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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rutgers Jewish Film Festival Returns to In-Person Screenings

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. – The Rutgers Jewish Film Festival returns to in-theater screenings with fifteen award-winning films from Israel, Poland, Ukraine, Germany, the United States, and France. Running October 26 through November 12, the festival will present mid-Atlantic and New Jersey premieres, as well as discussions with filmmakers, actors, scholars, and other special guests. Screenings will be held in person at the Regal Cinema, North Brunswick, and the Rutgers Business School in Piscataway. Four films will be available in the virtual cinema.

In-theater and virtual tickets are both \$14. Discount passes are also available. The festival is sponsored by Rutgers' Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life and made possible by a grant from the Karma Foundation. For information or to purchase tickets, visit **BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu/film**. (See below for full schedule. Updates will post on website.)

The festival kicks off with *Irena's Vow*, which had its world premiere this September at the Toronto International Film Festival. This powerful drama is based on the true story of Irena Gut Opdyke, a young Christian nurse who risked her life to save Jews in Nazi-occupied Poland while forced to work as a housekeeper in the home of a Nazi commandant. Irena's daughter, Jeannie Opdyke Smith, will speak at both festival screenings.

The festival will present the mid-Atlantic premiere of the documentary film *Rabbi on the Block*, about Tamar Manasseh, an African American Jewish rabbi and community activist from Chicago who is building bridges in support of a revitalized alliance of African Americans and Jews. Manasseh and the film's director, Brad Rothschild, will speak at the screening, which is cosponsored by Rutgers' Tyler Clementi Center for Diversity Education and Bias Prevention.

Producer Nancy Spielberg will speak at the N.J. premiere of *Closed Circuit*, a riveting film from Tal Inbar that offers a cutting edge, cinematic use of closed-circuit camera footage. It

weaves together raw footage from closed-circuit cameras at the 2016 terrorist attack in Tel Aviv's Sarona Market with current memories of Arab and Jewish survivors of the incident.

The festival will screen the beautifully animated, award-winning film *Where Is Anne Frank*, which brings to life Anne's imaginary friend Kitty, whose quest to find her best friend leads to unexpected adventures with modern day refugees and a deeper understanding of Anne's legacy. Lead actor Moshe Lobel (Broadway's Yiddish *Fiddler on the Roof*) will speak at both screenings of the remarkable Ukrainian film *SHTTL*, which captures the lives and loves of a Ukrainian Jewish village just before the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Director Maxim Pozdorovkin will speak at the N.J. premiere of his acclaimed documentary film *The Conspiracy*, which takes on the age-old myth that Jews are plotting to take over the world.

Featured Films

- **Barren** (Israel, 2022, Drama)
 - **Closed Circuit** (Israel, 2022, Documentary)
 - **The Conspiracy** (USA, 2022, Documentary)
 - **The Frisco Kid** (USA, 1979, Vintage Comedy Western)
 - **Generation 1.5** (Israel, 2022, Documentary) (*Virtual*)
 - **The Goldman Case** (France, 2023, Drama) (*Virtual*)
 - **The Good Person** (Israel, 2022, Drama)
 - **Irena's Vow** (Canada/Poland, 2023, Drama)
 - **Matchmaking** (Israel, 2022, Romantic Comedy)
 - **No Name Restaurant** (Germany, 2022, Comedy)
 - **The Other Widow** (Israel/France, 2022, Drama) (*Virtual*)
 - **Rabbi on the Block** (USA, 2023, Documentary)
 - **SHTTL** (Ukraine, 2022, Drama)
 - **The Story of Annette Zelman** (France, 2023, Drama) (*Virtual*)
 - **Where Is Anne Frank** (Belgium/ Luxembourg/France/Netherlands/Israel, 2021, Drama)
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In-Theater Screenings

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

Barren (Israel, 2022, 108 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Mordechai Vardi

A young ultra-Orthodox couple in Israel, unable to conceive children, find their lives turned upside down in this provocative drama about faith, trust, and sexual exploitation. When a visiting rabbi claims to be a healer of barren women, he sets off a chain of events that leads to marital strife and crises of conscience and belief.

Saturday, October 28, 9:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Tuesday, October 31, 3:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

Closed Circuit (Israel, 2022, 54 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Tal Inbar

Filmmaker Tal Inbar helps us imagine the unthinkable by skillfully weaving together raw footage from closed-circuit cameras at the infamous 2016 terrorist attack in Tel Aviv's Sarona Market with the present-day memories of Arab and Jewish survivors of the incident. The result is a heart-pounding and cinematic confrontation with trauma. – Jaie Laplante, Artistic Director, DOC NYC

Tuesday, October 31, 7:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Speaker: Nancy Spielberg, Producer

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

The Conspiracy (USA, 2022, 90 minutes)

English • Director: Maxim Pozdorovkin

With the increase of misinformation through social media and the rise of the alt-right, antisemitism has surged and moved from the fringes to the mainstream. Combining animation and archival footage, this powerful documentary takes on the biggest lie ever told: the myth that Jews are plotting to take over the world.

Sunday, October 29, 3:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Speaker: Maxim Pozdorovkin, Director

CLASSIC FILM

The Frisco Kid (USA, 1979, 119 minutes)

English • Director: Robert Aldrich

In this vintage comedy western, Gene Wilder gives one of his best performances as a hapless but loveable Polish rabbi who traverses the Wild West of the 1850s. The cultures of the Old World and the Old West collide as the intrepid rabbi and his outlaw cowboy companion (Harrison Ford) encounter a series of rollicking misadventures. See this classic film on the big screen!

Appropriate for 6th grade and up

Sunday, November 5, 12:30 p.m., Rutgers Business School

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

The Good Person (Israel, 2022, 85 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Eitan Anner

When a feminist film producer teams up with an ultra-Orthodox rabbi to make a film based on a biblical tragedy, artistic differences quickly escalate. This joint effort quickly unravels, threatening to undo much more than their careers and financial situation.

Official Selection: Haifa International Film Festival, 2022

Wednesday, November 1, 7:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Speaker: Prof. Azzan Yadin-Israel, Rutgers University

PRE-THEATRICAL RELEASE SNEAK PREVIEW

Opening Night Film

Irena's Vow (Canada, Poland, 2023, 121 minutes)

English • Director: Louise Archambault

In occupied Poland, a young nurse risks her life to hide Jews in the home of a Nazi commandant. Irena Gut uses her wit and courage to charm the commandant while avoiding his dangerous comrades in an impossible situation. Based on the true story of Irena Gut Opdyke who was awarded a Righteous Among the Nations medal in 1982, the film features Sophie Nélisse of the hit series *Yellowjackets*.

Official Selection: Toronto International Film Festival, 2023

Thursday, October 26, 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m., Regal Cinema

Speaker: Jeannie Opdyke Smith, daughter of Irena Gut Opdyke

Matchmaking (Israel, 2022, 98 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Erez Tadmor

A yeshiva student goes to comical excess to meet the girl of his dreams in this ultra-Orthodox matchmaking romcom. Handsome, young Moti goes on a whirlwind of dates within his tight-knit Ashkenazi community. But he is smitten with his sister's Mizrahi friend, Nechama, taboo due to her Middle Eastern origins. An award-winning cast rounds out this joyous, lighthearted tale of romance-overcoming-prejudice.

Saturday, October 28, 7:30 p.m. Regal Cinema

Tuesday, October 31, 12:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

MID-ATLANTIC PREMIERE

No Name Restaurant (Germany, 2022, 120 minutes)

Arabic, English, and Hebrew with English subtitles • Directors: Stefan Sarazin & Peter Keller

Three religions. Two men. And a camel. In this hilarious clash of cultures buddy comedy, an Orthodox Jew from Brooklyn teams up with a grumpy Bedouin to traverse the desert and reach Alexandria in time for the Passover seder.

Winner: Munich Film Festival, 2022; Winner: Bavarian Film Award, Best Production, 2023

Wednesday, November 1, 3:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Sunday, November 5, 6:30 p.m., Rutgers Business School

Speaker: Luzer Twersky, Lead Actor, invited to both screenings

MID-ATLANTIC PREMIERE

Rabbi on the Block (USA, 2023, 88 minutes)

English • Director: Brad Rothschild

Tamar Manasseh, a charismatic rabbi and community activist from the south side of Chicago, works to make African Americans and Jews become closer allies. With one foot firmly in each of these communities, Black Jews like Tamar are a natural bridge to help overcome decades of fear, misunderstanding, and lack of communication. With antisemitism and racism on the rise, the film is a hopeful look at a revitalized alliance of African Americans and Jews.

Sunday, October 29, 6:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Speakers: Tamar Manasseh and Brad Rothschild, Director

SHTTL (Ukraine, 2022, 114 minutes)

Yiddish and Ukrainian with English subtitles • Director: Ady Walter

SHTTL captures the vibrant world of a Ukrainian Jewish village before the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. A wedding between the rabbi's daughter and the butcher's son is disrupted by the return of a young filmmaker who vies for the woman he loves. The vitality of the village and the romance, politics, and intrigue of daily life there are brought home by a remarkable cast led by Moshe Lobel (Broadway's Yiddish *Fiddler on the Roof*) and actor Saul Rubinek (*Hunters, Unforgiven*).

Sunday, October 29, 12:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Wednesday, November 1, 12:30 p.m., Regal Cinema

Speaker: Moshe Lobel, Lead Actor, both screenings

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

Where Is Anne Frank (Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Netherlands, Israel, 2021, 99 minutes)

English • Director: Ari Folman

Anne Frank's imaginary friend Kitty comes to life in this award-winning, beautifully animated film. Miraculously appearing in the Anne Frank House in present-day Amsterdam, Kitty goes in search of her best friend. but instead of finding Anne, she discovers the city's refugees who are searching for a safe haven. Kitty's adventures lead her to inspire city officials to use Anne's legacy and message of hope and generosity in helping current and future generations.

Official Selection: Cannes Film Festival, 2021

Appropriate for 6th grade and up

Sunday, November 5, 3:30 p.m., Rutgers Business School

VIRTUAL CINEMA

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

Generation 1.5 (Israel, 2022, 80 minutes)

Hebrew and Russian with English subtitles • Director: Roman Shumunov

The monumental influx of Soviet immigrants to Israel in the 1990s left an indelible mark on Israeli society. This powerful documentary explores this complex history through the eyes of immigrants to Israel from the former USSR who came as children or teenagers. Three decades later, they reflect on the discrimination and racism they experienced and the compromises and sacrifices their families made to live freely as Jews.

MID-ATLANTIC PREMIERE

The Goldman Case (France, 2023, 115 minutes)

French with English subtitles • Director: Cédric Kahn

This electrifying courtroom drama offers a fascinating portrait of Pierre Goldman and his highly politicized 1976 appeals trial that gripped and divided France. Director Cédric Kahn was inspired to make the movie after reading the defendant's autobiography, *Obscure Memories of a Polish Jew Born in France*, which Goldman penned in prison. Political activist turned criminal, Goldman was tried and convicted of multiple crimes, including two murders; the police prejudice and antisemitism he endured were a microcosm of the political, ideological, and racial tensions of the time.

Official Selection: Cannes Film Festival, 2023

NEW JERSEY PREMIERE

The Other Widow (Israel, France, 2022, 83 minutes)

Hebrew with English subtitles • Director: Ma'ayan Rypp

A week before the opening of his new play, Ella's married lover Assaf dies suddenly, leaving the theater community in mourning. The young costume designer attends his shiva, keeping her identity a secret and diving into a world once forbidden to her. This moving film lingers playfully at the intersection of drama and comedy, probing the complexity of human relationships.

Nominated: 9 Israeli Academy Awards, 2023

The Story of Annette Zelman (France, 2023, 93 minutes)

French with English subtitles • Director: Philippe Le Guay

In this riveting drama set in 1942 Paris, Annette Zelman falls in love with Jean Jausion, a Catholic young man. His family opposes the match and when the couple become engaged, Jean's father takes the extreme measure of reporting their relationship to the Gestapo. Annette is arrested and there is no turning back in this tragic love story based on historical events.