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**RUTGERS JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY
NOVEMBER 3–17**

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – The Rutgers Jewish Film Festival celebrates twenty years of exploring Jewish history, culture, and identity through film. Running from November 3-17, the festival will feature nineteen films, including four New Jersey premieres and a closing night preview screening, and discussions with filmmakers, scholars, and other noteworthy guests. The event will be held at three venues: New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, 11 Livingston Avenue, New Brunswick (NBPAC – Opening Night Only); AMC New Brunswick, 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 is made possible by a generous grant from the Karma Foundation.

The festival kicks-off on Sunday, November 3, with a special gala dinner at 5:00 p.m., followed by a 7:30 p.m. screening of *The Unorthodox*, an Israeli film nominated for fourteen awards, including Best Picture, at the 2019 Israeli Oscars. Rich in comedy and drama, the film is based on real events, telling the incredible underdog story of a small group of Sephardic Israeli men who decided to band together in the 1980s to fight for their rights and wound up creating the Shas Political Party. Jessica Steinberg, the culture editor for the *Times of Israel*, will be the guest speaker. Opening night will be held at the newly opened New Brunswick Performing Arts Center. The gala opening night celebration is sponsored by the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation.

Documentary films will be presented on a variety of topics—from a fresh look at the cultural history and legacy of *Fiddler on the Roof*, to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Israel Museum, to the discovery of a vast treasure trove of Jewish historical documents hidden for centuries in an ancient Egyptian synagogue.

With equal parts comedy and seriousness, the American documentary from director Aliza Rosen, *Latter Day Jew*, follows H. Alan Scott, a gay comedian, writer, and cancer survivor who decides to leave the Mormon faith that he was born into and become a Jew. H. Alan Scott will make a special appearance at the festival's screenings on November 13 and 14.

Acclaimed filmmaker Aviva Kempner will be the guest speaker at both screenings of her new film *The Spy Behind Home Plate*, a feature-length documentary about the enigmatic baseball player Moe Berg who led a secret life spying for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II. Three of Kempner's films have screened previously in the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival. The festival is delighted to welcome her back on November 10 at the AMC and November 11 at the Princeton Garden Theatre.

The line-up of dramatic films also deals with a broad range of subjects—from a forbidden interfaith love affair in contemporary Mexico, to the palpable divide between secular and religious Jews in Israel today, to a light-hearted look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Three award-winning dramatic films will make their New Jersey premiere at the festival. *The Mover*, a Latvian film, is based on the true story of “Latvia’s Schindlers,” Žanis Lipke and his family, who saved many of the Latvian Jews who survived World War II. The film will be shown on November 5 and 10 at the AMC. *Those Who Remained*, a moving Hungarian film from director Barnabás Tóth, is a lyrical story of the healing power of love after the trauma of the Holocaust, set in post-World War II Hungary. Tóth will speak at the evening screening on November 7 at AMC. An additional screening will be held on November 13 at AMC.

The French film *My Polish Honeymoon* follows a young Parisian Jewish couple as they honeymoon in Poland and find themselves confronting modern-day anti-Semitism, unable to find evidence of past family connections, and unable to bridge their own families' silence about the past. The film's director, Élise Otzenberger, will be the speaker at both screenings of the film on November 14 at the AMC.

Closing night features a preview screening of the Canadian drama *The Song of Names* from renowned director François Girard. Academy Award nominees Tim Roth and Clive Owen star in this sweeping historical drama about a man's search for his childhood best friend—a Polish violin prodigy orphaned in the Holocaust—who vanished decades before on the night of his debut performance.

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 ruff@sas.rutgers.edu. Film tickets are \$14 with discounted tickets for seniors and students available. Please see the website for information on special ticket packages and opening night. Advance ticket purchase is strongly recommended as screenings often sell out.

Two special 20th anniversary pre-festival events are planned and are free and open to the community. “Movie at the Museum,” cosponsored by the Zimmerli Art Museum, features a screening and discussion of the Israeli film *The Museum*, a behind-the-scenes look at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, on Wednesday, September 25, at 4:30 p.m. The program will be held at the Zimmerli Art Museum, 71 Hamilton Street, New Brunswick.

On Friday, October 18, at 2:00 p.m., a Veterans Appreciation Program, cosponsored by the Rutgers Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services, will include a screening and discussion of the short American documentary *Footsteps of My Father* about the heroism of Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds who saved the lives of 200 Jewish American soldiers during World War II. The program will be held at Alexander Library, 169 College Avenue, New Brunswick. Light refreshments will be served at both events. RSVP to ruff@sas.rutgers.edu.

As part of the Bildner Center’s effort to support and supplement classroom learning about the Holocaust, the festival offers a free film screening for middle and high school student groups from across New Jersey, in collaboration with Rutgers’ Littman Holocaust Resource Center.

Following is a full list of films and dates screening during the festival. Please check the website for updates on speakers at screenings.

OPENING NIGHT

The Unorthodox (Israel, 2018, 99 minutes)
Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Eliran Malka

When the daughter of Yakov Cohen, a printer in Jerusalem, is expelled from school because of her Sephardic background, he decides to fight back. He is just a regular guy with no connections. But he has the will and the passion to take action, and a belief that he and other Sephardic Jews deserve to be proud of their heritage. Based on real events from 1983, *The Unorthodox* tells a remarkable underdog story, leading to the creation of the Shas political party in Israel. Rich in comedy and drama, the film also has a terrific soundtrack.

Sunday, November 3, 7:30PM, at NBPAC

Jessica Steinberg, Culture Editor, *Times of Israel*

Tuesday, November 5, 3:30PM, at AMC

City of Joel (USA, 2018, 83 minutes)

English • Director: Jesse Sweet

With unprecedented access, this film captures the conflict and drama surrounding Kiryas Joel, a village occupying a square mile within the town of Monroe in upstate New York that has become one of the fastest-growing Hasidic communities in the United States. When the secular residents of the larger township learn of Kiryas Joel's desire to annex adjacent land to address its population growth, it sets off a turf and legal battle. The documentary presents people on all sides of a conflict—religious enthusiasts, dissidents, people who doubt their own faith, and residents of Monroe who want to protect their bucolic lifestyle—and raises complex issues about the boundaries of religious freedom in the United States.

Sunday, November 10, 3:30PM at AMC

Speaker: Prof. Samuel Freedman, Columbia University

Tuesday, November 12, 1:00PM at PGT

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

From Cairo to the Cloud: The World of the Cairo Geniza (Canada, USA, Egypt, France, Israel, UK, 2018, 93 minutes)

English • Director: Michelle Paymar

This lively documentary tells the astonishing story of the discovery of a vast treasure trove of documents hidden for centuries in the “geniza,” or sacred storeroom, of an ancient synagogue in Fostat, Old Cairo. From sacred manuscripts to business accounts to personal letters in a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish languages, the Cairo Geniza contained the largest cache of Jewish historical documents ever found, revolutionizing our understanding of Jewish history and illuminating a thousand years of vibrant Jewish life in the heart of the Islamic world.

Sunday, November 10, 1:00PM, at AMC

DOUBLE FEATURE

Fiddler: A Miracle of Miracles (USA, 2019, 92 minutes)

English • Director: Max Lewkowicz

The screening is sponsored by David and Sylvia Steiner

This new documentary looks at the cultural history of one of the world's most beloved musicals. When *Fiddler on the Roof* opened on Broadway in 1964, it explored themes of tradition, religion, and anti-Semitism against a modern backdrop of radical social change. With rare archival footage and interviews with musical luminaries including Stephen Sondheim, Topol, and Lin-Manuel Miranda, the film explores the impact of this long-running, award-winning musical,

including the true wonder of wonders—that audiences worldwide and for the last half century all claim the story as their own.

Thursday, November 7, 12:30PM, at AMC

Speaker: Prof. Marc Aronson, Rutgers University

Sunday, November 17, Noon, at AMC

Preceded by

The Fiddle (Israel, 2018, 9 minutes)

Yiddish with English subtitles • Director: Asher Schwartz

This beautifully animated short film, based on Sholem Aleichem’s short story “The Fiddle,” tells the tale of a boy and his beloved fiddle. Narrated by the renowned Yiddish theater and Broadway actor Mike Burstyn.

Golda’s Balcony, The Film (USA, 2019, 86 minutes)

English • Director: Scott Schwartz

Tovah Feldshuh recreates 100 years of Jewish history, playing 45 different characters (including David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, and, of course, Golda Meir herself) in this new film. Her Tony Award-nominated play, *Golda’s Balcony*, was the longest-running one-woman show in Broadway history. Rare, multi-camera footage from the play’s original run was recently unearthed and assembled into this riveting film.

Wednesday, November 13, 1:00PM, at AMC

Speaker: David Fishelson, Producer

Latter Day Jew (USA, 2019, 85 minutes)

English • Director: Aliza Rosen

With a poignant mix of hilarity and seriousness, *Latter Day Jew* follows H. Alan Scott, a gay writer-comedian, cancer survivor, and former Mormon who becomes a Jew by choice. His family embraces his new spiritual path as he visits Israel and prepares for his Bar Mitzvah.

Wednesday, November 13, 7:30PM, at AMC

Thursday, November 14, 4:00PM, at AMC

Speaker at both screenings: H. Alan Scott

Leona (Mexico, 2018, 95 minutes)

Spanish with English subtitles • Director: Isaac Cherem

An intimate and moving film, *Leona* tells the story of Ariela, an independent-minded artist who lives with her family in a traditional Jewish neighborhood in Mexico City. Pressured to find a suitable match by her well-meaning if overprotective family, she instead falls for Ivan, a non-Jewish writer. Ariela finds herself torn between her family and forbidden love as she struggles to make difficult choices regarding her career and love life.

Saturday, November 9, 7:15PM, at AMC

Monday, November 11, 1:00PM, at PGT

Sunday, November 17, 2:45PM, at AMC

Speaker: Prof. Jorge Reina Schement, Rutgers University

Love, Antosha (USA, 2019, 92 minutes)

English • Director: Garret Price

An affectionate look at the young actor Anton Yelchin, who played an endearing young Chekov in the new Star Trek movies. His Russian-Jewish parents were renowned ice skaters who came to the United States in order to give him a better life. A young artist with a prolific career in film and television, Yelchin died in a tragic accident at the age of twenty-seven. Narrated by Nicolas Cage and including interviews with colleagues, family, and friends, including Chris Pine, Jennifer Lawrence, and J. J. Abrams, the documentary paints a broad portrait of an intensely authentic and gifted artist.

Rated R

Saturday, November 16, 9:30PM, at AMC

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

The Mover (Latvia, 2019, 87 minutes)

Latvian with English subtitles • Director: Davis Simanis

Based on the true story of “Latvia’s Schindlers,” this award-winning feature film offers a gripping account of Žanis Lipke, honored as one of the “Righteous among the Nations” for his heroic deeds in Latvia during World War II. Despite the hardship that members of the Lipke family endured under successive Soviet and German occupations, they embarked on a covert operation to save local Jews, moving them from the Riga ghetto to an underground bunker hidden on their property. The Lipkes are credited with saving about 40 of the 200 Jews in Latvia who survived the war.

Tuesday, November 5, 1:00PM, at AMC

Sunday, November 10, 5:00PM, at AMC

The Museum (Israel, 2017, 74 minutes)

English and Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Ran Tal

Going behind-the-scenes at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, this award-winning film takes viewers on an immersive exploration of one of Israel’s most important cultural institutions. Filmed during the museum’s fiftieth-anniversary celebrations, the documentary follows the daily routine of a colorful cast of characters—the museum director, a singing security guard, a Palestinian guide, and a host of other museum staff and visitors—with surprising humor, human stories, precious art, and the unfolding of the history of Israel.

Sunday, November 17, 2:15PM, at AMC

Speaker: James Snyder, Executive Chairman, Jerusalem Foundation; Former Director, Israel Museum

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

My Polish Honeymoon (France, 2019, 88 minutes)

French with English subtitles • Director: Élise Otzenberger

When Anna and Adam, a young Parisian Jewish couple, embark on their long-awaited honeymoon, Poland seems an unlikely choice. But this seemingly lighthearted comedy soon takes on a darker tone. As they explore the country, searching in vain for evidence of past family connections, they confront modern-day anti-Semitism and their own families' silence about the past.

Thursday, November 14, 1:00PM, at AMC

Thursday, November 14, 7:30PM, at AMC

Speaker at both screenings: Élise Otzenberger, Director

The Other Story (Israel, 2018, 112 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Avi Nesher

Two rebellious young women—one fleeing the chaos of secular hedonism for the disciplined comforts of faith, the other desperate to transcend her religious upbringing for sexual and spiritual freedom—cross paths unexpectedly in Jerusalem with startling consequences. This poignant drama from renowned Israeli filmmaker Avi Nesher plumbs the divide between Israel's secular and religious Jews.

Thursday, November 7, 3:30PM, at AMC

Speaker: Prof. Michal Raucher, Rutgers University

Saturday, November 9, 9:30PM, at AMC

FILMMAKER SPOTLIGHT

The Spy Behind Home Plate (USA, 2019, 96 minutes)

English • Director: Aviva Kempner

This feature-length documentary about the enigmatic baseball player Moe Berg focuses on a little-known Jewish hero. From the streets of Newark to five major league teams during baseball's golden age, to his secret life spying for the Office of Strategic Services during World War II, Berg's improbable story is told with rare historical footage and revealing interviews with family and an all-star roster from the worlds of history, sports, and spy craft.

Sunday, November 10, 12:30PM, at AMC

Monday, November 11, 7:30PM, at PGT

Speaker at both screenings: Aviva Kempner, Director

Stockholm (Israel, 2018, 155 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Daniel Syrkin

Israeli TV Series— BINGE-WATCH all four episodes!

When a leading contender for the Nobel Prize in Economics is found dead in his bed, his four closest friends scramble to keep it a secret in the increasingly hectic days leading up to the big announcement. *Stockholm* is a fast-paced Israeli TV series about the resilience of friendship in the twilight years, told with no shortage of wit and heart. Its stellar cast, including Dov Glickman (*Shtisel*) and Sasson Gabai (*The Band's Visit*, *The Other Story*), strikes the perfect balance of humor and drama with irreverence and chutzpah.

Tuesday, November 5, 7:00PM, at AMC

Tel Aviv on Fire (Israel, 2018, 97 minutes)

Hebrew and Arabic with English subtitles • Director: Sameh Zoabi

This critically acclaimed film explores the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a satirical comedy. When Salam, a hapless young Palestinian man with no experience in the television business, begins work on a soap opera filmed in Ramallah, his daily commute takes him through an Israeli checkpoint. IDF officer Assi soon discovers Salam's connection to the show—and his own wife's obsession with it—so he uses his power to become Salam's secret writing partner. With both men now invested in the soap's narrative arc, Salam has to concoct plot twists to suit viewers on both sides.

Sunday, November 10, 7:00PM, at AMC

Tuesday, November 12, 7:30PM, at PGT

Saturday, November 16, 7:15PM, at AMC

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

Those Who Remained (Hungary, 2019, 83 minutes)

Hungarian with English subtitles • Director: Barnabás Tóth

Set in 1949 Budapest, Aldo and Klara have both lost everyone they loved to the ravages of World War II. A survivor of the camps, forty-two-year-old Aldo lives a solitary life as a doctor, while teenage Klara lives reluctantly with her great-aunt, holding on to hope that her parents will return. When Klara meets Aldo, she finds the father figure missing from her life and hope begins to return for both of them. But their father-daughter relationship is misunderstood by Communist officials and complicated by Klara's burgeoning sexuality. A lyrical story of the healing power of love told through the eyes of a young woman in post-World War II Hungary.

Thursday, November 7, 7:30PM, at AMC

Speaker: Barnabás Tóth, Director

Wednesday, November 13, 3:30PM, at AMC

Speaker: Prof. Debórah Dwork, Bildner Visiting Scholar, Rutgers University

RETURNING FESTIVAL FAVORITE

Wondrous Oblivion (France, UK, Germany, 2003, 106 minutes)

English • Director: Paul Morrison

Eleven-year-old David Wiseman is mad about cricket, but hopeless at the game. When a Jamaican family moves in next door and builds a cricket net in the backyard, David is in seventh heaven. But when anti-Semitic neighbors shift their prejudice onto the new arrivals, David's family is caught in the middle, and he has to choose between fitting in and standing up for his new friends. Oscar-nominated director Paul Morrison delivers a charming and moving coming-of-age drama offering a view into a working-class Jewish community in 1960s London.

Sunday, November 17 • 4:30PM, at AMC

CLOSING NIGHT

Preview Screening

The Song of Names (Canada, UK, Germany, Hungary, 2019, 113 Minutes)

English • Director: François Girard

Academy Award nominees Tim Roth and Clive Owen star in this sweeping historical drama about a man's search for his childhood best friend—a Polish violin prodigy orphaned in the Holocaust—who vanished decades before on the night of his debut performance. The latest work from acclaimed director François Girard (*The Red Violin*), *The Song of Names* is based on Norman Lebrecht's novel of the same name.

Sunday, November 17, 7:00PM, at AMC

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