Arts & Life

Quinnipiac professor Julie Buck premieres film at TIFF

By BRYCE INFALD
Staff Writer

Quinnipiac Professor of Film Julie Buck co-produced the film "The Life and Deaths of Wilson Shedd," which had its world premiere Sept. 13 at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

The film was directed by Tim Blake Nelson and stars actress Amanda Seyfried and actor Scoot McNairy. It follows a teacher at a prison who forms a connection with a death-row inmate. It explores an array of topics, including domestic abuse and prison executions.

Buck stated that the story is partially inspired by the 2015 Dannemora prison escape, where a prison employee helped two prisoners escape.

As a producer, Buck was involved in nearly every stage of the film.

"Usually I work on-set as a producer… sometimes behind the screen, but oftentimes I'm doing all the line producing, so figuring out how much things are going to cost and where we're going to shoot and hiring all of the people and then throughout post I've been involved," Buck said. "I hired the post-production supervisor and talk about which festivals we're going to do, so I'm the main creative producer with Tim."

When Nelson originally wrote the script, he did not have the film's eventual cast in mind.

"So there's been about like three different rounds of casts attached to the film, and we finally got greenlit with Seyfried and another actor, not Scoot, who had to leave…about four weeks before we started shooting, so we had to find a new actor," Buck said.

Nelson found cast members through various methods, with the help of Buck and the film's casting director, Avy Kaufman. The casting process utilized film reels, Nelson's industry connections and a separate Atlanta casting director.

"He was working on 'The Testament of Ann Lee' with Seyfried; they became really good friends, and he was like, 'Hey, do you want to read my script?' and she was like, 'I love the script; I'll do it, yes, let's do it,'" Buck said.

Before the film's premiere at TIFF, Buck traveled to Toronto early to ensure the film was ready for its world premiere.

"As a producer, I had to go in the day before with our sound designers, and we had to watch the film on the big screen to make sure levels were right," Buck said. "The theater we played in is a 1,700-seat theater, so it was huge."

The film is scheduled to play at eight more film festivals, including the Hamptons, Mill Valley and Woodstock Film Festivals, along with others that have not yet been announced.

"You have to be very careful as to where you play a film because it has to be a premiere, so… TIFF is worldwide, and then Hamptons would be (the) U.S. premiere," Buck said.

Buck discussed the satisfaction that comes from completing a film, particularly due to an eight year gap in her film production credits, which ended with the premiere of this film.

"It's nice to have a film, because I've had a bunch of different films that are in development and have been in development for a long time, and so it's nice when there's a film that (you) actually love and you care about that actually gets made," Buck said.

"The Life and Deaths of Wilson Shedd" does not have a distributor yet, so a release date has not been set. Once the film becomes accessible to the public, Buck hopes it will have a theatrical release and contend for awards.

"So we're trying to decide, we're just trying to see what the offers are going to ultimately be, but I do think that the intention is for it to be an awards film," Buck said. "Because it is a difficult film. It is the type of film that would get a lot more exposure when we talk about the actors, if they are nominated for an Oscar or for a Golden Globe or whatever it happens to be."

After over a decade of writing, cast changes and trying to get financing, Buck and Nelson created "The Life and Deaths of Wilson Shedd" and brought it to an international audience at TIFF.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY JULIE BUCK

Actress Amanda Seyfried and actor Scoot McNairy filming "The Life andDeaths of Wilson Shedd."

The Emmys had it all, except an audience

By KELSEY SWEET
Staff Writer

The show showed up, the trophies were handed out and the red carpet was packed.

The 78th Emmy Awards Sept. 14 revealed something bigger than who took home the gold: it posed more of a question about whether audiences still care about television's biggest night.

Between surprise appearances, emotional tributes and long-awaited victories, television's biggest night tried to prove it still has a place in a world where audiences can watch the highlights with a scroll of their phones.

The changing TV landscape is reflected in how the audience engaged with the Emmys themselves. Despite having the biggest stars and showcasing the most acclaimed films, people are not tuning in to watch the ceremony itself.

According to the Associated Press, the streaming ceremony drew about 6.7 million views this year, nearly 10% fewer than the previous year and one of the smallest Emmy audiences ever. In 2000, the Emmys drew nearly 22 million viewers.

The decline was not limited to the Emmys. There was a 9% drop in the views from the Oscars as well. For me, that may be the most interesting part of the Emmys. The night still celebrated television's biggest stars and honored the year's shows, but the shrinking audiences raise a larger question: are award shows still cultural events, or have they become something people experience mostly through clips and social media?

The 2026 Emmys had plenty of memorable moments, but perhaps the most interesting part of the night was not who held the trophies, but how many people were watching.

A HOST WHO KNOWS TELEVISION

Actress Mariska Hargitay, host of the 2026 Emmy Award Ceremony, opened the night with a musical performance, leaning into her decades of television familiarity from NBC's "Law & Order." The highlight was a sketch that brought singer-songwriter Taylor Swift into a fictional "SVU" storyline, one of the night's biggest celebrity surprises.

Audiences increasingly experience television through social media. Swift is a major social media-driven celebrity, and her surprise appearance quickly circulated on social media platforms. Since fewer people may be tuning in to watch live television, highly shareable celebrity moments like this can extend the reach of the program and keep it relevant online.

Swift is commonly known for dropping hints to her fans in the industry when she is undergoing some sort of project or secrecy. The press claimed that some easter eggs were "dropped."

It was already a big Emmy week for Hargitay. Before hosting the main ceremony, she had already been awarded two Emmys for "My Mom Jayne," the documentary about her mother, actress Jayne Mansfield.

From growing up with her mother in the industry to creating a path of her own, Hargitay had a very special connection to the industry.

"WIDOW'S BAY HAS ITS HIT"

The most successful winner of the evening was Apple TV's "Widow's Bay." The mix of horror and comedy won Outstanding Comedy Series and several acting and creative awards. Combined with the awards it had won in the earlier months, the show finished with 14 Emmys, the most ever won by a comedy season in a single season.

By the end of the night, Apple TV's "Widow's Bay" had emerged as the biggest winner. The show's success was one of the clearest signs of how television has been drastically changed. A series blending horror and comedy became the most awarded comedy of the season. Even after competing alongside more established television names.

But the ceremony was about more than trophies. It was a celebration of where television has been, where it is headed and the people who have shaped it.

While several programs took home major awards, the night belonged to the TV industry as a whole.

The night also raised questions about what the Emmys are rewarding and whether the ceremony still reflects the quality and cultural impact audiences expect from television's biggest award.

STARS MAKING HISTORY IN 2026 EMMYS

Matthew Rhys, a Welsh actor, made television history at the 78th Primetime Emmy Awards by achieving two unprecedented milestones in a single evening.

He ended up receiving a double win in one night. He became the first actor in Emmy history to win two Lead Actor awards on the same night for different shows, including "Widow's Bay" and Netflix's "The Beast in Me."

Rhys was not the only star making history. Jan Smart won her fifth consecutive Emmy for "Hacks," which ended its five-season run this year. Her win brought her career total to eight acting Emmys, tying her with actress Cloris Leachman and actress Julia Louis-Dreyfus.

In the drama categories, "The Pitt" won outstanding drama series for the second consecutive season while actor Noah Wyle (Dr. Michael "Robby" Robinavich) repeated his win for lead actor.

Actress Rhea Seehorn earned her first Emmy for lead actress in a drama for "Pluribus," a long-awaited victory after several nominations for "Better Call Saul."

The ceremony also made room for nostalgia. The cast of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" reunited to celebrate the show's 30th anniversary, while the original stars of "Charlie's Angels" marked the series' 50th anniversary.

I'M SORRY I CAN'T BE THERE. SAVE ME A SEAT

Some of the night's most emotional moments came during tributes of famous singers and actors. Singer-songwriter Dolly Parton, filmmaker Rob Reiner and actress Catherine O'Hara were among those remembered during the ceremony. Singer-songwriter Reba McEntire performed in tribute to Parton while Actress Jamie Lee Curtis honored Reiner during the "In Memoriam" segment.

Actor Michael J. Fox also received the Bob Hope Unitarian Award for his work supporting Parkinson's disease research. Fox was diagnosed with Parkinson's at age 29 in 1991 and publicly revealed his diagnosis in 1998. In 2000, he founded the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, which has funded more than three billion dollars in research programs.

LIGHTS OFF: UNTIL NEXT YEAR

So, while viewership has declined and social media has taken people away from actually tuning into the ceremony, the record-breaking performances, reunions and tributes showed that beyond honoring this year's winners, the ceremony still continues to shape television.

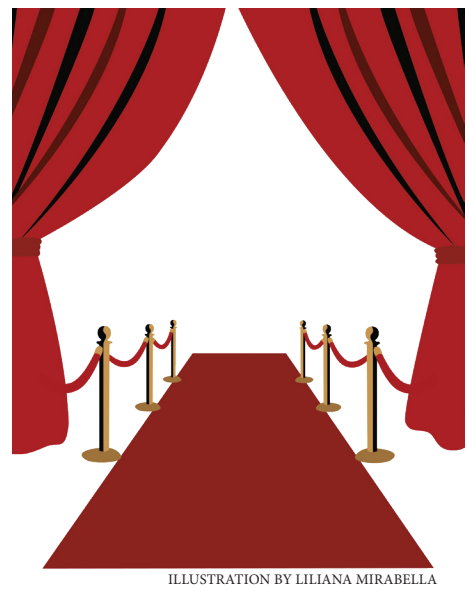


ILLUSTRATION BY LILIANA MIRABELLA