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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Please contact the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life at [rujff@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:rujff@rci.rutgers.edu), 848-932-4166, or visit [BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu)

### **RUTGERS JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL TO RUN OCTOBER 24 – NOVEMBER 3**

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – The fourteenth annual Rutgers Jewish Film Festival brings Central New Jersey fifteen diverse, award winning, international films, as well as discussions with filmmakers, actors, scholars, and other noteworthy speakers who enrich the festival screenings. Held October 24 – November 3, all screenings and special events will take place at the Regal Cinema Commerce Center, 2399 Route 1 South, in North Brunswick. The festival is sponsored by Rutgers' Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life and made possible through a grant from the Karma Foundation.

Through dramas, documentaries, and docudramas, the festival will explore a broad range of topics, including: Israeli society; arts and culture; adolescence and identity; and stories of escape and rescue during the Holocaust. An international array of films is presented from the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Israel, France, and Australia. Five of the films are New Jersey premieres.

Opening night features *No Place on Earth*, a 2012 documentary that tells the remarkable story of Ukrainian Jews who spent 511 days in remote gypsum caves in western Ukraine during World War II to avoid Nazi capture, the longest recorded underground survival in human history. The film's director, Janet Tobias, and Chris Nicola, the film's narrator and the spelunker who made this incredible discovery, will make guest appearances. A matinee screening of the film is offered for middle and high school groups studying the Holocaust. Opening night also features a buffet dinner and dessert reception for Patrons of the festival.

Additional notable offerings include the New Jersey premiere of the 2013 American documentary *Sukkah City*, which looks at the architectural and design competition held in 2010 in New York City to reimagine and construct this ancient structure for the twenty-first century. Special guests at the screening will be the director, Jason Hutt, and Joshua Foer, co-founder of

the design competition Sukkah City and author of *Moonlighting with Einstein*. The screening is sponsored by David and Sylvia Steiner.

Two films showcase Israeli dance (*Let's Dance*) and Israeli ethnic music (*The Ballad of the Weeping Spring*). Also, this year, the festival presents a family film screening of *The Zigzag Kid*, a riveting drama that deals with adolescence and identity, and grandparent/grandchild relationships, inspired by David Grossman's novel with the same title and featuring Isabella Rossellini.

Closing night will feature *Besa: The Promise*, a documentary that illuminates for the first time the stories of Albanian Muslims who rescued Jews during the Holocaust, revealing a little known chapter in Jewish-Muslim relations. Special guests at the screening will be Johanna Neumann, a hidden child in Albania, and Jason Williams, the film's producer.

Tickets go on sale September 30 and advance purchase is strongly recommended. For festival schedule and ticket information, visit the website [BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu), email [rujff@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:rujff@rci.rutgers.edu), or call 848-932-4166. Film tickets are priced from \$6 to \$12.

Following is a full list of films and speakers at the festival:

## **No Place on Earth** (English, German, Yiddish with English subtitles)

New Yorker Christopher Nicola, an avid spelunker, traveled to western Ukraine in 1993 to explore its vast network of gypsum caves. While navigating a remote portion, he discovered some unusual articles that indicated humans had once resided there. It became his mission to tell their story. *No Place on Earth* presents the incredible experience of Ukrainian Jews who spent 511 days in the caves during World War II to avoid Nazi capture, the longest recorded underground survival in human history.

**Screenings:** Thursday, October 24, at 7:30 p.m., with Janet Tobias, director, and Christopher Nicola, spelunker and film narrator. Sunday, October 27, at 3:00 p.m. with Janet Tobias. Thursday, October 31, at 10:15 a.m.: special free screening for school groups-advance reservation required.

## **Family Film**

### **The Zigzag Kid** (Dutch, English, and French with English subtitles)

Nono longs to be a detective like his father, a famous police inspector, but his wild nature constantly gets him into trouble. Two days before his bar mitzvah, he is sent to his uncle's to be disciplined, but a chance encounter on the train leads Nono on an adventure, giving him a chance

to prove himself and learn more about his identity. Travel to the French Riviera, entrance into a world of disguises and crazy pursuits, and answers to past secrets change Nono's life. The film is inspired by David Grossman's novel with the same title and features Isabella Rossellini.

**Screenings:** Thursday, October 24, at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, November 3, at 1:00 p.m.  
Speaker for November 3: TBA.

## **Double Feature**

### **The Boys of Terezin** (in English)

Between 1942 and 1944, teenage prisoners in Terezin documented their lives in their secret weekly magazine VEDEM. They wrote essays, stories, and poetry illuminating the boys' homesickness, fatigue, humor, and courage. The film chronicles the creation and performance of a stunning oratorio, com-missioned from American composer Lori Laitman, to set the boys' words to music, and captures the remarkable bonding that occurred between five survivors and the teenage members of the Northwest Boychoir as they rehearsed the oratorio.

*Shown with*

### **Numbered** (Hebrew with English subtitles)

An estimated 400,000 prisoners were tattooed with serial numbers at Auschwitz, of whom only a few thousand are still living today. This intimate and visually engaging documentary details the current lives of some of these survivors, their memories of the camps, and their relationships with their numbers. Numbered is an emotionally affecting portrait of memory and history, and the numbers enduring presence in survivors, and their families' lives.

**Screenings:** Sunday, October 27, at Noon with Prof. Carol Zemel, Dept. of Visual Arts, York University, Toronto. Tuesday, October 29, at 12:30 p.m. with Dr. Eva Fogelman, psychologist and author, and Leo Lowey, survivor of Terezin.

## **New Jersey Premiere**

### **Let's Dance** (Hebrew with English Subtitles)

Israeli society has raised generations of dancers and choreographers who have turned local modern dance into a national and international success story. The film presents the works of leading choreographers Ohad Naharin, Rami Be'er, and Yasmeen Godder, and opens a window on their sources of inspiration and the development of the Israeli dance scene.

*Offered in conjunction with Rutgers Dance Department.*

**Screening:** Sunday, October 27, at 12:45 p.m. with Judith Brinn Ingber, Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, University of Minnesota.

## **New Jersey Premiere**

### **Sukkah City** (in English)

In 2010, the design competition Sukkah City challenged contemporary architects and designers to reimagine and construct (within traditional parameters) this ancient structure for the twenty-first century. The contest drew 600 submissions and culminated in the construction, installation, and two-day exhibition of the twelve winning sukkahs in Union Square Park in New York City. The film tracks the competition from Jury Day, as an all-star cast of architects, academics, and critics debates the merits of the designs, and feedback is offered by some of the 200,000 New Yorkers who attended the exhibition.

*The screening is sponsored by David and Sylvia Steiner.*

**Screening:** Sunday, October 27, at 2:45 p.m. with Jason Hutt, director, and Joshua Foer, co-founder of the design competition Sukkah City and author of *Moonlighting with Einstein*.

## **New Jersey Premiere**

### **Out in the Dark** (Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles)

Nimer, an ambitious Palestinian student from the West Bank, dreams of a better life. One fateful night in Tel Aviv, he meets Roy, an Israeli lawyer, and the two men fall in love. As their relationship deepens, they are both confronted with the harsh realities of their situation: a Palestinian society that refuses to accept Nimer for his sexual identity, and an Israeli society that rejects him for his national identity. When his Israeli student visa is suddenly revoked, family loyalties are tested and they must choose between love and survival.

**Screenings:** Sunday, October 27, at 5:15 p.m. with Dr. Boaz Hagin, Film and Television Department, University of Tel Aviv. Wednesday, October 30, at 7:30 p.m. with Prof. Orna Sasson-Levy, Department of Sociology, Bar-Ilan University.

## **Winner: Best Film and Best Director, Israeli Academy Awards, 2012**

### **Fill the Void** (Hebrew with English Subtitles)

Esther, the oldest daughter in a Hasidic family from Tel Aviv, tragically dies in childbirth. A prospective bride who lives in Belgium is found for her widower, but the possibility of their only grandson moving away throws the family into turmoil. When a match is proposed instead with Shira, Esther's younger sister, she is faced with the dilemma of choosing between family loyalty and her own needs and desires.

**Screenings:** Sunday, October 27, at 7:30 p.m. with Hadas Yaron, lead actress. Wednesday, October 30, at 12:30 p.m.

### **Besa: The Promise** (English and Albanian with English subtitles)

Besa, an honor code, moved Albanians to offer safe harbor to Jewish refugees during the Holocaust. American photographer Norman Gershman documents first-person accounts of

Albanian Muslims who rescued Jews. These stories are brought to light for the first time and reveal a little known chapter in Jewish-Muslim relations. The film presents a powerful human drama that bridges generations and religions.

**Screenings:** Tuesday, October 29, at 3:30 p.m. with Norman Gershman, photographer, and Majlinda Myrto, an Albanian-American Muslim whose family members are recognized as "Righteous Gentiles." Sunday, November 3, at 7:00 p.m. with Johanna Neumann, a hidden child in Albania, and Jason Williams, film producer.

**Nominee: Best Documentary Feature, Academy Awards, 2013**

**Gatekeepers** (Hebrew with English subtitles)

For the first time, six former heads of the Shin Bet, Israel's secret service agency, agree to share their insights and reflect publicly on their actions and decisions during recent decades. These interviews, which were the subject of debate in Israeli media, focus retrospectively on critical events and developments and the controversy surrounding Israel's relations with the Palestinians in the aftermath of the Six-Day War.

**Screenings:** Tuesday, October 29, at 7:30 p.m. and Thursday, October 31, at 3:00 p.m.  
Speaker for both screenings: Prof. Jonathan Mendilow, Chair, Department of Political Science, Rider University.

**Hannah Arendt** (English and German with English subtitles)

A look at the life of philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt, who reported for the New Yorker on the war crimes trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. Arendt, a German Jewish émigré who lived and taught in New York City, wrote about the Holocaust in terms no one had ever heard before, and her reports instantly provoked highly negative responses. The film presents historical footage from the Eichmann trial and dramatizations of the New School intellectuals of that era, as well as raises questions about Arendt's life and work.

**Screening:** Wednesday, October 30, at 3:00 p.m. with Prof. Nancy Sinkoff, Department of Jewish Studies, Rutgers University

**400 Miles to Freedom** (English, Hebrew, and Amharic with English subtitles)

In 1984, the Beta Israel, a secluded 2,500-year-old community of observant Jews in the northern Ethiopian mountains, fled a dictatorship and began a secret and dangerous journey. Codirector Avishai Mekonen, a ten-year-old at the time, recounts the community's exodus out of Africa and the brutal kidnapping he endured as a child in Sudan. This life-defining event and his experiences in Israel inspire an inquiry into identity and lead him to interview African, Asian, and Latino Jews in Israel and America.

**Screenings:** Thursday, October 31, at 1:15 p.m. and Sunday, November 3, at 3:15 p.m.  
Speaker for November 3: TBA.

**Winner: Original Music, Original Soundtrack, Production Design, Costume Design, Israeli Academy Awards, 2012**

**The Ballad of the Weeping Spring** (Hebrew with English subtitles)

When the son of his former bandmate and best friend arrives with the news that his father is dying, Yosef Tawila embarks on a mission to grant his friend's final wish and reunite their legendary band for a final concert. In this riveting and colorful drama, Yosef's journey opens a window onto outstanding Israeli ethnic music and culture while testing the boundaries of friendship.

**Screenings:** Thursday, October 31, at 7:30 p.m. with Dr. Galeet Dardashti, anthropologist, New York University, and lead singer of Divahn. Saturday, November 2, at 7:15 p.m.

**New Jersey Premiere/**

**Winner: Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor, Israeli Academy Awards, 2012**

**God's Neighbors** (Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles)

Leading a brigade of Orthodox watchdogs, Avi and his friends patrol the streets of the Israeli coastal city Bat Yam to ensure strict adherence to laws of Shabbat and modesty. Their behavior, however, is often less than pious. The arrival of a non-religious young woman in the neighborhood leads to a new relationship and a crisis of faith.

**Screenings:** Saturday, November 2, at 9:30 p.m. Sunday, November 3, at 3:30 p.m.  
Invited guest for November 3: Rotem Ziesman-Cohen, actress

**New Jersey Premiere**

**The First Fagin** (in English)

This docudrama uses reenactments, interviews, and historical facts to trace the life of Isaac "Ikey" Solomon, the nineteenth-century Jewish convict widely believed to be the inspiration for one of the most infamous characters in English literature, *Oliver Twist's* Fagin. The film is based on the book *The First Fagin: The True Story of Ikey Solomon* by Judith Sackville-O'Donnell.

**Screening:** Sunday, November 3, at 12:30 p.m. with Prof. Carolyn Williams, Chair, Department of English, Rutgers University.