

24th Portland Jewish Film Festival

Welcome to the 24th annual Portland Jewish Film Festival, produced by the Northwest Film Center and co-presented with the Institute for Judaic Studies. While the Festival specifically celebrates the diversity of Jewish history, culture, and identity, we hope that these films, and the stories they tell, resonate beyond their settings and speak to universal experiences and issues that confront our common humanity. Please join us for a reception preceding the film at 6 pm in the Andrée Stevens Room, hosted by the Institute for Judaic Studies and the Northwest Film Center.

Special thanks to our sponsors: Oregon Israel Fund of OJCF; Oregon Jewish Life Magazine; Leonard & Lois Schnitzer Charitable Supporting Fund of OJCF; Diane Solomon, Family Fund; Cedar Sinai Park; Schnitzer CARE Foundation; Reuben & Liz Menashe; Carolyn Weinstein, Hasson Realtors; Jewish Federation of Greater Portland; Community Warehouse; Mittleman Jewish Community Center; Portland Jewish Academy; Holzman Foundation; JStreet; German Consulate; Jewish Family & Child Services and Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education; Cong. Neveh Shalom and Cong. Shaarie Torah.

Wednesday, June 15, 7 pm

The Midnight Orchestra, Morocco, 2015

dir. Jerome Cohen Olivar (102 mins., Drama, DCP)

Michael Abitbol, the son of a once famous Jewish musician, returns to Casablanca for the first time after leaving Morocco as a child amidst racial tensions spurred by the 1973 Yom Kippur War. There, he embarks on a mission to honor his iconic father's legacy. With the help of a comical cab driver, Michael's search for the former members of his father's band unexpectedly transforms his life forever. Olivar's picaresque comedy-mystery, a celebration of both Moroccan-Jewish life and generational understanding, was awarded the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at the Montreal Film Festival. In Arabic, English and French with English subtitles. Join us at 6 pm for a reception preceding the film hosted by the Institute for Judaic Studies. (Arabic, English, French with English Subtitles)

Thursday, June 16, 7 pm

In Search of Israeli Cuisine, Israel/US, 2015

dir. Roger Sherman (97 mins., Documentary, DCP)

"If hummus and falafel are the only things that come to mind when you think about Israeli food, then this fascinating documentary is a must-see. Guided by Michael Solomonov, the Israel-born, Philadelphia-based, award-winning chef behind (hit Philadelphia restaurant)

Zahav, we explore the 70+ diverse cultures of Israel through food. Solomonov visits the vibrant restaurants of Tel Aviv, must-experience Jerusalem destinations and kitchens off the beaten track. He samples food traditions as diverse as Moroccan, Persian, Lebanese, French, Italian and Russian and talks to a variety of chefs—Jewish, Arab, Christian and Druze; kosher and non-kosher, secular and religious—and asks them about their traditions and if there is such a thing.”—Palm Springs Film Festival.

Saturday, June 18, 8 pm

A Tale of Love and Darkness, US, 2015

dir. Natalie Portman, (98 mins., Drama, DCP)

Based on Amos Oz’s acclaimed international bestseller, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* recounts the time Oz spent with his mother, Fania (Natalie Portman), at the end of the British Mandate for Palestine and through the early years of the State of Israel. Struggling with raising her son in the foreign city of Jerusalem, and grappling with a married life filled with unfulfilled promises, Fania battles her inner demons and longs for a better world for her 10-year-old son Amos. As a nation is born around them, Amos must say good-bye to his mother before he is ready and come to terms with his own new beginning. “Portman has made a film with something serious and interesting to say about Israel, a nuanced portrait of the place that demonstrates a commitment to, and connection with, her home country. This is an assured, heartfelt debut.”—The Guardian. (Hebrew with English Subtitles)

Sunday, June 19, 4:30 pm

The Kind Words, Israel, 2014

dir. Shemi Zarhin, Sasson Gabai (118 mins., Drama, DCP)

Embittered, spiky-tempered restaurateur Dorona and her two very dissimilar brothers receive a bombshell when they learn the man who raised them isn’t their biological father. This seismic shock sets them on a quest across France to unravel their origins, tracing their roots to their mother’s native Algiers. As they piece together the inscrutable secrets of their past, Dorona attempts to reconcile her strained relationship with her long-suffering husband Ricki, while her brothers grapple with issues of familial, religious, and ethnic identity. “Briskly paced and threaded throughout with wry humor, Zarhin’s film asks us to confront our own ideas around identity and walking the emotional tightrope between lies and truth.”—Toronto Film Festival. Nominated for 12 Israeli Academy Awards, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay. (French, Hebrew with English Subtitles)

Sunday, June 19, 7:30 pm

Time to Say Goodbye, Germany, 2015

dir. Viviane Andereggen (82 mins., Comedy, DCP)

Twelve-year-old Simon has a lot to deal with. His life in Hamburg has him traveling back and forth like a ping-pong ball between his recently divorced mom and dad. To complicate matters further, his family is religiously divided. His newly observant father Frank insists that his squeamish son sacrifice his foreskin before his Bar Mitzvah, while liberal-minded mom Hannah is fed up with the pious posturing of her ex-husband. In the meantime, Simon falls head over heels in love with his new rabbi Rebecca, who is unfortunately twenty years his senior. Thanks to the Machiavellian scheming of Simon's friends, his quest to win her heart fuels a comical family feud. "A delightful, rapid-fire story of pubescent awkwardness."—Atlanta Jewish Film Festival. (German with English Subtitles)

Monday, June 20, 7 pm

Censored Voices, Israel/Germany, 2015
dir. Mor Loushy (87 mins., Documentary, DCP)

The Six-Day War in 1967 ended with a stunning victory for Israeli military forces against neighboring countries Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. It was a victory that nearly tripled the size of the country, and was a moment of great pride for the new nation. Yet interviews conducted by renowned authors Avraham Shapira and Amos Oz with Israeli soldiers returning from the battlefield paint anything but a glorious portrait of war. Censored by the Israeli military for nearly five decades, these recordings are now brought to light alongside the contemporary reactions of still-living soldiers to their long-hidden testimony. The tapes capture these young men wrestling with the question of the responsibility of the conqueror to the conquered, the paradox of a people who fled oppression who must now preserve their security by becoming oppressors, and the still-fervent hope for a lasting peace with their Arab neighbors. "An essential amendment to the historical record, *Censored Voices* reminds us that no war is entirely virtuous."—New York Times. (Hebrew, English with English Subtitles)

Tuesday, June 21, 7 pm

The Last Mentsch, France/Germany, 2014
dir. Pierre-Henry Salfati (93 mins., Drama, DCP)

Marcus Schwarz has spent a lifetime concealing his Jewish heritage. After surviving the horrors of Auschwitz, he has painstakingly created a new identity for himself in Germany. But as his twilight years draw near, Marcus decides he wants to be buried in a Jewish cemetery. There's only one small problem: the rabbis don't believe he's Jewish. Forced to return to his childhood Hungarian village to prove his true identity, Marcus enlists a troubled young Turkish woman to drive him on what turns out to be a life-changing trip for both. Salfati's funny, poignant story of friendship and healing explores the cost of forgetting the past, and the power in remembering it. In English, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, and Yiddish with English subtitles. (German, Hungarian, Hebrew, English, Yiddish with English Subtitles)

Wednesday, June 22, 7 pm

P.S. Jerusalem, Israel, 2015

dir. Danae Elon (97 mins., Documentary, DCP)

P.S. Jerusalem is the story of one family in search of home. After living in New York City for two decades, filmmaker Danae Elon makes the decision to move with her husband and children to Jerusalem. This complicated choice goes against the last wishes of Danae's father, acclaimed author Amos Elon, who made her promise that she would not return to the city in which he had so painfully lost faith. Through her camera's lens, she intimately narrates her children's and her husband's experiences, bravely exposing the complexities of life in Jerusalem and Israel, and one family's challenge to find their "home." ". . . a deeply affecting, very personal film about the nature of identity."—Toronto Film Scene. (English, Hebrew, Arabic with English Subtitles)

Thursday, June 23, 7 pm

The Kindergarten Teacher, Israel/France, 2014

dir. Nadav Lapid (119 mins., Drama, DCP)

In this ambitious tale about the human drive to create, Nadav Lapid subverts the traditional teacher-student relationship, warping it from selfless mentorship into self-absorbed obsession. Nira, a kindergarten teacher in Tel Aviv, is convinced that her five-year-old student is a modern day poetry prodigy. Hypnotized by the boy's recitations of his work, she begins to write the poems down. A struggling poet herself, Nira comes to believe that only she can help the boy with his remarkable gift, but as her efforts escalate, so do the murky complexities surrounding her true motivations. "The Kindergarten Teacher—the film as well as the character—yearns for different values, for intensity, beauty, and meaning. Its sobering lesson is that the search for those things is most likely to end in madness, confusion, and violence." — A.O. Scott, New York Times. (Hebrew with English Subtitles)

Saturday, June 25, 8 pm

Fever at Dawn, Hungary, 2015

dir. Péter Gárdos (110 mins., Romance/Drama, DCP)

July, 1945. Miklos is a twenty-five-year-old Hungarian who has survived the camps and has been brought to Sweden to convalesce. His doctor has just given him a death sentence—his lungs are filled with fluid and in six months he will be gone. But Miklos has other plans. He didn't survive the war only to drown from within, so he declares war on his own fate. He acquires the names of the 117 Hungarian women also recovering in Sweden, and he writes a letter to each of them in his beautiful cursive hand. One of these women, he is sure, will become his wife. Based on the letters of Gárdos' parents, *Fever at Dawn* is a tale of passion, striving, doubt and faith, and the redeeming power of love. (Hungarian with English Subtitles)

Sunday, June 26, 4:30 pm

The Art Dealer, France, 2014

dir. François Margolin (95 mins., Drama/Thriller, DCP)

When her art dealer husband brings home a ravishing 18th century painting, Esther, a journalist, thinks nothing of it until her father is suddenly overcome with emotion at the sight of it. When he refuses to explain his visceral reaction, she becomes intent on solving the mystery of a treasure presumably stolen from her Jewish family by the Nazis. Risking her family, her profession, and even her sanity, she pushes against the silence of her Jewish elders, long-buried memories, and government cover-ups. Searching for the truth in a past shrouded in mystery, she uncovers a story that has been carefully buried for decades by those closest to her, and in doing so learns that some family secrets are best kept hidden. “A fine film, in which ...memory, identity, art and imagination dance together and intermingle.”—Cineuropa. (French with English Subtitles)

Sunday, June 26, 7 pm

Demon, Poland/Israel, 2015

dir. Marcin Wrona (94 mins., Thriller, DCP)

Peter has just arrived from England to marry his beautiful fiancée, Zaneta, at her family’s country house in rural Poland. While inspecting the grounds, Peter finds skeletal human remains buried on the property. Haunted by his discovery, Peter’s mental state slowly starts to unravel while the joyous and drunken traditional Polish wedding goes on around him. With nods to Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*, *Demon* is a chilling, clever take on the Jewish legend of the *dybbuk* and a thrillingly kinetic cinematic experience. (Polish, English, Yiddish with English Subtitles)

Monday, June 27, 7 pm

Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You, US, 2016

dir. Heidi Ewing, Rachael Grady (92 mins., Documentary, DCP)

Norman Lear is arguably the most influential creator, writer, and producer in the history of television. His legendary 1970s TV shows *All in the Family*, *Good Times*, *The Jeffersons*, and *Maude* used comedy and unforgettable characters to boldly crack open a cultural dialogue and shift the national consciousness about class, race, faith, and feminism. Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing’s film offers a rich and layered portrait of the extraordinary 93-year-old Mr. Lear that reveals a man whose extraordinary social and cultural contributions emerged from both his personal story and an ongoing dialogue with the world.

Tuesday, June 28, 7 pm

Vita Activa: The Spirit of Hannah Arendt, Israel/Canada, 2016
dir. Ada Ushpiz (125 mins., Documentary, DCP)

The German-Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt caused an uproar in the 1960s by coining the subversive concept of the “Banality of Evil” when referring to the trial of Holocaust organizer Adolph Eichmann, which she covered for the New Yorker magazine. Her private life was no less controversial thanks to an early love affair with renowned German philosopher and Nazi supporter Martin Heidegger. Ushpiz’s thought-provoking film offers an intimate portrait exploring the whole of Arendt’s life, traveling to places where she lived, worked, loved, and was betrayed; where she wrote about the open wounds of modern times and the nature of evil, totalitarianism, ideologies, and the perils faced by refugees. “While it will surely satisfy and provoke students of 20th century intellectual history, it feels more urgent than most documentaries of its kind... (and) includes some especially chilling implications for the current state of American politics.” – A.O. Scott, The New York Times. (English, German, Hebrew, French with English Subtitles)

Wednesday, June 29, 8 pm

Once in a Lifetime, France, 2014

dir. Marie-Castille Mention-Schaar (105 mins., Drama, DCP)

A dedicated history teacher at a French high school, Anne is determined to give the best education she can to her underprivileged inner-city pupils. Overcoming their apathy, however, proves to be more difficult than expected. Frustrated but undaunted, Anne tests her multicultural classroom with a unique assignment: a national competition on the theme of child victims of the Nazi concentration camps. The project is initially met with extreme resistance, until a face-to-face encounter with a Holocaust survivor dramatically changes the students’ attitudes and perspectives on the world. “...vibrates with genuine emotion.” – French Cinema Review. Best Narrative Film, Toronto Jewish Film Festival. Ages 14+. (French with English Subtitles)