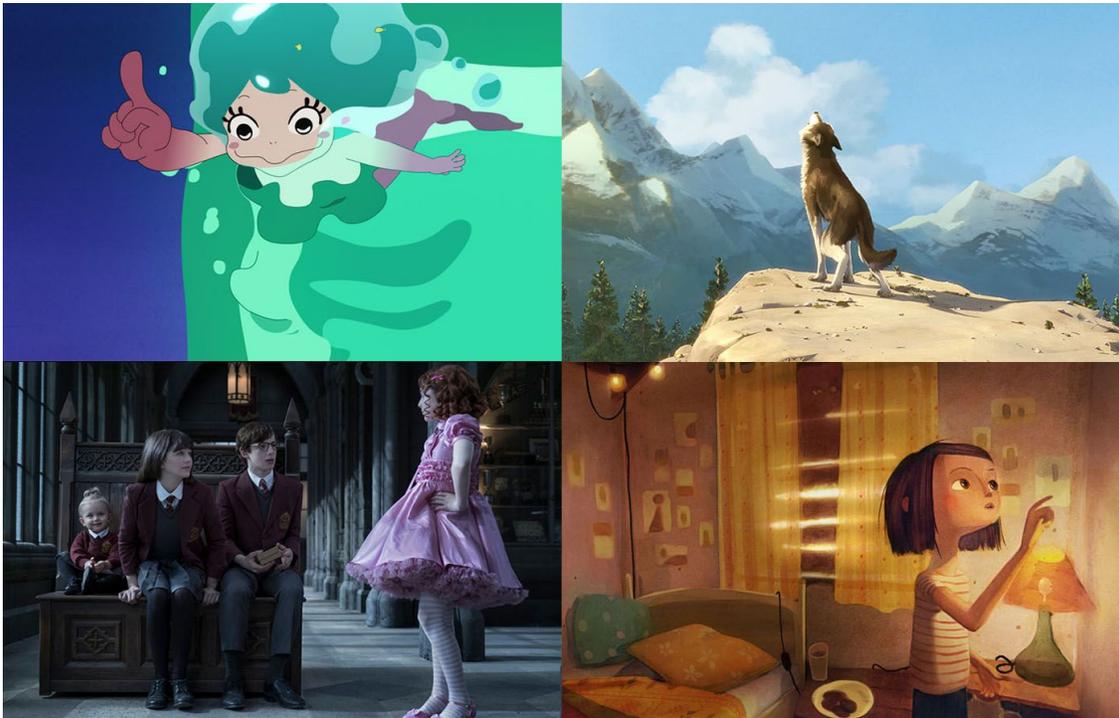




**NEW YORK INT'L CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL
ANNOUNCES 2018 OPENING NIGHT, OPENING
SPOTLIGHT, CENTERPIECE, AND INAUGURAL VR JR.
MINI-FEST**

OPENING NIGHT: Masaaki Yuasa's *LU OVER THE WALL*
OPENING SPOTLIGHT: Alexandre Espigares' *WHITE FANG*
CENTERPIECE: Netflix's *A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS:
SEASON 2, THE AUSTERE ACADEMY PARTS 1 & 2*

**VR JR., NYICFF's first Virtual Reality mini-fest,
includes *WOLVES IN THE WALLS* and *SON OF JAGUAR***



Clockwise: Lu Over the Wall, White Fang, Wolves in the Walls, A Series of Unfortunate Events: Season 2

NEW YORK (January 11, 2018) – The Oscar® qualifying New York International Children’s Film Festival has announced their 2018 Opening Night, Opening Spotlight, Centerpiece, and an inaugural Virtual Reality mini-fest. The 21st anniversary of the Festival will run from February 23rd – March 18th. Established in 1997, the Festival is the nation’s largest for children and teens and will present animated, live action, documentary, and experimental shorts and features from approximately 30 countries. Tickets go on sale January 17th for members and January 24th for the general public at www.nyicff.org.

This year’s Festival opens on Friday, February 23rd, with the East Coast premiere of anime auteur Masaaki Yuasa’s *Lu Over the Wall*. Boasting a distinctive, off-kilter animation style, eye-popping color palette, and outrageous music, Yuasa’s latest gem is, at its core, a captivating coming of age story. The eponymous Lu is a manic mermaid with a show-stopping voice who helps Kai, a gifted teenager unfulfilled by small-town life, discover his own. Winner of the Grand Prize Cristal Award at Annecy 2017, *Lu* evokes charming hints of Miyazaki, but claims a frenetic energy and surreal, freewheeling structure all its own.

Rounding out Opening Weekend is the Saturday, February 24th, Opening Spotlight screening of Academy Award®-winning director and NYICFF alum Alexandre Espigares’ debut feature, *White Fang*. An ambitious animated retelling of the classic Jack London novel, *White Fang* employs the voice work of Rashida Jones, Nick Offerman, Eddie Spears, and Paul Giamatti to tell the epic journey of White Fang’s life from pup to sled-dog to abused prizefighter and beyond, set in the gorgeously rendered landscape of the Pacific Northwest frontier.

On Saturday, March 10, NYICFF presents a special sneak peek Centerpiece screening of *The Austere Academy: Parts 1 & 2*, the highly-anticipated first episodes of Netflix’s original program *A Series of Unfortunate Events: Season 2*. Directed by Barry Sonnenfeld and based on the *Lemony Snicket* series by Daniel Handler, this lauded adaptation is hailed as having “a respect for the ability of young minds to perceive offbeat, incongruous humor, the very quality that made the books so successful in the first place” (*The New York Times*). The new season returns with an all-star cast, including the brilliant Neil Patrick Harris as Count Olaf, and plenty of nefarious schemes to catch the Baudelaire orphans. Season 2 releases March 30 only on Netflix.

The 2018 Festival will also showcase the inaugural edition of VR JR., a full weekend of Virtual Reality experiences, a special VR creators’ talk, and demos uniquely curated to provide a thoughtful point of entry for children and families to explore this new medium. Taking place Saturday and Sunday, March 3 and 4, the pioneering program showcases the latest VR projects that place kids at the helm of their own immersive story world. Projects include the East Coast premiere of the Neil Gaiman picture book adaptation *Wolves in the Walls*, directed by Pete Billington, and Golden Globe-nominated director Jorge Gutiérrez’s *Son of Jaguar*, a new Google Spotlight Story placing viewers into the story of a family of Mexican wrestlers.

OPENING NIGHT:

● **LU OVER THE WALL, dir. Masaaki Yuasa (Japan) – 2018, East Coast premiere, Animation, 107 minutes**

Though obedient to his family, Kai’s quiet life in a traditional Japanese seaside town starts to rock and roll when he secretly joins a band with his classmates. His true interest is where they practice —on the foreboding Merfolk Island—a place that turns out to be even wilder than the town lore suggests. Enter Lu: a mermaid girl with the soul and voice of a pop star, who steals the show in this shape-shifting, musical/anime hybrid.

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OPENING SPOTLIGHT:

- **WHITE FANG, dir. Alexandre Espigares (France/Luxembourg/USA) – 2018, East Coast premiere, Animation, 85 minutes**

NYICFF alum and Oscar®-winning short film director Alexandre Espigares returns with his feature debut, a thrilling and thought-provoking adaptation of Jack London's classic tale. White Fang and his fellow canines call the rugged beauty of the Yukon territory home, but with the Gold Rush of the 1890s they are thrust against the harsh life of profit-seeking prospectors. Will the tribal leader or a new peacekeeping couple offer White Fang another path?

CENTERPIECE:

- **A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS: SEASON 2, THE AUSTERE ACADEMY, dirs. Barry Sonnenfeld and Daniel Handler (USA) – 2018, Special Preview Screening, Live Action, 98 minutes (Parts 1 & 2)**

Join us for an exclusive sneak peek as the delightfully dark and witty Lemony Snicket *Series* goes from book to screen in season two of the Netflix original. The ever-intrepid Baudelaire siblings--Violet, Klaus, and Sunny--are back, still plagued by the evil Count Olaf (Neil Patrick Harris) and his troupe. The challenges mount, but shabby disguises, nefarious schemes, and very big words don't faze this resourceful trio. They won't relent until they unlock the secret to their parents' disappearance and enlighten a few less literate adults along the way. Season 2 launches March 30, only on Netflix.

VIRTUAL REALITY:

- **VR JR., Interactive VR Experiences and VR JR. Talk**

We're bringing our high-quality, innovative programming into new digital realms, offering the first dedicated Virtual Reality mini-fest for kids and families. A dynamic, interactive experience presented over the course of a full weekend, VR JR. will feature exciting VR projects, special talks, and demos. Just as we've made the enjoyment of artful, international films an accessible experience for young audiences, we're excited to do the same for VR. Explore a new facet of creative production with immersive experiences *Wolves in the Walls*, *Son of Jaguar*, and more at VR JR.

ABOUT NEW YORK INT'L CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL

Distinguished by its unique mission and high-caliber programming, New York International Children's Film Festival was founded in 1997 to support the creation and dissemination of thoughtful, provocative, and intelligent film for children and teens ages 3-18. Celebrating its 21st year in 2018, the flagship New York City Festival takes place February 23 - March 18, and has grown from one weekend of films into the largest film festival for children and teens in North America. Presenting consistently sold-out screenings for the general public and weekday screenings for school groups throughout New York City over the course of four weeks at venues throughout the city, the Festival's rich and dynamic film program — drawn from roughly 2,500 international submissions — boasts over 100 short and feature films, filmmaker Q&As, retrospective programs, parties, premieres, audience voting, and a Closing Night celebration. The Festival is an Academy Award® qualifying festival, one of only four film festivals in New York State — and only two children's film festivals in the country — to hold that honor with the Festival's esteemed jury selecting the qualifying films. The Festival experience cultivates an appreciation for the arts, encourages active, discerning viewing, and stimulates lively discussion among peers, families, and the film community.

In addition to presenting the annual event, New York International Children's Film Festival is a multifaceted arts organization that offers year-round engagement, including a nationwide touring program, filmmaking camps, and Film-Ed educational field trips for public and private schools, with free or reduced cost school programs offering equal access to the art of film for all. Goldfish Colors is a Presenting Sponsor of the 2018 Festival. New York International Children's Film Festival is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, public funds from the New York State Council

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