-born soprano, Elza van den Heever in the virtuosic role of Princess Elettra in Mozart's operatic masterpiece, *Idomeneo*.

## Beyond the River

Two men from vastly different walks of life have one thing in common: to win gold. But there are a few things in their way. One has a marriage on the verge of collapse. The other is on the run from the law, and his so-called life. Then there's the minor detail of them never before having competed as a team... Somewhere along the river of their lives, there's a confluence that changes both of them - forever. Through a series of unexpected events, the two men find themselves attempting the three-day Dusi Canoe Marathon as a doubles pair. But there are a few things they must overcome, not least of which are the completely different worlds they come from. They realise that the dream they both desperately desire requires them to work together, both in the boat and beyond the river.

Inspired by the true story of Siseko Ntondini and Piers Cruickshanks, who together won gold in the 2014 Dusi, *Beyond the River* delivers a nail-biting adventure story about the triumph of the human spirit. Starring Lemogang Tsipa and Grant Swanby. Directed by Craig Freimond and written by Freimond and Robbie Thorpe.

“It’s not just for canoeing people, it’s for everyone” says Swanby. “Everyone who goes to see it is going to have a really amazing film experience.”

“It’s a true South African story” says Tsipa. “You’ll see a lot of different sides of South Africa and the country.”

Freimond says, “The film is quite different. I can’t think of too many films like it. It’s got a feel-good side to it, but it has also got a lot of depth. People who’ve seen it have responded to the story, the film itself, the actors, the landscapes. People will enjoy this movie.”

## Going in Style

Oscar winners, Morgan Freeman (*Million Dollar Baby*), Michael Caine (*The Cider House Rules*, *Hannah and Her Sisters*) and Alan Arkin (*Little Miss Sunshine*) team up as lifelong buddies Willie, Joe and Albert, who decide to buck retirement and step off the straight-and-narrow for the first time in their lives when their pension fund becomes a corporate casualty. Desperate to pay the bills and come through for their loved ones, the three risk it all by embarking on a daring bid to knock off the very bank that absconded with their money.

This fun and fast-paced comedy with both heart and bite is directed by Zach Braff (*Garden State*, *Wish I Was Here*) from a screenplay by Oscar nominee Theodore Melfi (*Hidden Figures*, *St. Vincent*).

“I think audiences respond to people getting even,” offers screenwriter Theodore Melfi. “We had to approach it in a comedic way because what they’re doing is a crime, but what’s been done to them is also a crime. I have a big thing about justice and about people getting their due. For me, these guys are clearly in the right. They’ve worked 40 years and their pension is stripped from them. And what happens to Joe with his mortgage is a perfect example of the salesmanship of a bank officer to profit the bank, without regard to its customers.”

One of the ways Melfi modernised the story, he says, was “to make it more action-oriented and make the heist the crux of it, whereas the original focused more on its aftermath.” Additionally, he introduced an element of romance with the upbeat,

hot-blooded Annie, played by Ann-Margret, opposite the cautious, cynical Al, because, “I wanted to explore the idea of love and sex in later life. That’s very much a part of life that you rarely see acknowledged.”

## The Shack

After suffering a family tragedy, Mack Phillips (Sam Worthington) spirals into a deep depression causing him to question his innermost beliefs. Facing a crisis of faith, he receives a mysterious letter from God urging him to an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Despite his doubts, Mack journeys to the shack and encounters an enigmatic trio of strangers led by a woman named Papa (Octavia Spencer). Through this meeting, Mack finds important truths that will transform his understanding of his tragedy and change his life forever.

This film is based on the phenomenally successful novel, *The Shack*, by author, William P. Young that debuted and stayed on the New York Times Bestsellers List at No.1 for over 70 weeks.

It is a profoundly inspirational story about the resiliency of the human spirit in amongst unimaginable loss, as a grieving father faces the hardest decision of his life — to forgive the unforgivable.

“The most exciting thing I’ve heard from people that have dug into this as a film is that ‘it made me want to be a better person.’ This story gives people hope and I love that!” shares producer Brad Cummings.

Sam Worthington says, “We all lose a relationship or a loved one. If you look at it in a very simple way, the film offers a beautiful message that if you forgive the tragedy that hits your life, you can actually get through it. It may be extremely painful and take a long time, but forgiveness releases you, it sets you free.”

Octavia Spencer says, “I hope for people who find themselves in the same situation as Mack, who are at the precipice of redefining their lives or reaffirming their faith, that they will hopefully find their path and that Mack’s resolution will be their own.”

## Bleed For This

Based on the incredible true story of one of boxing’s most charismatic and colourful champions, this sports drama tells of Rhode Island native, Vinny Pazienza (*Miles Teller*), aka “The Pazmanian Devil.”

When a near-fatal car accident leaves him with a broken neck and the prognosis that he may never walk again, Vinny teams with trainer Kevin Rooney (Aaron Eckhart) and stages a triumphant return to the ring.

With Martin Scorsese as the film's executive producer, it artfully blends action, humour and tragedy to portray one of the greatest comebacks in the history of sports. The film was written and directed by Ben Younger (*Boiler Room*, *Prime*).

"The craziest thing is that what you see in the movie actually happened to me and I made it out alive," says former boxer, Vinny Pazienza, watching his life take shape as a film. "I look back and go, 'What the hell was I thinking, working out with screws in my skull and a broken neck with the screws right on the cusp of touching the muscles that they shouldn't be touching. The whole thing is a pretty wild."

## Sleepless

Jamie Foxx (*Django Unchained*, *White House Down*) plays an undercover Las Vegas police officer, Vincent Downs, who is caught in a high stakes web of corrupt cops and the mob-controlled casino underground. When a heist goes wrong, a crew of homicidal gangsters kidnaps Downs' teenage son. In one sleepless night he will have to rescue his son, evade an internal affairs investigation and bring the kidnappers to justice. Directed by Baran bo Odar and written by Andrea Berloff.

## Idomeneo

*Idomeneo* is set in Crete, about 1200 BC. Helen, the wife of King Menelaus of Greece, has been carried off by Paris, son

of King Priam of Troy, triggering the Trojan War. As she is also the sister-in-law of Agamemnon, several Greek kings allied with him have joined forces to lay siege to the city of Troy. One of these kings is Idomeneo (Idomeneus) of Crete. Having been away for many years, Idomeneo has, prior to his victorious return, sent ahead of him some Trojan captives, including Priam's daughter, the Princess Ilia. On her arrival in Crete she is rescued from a storm by Idomeneo's young son, Idamante, who has ruled as regent in his father's absence. The two have fallen in love. Princess Elettra, daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, also loves Idamante. After Elettra and her brother, Oreste, killed their mother and her lover, she was forced to flee their home in Argos and has taken refuge in Crete.

Elza van den Heever is joined by a stellar ensemble including Matthew Polenzani in the title role of the King of Crete, Idomeneo, with Nadine Sierra as Ilia, Alice Coote as Idamante and Alan Opie as Arbace. This classic production from Jean-Pierre Ponnelle, which has its first Met revival in over a decade this season, is under the baton of the Metropolitan Opera's famed Music Director Emeritus James Levine. He also conducted the first Met staging of this opera in 1982. The production will be shown in Nouveau and selected Ster-Kinekor cinemas from Saturday, 29 April, for limited screenings.

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## ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit [www.writingstudio.co.za](http://www.writingstudio.co.za)

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