

Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 26th August at 7:30 pm

Pablo Neruda
Cardinal Cox

Neruda (2016)

15 | 1h 47min | Chile

Director; Pablo Larraín

Stars; Gael Garcia Bernal, Luis Gnecco, Mercedes Moran

“Neruda,” an intoxicating puzzle of a movie directed by Pablo Larraín, chronicles a strange, harrowing episode from the late 1940s, when the Chilean government’s crackdown on communism drove the great poet and politician Pablo Neruda underground. Specifically, the film unravels the tricky game of cat-and-mouse between Neruda and an ambitious police inspector named Oscar Peluchonneau, who sought to track down the dissident artist whose writings had struck a dangerously resonant chord with the working class.



Pablo Neruda was a child prodigy, composing his first poems when he was 10 in 1914. Although his father tried to discourage him he had his first essay published in a local paper when he was 13 and before he was 20 he had had published many poems and articles. In his early twenties he entered the diplomatic service, serving in the Far East.

He was the Chilean consul in Madrid at the start of the Spanish Civil war, the experience of which deeply politicised him. While a consul in Paris Neruda was able to arrange for Spanish refugees to be freed from the terrible French camps to immigrate to Chile. From 1940 to 1943 he was Consul General in Mexico City and while there assisted the painter David Siqueiros (who was accused of being part of an assassination attempt upon Leon Trotsky) to go to Chile.

Upon the election of left-wing President Videla who turned upon the Communists Neruda found himself in the opposition in Chile, the events of which form the basis of the film **Neruda** (2016) and also inspired (in part) the fictional **Il Postino** (1994).

Neruda was able to return to Chile in 1952 and when Salvador Allende became President in 1970 Neruda was appointed Ambassador to France but had to give up the post due to ill-health in 1972. During the CIA-engineered coup of 1973 Neruda was taken into hospital with prostate cancer, although his death on September 23 is widely believed (though there is little evidence) to have been an assassination.

Pablo Neruda’s work encompassed both the charge eroticism of his collection *Twenty Love Poems and a Desperate Song* (1924) and strident communism. He composed poems to Stalin, and Fidel Castro. On the death of Che Guevara he wrote articles on “the loss of a great hero”, though he privately told others not to mourn for Che but rather for Luis Emilio Recabarren, the founder of the Chilean communist movement who advocated a pacifist revolution as opposed to Che’s military activities.

Widely admired around the world Neruda’s legacy is of a poet who composed works that included surrealist verse and historical epics.

Cardinal Cox has been attending screenings of the Peterborough Arts Cinema for over thirty-five years. He has held various poetry posts,

*including Poet-in-Residence of The Dracula Society for two years, toured his one-man show **High Stakes** and was co-writer of the play **Trials of Mary**.*

