



Hamnet

Season 46 – 1st Film – Screening 10th September 2026

UK/US	2025
UK Release date	9 th January 2026
125 minutes	Certificate 12A
Director	Chloé Zhao
Written by	Chloé Zhao and Maggie O'Farrell
Composer	Max Richter
Photography	Lukasz Zal
Production Design	Fiona Crombie
Costume Designer	Malgosia Turzanska
Agnes	Jessie Buckley
Will	Paul Mescal
Bartholomew	Joe Alwyn
Mary (W's mother)	Emily Watson
John (W's father)	David Wilmot
Hamnet	Jacobi Jupe
Judith	Olivia Lynes
Hamlet	Noah Jupe



Welcome to our 46th Season. We open with a critically garlanded film, defined by a mesmerising performance from Jessie Buckley. The source material is Maggie O'Farrell's acclaimed 2020 novel – a historical fiction which used real characters and events to conjure a powerful story. O'Farrell co-wrote the screenplay with the director Chloé Zhao (who won the Best Director Oscar for *Nomadland*, shown by the Club in 2021). Whilst the novel weaves back and forth along a timeline, the film thankfully progresses in a more linear fashion.

A prologue notes that the names “Hamnet” and “Hamlet” were considered interchangeable in Elizabethan England. Note also that “Agnes” is used rather than the more familiar “Anne” in sympathy with written records of the time.

The film introduces Agnes as an oddball loner damned by Stratford villagers as “the child of a forest witch.” She practices falconry, is versed in herbal lore and possesses second sight. Will is younger: a “pasty faced scholar” and an aspiring if unfulfilled writer, working part-time as a tutor. Both are scarred by unhappy home lives. Agnes' parents have both died and she has a fractious relationship with her resentful step-mother (Joan) but is close to her younger brother Bartholomew. Will resists working in his brutish father's glove-making business. The couple marry in haste (she is with child at the altar) and – disowned by her step-mother – Agnes moves into Will's cramped family home. Daughter Susanna is born (with Agnes alone in the forest). Agnes

suggests her frustrated husband move to London to pursue his theatrical leanings, with the intent for the family to follow down at a later date. She gives birth to twins – Hamnet and Judith – in a notably harrowing scene. The film moves forward 11 years. The couple are still living apart with Will only an intermittent visitor, though he has sent funds back so that the family can now live in “the biggest house in Stratford.” The twins are close, even playfully swapping identities. There is a heart-wrenching family tragedy, triggering an outpouring of grief, blame and guilt and straining the marriage. Sometime later, Agnes learns that Will’s latest play uses their late son’s name and resentfully travels down to London, but fails to confront her errant husband. She watches the play at the Globe theatre and realises it is a powerful and loving paternal tribute.

And... “the rest is silence.”

The performances are all first rate, but this is Jessie Buckley’s film. A native of Co Kerry, British audiences first saw her in a 2008 reality show to find a new Nancy for a West End revival of the musical “Oliver!” Buckley came second but declined the offer to join the production as an understudy. She quickly made her mark on TV (“War and Peace”, “Chernobyl”) and in films (“Wild Rose”, “Misbehaviour” and “Women Talking” as well as “Wicked Little Letters” which we showed in January 2024).

Variety described her performance as “heroic,” Empire warned that “Buckley could well shatter your soul” and The Guardian swooned that “she is nothing short of a wonder. It is on her shoulders that the film’s knockout climax rests. As she rises to the task, it is as if she is no longer acting but instead channelling a whole history of human lamentation.” The New York Post claimed “she swings back and forth from cast iron to porcelain. The actress is thunderous, playful, grounded and ethereal.” To no-one’s surprise, Buckley was awarded the Golden Globe, BAFTA and Oscar for leading actress.

General critical and audience acclaim was almost universal, with widespread praise for the musical score, costumes and atmospheric (dark) lighting. The Times lauded the restrained direction, noting that Zhao “litters the film with seemingly throwaway yet nonetheless exquisitely subtle touches that reinforce the central themes without ever beating the audience over the head” and dubbed it “the essential Shakespeare movie.” Empire praised “a wrenching contemplation of the ‘undiscovered country’ of death and grief.” The Telegraph summarised the film as “devastating, heartbreaking, even hard to watch. But it categorically isn’t a downer, thanks in no small part to the sublime final reel.”

There were a few dissenting voices, with The Wall Street Journal dismissing “quintessential Oscar bait (highbrow foundation; maximal crying and emoting) ...dogged by intellectual anachronism.” I rather doubt many of you will be annoyed by the linguistically premature use of “Hello” and “OK” in the dialogue or by Paul Mescal swimming using the then unknown front crawl stroke; perhaps rather more of us will admire the film’s virtues, including Buckley’s towering performance.

Eugene Smith



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Club website: www.wncc.org.uk. Prefer to leave your comments on the film and your score online rather than on paper? Email to reactions@wncc.org.uk by close Tuesday 15th September
We're clearing out our DVDs and Blu-rays – please feel free to take some home!

Season 46

All films on Thursdays from 8pm



24th Sept - **I Swear** (2025/K Jones/UK/120mins/15)

Emotional (true) story of alienated Tourette's syndrome sufferer, starring Robert Aramayo with Peter Mullan and Maxine Peake. Won 2 BAFTAs.

8th Oct - **The Marching Band** (En Fanfare) (2024/E Courcol/France/103 mins/15)

Acclaimed conductor diagnosed with leukaemia bonds with a possible donor – a previously unknown older brother (who is a musician and a factory worker).

22nd Oct - **The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie** (1969/R Neame/UK/116mins/12)

An eccentric, liberated teacher (Maggie Smith in an iconic Oscar-winning performance) influences her young gels in 1930s Edinburgh, leading to conflicts with the Head.

12th Nov - **The Choral** (2025/N Hytner/UK/113mins/15)

A choral society loses its males to The Great War, so recruits teenagers pre-conscription. Stars Ralph Fiennes and Roger Allam. Co-written by Alan Bennett.

26th Nov - **Rental Family** (2025/Hikari/US-Jpn/109/12A)

A disillusioned American actor in Tokyo (Brendan Fraser) works for an agency playing stand-in roles for strangers in a touching exploration of loneliness and connection.

10th Dec - **Song Sung Blue** (2025/C Brewer/US/138mins/12A)

A married couple (Hugh Jackman and Kate Hudson) experience success and failure as a Neil Diamond tribute act ("Lightning and Thunder"). So good, so good...

7th Jan - **A Private Life** (Vie privée) (2025/R Zlotowski/France/105mins/15)

Jodie Foster plays a bi-lingual psychiatrist in Paris investigating the death of a former client whom she thinks has been murdered. Blends thrills and dark comedy.

21st Jan - **Lee** (2024/E Kuras/UK/117mins/15)

True story of multi-talented female war correspondent/photographer (Kate Winslet) who travels to the front line of WW2; reminiscences later with son (Josh O'Connor)

11th Feb - **The Ballad of Wallis Island** (2024/J Griffiths/UK/99mins/12A)

An eccentric lottery winner living alone on a remote island organises a folk music concert. A charming, understated comedy-drama with Tim Key and Sian Clifford.

25th Feb - **Rule Breakers** (2025/B Guttentag/Afgh-US/120mins/12)

Rousing feelgood and inspirational real-life story of an Afghan girls' robotics team that overcomes local opposition to enter a competition in the US.

11th Mar - **Young Mothers** (Jeunes Mères) (2025/Dardennes Bros/Bel/105mins/12A)

Five young mothers living in a shelter strive for a better future amidst challenging upbringings. Understated, graceful and moving. Presented to mark Mother's Day.

25th Mar - **Force Majeure** (Turst) (2014/R Ostlund/Swed-Fr/119 mins/15)

A Swedish family suffer in a devastating avalanche in the French Alps. A dark comedy/drama about paternal responsibilities. Remade (badly) as Downhill (2020).

8th April - **Dead of Winter** (2025/B Kirk/US/98mins/15)

In snowbound Minnesota, a grieving widow (Emma Thompson) interrupts the kidnapping of a teenage girl...and there's no cellphone signal. Filmed in Finland.

22nd April - **Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight** (2024/E Davidtz/SA/99 mins/15)

Heartfelt girl's-eye view of last days of (White) Rhodesia in 1980. Newcomer Lexi Venter won praise as 8-year-old Bobo. Writer/director Embeth Davidtz is her mother.

13th May - **Santosh** (2025/S Suri/India/120mins/15)

Gripping female-led police procedural and a thought-provoking examination of India's caste system, police corruption, and gender inequality.

27th May - **Le Havre** (2011/A Kaurismaki/France/2011/93mins/PG)

An African boy arrives by cargo ship in the port of Le Havre; an ageing (and unwell) shoe shiner takes pity on him. Our AGM will precede this film.

Comments and reactions to **Mid-August Holiday** - shown on May 28th 2026
 No of reaction slips received = **24** Average score = **6.75**

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number	0	0	0	1	1	9	7	4	2	0

Position	Film	Score	Reactions	Attendance
1	Mr. Burton	8.41	29	49
2	Touch (Snerting)	8.20	30	46
3	Conclave	8.15	34	52
4	Frantz	7.91	32	43
5	The Penguin Lessons	7.89	35	49
6	I'm Still Here	7.83	24	32
7	The Dressmaker	7.73	26	37
8	Perfect Days	7.34	29	50
9	Still Life	7.13	24	43
10	How to Make Millions...Grandma	7.12	26	43
11	Thelma	6.92	24	44
12	Chevalier	6.80	25	43
13	Mid-August Lunch	6.75	24	43
14	Girls Will be Girls	6.29	34	50
15	Maria	6.16	25	44
16	Jimi - All is By My Side	4.77	26	33
17	A Christmas Tale/Conte de Noel	3.72	25	46

Old age at its best. Charming

Wonderful joyful film

Good gentle film but how much wine does he drink, I wonder!

He had a lot of patience

What a funny little film. A bit difficult to watch at 78!!

An unusual film, Not much more I can say. I would have preferred a more enjoyable film to end the film season

Preferred the short. Old life is tedious and although I have every sympathy and empathy with the tolerant, loving, caring son I would not like to be in his shoes unable to say "no"!

Very entertaining. I need a glass of wine after watching it

Our Next Film – Thursday 24th September – I Swear

A really uplifting film

A bit of a gem

A pleasing end

Full of delightful touches. Amusing and entertaining

Rather tedious

Pleased to see the ladies enjoying themselves



Mr Aramayo is astonishing, giving an intensely committed performance of every twitch, shout and tick – The Wall Street Journal

All flaws are overcome by Aramayo's technically precise and heart-rending turn. It's astonishing – The Times

An absorbing, compassionate film – The Guardian

Empathetic, funny and myth-busting – Time Out