



## PRESS RELEASE

# Second Annual ReelAbilities Film Festival in Toronto

- #CinemaForAll from May 11 – 18, 2017 -

**Toronto, March 22, 2017** – The Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre (MNjcc) is pleased to announce the programming lineup for the second annual **ReelAbilities Film Festival (RAFF)** in Toronto, taking place **May 11 -18** in various venues across the city. ReelAbilities is the first and largest festival of its kind in Canada and will showcase 17 films, including Canadian and International premieres from Brazil, Canada, Hungary, Israel, Ireland, Iraq, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States – showcasing disability and Deaf cultures through film.

In addition to screenings, the Festival will include a free Family Film and Arts Day at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital; film industry workshops; meet-and-greets with casts and directors; panel discussions addressing the intersections of sexuality, employment, disability and art.

“The magic of cinema should be accessible to all,” said Liviya Mendelsohn, Artistic Director of ReelAbilities Toronto Film Festival. “Yet many film screenings present barriers to the one in five Canadians with disabilities, and the stories of people with disabilities and Deaf people are underrepresented in media and film. Our festival offers a model of accessible screenings for all audience members. With more than 30 community partners, 17 films, and a free Family Film and Arts Day, we’re excited to open minds and hearts, and to celebrate disability and Deaf cultures.”

A jury of artists, filmmakers and curators of all abilities have selected the powerful films which are supported by a variety of sponsors and community partners.

### TICKET INFORMATION

General tickets are \$15 per screening and are on-sale now at <http://toronto.reelabilities.org/> or in-person prior to each screening with cash payment only. Discounted ticket prices are available for seniors, students and those on a fixed income. Children under five are free.

**SPONSORS:** Abilities Magazine, Access Ryerson, Accessible Media Inc., Anonymous, Artscape, Autism Ontario, Community Living Toronto, CNIB, Dorel Industries, Down Syndrome Association of Toronto, Holland Bloorview Kid’s Rehabilitation Hospital and Mohawk College.

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS:** ACTRA Diversity, ALS Society, Al Green Theatre, Alliance on Equality for Blind Canadians, Balance for Blind Adults, Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Canadian Sport Film Festival, Centre for Independent Living, DANI, Design Exchange, Hillel Ontario, Innis Town Hall, Inside Out Film Festival, Israeli Consulate, L’Arche Toronto, New Zealand Embassy, Reena, Regent Park Film Festival, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario, STOPGAP, Tangled Art + Disability, Toronto Accessible Sports Council, Toronto Animated Image Society, Toronto Deaf International Film and Arts Festival, Toronto Irish Film Festival, Toronto Jewish Film Society, Rendezvous With Madness Film Festival, Variety Village, Workman Arts.

## ACCESSIBILITY

- All festival venues used by RAFF are wheelchair accessible and companion seating is available.
- All films will screen with open captioning and/or subtitles.
- American Sign Language interpreters will be present at select screenings and panels.
- There is no charge for Support People.
- Service animals are welcome.
- Several of the films have audio description with Phonic Ear Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) available.
- A scent-free policy will be in effect.
- All screenings will be sensory friendly.

## FILM PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE

### Opening Night

**Wednesday May 10, 7:00 pm, Wychwood Barns**

**LOOKING AT THE STARS** DIR. ALEXANDRE PERALTA | 90 MIN | BRAZIL | DOCUMENTARY

#### **CANADIAN PREMIERE**

A feature documentary about what it means, in equal parts, to be a woman, a blind person, and a dancer. Looking at the Stars is an intimate glimpse into the lives of the extraordinary ballerinas at the world's only ballet school for the blind—the Fernanda Bianchini Ballet Association for the Blind.

**Thursday May 11, 7:30 pm, Al Green Theatre**

**SANCTUARY** DIR. LEN COLLIN | 85 MIN | IRELAND | NARRATIVE

#### **CANADIAN PREMIERE**

In this dramatic comedy, Larry and Sophie are trying to find intimacy in a world doing everything to keep them apart. Their night together takes unexpected twists and turns when they bribe their caregiver into booking them a hotel room.

Panel Discussion: Disability, Sexuality and Consent, Presented by Community Living Toronto

**Friday May 12, 7:30 pm, Innis Town Hall**

**ENTER THE FAUN** DIR. TAMAR ROGOFF & DAISY WRIGHT | 67 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY

#### **CANADIAN PREMIERE**

The unlikely collaboration between a veteran choreographer and a young actor with cerebral palsy delivers astonishing proof that each and every body is capable of miraculous transformation. Open Captioned film (in English).

### Free Family Film and Arts Day

**Saturday May 13, 10 am – 4 pm, Holland Bloorview**

**CHILDREN OF GOD** DIR. AHMED YASSIN | 10 MIN | IRAQ | NARRATIVE

#### **CANADIAN PREMIERE**

A young amputee bets his prized possessions, hoping to grab the attention of the girl he loves.

**4 QUARTERS OF SILENCE** DIR. CODY BROADWAY | 17 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY

#### **CANADIAN PREMIERE**

For every snap, hit, pass and run, one team tackles a unique challenge. Located in Austin, the Texas School for the Deaf is the only school out of 1,483 high school football teams that serves the Deaf. In this uplifting short, deafness is not a weakness; it's a strength.

**MY LIFE IN THE CITY** DIR. ADAM GOLDHAMMER | 12 MIN | CANADA | DOCUMENTARY SHORT

#### **WORLD PREMIERE**

People with disabilities are often left out of conversations about city building. This film shares stories

and ideas from adults with intellectual disabilities on urban spaces, development and a vision for the city of Toronto.

**PRINCESS JACK** DIR. LESLEY JOHNSON | 8 MIN | CANADA | DOCUMENTARY SHORT

A short documentary about a boy with high-functioning autism, whose life is filled with make-believe. The film follows Jack as he introduces us to his particular tastes in wardrobe, carefully applies costume makeup, and patiently works his way through sewing classes in hope of making his own princess ball-gown.

**THE REBOUND** DIR. SHAINA ALLEN | 65 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY

**CANADIAN PREMIERE**

Experience the spirit of sport in this true story of the Miami Heat Wheels quest for glory, and the journeys of three para-athletes in search of new dreams. The film won the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Brooklyn Film Festival.

Panel Discussion: Accessible Arts, presented by Holland Bloorview

**Sunday May 14, Al Green Theatre**

**3:00 – 5:15 pm**

**SWIM TEAM** DIR. LARA STOLMAN | 100 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY

**TORONTO PREMIERE**

*SWIM TEAM* chronicles the extraordinary rise of the Jersey Hammerheads, capturing a moving quest for inclusion and independence. From the opening day of the swim season to the opening ceremony of the national Special Olympics, this multifaceted doc explores the struggles and triumphs of three young athletes with autism. Meet director Lara Stolman after the film for a Q & A.

**6:30 - 7:30 pm**

**HOLD MUSIC** DIR. MICHAEL MCNEELY | 10 MIN | CANADA | SHORT

**WORLD PREMIERE**

In this 10-minute semi-silent experimental short, a young, gay, deaf-blind man faces a number of challenges when purchasing tickets for a musical for himself and his loved ones.

A Q & A will take place following the film with Director Michael McNeely and the cast.

**7:30 - 9:30 pm**

**LOOKING AT THE STARS** DIR. ALEXANDRE PERALTA | 90 MIN | BRAZIL | DOCUMENTARY

See previous description under Opening Night section.

**Monday May 15, 7:30 pm, Innis Town Hall**

**ANNA** DIR. HARRIET MAIRE | 9 MIN | NEW ZEALAND | NARRATIVE SHORT

**CANADIAN PREMIERE**

A complex and generous-hearted portrait, the film follows Anna, a woman whose routine is unexpectedly interrupted when someone takes her seat on the bus.

**MY FERAL HEART** DIR. JANE GULL | 83 MIN | UK

**CANADIAN PREMIERE**

In this coming-of-age drama, a sudden bereavement throws Luke, a fiercely independent young man with Down syndrome, into a daunting new environment. He finds unexpected support from his feisty, streetwise caregiver. Friendships bloom and long-buried secrets are revealed.

Audience Award, Cinequest Film Festival

**Tuesday May 16, 7:30 pm, Innis Town Hall**

**IMBER'S LEFT HAND** DIR Richard Kane | 63 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY

**TORONTO PREMIERE**

Poignant and revelatory, *IMBER'S LEFT HAND* is an award-winning documentary that chronicles the life and career of celebrated American painter and Harvard professor Jon Imber. A bittersweet and deeply

moving document of this artist's courageous and darkly humorous response to a diagnosis of ALS. Adversity only makes him more determined.  
Panel discussion following screening.

**Wednesday May 17, 7:30 pm, Al Green Theatre**

**SPECTRUM: A STORY OF THE MIND** DIR. JILL JONES + BRENT YONTZ | 24 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY  
**TORONTO PREMIERE**

An inventive animated and live action documentary that explores the inner sensory experiences of autism, featuring Temple Grandin and Judy Endow.

**ADAM'S BAR MITZVAH** | DIR ADAM WOLFOND, ESTEE KLAR, LUIS MOREIRA | 14 MIN | CANADA  
**WORLD PREMIERE**

"Not being able to speak is not the same as not having anything to say." This short doc follows Adam Wolfond as he prepares for his Bar Mitzvah, and illuminates Judaism, identity, disability and community. A Q & A with filmmakers Adam Wolfond and Estee Klar will take place after the film.

**Closing Reception**

**Thursday May 18, 7:30 pm, Al Green Theatre**

**MY HERO BROTHER** DIR. YONATAN NIR | 78 MIN | ISRAEL | DOCUMENTARY  
**TORONTO PREMIERE**

A group of young adults with Down syndrome embark on a demanding trip through the Himalayas, accompanied by their siblings. Their journey brings unresolved challenges to the surface.

A discussion panel with the cast and director Yonatan Nir will take place after the film.

Winner, Best Documentary, Jerusalem Film Festival

**About ReelAbilities Film Festival**

ReelAbilities Film Festival brings together the community to promote awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of people with different abilities. ReelAbilities Film Festival showcases films, conversations and artistic programs to explore, embrace and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience. This is the second annual ReelAbilities Festival in Toronto.

For more information, visit <http://toronto.reelabilities.org/>

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