



PRESS RELEASE

The Third Annual *ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto* Announces Festival Programming and Ticket Onsale

#CinemaForAll from May 29 – June 4, 2018

Toronto, April 16, 2018 – The *Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre (MNjcc)* is pleased to unveil programming for the third annual ***ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto (RAFFTO)***, Canada’s largest film festival dedicated to showcasing Deaf and disability cultures. The Festival will present 25 films in various venues across the city from **May 29 – June 4, 2018**.

The 2018 *RAFFTO* lineup includes Canadian premieres from Brazil, Canada, China, Poland, Spain and the U.S. From the remarkable true story of four young students from a school for the blind who leave their small Tibetan village in order to travel to Shenzhen to sing on a TV talent competition in *Ballad From Tibet*, to a glimpse into the life of Matt who works in his own salon by day and, by night, dresses up as a superhero giving free haircuts to the homeless on a busy Toronto street corner in *The Barber of Augusta*, this powerful roster of films will educate and excite audiences.

ReelAbilities Film Festival was established in New York in 2007 and, in 2016, it crossed the border when it launched in Toronto as *ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto*, making it the first international chapter of the Festival. Since its inaugural year, *RAFFTO* has grown steadily adding new programming and more films each year and has welcomed thousands of filmgoers who have come to enjoy film but also to learn about the way different people navigate the world. A jury of artists, filmmakers and curators of all abilities from Canada deliberated and selected the impactful films in this year’s lineup. A full schedule of films can be found below and at reelabilities.org/toronto.

“Film is a powerful medium of representation often reflecting our stories and experiences back to us,” said Liviya Mendelsohn, Artistic Director of *ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto*. “We’re excited to announce a diverse slate of accessible films made by ground-breaking Canadian and international filmmakers that tell the stories of Deaf people and those with disabilities who are often underrepresented in media and film. This year, we are presenting our first ever comedy night and will be exploring the topics of sexuality and disability, disability rights, the Deaf film scene and inclusive design through our panels and workshops. We are also pleased that through the ReelEducation school and field trip program, we are helping to educate youth about life with disabilities.”

RAFFTO programming expands beyond the six-day lineup, with free screenings taking place pre-Festival at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital and *Doors Open Toronto*. In addition to screenings, the Festival will include Q&As with film talent; industry workshops; and panel discussions surrounding sexuality and consent, disability rights and advocacy, accessible media creation and universal design. For more information, please visit reelabilities.org/toronto.

TICKET INFORMATION

General admission tickets are \$12 per screening and are on-sale now at reelabilities.org/toronto. Discounted ticket prices are available for seniors, post-secondary students and those experiencing financial barriers. Screenings are free for support persons and students from kindergarten – grade 12. Tickets to Opening Night, which includes admission to both screenings, are \$30 each and are on-sale now at <https://reelabilitiestoronto-openingnight18.eventbrite.ca>

With support from funding bodies of the Government of Ontario, Ontario Arts Council and Toronto Arts Council Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre.

SPONSORS: Community Living Toronto, Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, AMI, CNIB, Autism Ontario.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS: Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (TO), ALS Society, Azrieli Centre for Adult Neurodevelopmental Disabilities and Mental Health at CAMH, Canadian Sport Film Festival, Charton Hobbs, Centre for Independent Living, Community Living Ontario, Deaf Spectrum, Design Exchange, Geneva Centre for Autism, Good Foot Delivery, Harmony Movement, Consulate General of Hungary, Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival, Israeli Connection, Reel Asian Film Festival, Reena, Rick Hansen Foundation School Program, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCI), Stopgap Foundation, Tangled Arts & Disability, Toronto Animated Image Society, Toronto After Dark Film Foundation, Toronto Jewish Film Festival, Toronto Jewish Film Society, Variety Village and Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival Presented by 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

TUESDAY, MAY 29 – TORONTO REFERENCE LIBRARY

7:30 – 7:40 p.m.

MILKYPop KID | DIR. JOHANNA GARVIN | 7 MIN | AUSTRALIA | CANADIAN PREMIERE

An actor and disability consultant is asked to help a former child star prepare for his triumphant comeback in a likely award-bait role.

7:40 – 9:20 p.m.

KEEP THE CHANGE | DIR. RACHEL ISRAEL | 93 MIN | USA | WINNER OF THE NORA EPHRON PRIZE AND BEST NARRATIVE FEATURE AT THE TRIBECA FILM FESTIVAL

David is an upper-class charmer struggling to hide his high-functioning Autism. Forced by his parents to attend *Connections*, a support group for people on the Autism spectrum, David falls in love with Sarah, a sheltered young woman who challenges his identity as “normal.”

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 2018 – INNIS TOWN HALL

1:10 – 1:30 p.m.

JUST, GO! | DIR. PAVEL GUMENNIKOV | 11 MIN | LATVIA | CANADIAN PREMIERE AND WINNER OF THE AUDIENCE AWARD AT THE STONY BROOK FILM FESTIVAL

Just, who lost both of his legs in an accident, chases the thieves who stole his crush's purse.

1:30 – 2:40 p.m.

***PERFECTLY NORMAL FOR ME* | DIR. CATHERINE TAMBINI | 57 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE**

At a unique after school dance program in Queens, kids with a variety of physical and developmental challenges pair with teenage volunteer helpers to create an inclusive environment too often absent in our world.

7:05 – 8:45 p.m.

***BALLAD FROM TIBET* | DIR. ZHANG WEI | 86 MIN | CHINA | CANADIAN PREMIERE AND WINNER OF BEST PICTURE AT CHINA INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL**

Based on a true story: Four young students from a school for the blind embark on an odyssey from their remote village in Tibet to the giant city of Shenzhen in order to sing on a TV talent competition.

THURSDAY, MAY 31, 2018 – INNIS TOWN HALL

1:10 – 1:25 p.m.

***PARTIALLY COMPENSATED* | DIR. KRISTA WELTNER | 11 MIN | USA | CANADIAN PREMIERE**

A stop-motion animated film illustrating a child with dyslexia's experience in the classroom, and the difference made by understanding teachers who make that extra effort.

1:30 – 2:05 p.m.

***MR. CONNOLLY HAS ALS* | DIR. DAN HABIB | 32 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE AND WINNER OF THE BEST DOCUMENTARY AT THE DAM SHORT FILM FESTIVAL**

A beloved high school principal continues to lead, while dealing with ALS.

7:05 – 7:30 p.m.

***THE BARBER OF AUGUSTA* | DIR. MICHÈLE HOZER | 26 MIN | CANADA | DOCUMENTARY**

Matt works at his own salon by day, but at night, he dresses up as a superhero, sets up a salon stool on a busy Toronto street corner, and gives free haircuts to the homeless.

7:30 – 8:30 p.m.

***BEING RACHEL* | DIR. JESSE HEFFRING | 60 MIN | CANADA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE**

A documentary about youth with developmental disabilities putting on a play about their lives.

FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 2018 – INNIS TOWN HALL

1:10 – 2:30 p.m.

***DEEJ* | DIR. ROBERT ROOY | 72 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE**

DJ Savarese ("Deej") finds comfort in words, as expressed by his poetry, which belies his high school senior standing. Yet he only "speaks" through a text-to-voice synthesizer. Adopted by a loving and supportive family, Deej navigates the college admissions process as a young adult on the Autism spectrum, while confronting obstacles to inclusion.

7:05 – 8:00 p.m.

***BY STANLEY FOR STANLEY* | DIR. MONIKA MELEŃ | 54 MIN | POLAND | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE AND AWARD WINNER AT THE KRAKOW FILM FESTIVAL**

Several dozen years apart in age, both Stanislaw and Staś were born without arms. A remarkable artist who uses his feet to paint, draw, eat and drive, Stanislaw becomes an important mentor to young Staś, a boy still learning to navigate his unique place in the world.

9:35 – 9:40 p.m.

***LEFTY AND LOOSEY* | DIR. ZICO ABRAR | 5 MIN | USA | CANADIAN PREMIERE**

Private Investigators Lefty and Loosey uncover a diabolical plot and must save the world.

9:40 – 11:15 p.m.

KILLS ON WHEELS | DIR. ATTILA TILL | 103 MIN | HUNGARY | WINNER OF BEST NEW DIRECTOR AT THE CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

A noir caper, a mix of live action and graphic animation, and a dark sense of humour, *Kills on Wheels* successfully blends genres, dealing with issues of invisibility, prejudice, and loneliness as it rolls on to exciting, offbeat places. Hungary's 2016 Oscar submission for Best Foreign Film.

SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 2018 – INNIS TOWN HALL

1:05 – 1:20 p.m.

LEO & CAROL | DIR. ALVARO CAMPOS & DAFNE CAPELLA | 15 MIN | BRAZIL | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE

Leo, a “vertically challenged” public officer and comedian, is about to marry Carol, a teacher who is 5’5” tall.

1:30 – 1:40 p.m.

TAKE ME | DIR. ANAÏS BARBEAU-LAVALETTE & ANDRÉ TURPIN | 10 MIN

A nurse confronts his principles when he's asked to aid two patients in assisted sex.

4:00 – 4:15 p.m.

JUST, GO! | DIR. PAVEL GUMENNIKOV | 11 MIN | LATVIA | CANADIAN PREMIERE AND WINNER OF THE AUDIENCE AWARD AT THE STONY BROOK FILM FESTIVAL

Just, who lost both of his legs in an accident, chases the thieves who stole his crush's purse.

4:15 – 5:15 p.m.

MIND/GAME: THE UNQUIET JOURNEY OF CHAMIQUE HOLDSCLAW | DIR. RICK GOLDSMITH | 56 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE

Billed as the “female Michael Jordan”, basketball phenom Holdsclaw led Tennessee to three successive championships and became a WNBA number-one pick, Rookie of the Year and All-Star. But her hidden struggle with mental illness led to personal setbacks and a second career as a vocal mental health advocate.

7:10 – 7:35 p.m.

UNSPOKEN | DIR. GENEVA PESCHKA | 12 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE

Unspoken stars and is co-directed by 14 year old Emma Zurcher-Long, a teenage girl who is challenging societal judgment surrounding autism...one keystroke at a time.

7:35 – 8:40 p.m.

DEEJ | DIR. ROBERT ROOY | 72 MIN | USA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE

DJ Savarese (“Deej”) finds comfort in words, as expressed by his poetry, which belies his high school senior standing. Yet he only “speaks” through a text-to-voice synthesizer. Adopted by a loving and supportive family, Deej navigates the college admissions process as a young adult on the Autism spectrum, while confronting obstacles to inclusion.

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2018 – INNIS TOWN HALL

3:00 – 3:40 p.m.

DESIGNABILITY | DIR. OTOXO PRODUCTIONS | 33 MIN | SPAIN | CANADIAN PREMIERE

Design studio La Casa de Carlota in Barcelona harnesses the unique skills of a creative team, which includes members with Down syndrome and autism.

5:00 – 5:15 p.m.

STEP INTO MY WORLD | DIR. NICOLA DI CAPUA | 9 MIN | CANADA | DOCUMENTARY | FESTIVAL PREMIERE

The story of a one-day shoot where the entire crew is deaf, except an aspiring hearing production coordinator who comes to work without knowing the life-changing experience that awaits him.

5:15 – 5:45 p.m.

DEAFENING DARKNESS | DIR. MARK TRIFUNOVIC | 26 MIN | CANADA | CANADIAN PREMIERE

When a woman who is Deaf tries to find out what has happened to a friend who went missing, she uncovers something she did not expect!

7:05 – 8:30 p.m.

DEFIANT LIVES | DIR. SARAH BARTON | 84 MIN | AUSTRALIA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE

Weaving together never-before-seen archival footage with reflective interviews and the personal stories of men and women with disabilities, Defiant Lives details the rise of the disability rights movement in Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.

MONDAY, JUNE 4, 2018 – AL GREEN THEATRE

1:05 – 1:10 p.m.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF DAY | DIR. MARIA KENNEDY | 6 MIN | CANADIAN PREMIERE AND NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE

Two young adults with Down syndrome have an unsettling encounter.

1:10 – 1:40 p.m.

UNSPOKEN | DIR. GENEVA PESCHKA | 26 MIN | CANADA | DOCUMENTARY | CANADIAN PREMIERE

Starring and co-directed by 14-year-old Emma Zurcher-Long, a teenage girl who is challenging societal judgment surrounding autism, one keystone at a time.

CLOSING

7:10 – 8:40 p.m.

SCAFFOLDING | DIR. MATAN YAIR | 93 MIN | ISRAEL AND POLAND | CANADIAN PREMIERE

Seventeen-year-old Asher has always been a troublemaker and terrible student due to his learning differences. A charismatic teacher prompts a fascination in the world of literature, but also forces a conflict with Asher's brash father, who expects him to take over the family scaffolding business.

AUXILLARY PROGRAMMING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16 – HOLLAND-BLOORVIEW KIDS REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

REELEDUCATION LAUNCH DAY

To celebrate the launch of the inaugural ReelEducation program, which pairs past RAFFTO Festival films with school lesson plans, the Festival is bringing together 75 local students for screenings of past Festival films paired with fun activities.

SATURDAY, MAY 26 – AL GREEN THEATRE

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

PUSHPULL DANCE PERFORMANCE

A relaxed, inclusive interpretative dance performance in partnership with PushPull Dance Toronto.

SATURDAY, MAY 26 AND SUNDAY, MAY 27 – CITY HALL (COUNCIL CHAMBERS)

All day

DOORS OPEN TORONTO

The following past Canadian Festival films will be screened on a loop: *I Am* (RAFFTO 2016), *Princess Jack* (RAFFTO 2017) and *My Life In The City* (RAFFTO 2017).

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30 – INNIS TOWN HALL

2:45 – 3:30 p.m.

REELEDUCATION – DISCUSSION SERIES

ReelEducation chat with Luke Anderson of StopGap

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30 – INNIS TOWN HALL

9:00 – 10:00 p.m.

COMEDY NIGHT

Canadian comedians Courtney Gilmore, Michael McCreary and Dan Barra-Berger share their lived experiences for an engaging and side-splitting hour.

THURSDAY, MAY 31 – INNIS TOWN HALL

2:15 – 3:00 p.m.

REELEDUCATION – DISCUSSION SERIES

ReelEducation chat with Rick Hansen Foundation Ambassador and ALS Society of Canada

FRIDAY, JUNE 1 – INNIS TOWN HALL

2:45 – 3:30 p.m.

REELEDUCATION – DISCUSSION SERIES

ReelEducation chat with filmmakers Adam Wolfond and Estee Klar

SATURDAY, JUNE 2 – INNIS TOWN HALL

1:30 – 2:30 p.m.

SEXUALITY AND DISABILITY PANEL

A panel of guests with lived experience discuss sex, consent and the dating lives of people with disabilities.

SUNDAY, JUNE 3 – DESIGN EXCHANGE

3:45 – 4:30 p.m.

DESIGN EXCHANGE WORKSHOP

This workshop in partnership with Design Exchange focuses on inclusive design and planning.

5:45 – 6:30 p.m.

DEAF FILMS IN THE MAKING PANEL

Deaf filmmakers and actors share their stories.

8:30 – 9:30 p.m.

DEFIANT LIVES: STORIES OF DISABILITY RIGHTS

Community Living Toronto brings another important panel discussion to RAFFTO, to discuss the experiences of people with various disabilities and stories of their challenges and successes in the realm of disability rights.

MONDAY, JUNE 4 – AL GREEN THEATRE

2:45 – 3:30 p.m.

REELEDUCATION – DISCUSSION SERIES

ReelEducation chat with the cast and director of *A Different Kind of Day*

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

INDUSTRY WORKSHOP

Presented by Festival Sponsor Accessible Media Inc., RAFFTO presents the second annual industry-focused workshop on production of accessible tech, through Audio Description and captioning practises.

About ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto (RAFFTO)

ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto brings together the community to promote awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of people with different abilities. RAFFTO showcases films, conversations and artistic programs to explore, embrace and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience. 2018 will be the third annual ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto.

www.toronto.reelabilities.org

About Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre

The Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre strives to be an inclusive and welcoming hub for healthy community, anchored in Jewish values, where all downtown Toronto feel they belong.

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

Media Contact:

ReelAbilities Film Festival: Toronto

Kelly Price | Publicist, Holmes PR Inc.

kprice@holmespr.com

416.628.5613