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ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York
Announces Official Lineup of 11th Annual Festival

Opening Night Features the HBO Documentary
“Moonlight Sonata: Deafness in Three Movements,”
From Director Irene Taylor Brodsky

Tickets on Sale March 1; Festival Runs April 2-9

New York, NY, (February 27, 2019) – The Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan’s ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York, announces that Oscar® nominated and Emmy Award®-winning filmmaker Irene Taylor Brodsky’s stunning film “Moonlight Sonata: Deafness in Three Movements,” which premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival, will open its 11th annual festival on April 2, with the festival continuing until April 9. The full lineup of screenings is below. Tickets go on sale Friday, March 1 and can be purchased at ny.reelabilities.org, 646.505.5708, or TTY 877.505.6708.

The 2019 ReelAbilities Film Festival continues to showcase talent from around the world dedicated to awareness of the stories and artistic expressions of people with different abilities. The festival celebrates the diversity of the shared human experience through engaging films and events and encourages inclusion and responsible portrayals in cinema of people with disabilities, the most underrepresented minority in America media.

The 11th Annual ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York will take place at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, located at 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, and at over 20 other venues across all five boroughs of New York City, Long Island, and Westchester and Rockland counties, making it a geographically
accessible festival. In addition, it is packed with technology to make it an exceptionally accommodating festival for those with disabilities of all kinds. Individuals requiring accommodations to participate should contact the specific screening venue directly by March 18.

“This year is not only our largest festival, but also our most accessible to date as we continue to raise the bar on inclusive forms of film presentation,” says Isaac Zablocki, director and co-founder of the festival. “The themes of the films are more diverse than ever and the high level of storytelling makes these films relatable to everyone, with or without a disability.”

The opening night gala film “Moonlight Sonata: Deafness in Three Movements” premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival where it was nominated for a grand jury prize. The film is a deeply personal portrait of three lives, and the discoveries that lie beyond loss: a deaf boy growing up, his deaf grandfather growing old, and Beethoven the year he was blindsided by deafness and wrote his iconic sonata. The film was produced by HBO, Taylor Brodsky and Tahria Sheather and will premiere on HBO.

The closing night film “The Drummer and the Keeper,” directed by Nick Kelley, won numerous awards including the Rising Star Award at the Irish Film and Television Awards and the Festival Jury Prize at the Breaking Down Barriers International Disability Film Festival. In the film, Gabriel is a drummer in a promising band, desperate to hide his bipolar diagnosis from his exasperated band mates. At a therapeutic mixed-ability soccer game he’s obliged to attend, Gabriel meets Christopher, a teenager with Asperger Syndrome, and the two are forced to “make friends.” The film will screen Tuesday, April 9 at 7 p.m. at the IAC Building, co-presented by Vimeo.

This year’s festival including the world premiere of “Me, My Mouth, and I,” directed by Sophie Robinson, and the New York premieres of “Nathan’s Kingdom,” “Wild Prairie Rose,” and “Hearts of Glass.”

The New York festival is the launching pad for an international program and its selections run satellite ReelAbilities festival in over 20 cities worldwide.

The full lineup of the 11th Annual ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan is below. Tickets go on sale Friday, March at ny.reelabilities.org or 646.505.5708.
FEATURE FILMS

OPENING NIGHT GALA AND SCREENING
“Moonlight Sonata: Deafness in Three Movements”
Dir. Irene Taylor Brodsky
90 min., USA, documentary
Tuesday, April 2, 7 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Red carpet starting at 6:30 p.m.; Gala to immediately follow screening

A deeply personal portrait of three lives, and the discoveries that lie beyond loss: a deaf boy growing up, his deaf grandfather growing old, and Beethoven the year he was blindsided by deafness and wrote his iconic sonata. The film premiered at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival and is produced by HBO, Irene Taylor Brodsky and Tahria Sheather.

Opening Night Leadership
Co-chair Elisha Wiesel and Lynn Bartner-Wiesel
Co-chair Jeff Feig and Michelle Feig
Advisory council chairs David Manzano and Jordana Manzano

CLOSING NIGHT GALA AND SCREENING
“The Drummer and the Keeper”
Dir. Nick Kelly
93 min., Ireland, Narrative
Tuesday, April 9, 7 p.m. | IAC Building, co-presented by Vimeo
Screening preceded by gala and red carpet starting at 6 p.m.

Gabriel is a drummer in a promising band, desperate to hide his bipolar diagnosis from his exasperated bandmates. At a therapeutic mixed-ability soccer game he’s obliged to attend, Gabriel meets Christopher, a teenager with Asperger Syndrome, and the two are forced to “make friends.”

“América”
Dir. Erick Stoll and Chase Whiteside
75 min., USA, Documentary
Wednesday, April 3, 7 p.m. | Maysles Documentary Center
Thursday, April 4, 7:15 p.m. | Lehman College
Saturday, April 6, 8:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Sunday, April 7, 4:30 p.m. | Museum of the Moving Image

Diego, a young circus artist, returns home and reunites with his brothers after their grandmother, América, falls from her bed. Diego is a dreamer who sees poetry and purpose in this tragedy. His dream of familial cohesion fades into reality as the brothers clash over money, communication, and the challenge of caring for América.
“Crazy”
Dir. Lise Zumwalt
60 min., USA, Documentary
Thursday, April 4, 6 p.m. | Mid-Manhattan Library at 42nd St.
Friday, April 5, 1 p.m. | Bellevue Hospital/ NYU
Saturday, April 6, 2 p.m. | NYPL: Webster Library
Sunday, April 7, 8:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

A young man diagnosed with schizophrenia decides to go off his medication fearing that side effects will override the drugs' benefits. A powerful human drama that challenges perceptions about treating mental illness.

“Gurrumul”
Dir. Paul Williams
96 min., Australia, Documentary
Wednesday, April 3, 5 p.m. | NYU Center for Disability Studies
Wednesday, April 3, 7 p.m. | Nitehawk Williamsburg
Thursday, April 4, 5:30 p.m. | Lehman College
Friday, April 5, 7 p.m. | Maysles Documentary Center
Monday, April 8, 8:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan

A portrait of world music phenomenon Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, a blind indigenous artist on the brink of international reverence. Possessing a deep reserve of musical talent, he struggles with balancing his personal life and keeping the show on the road.

“Hearts of Glass—A Vertical Farm Takes Root in Wyoming”
Dir. Jennifer Tennican
68 min., USA, Documentary
*East Coast Premiere*
Wednesday, April 3, 4 p.m. | The Viscardi Center
Wednesday, April 3, 7:15 p.m. | Lehman College
Saturday, April 6, 6:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Monday, April 8, 12:30 p.m. | St. John's University

This film follows the tumultuous first 15 months of the operating of Vertical Harvest, a state-of-the-art hydroponic greenhouse that provides local crops as well as employment for people with disabilities. Plants and people grow together in this intimate portrait of innovation, inclusion, and community.

“Intelligent Lives”
Dir. Dan Habib
72 min., USA, Documentary
Sunday, April 7, 10 a.m. | Commonpoint Queens
Sunday, April 7, noon | Cinema Arts Centre
Sunday, April 7, 4:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Monday, April 8, 7:30 p.m. | Lincoln Center

Three pioneering young American adults with intellectual disabilities challenge perceptions of intelligence as they navigate education and the workforce. The film challenges what it means to be intelligent, and points to a future in which people of all abilities can fully participate in higher education, meaningful employment, and intimate relationships.

“Me, My Mouth, and I”
Dir. Sophie Robinson
59 min., UK, Documentary
*International Premiere*
Wednesday, April 3, 6:15 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Thursday, April 4, 2 p.m. | NYPL: Webster Library
Thursday, April 4, 4 p.m. | NYPL: Mid-Manhattan Library at 42nd St.

The journey of an actress with Tourette Syndrome and her exploration of neurodiversity. Artist, activist, and performer Jess Thom asks novel questions about the portrayal of disability in the arts and the exclusion of people with disabilities as cultural and creative producers.

“Nathan’s Kingdom”
Dir. Olicer Muñoz
98 min., USA, Narrative
*East Coast Premiere*
Thursday, April 4, 8:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Friday, April 5, 8 p.m. | Rivertown Film Society (JCC Rockland)

A dark fantasy drama about Nathan, a young man with autism, and his sister Laura, who has an addiction. Rather than surrender to social services, they risk it all, battling monsters and enduring mythical wars in the hope of finding a fictitious kingdom to potentially transform their lives forever.

“Suicide: The Ripple Effect”
Dir. Kevin Hines and Greg Dicharry
95 min., USA, Documentary
Sunday, April 7, 2 p.m. | Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum
Sunday, April 7, 6:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Monday, April 8, 7 p.m. | Bedford Playhouse

At age 19, Kevin Hines attempted to take his own life by jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge. Seventeen years later, he still struggles with many of the same symptoms that led him to attempt suicide, but he is on a mission to use his story to help others stay alive.
“Tamara and the Ladybug”  
Dir. Lucía Carreras  
107 min., Mexico, Spain, Narrative  
Wednesday, April 3, 8:30 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan  
Saturday, April 6, noon | NYPL: Mid-Manhattan Library at 42nd St.

Tamara is a woman with a mental disability who attempts to continue her daily routine despite the disarray in her life. Tamara’s fascination with ladybugs leads her out of her neighborhood and into the unknown, where she discovers a new reality.

“The Drummer and the Keeper”  
Dir. Nick Kelly  
93 min., Ireland, Narrative  
Wednesday, April 3, 5 p.m. | Lehman College  
Saturday, April 6, 3 p.m. | Mid-Manhattan Library  
Sunday, April 7, 3 p.m. | Cinema Arts Centre  
Monday, April 8, 5 p.m. | St. John’s University  
Tuesday, April 9, 7 p.m. | CLOSING NIGHT, IAC Building, co-presented by Vimeo

Gabriel is a drummer in a promising band, desperate to hide his bipolar diagnosis from his exasperated band mates. At a therapeutic mixed-ability soccer game he’s obliged to attend, Gabriel meets Christopher, a teenager with Asperger Syndrome, and the two are forced to “make friends.”

“The R-Word”  
Dir. Amanda Lukoff  
66 min., USA, Documentary  
*East Coast Premiere*  
Friday, April 5, 1 p.m. | NYPL: Webster Library  
Monday, April 8, 6:15 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan  
Monday, April 8, 7 p.m. | Gural JCC

The inappropriate use of the R-word can be heard every day, and continues to marginalize a population of people. This film confronts how, when, and why the R-word became so present in our culture, illustrates who it impacts, and ultimately makes the case for changing the conversation around people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Wild Prairie Rose”  
Dir. Deborah LaVine  
91 min., USA, Narrative  
*New York Premiere*  
Wednesday, April 3, 7:30 p.m. | Gold Coast  
Thursday, April 4, 6:15 p.m. | Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
In 1952, Rose Miller returns to her rural hometown to care for her ailing mother. When Rose decides to embark on a filmmaking project in her local community, she is enchanted by a local man who is deaf, and must decide if she has the courage to follow her heart.

**SHORT FILMS**

“Act Natural”  
Dir. Luca Fox  
4 min., Australia, Narrative  
The battle occurring in the mind of a young man with high-functioning autism as he engages in everyday conversation.

“Coda”  
Dir. Erika Davis-Marsh  
22 min., USA, Narrative  
A young dancer struggles with her identity and growing up hearing in a deaf family.

“Descent: In Process”  
Dir. Chris Cameron  
7 min., USA, Documentary  
Three artists create a multimedia dance performance that amplifies the joy of wheeled movement.

“Hair Trigger”  
Dir. Taylor Schafer  
9 min., USA, Narrative  
School shooting survivor Sadie struggles to reconcile the night before the rest of Sadie’s classmates return to school without her.

“Hale”  
Dir. Brad Bailey  
21 min., USA, Documentary  
Born with cerebral palsy, Hale Zukas is the “grandfather” of the disability movement. A born activist, he wakes up every day to fight for disability rights.

“Hot Flash”  
Dir. Danny Woodburn  
9 min., USA, Web Series  
In this parody, a woman discovers that her symptoms of menopause allow her to unwittingly become a superhero.

“Ian, a Moving Story”
Dir. Abel Goldfarb  
10 min., Argentina, Narrative  
Ian has cerebral palsy. All he wants is to make friends, but discrimination keeps him away from the playground.

“Jmaxx and the Universal Language”  
Dir. Ryan Mayers  
13 min., USA, Documentary  
A teenager with autism turns to dance as a way to better express himself.

“Leftover”  
Dir. Meric Demiray  
10 min., Turkey, Narrative  
A young man leaves home to join a peace rally. On his way, he starts to experience strange occurrences.

“Little Rebel”  
Dir. Aimie Vallat and Guido Ronge  
10 min., USA, Documentary  
Isatou Jallow, a woman from The Gambia living in Seattle, advocates for women, asylees, and people with disabilities.

“Living Art”  
Dir. David Rochkind  
32 min., USA, Documentary  
The story of a young woman living with familial dysautonomia, whose art became her stunning and profound means of communication and livelihood.

“Mapping the Disability Trap”  
Dir. Jason DaSilva  
14 min., USA, Documentary  
Filmmaker Jason DaSilva encounters a health care crisis as he tries to be closer to his son who lives 2,000 miles away.

“The Matchmaker”  
Dir. Leonora Pitts  
12 min., USA, Narrative  
Sam is concerned that his aging mother lacks the social stimulation that he believes will stave off Alzheimer's. He decides to find her a new best friend.

“On the Spectrum”  
Dir. Yuval Shafferman, Created by Dana Idisis + Yuval Shafferman  
26 min., Israel, Series  
Three roommates in their twenties, all on the autism spectrum, share an apartment while learning to contend with the world around them.
“Panic Attack!”
Dir. Eileen O’Meara
3 min., USA, Narrative
A woman wonders if she left the coffee machine on, causing her to slowly fall into a pit of anxiety and obsession, and lose hold on reality.

“Shakespeare in Tokyo”
Dir. Genevieve Clay-Smith
21 min., Australia, Japan, Narrative
A Shakespeare fan with Down syndrome sets off on a solo adventure to discover Tokyo and to prove his independence.

“Shake with Me”
Dir. Zack Grant
33 min., USA, Documentary
Debra Magid is an artist living with, and growing through, Parkinson’s disease. Her art, health, and family bring her will to triumph.

“The Siblings Liebencrantz”
Dir. Jonathan Johnson
5 min., USA, Narrative
If you enter the Minimalist Café in Brooklyn, you’ll find four siblings all searching for something: to be the next YouTube sensation.

“Take Me to the Waves”
Dir. Jake Taylor Kipping + Tom Stoker
20 min., UK, Narrative
When Clementine shares her romantic feelings towards her caregiver, she must face the complications that exist.

“Thrive”
Dir. Paul Szynol
14 min., USA, Documentary
A look at the prodigious talent and irrepressible spirit of a musically precocious 12-year-old blind piano player.

“The Unconditional”
Dir. Dave Adams
30 min., USA, Documentary
An unflinching look into the lives of two undiagnosed children with disabilities and their parents, as they try to navigate reality.

“Unteachable”
Dir. Anthony Sherin
11 min., USA, Documentary
A boy who can’t read meets a teacher who changes everything.
“Visibility”
Dir. Keenan O'Reilly
5 min., USA, Narrative
A dynamic duo hatches a bird-brained scheme to supplement their income.

About ReelAbilities Film Festival: New York
ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest film festival in the world dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with different abilities.

Founded in New York in 2007 by the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, the festival presents award-winning films by and about people with disabilities in multiple locations throughout the city. Post-screening discussions and other engaging programs bring communities together to explore, discuss, embrace, and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience. Learn more at ny.reelabilities.org.

About the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
Together with its community, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan creates opportunities for people to connect, grow, and learn within an ever-changing Jewish landscape. Located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, the JCC is a vibrant non-profit community center on the Upper West Side. The cornerstone of progressive programming in Manhattan, the JCC serves over 55,000 people annually through 1,200 programs each season that educate, inspire, and transform participants’ minds, bodies, and spirits. Since its inception, the JCC has been committed to serving the community by offering programs, classes, and events that reach beyond neighborhood boundaries, reaching people at all stages of their lives. Learn more at jccmanhattan.org.

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