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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, 848-932-4165, or visit BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu

RUTGERS JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL TO RUN OCTOBER 28 – NOVEMBER 8

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – From live music and conversation with acclaimed Israeli musician David Broza, to East Coast and N.J. premieres, the sixteenth annual Rutgers Jewish Film Festival brings Central New Jersey a diverse roster of award-winning, international films, as well as discussions with filmmakers, scholars, and other noteworthy speakers who enrich the film going experience. Scheduled for October 28 – November 8, opening night festivities will be held at the Nicholas Music Center, 85 George Street, New Brunswick. The remainder of the Festival films, October 29 through November 8, will be screened at the Regal Cinema Commerce Center, 2399 Route 1 South, North Brunswick, NJ. 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 and documentaries, the festival explores a broad range of subjects, including numerous aspects of Israeli society and culture: music in Israeli society, as a bridge to peace and as a means of coping with extreme circumstances; religious differences that fuel family dramas; the history and relevance of the Zionist movement; and relationships between Arabs and Israelis. The spotlight also illuminates Jews in America through films featuring Theodore Bikel, Sholom Aleichem, and the great, but little-known, philanthropist, Julian Rosenwald. Several dramatic films from Bulgaria and Germany, *Bulgarian Rhapsody* and *Phoenix*, offer moving personal stories, set against the back drop of World War II and the Holocaust. The festival will also offer the East Coast premiere of the Hungarian and British comedy *Dough*, with a special appearance by the director and lead actor.

The New Jersey premiere of the Israeli film *East Jerusalem West Jerusalem* opens the festival. The film documents Israeli singer and guitarist David Broza as he travels to East Jerusalem to record his latest album with Israeli, Palestinian, and American musicians, in the hope of bridging cultures and moving a step closer toward peaceful coexistence. The film

screening will be followed by Q&A and live music by David Broza at the Nicholas Music Center. Opening night also includes a buffet dinner and dessert reception for festival sponsors. Opening night is cosponsored by Mason Gross School of the Arts and Rutgers' GAIA Centers 2015-2017 Biennial Theme: Global Urbanism. A matinee screening of the film will be held at the Regal Cinema Commerce Center on November 1.

Closing night features *Raise the Roof*, an American documentary about the epic efforts of Boston-based artists Rick and Laura Brown who recruited over 300 volunteers, students, and craftsman to rebuild one of the magnificent lost wooden synagogues of Poland, and how they recovered a lost Jewish world in the process. Both Rick and Laura Brown, of Handhouse Studio, will be special guests at the screening. A matinee screening of the film will be held on November 3 with Ariel Rosenblum, a volunteer on the project, speaking after the film.

Special film screenings for both high school and Rutgers college students are also on the schedule. The festival partners with Rutgers' Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center to present a free matinee screening of *Nicky's Family* for New Jersey high school students. In addition, David Broza will be a guest speaker for the Rutgers Honors College Forum "Art and Social Change," where he will focus on the topic of music as a cultural bridge. (Cosponsored by Rutgers' GAIA Centers) Moreover, a film screening and discussion of *Raise the Roof* will be held on Rutgers campus with Rick and Laura Brown, who will also visit a Jewish studies class.

For festival schedule and ticket information, or to purchase tickets online, visit the website **BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu**. To contact festival staff, email ruff@rci.rutgers.edu, or call **848-932-4166**. Film tickets are priced from \$6 to \$12. Tickets for opening night range from \$6 to \$20. Advance ticket purchase is strongly recommended as screenings often sell out prior to the festival.

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

New Jersey Premiere

EAST JERUSALEM WEST JERUSALEM (Israel, 2014, 80 minutes)

English, and Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles

Directors: Erez Miller and Henrique Cymerman

Acclaimed Israeli singer/guitarist David Broza journeys to East Jerusalem to record his latest album with Israeli, Palestinian, and American musicians. Broza hopes that bridging cultures through music can be one small step toward peaceful coexistence. The film weaves together

soulful music, personal conversations, and interviews with musicians including Steve Earle and Wyclef Jean.

**Wednesday, October 28, at 7:30 p.m. (Nicholas Music Center);
Special Guest: David Broza - Film followed by Q&A and live music**

Sunday, November 1, at 3:30 p.m. (Regal Commerce Center); Speaker: TBA

APPLES FROM THE DESERT (Israel, 2014, 94 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Directors: Arik Lubetzky and Matti Harari

In a film adaptation of the award-winning Israeli play, rebellious teenager Rebecca Abravanel breaks with the strict religious traditions of her ultra-Orthodox, Sephardic Jewish parents and journeys into the secular world. When her father tries to force her into an arranged marriage with an older widower, she runs away from home, leaving Jerusalem to join her new friend Dooby on his secular kibbutz. Her departure sets in motion a series of events that force the entire family to confront their beliefs—and one another.

**Thursday, October 29, at 3:30 p.m.; Speaker: Prof. Yael Zerubavel, Bildner Center,
Rutgers**

Sunday, November 8, at 3:30 p.m.

ROCK IN THE RED ZONE (Israel, USA, 2014, 87 minutes)

English and Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Laura Bialis

For the past eight years, the southern Israeli town of Sderot has endured almost daily attacks by Qassam rockets launched from Gaza. *Rock in the Red Zone* shares the story of the people, the music, and the harsh realities of life in this besieged town through the voices of Sderot's musical elite and those of the up-and-coming musicians who play in the underground rock club that doubles as a bomb shelter.

Sunday, November 1, at 7:30 p.m.; Guest speaker: Laura Bialis, director, via Skype

THE ZIONIST IDEA (USA, 2015, 160 minutes)

English, and Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles

Directors: Oren Rudavsky and Joseph Dorman

The Zionist Idea is a feature-length exploration of the one of the most influential, controversial, and urgently relevant political ideologies of the modern era. With origins in late nineteenth-century Europe, Zionism was born of both the Jewish confrontation with modernity and the renewed persecution of Jews throughout Europe. Today, amid unceasing religious conflict in the Middle East, how do Americans understand the meaning, history, and future of the movement?

Sunday, November 8, at Noon; Special guest: Joseph Dorman, director

A BORROWED IDENTITY (Israel, 2014, 104 minutes)

Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles • Director: Eran Riklis

Eyad, a Palestinian-Israeli teenager who wins a scholarship to an elite Jerusalem boarding school, is an outsider struggling to fit in with the Jewish-Israeli culture in the late 1980s. Through the school's community service initiative, he befriends Jonathan, who suffers from muscular dystrophy, and is embraced by Jonathan's mother as a member of the family. As war looms, Eyad discovers love and disappointment, and makes a life-changing decision that alters the course of his future. Sayed Kashua based the script on his debut novel.

Sunday, November 1, at 12:45 p.m.

Thursday, November 5, at 3:30 p.m.

Speaker for both screenings: Ibrahim Miari, Hebrew Language Program, University of Pennsylvania, and professional actor

THE FAREWELL PARTY (Germany, Israel, 2014, 93 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles; Directors: Sharon Maymon and Tal Granit

Nominated for 14 Israeli Academy Awards, this film takes on a serious subject and treats it with a unique blend of compassion and humor. A group of friends at a Jerusalem retirement home decide to help their terminally ill friend take his death into his own hands. When rumors of their assistance begin to spread, more and more people ask for their help, raising thorny and emotional questions.

Saturday, October 31, at 9:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 3, at 7:30 p.m.; Speaker: Dr. Daniel Rosenblatt, critical care specialist, John F. Kennedy Medical Center

THE LAST MENTSCH (France, Germany, Switzerland, 2014, 93 minutes)

English, and German, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Hungarian with English subtitles

Director: Pierre-Henry Salfati

Born Menachem Teitelbaum, Marcus escaped Auschwitz, only to reject his Jewish past. He so effectively creates a new identity for himself that the rabbis refuse his appeal for burial in Cologne's Jewish cemetery when he faces his own mortality. Determined to reestablish his Jewish ancestry, Marcus enlists the help of a young Turkish woman and the unlikely duo takes a road trip that changes them both.

Sunday, November 8, at 4:00 p.m.; Speaker: TBA

TO LIFE (preceded by THE TRAIN) (German, 2014, 86 minutes)

German with English Subtitles; Director: Uwe Janson

Fate has taken its toll on the aging cabaret singer Ruth. Her accidental meeting with the young German man Jonas saves her life. As memories of a tragic love affair and the Yiddish songs of her youth restore Ruth's strength, she gives Jonas, who harbors a troubling secret, the courage to stop running from his own chance at love—and from his future.

THE TRAIN (USA, 2015, 8 minutes)
English • Director: Asher Grodman

The film portrays a chance meeting between a young businessman and a Holocaust survivor. *The Train* is inspired by the true story of Andre Mencz, portrayed by Eli Wallach in one of his final performances.

Saturday, October 31, at 7:15 p.m.
Tuesday, November 3, at 3:30 p.m.; Speaker: TBA

BULGARIAN RHAPSODY (Bulgaria/Israel, 2014, 108 minutes)
Bulgarian, German, Ladino with English subtitles • Director: Ivan Nitchev

Set in Bulgaria during the summer of 1943, this touching story of adolescence and first love explores Bulgaria's complicity in the Holocaust.

Sunday, November 1, at 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, November 5, at 12:30 p.m.

PHOENIX (Germany, 2014, 98 minutes)
German with English subtitles • Director: Christian Petzold

Auschwitz survivor Nelly, barely recovered from surgery to restore her badly injured face, returns to Berlin in 1945. She sets out to find her husband, Johnny, hoping to discover the truth: whether the love of her life adored or betrayed her.

Thursday, October 29, at 7:30 p.m.; Speaker: Prof. Fatima Naqvi, Dept of German, Rutgers
Saturday, November 7, at 9:30 p.m.

THEODORE BIKEL: IN THE SHOES OF SHOLOM ALEICHEM
(USA, 2014, 75 minutes) English • Director: John Lollo

Portraits of Sholom Aleichem and Theodore Bikel are interwoven to create an enchanting documentary that highlights what these beloved Jewish icons had in common: wit, wisdom, and talent, shot through with humanity and Yiddishkeit. A pioneer of modern Jewish literature and champion of the Yiddish language, Sholom Aleichem created dozens of memorable characters in his stories. Bikel, whose career included more than 150 film roles and countless stage productions, was a master at bringing the writer's work to life through charismatic storytelling and rich performances.

Thursday, October 29, at 1:15 p.m.; Speaker: TBA

Sunday, November 8, at 1:00 p.m.; Special guest: John Lollo, director

ROSENWALD (USA, 2014, 90 minutes)

English • Director: Aviva Kempner

Julius Rosenwald may have been the greatest philanthropist you've never heard of. The son of an immigrant peddler, he overcame his humble origins to become the top executive at Sears, Roebuck. Inspired by the Jewish principle of tzedekah (charity) and the writings of Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald went on to leverage his newfound wealth and prestige by partnering with African-American communities to build more than 5,000 schools in the South and establish the Rosenwald Fund, which supported African-American artists and intellectuals.

Sunday, November 1, at 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: Alex Bethea, Vice-Principal, Paul Robeson Elementary School, and City Councilman, Trenton

East Coast Premiere

DOUGH (Hungary/United Kingdom, 2015, 94 minutes)

English • Director: John Goldschmidt

Faced with a dwindling clientele and the pressures of encroaching big box stores, Jewish baker Nat Dayan enlists the aid of Ayyash, a young Muslim apprentice, at his kosher bake shop in London's East End. When Ayyash's stash of marijuana accidentally falls into the dough, the challah starts flying off the shelves and an unlikely friendship develops between the two men. *Dough* is a warmhearted and gently humorous story about overcoming prejudice and finding redemption in unexpected places.

Thursday, November 5, at 7:30 p.m.

Special guests: John Goldschmidt, director, and Jerome Holder, actor

Saturday, November 7, at 7:00 p.m.

RAISE THE ROOF (USA, 2015, 85 minutes)

English and Polish with English subtitles; Directors: Yari and Cary Wolinsky

Fascinated by the magnificent lost wooden synagogues of Poland, Boston-based artists Rick and Laura Brown mastermind an effort to rebuild one of these architectural wonders. They recruit an international team of 300 craftsmen, students, and volunteers who employ antique tools and artisanal techniques to recreate the timber-framed roof and intricate mural designs of the synagogue in the town of Gwozdziec. Against enormous obstacles, they recover not only a lost synagogue, but a lost Jewish world.

Tuesday, November 3, at Noon

Speaker: Ariel Rosenblum, project volunteer

RUTGERS

Sunday, November 8, at 7:30 p.m.

Special guests: Rick and Laura Brown, Handhouse Studio

Monday, November 9, at 7:30 p.m. – Campus Screening