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RUTGERS JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL TO RUN OCTOBER 30 – NOVEMBER 11

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – The Rutgers Jewish Film Festival heads into its nineteenth season, Oct. 30 – Nov. 11, offering a great diversity of award-winning, international films. Fifteen feature films, five New Jersey premieres, and thought-provoking discussions with filmmakers, actors, scholars, and other noteworthy guests will be featured. The festival will be held at two venues: AMC Loews New Brunswick 18, 17 US Highway 1 South, New Brunswick (AMC); and Princeton Garden Theatre, 160 Nassau Street, Princeton (PGT). The festival is sponsored by Rutgers' Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life and supported by the Karma Foundation.

The Interpreter, the Slovakian entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2019 Academy Awards, opens the festival at the AMC with a special appearance by critically-acclaimed Austrian lead actor Peter Simonischek. Appearing in more than sixty films since 1980, Simonischek was the lead actor in the German film *Toni Erdmann*, a nominee for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2017 Oscars. An emotional journey through rural Slovakia ensues when a man is hired as an interpreter by the son of the Nazi officer who murdered his parents during World War II. A moving tale that deals with memory at both a personal and collective level, the film focuses on the unlikely friendship that develops between the two men. Opening night also includes a buffet dinner and dessert reception for festival sponsors. Two additional screenings of the film will be held: On November 4 at AMC (also attended by Simonischek), and on November 7 at PGT.

Documentary films are presented on a variety of topics including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the hijacking of an Israeli passenger bus, baseball, and identical triplets separated at birth. *Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel* is the heartwarming story of the 2017 Israeli national baseball team making it into the World Baseball Classic for the very first time. New Jersey

native Seth Kramer, a director of the film, as well as New York Mets player Ty Kelly will make a special appearance at the November 4 screening of the film at AMC.

The New Jersey premiere of *Who Will Write Our History*, a film about brave resistance fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto who risked their lives to document Jewish life in the ghetto, is a main festival feature. The film is based on Professor Samuel Kassow's book of the same name. Kassow, Trinity College, will be the guest speaker at the November 11 matinee screening at the AMC. Acclaimed director Roberta Grossman, the film's director, will make a guest appearance at the November 5 screening at PGT.

A special panel discussion, "Writing about Historical Events," with Samuel Kassow and Moshe Zonder will be held on November 11 at 2:00 p.m. at the AMC. Zonder was the head writer for *Fauda*, the enormously popular Israeli television series turned Netflix Original. A prolific screenwriter for film and television, he also has a background in investigative journalism as a reporter for the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*. Zonder is participating in the Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artist program sponsored by the Israel institute. Kassow, who wrote the book *Who Will Write Our History?: Rediscovering A Hidden Archive from the Warsaw Ghetto*, is an expert on the history of Ashkenazi Jewry. The program is free, but tickets are required for entrance.

As part of the Bildner Center's effort to support and supplement classroom learning about the Holocaust, the festival will present a free film screening for middle and high school students from across New Jersey. *A Bag of Marbles*, a moving French film that showcases the fortitude and resilience of two young Jewish brothers who must flee occupied France for the Free Zone in 1941, will be presented in partnership with Rutgers' Herbert and Leonard Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center. Henry and Bernard Schanzer, twin brothers now living in New Jersey who were hidden together as young boys on a farm in France, will speak with the students after the screening.

Award winning Israeli director Dan Wolman will speak at the closing night screening of his recent film *An Israeli Love Story*. The powerful drama, set in the tumultuous years of 1947-1948, is based on the real life story of theater director and actress Pnina Gari. A young couple must navigate both their budding romance and their commitment to the struggle for Jewish independence from the British. Dan Wolman, a towering figure in the Israeli cinematic world,

made an appearance at the 2011 Rutgers Jewish Film Festival to speak about his film *Gei Oni*, which opened the festival that year. An additional matinee showing of *An Israeli Love Story* will be held on November 8 at AMC.

For the schedule, ticket information, and speaker updates, visit the website **BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu/film**. Festival staff can also be reached by phone at 848-932-4166, or by email at rujff@sas.rutgers.edu. Film tickets are \$13 with discounted tickets for seniors and students available. Advance ticket purchase is strongly recommended as screenings often sell out prior to the festival.

Following is a full list of films and dates. Check the website for additional speakers.

New Jersey Premiere

The Body Collector (Netherlands, 2016, drama, 142 minutes)
Dutch with English subtitles • Director Tim Oliehoek

The highest-rated mini-series in Dutch television history, this true-life drama depicts the heavy price paid by journalists in their search for truth and justice. As the idealistic editor-in-chief of *De Telegraaf*, Hans Knoop becomes personally involved in the hunt for Pieter Menten, a Nazi war criminal living a lavish existence in a villa outside Amsterdam. This dramatic film follows Knoop's struggle to uncover Menten's dark past.

Thursday, November 1, 7:00 p.m., at AMC
Speaker: Avi Lewis, documentary filmmaker

Bye Bye Germany (Germany/Luxembourg/Belgium, 2017, drama, 102 minutes)
German with English subtitles • Director: Sam Garbarski

After the war, charismatic David Bermann recruits fellow Holocaust survivors for a money-making scheme to realize their shared dream of rebuilding their lives in America. Their clever strategy brings in much-needed cash, until David's secret past begins to catch up with him. Accused of collaborating with the Nazis, he must convince both his friends and American interrogators of his innocence. This dark comedy is based largely on co-screenwriter Michel Bergmann's debut novel *The Traveling Salesmen*, inspired by his own family history.

Tuesday, October 30, 3:30 p.m., at AMC
Speaker: Professor Michael Levine, Rutgers University

Wednesday, November 7, 7:30 p.m., at PGT
Speaker: Professor Benjamin Lapp, Montclair State University
Saturday, November 10, 9:30 p.m., at AMC

Disobedience (UK/Ireland/USA, 2017, drama, 114 minutes)

English • Director Sebastián Lelio

After living in New York for decades, Ronit (Rachel Weisz) returns to North London for her estranged father's funeral. Her arrival causes an uproar in the Orthodox Jewish community that shunned her decades earlier for her attraction to Esti (Rachel McAdams), her childhood best friend. Based on the novel of the same name by Naomi Alderman, *Disobedience* examines the boundaries between personal freedom and faith as Ronit and a now-married Esti rekindle their repressed romance.

Sunday, November 11, 4:00 p.m., at AMC

Speaker: Professor Michal Raucher, Dept. of Jewish Studies, Rutgers

The Dybbuk (Poland, 1937, drama – New Restoration – 123 minutes)

Yiddish with English subtitles • Director: Michał Waszyński

A rich, ethnographic tapestry of Jewish legend, *The Dybbuk* is a Yiddish-language drama based on S. Ansky's seminal play about a bride possessed by a *dybbuk*, or disconnected soul. The film weaves a mystical tale from the Hasidic shtetls of the late nineteenth century with the story of two close friends, Sender and Nisn, who vow that their first-born children will marry one another. *The Dybbuk* presented here is a new restoration of the 1937 classic, which was originally filmed just before the outbreak of World War II.

Thursday, November 8, Noon, at AMC

Speaker: Dr. Agnieszka Legutko, Columbia University

Foxtrot (Germany/France/Israel, 2017, drama, 108 minutes)

German, Arabic, and Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Samuel Maoz

When Michael and Dafna receive the news that their son Jonathan has died at his military outpost, the family struggles to cope with their unfathomable loss. The film reveals the surreal events that led to Jonathan's death, and circumstances that mirror a family and society trapped in an unending cycle of conflict. Inspired by the director's own experience as a soldier in the Israeli army, *Foxtrot* portrays a tragic yet universal story of grief as it moves from trauma to catharsis.

Winner: Israeli Academy Awards in multiple categories, including Best Film and Best Actor

Sunday, November 4, 7:00 p.m., at AMC

Speaker: Professor Yael Zerubavel, Dept. of Jewish Studies, Rutgers

Heading Home: The Tale of Team Israel (USA/Israel/Japan/South Korea, 2018, documentary, 91 min.)

English • Directors: Seth Kramer, Daniel A. Miller, and Jeremy Newberger

Heading Home follows the unlikely story of Israel's national baseball team and its advance to the World Baseball Classic for the first time in history. The 2017 line-up includes several Jewish-American Major League players - Ike Davis, Ty Kelly, and Ryan Lavarney. While some have little connection to Judaism, the players find themselves unexpectedly engaged in soul-searching during their first-ever visit to Israel, developing a sense of pride in their heritage while defending their team's reputation on the field.

Sunday, November 4, 2:45 p.m., at AMC

Speakers: Seth Kramer, director, and Ty Kelly, New York Mets

Saturday, November 10, 7:15 p.m., at AMC

The Interpreter (Slovakia, 2018, drama, 113 minutes)

German, Slovak, Russian, and Ukrainian with English subtitles • Director: Martin Šulík

When Ali is hired as an interpreter by the son of the SS officer who murdered his parents during the war, an unlikely road trip ensues. Their emotional trek takes them through the Slovak countryside, where Ali and Georg discover a nation eager to forget its role in the Holocaust. Meanwhile, the two men develop an unexpected friendship as they uncover the complexities of their overlapping stories.

Tuesday, October 30, 7:00 p.m., at AMC (OPENING NIGHT)

Speaker: Peter Simonischek, lead actor

Sunday, November 4, 11:45 a.m., at AMC

Speaker: Peter Simonischek, lead actor

Wednesday, November 7, 1:00 p.m., at PGT

An Israeli Love Story (Israel, 2017, drama, 93 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Dan Wolman

Based on the true story of theater director and actress Pnina Gari, *An Israeli Love Story* tells a passionate story of love and independence. Set in the turbulent years of 1947-1948, Eli and Margalit are torn between their love for one another and where they see their own futures in the Jewish state. Margalit seeks the spotlight in the budding theater world of Tel Aviv, while Eli's allegiance is to the struggle for Jewish independence from the British. As their commitment to each other grows, the harsh reality of life in Israel intervenes.

Thursday, November 8, 3:30 p.m., at AMC
Sunday, November 11, 7:30 p.m., at AMC (CLOSING NIGHT)
Speaker: Dan Wolman, director

The Last Suit (Argentina/Spain, 2017, drama 86 minutes)
Spanish, German, Polish, and Yiddish with English subtitles • Director: Pablo Solarz

Abraham Bursztein has built a successful life in Argentina, but at 88, finds his place in the world diminished. When his daughters arrange his move into a retirement home, he plots a secret, one-way road trip, refusing to fade quietly away. This charming film accompanies Abraham on his bittersweet journey back in time and halfway around the world, where he plans to keep a promise to the Christian friend who saved him from certain death at the end of World War II.

Preceded by

116 Cameras (USA, 2017, 16 minutes)
English • Director: Davina Pardo

A Holocaust survivor's story is preserved so that she will be able to tell it forever - through an interactive hologram.

Saturday, November 3, 9:30 p.m., at AMC
Tuesday, November 6, 11:30 a.m., at PGT
Thursday, November 8, 7:30 p.m., at AMC
Speaker: Natasha Zaretsky, Rutgers-Newark and NYU

New Jersey Premiere

Muhi: Generally Temporary (Israel/Germany, 2017, documentary, 89 minutes)
Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles
Directors: Rina Castelnouvo-Hollander and Tamir Elterman

Muhi: Generally Temporary recounts the extraordinary journey of a Palestinian boy whose spirit sustains him and the staff at the hospital where he has lived for more than seven years. Born with a congenital disease, Muhi was rushed from Gaza to Israel as an infant for a life-saving treatment. This inspiring documentary explores Israeli-Palestinian tensions through the lens of Muhi's unique circumstances, seeing past the limitations of identity, nationality, and religion and beyond the broader conflict that divides this lively child's world.

Nominated: Israeli Academy Award for Best Documentary, 2017

Sunday, November 4, 12:15 p.m., at AMC

RBG (USA, 2018, documentary, 98 minutes)
English • Directors: Betsy West and Julie Cohen

RBG provides an intimate portrait of the exceptional life and career of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, from her battles for women's equality in the workplace to her ongoing legacy on the U.S. Supreme Court and her unlikely role as a pop culture icon.

Thursday, November 1, 4:00 p.m., at AMC

Speaker: Professor Ruth Mandel, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University

Sunday, November 11, 1:15 p.m., at AMC

New Jersey Premiere

Remember Baghdad (Iraq/UK/Israel, 2016, documentary, 69 minutes)
Arabic, English, and Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Fiona Murphy

As descendants of the scholars who wrote the Babylonian Talmud, Iraqi Jews held a presence in the country for 2,600 years, until their remaining numbers were forced to flee in 1967. In this moving documentary, four families reflect with nostalgia, clarity, fear, and regret on both the heyday and turbulence of Jewish life in their native country. The film entwines archival footage with home movies and scenes from contemporary Baghdad, where one Jewish man returns to purchase a house and stake a claim to his ancestral homeland.

Sunday, November 11, 11:45 a.m., at AMC

New Jersey Premiere

Rescue Bus 300 (Israel, 2018, documentary, 75 minutes)
Arabic and Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Rotem Shamir

In 1984, four armed Palestinian terrorists hijacked a bus en route from Tel Aviv to Ashkelon, taking the passengers hostage and steering the bus towards Gaza. Through interviews with Israeli officials at the time and dramatic reenactments of the bus takeover and the daring rescue, this powerful documentary portrays the human drama and personal stories behind both the hijacking and subsequent investigation that rocked Israeli society.

Thursday, November 1, 1:15 p.m., at AMC

Speaker: Moshe Zonder, Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artist, Bildner Center, and head writer of Israeli TV series *Fauda*

Tuesday, November 6, 2:00 p.m., at PGT

Three Identical Strangers (USA, 2018, documentary, 96 minutes)
English • Director: Tim Wardle

Through a series of coincidences, three complete strangers discover they are identical triplets who were separated at birth and adopted by different families. Though they lived within 100 miles of each other, the triplets and their families did not know of the others' existence. This remarkable documentary follows the chain of events set in motion by their serendipitous reunion, unearthing an extraordinary and disturbing secret that transcends the triplets' own incredible story.

Winner: Special Jury Prize, Sundance Film Festival

Saturday, November 3, 7:15 p.m., at AMC
Sunday, November 4, 5:30 p.m., at AMC

Speaker: Professor Allan V. Horwitz, Board of Governors Professor, Department of Sociology and Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research, Rutgers

New Jersey Premiere

Who Will Write Our History (USA, 2018, documentary, 90 minutes)
English and Polish with English subtitles • Director: Roberta Grossman

Soon after the Nazis sealed the Warsaw Ghetto, a brave group of resistance fighters compiled and hid some 35,000 pages of testimonies about life in the ghetto. Gathered over three years, the documents were hidden underground in milk cans and metal cases. Combining excerpts from this secret archive with interviews and rare footage, this powerful documentary dramatizes the pen-and-paper rebellion waged by those who risked their lives to ensure that the truth would outlive them. The film is based on the book of the same name by Samuel Kassow.

Monday, November 5, 7:30 p.m., at PGT

Speaker: Roberta Grossman, director

Sunday, November 11, 3:30 p.m., at AMC

Speaker: Professor Samuel Kassow, Charles H. Northam Professor of History, Trinity College

SPECIAL PROGRAM

Writing about Historical Events: A Panel Discussion

PANELISTS:

Professor Samuel Kassow, Trinity College

Moshe Zonder, Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artist, Bildner Center



Moderator: Nancy Sinkoff, Academic Director, the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life

Zonder and Kassow will discuss the challenges of developing historical and contemporary events for the television and movie screen.

Sunday, November 11, 2:00 p.m., at AMC

Entrance is free. Tickets are required.