

Venice picks *The Tempest* to close festival, completes competition jury

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American director Julie Taymor's William Shakespeare adaptation *The Tempest* boasting an all-star cast including Helen Mirren, Alfred Molina and David Strathairn will close the Venice Film Festival, playing out of competition.

In a separate announcement, festival top brass said they have completed the main competition jury.

The Tempest will be released on the cusp of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's work, which debuted in 1610 and was originally regarded as a comedy before it was subsequently considered by many to be one of the English playwright's finest late romances.

The film will take the traditional spot of the closing film and screen in Venice's Sala Grande after the awards ceremony.

Taymor has made some artistic changes, most notably in changing the sex of the sorcerer Prospero into the sorceress Prospera portrayed by Oscar winning Mirren. The story line sees Prospera travel from vengeance to forgiveness during her reign over a magical island while unleashing her powers for good or ill on those around her.

Behind the scenes, Taymor was joined by Oscar winning composer Elliot Goldenthal, three time Oscar winning costumer Sandy Powell and Oscar winning editor Françoise Bonnet.

Icon Entertainment International is handling world sales on the film, which will get a December 2010 release in North America through Touchstone Pictures.

This is not Taymor's first foray into adapting works originally conceived for the stage. She has directed five operas including *Oedipus Rex*, which won recognition at the Montreal Festival Of Films On Art. Her take on *The Magic Flute* inaugurated the new series on art-oriented PBS television in the United States. She has also directed on Broadway including the musical *Spider-Man: Turn Off The Dark* with songs by Bono.

Taymor was last on the Lido in 2002 with the biopic *Frida*, about the Mexican artist Frieda Kahlo, which went on to win two Oscars.

Separately Venice has announced Andrew Lau's *Legend Of The Fist The Return Of Chen Zhen* as the second film to screen on the opening night in honour of the 70th anniversary of the birth of Bruce Lee. The film is considered a return to Lee's martial arts character Chen Zhen, who will be played by Donnie Yen.

Venice has completed the jury for its main competition. As previously announced Quentin Tarantino will serve as president at this year's edition. Tarantino will be joined by Mexican writer-director Guillermo Arriaga, whose directorial debut *The Burning Plain* played in the Venice competition in 2008. Other members are: Lithuanian actress Ingeborga Dapkunaite, seen in Hollywood productions as *Mission: Impossible* and *Seven Years In Tibet*; French New Wave director and screenwriter Arnaud Desplechin, who brought *Kings And Queen* to the Lido in 2007; American musician, composer and longtime Tim Burton collaborator Danny Elfman; film-maker Luca Guadagnino, whose critically acclaimed *I Am Love* played in Horizons last year; and Oscar winning director Gabriele Salvatores (*Mediterraneo*, 1991). The jury votes on the Golden Lion for best film, the Silver Lion for best director, the special jury prize, the Coppa Volpi awards for best actor and best actress, the Marcello Mastroianni Prize for best new young actor or actress, the Osella for best technical contribution and the Osella for best screenplay.

The full Venice line up will be announced later this week on July 29. The festival runs from September 1-11.