



NEW YORK INT'L CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES COMPLETE 2019 FEATURE FILM SLATE

FESTIVAL DATES: FEBRUARY 22 - MARCH 17, 2019

**NYICFF TO SHOWCASE THE DIVERSITY OF OUTSTANDING FILMMAKING
FROM AROUND THE WORLD FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

NEW YORK (January 16, 2019) — The Oscar®-qualifying New York Int'l Children's Film Festival announced the complete slate of feature films for its 2019 edition. Now in its 22nd year, the Festival is a leading authority on intelligent, insightful, and creative options for viewers of all ages, and will present four weekends of short and feature films, panels with visiting filmmakers, interactive VR experiences, and more—spanning a diverse array of styles, themes, and subject matter—carefully curated for a new generation of discerning filmgoers. The 2019 feature film slate includes one World Theatrical premiere, three North American premieres, four US premieres, and six East Coast premieres.

Notable in 2019 are sophisticated, all-age-spanning films not expressly made for young audiences but featuring stories that touch on themes of youth, including the Opening Night East Coast premiere of Chiwetel Ejiofor's directorial debut, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (UK/Malawi), fresh off of its Sundance and Berlin premieres and before it hits Netflix on March 1. Additionally, *Supa Modo*, directed by Likarion Wanarari and selected as Kenya's entry for the Oscars, showcases exceptional storytelling for audiences of all ages and demonstrates the strength and originality of new feature filmmaking co-productions from the African continent.

Other noteworthy, cross-generational live-action titles include the North American premiere of *Raoul Taburin* from French director Pierre Godeau, a charmingly whimsical tale of imposter syndrome that's hard to shake, set in the Tour de France-obsessed French countryside. Making its North American debut, *Ailo: A Lapland Odyssey* is a beautifully filmed and sharp-witted constructed account of a reindeer's first year of life, with stunning cinematography of the panoramic Lapland landscape and a host of its wild inhabitants captured at close range.

Renowned for bringing the best animation talent from around the world to light, NYICFF continues to be at the forefront of discovery of the latest in the field. Highlights in 2019 include: the East Coast premiere of Juan Antin's animated adventure quest *Pachamama* (France/Luxembourg/Canada) which offers a visit into indigenous culture through a history and landscape rarely represented in animation; the US Premiere of *Dillili in Paris*, the newest feature from animation scion Michel Ocelot, a jewel-toned caper through the bustling cafe culture of Belle Epoque Paris; a new, 2D/3D take on the beloved Moomins series with the World Theatrical premiere of *Moominvalley*, featuring Rosamund Pike and other notable voice cast members in a slyly-written, lively script that will keep adults and children engaged in the Moomins' capers at a rapid clip. Notable anime titles include the World Premiere English-language version of Kitarō Kōsaka's *Okko's Inn*, a warmly moving film about love, loss, and altruism threaded with equal moments of inquiry and delight, as well as the winningly absurd *Penguin Highway*, the first feature from the new Japanese animation start-up studio spun off from Miyazaki's stable of younger animators.

A talented range of female feature directors, in addition to the many shorts filmmakers that will be announced next, take center stage at NYICFF. The luminously filmed, classic boys-coming-of-age tale gets a thoughtful, feminist update in Joya Thome's *Queen of Niendorf*. Linda Hambäck brings her deft animation and quiet wit to the Swedish police procedural for the junior set, *Gordon & Paddy* (with Gordon voiced by the inimitable Stellan Skarsgård). Héléne Giraud, along with co-director Thomas Szabo, elevates the bug film to a clever commentary on climate change and produces eye-popping visuals through a dazzling mix of CG and live action footage and a brilliant soundtrack in the latest *Minuscule* film. Finally, the art heist caper gets a new locale and clever refresh in Marta Karwowska's Polish feature *Double Trouble*.

Programming Director Maria-Christina Villaseñor says, "We are thrilled to showcase the diversity of outstanding filmmaking from around the world at NYICFF 2019 and demonstrate that multidimensional storytelling and artful approaches know no boundaries in terms of age range,

genre or country. Kids and families are as hungry for artful, meaningful stories as adult audiences, whether told through live action, documentary, or animation, and all will be richly rewarded through an impressive slate of international titles at NYICFF 2019.”

Full shorts programming and additional special events are forthcoming:
nyicff.org/press

FESTIVAL DATES: February 22 - March 17, 2019

TICKETS: www.nyicff.org

LOCATIONS: Alamo Drafthouse City Point, Cinépolis Chelsea, IFC Center, Museum of the Moving Image, Quad Cinema, Scandinavia House, and SVA Theatre

The feature films confirmed for the 2019 New York International Children’s Film Festival are:

OPENING NIGHT:

THE BOY WHO HARNESSSED THE WIND, dir. Chiwetel Ejiofor (UK/Malawi) — 2019, East Coast Premiere, Live Action, 113 minutes; in English and Chichewa with English subtitles

Written, directed, and co-starring Oscar-nominated Chiwetel Ejiofor, this inspiring true-to-life film, adapted from the bestselling book by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer, follows 13-year-old William Kamkwamba (newcomer Maxwell Simba) who is thrown out of the school he loves when his family can no longer afford the fees. Sneaking back into the school library, he finds a way, using the bones of the bicycle belonging to his father Trywell (Ejiofor), to build a windmill which then saves his Malawian village from famine. The emotional journey of a father and his exceptional son at its heart, William’s tale captures the incredible determination of a boy whose inquisitive mind overcame every obstacle in his path.

OPENING SPOTLIGHT:

PACHAMAMA, dir. Juan Antin (France/Luxembourg/Canada) — 2018, East Coast Premiere, Animation, 72 minutes; in English

Tepulpai’s your average kid—headstrong and a bit naughty. It may seem unusual that he has a pet armadillo and wants to be a shaman, but not if you live in the ancient Peruvian Andes like he and his wise friend Naïra do. The two embark on a young heroes’ quest to locate their community’s stolen treasure and must confront the Inca and newly arrived Spanish to retain their indigenous ways. With a vibrantly-hued palette and Pre-Colombian soundtrack of ancient flutes and condor wings, *Pachamama* exuberantly celebrates nature, culture, and community.

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: NETHERLANDS

MY EXTRAORDINARY SUMMER WITH TESS, dir. Steven Wouterlood (Netherlands) — 2019, North American Premiere, Live Action, 82 minutes; in Dutch with English subtitles

While Sam’s family heads out for a Dutch island holiday of togetherness and fun, the 10-year-old decides it’s the perfect time to train himself to be alone. Even if his teen brother is a

know-it-all, Sam's got a great family and no reason to worry. But as the youngest, he fears one day he'll outlive everyone. His training is interrupted when he meets spirited Tess, who, on a pressing quest of her own, pulls Sam into her madcap scheme. The two discover that, as messy and vulnerable as it is, maybe togetherness isn't so bad.

FEATURES (LISTED ALPHABETICALLY):

AÏLO: A LAPLAND ODYSSEY, dir. Guillaume Maudatchevsky (France) — 2018, North American Premiere, Live Action, 80 minutes; in French with English subtitles

From the heights of the Arctic poles to the bottom of the temperature scale, *Aïlo* and its panoramic Lapland landscape captivate with cinematic splendor. Follow a young reindeer's first year at close range, filled with moments of puzzlement, wonder, struggle, and delight as Aïlo, guided by his mother, must navigate an icy world. Sharing the terrain with Aïlo are a hilariously wiley and ever-wiggly stoat, an endlessly curious red-eared squirrel, and sharp-eyed wolves, in this snowy story fashioned through witty narration and clever cross-cutting.

DILILI IN PARIS, dir. Michel Ocelot (France/Belgium/Germany) — 2018, US Premiere, Animation, 95 minutes; in French with English subtitles

Travel to the bustling cafe culture of Paris in the Belle Epoque with Dilili, a bright young girl with perfect diction, grace, and eagle-eyed smarts as she begins to investigate a nefarious plot by the ominous Master Men. Together with Orel, a delivery boy who ferries her around jewel-toned Paris as an only expert animator (NYICFF alum and *Kirikou* creator) Michel Ocelot could conceive, Dilili will stop at nothing until justice is restored. Our supersleuths journey through a turn-of-the-century world so evocative, you just might spot Picasso, Proust, or Marie Curie in the substrates and salons of the City of Lights.

DOUBLE TROUBLE, dir. Marta Karwowska (Poland) — 2017, East Coast Premiere, Live Action, 83 minutes; in Polish with English subtitles

Instead of a summer in Canada with her parents, Julka is stuck in Warsaw with an aunt who barely takes notice except to scold. When she forgets to lock up the house, letting thieves enter in, it's her aunt's unluckiest break—but it just might be her chance at adventure. Julka must convince her young new neighbor, Olek, to help her recover stolen plans that could uncover the location of a precious, long-lost piece of art. Despite their differences, they join forces in this heist-meets-art-history caper where nothing and no one is quite what it seems.

THE FALCONS, dir. Bragi Thor Hinriksson (Iceland) — 2018, East Coast Premiere, Live Action, 90 minutes; in Icelandic with English subtitles

The Falcons are in for their toughest challenge ever, on and off the soccer field. As they head to the semi-finals of Westman Islands' biggest soccer tournament, they'll face jittery nerves, teammate hijinks, long-standing rivalries, and pressure from peers and family alike. Like all great sports dramas, there's a lot more at stake than just soccer, and the team quickly learns that what's on the surface doesn't always match the core. With plot twists, white-knuckle soccer

plays that take place amidst a rumbling volcano (yes, a volcano!), and above all, teamwork, you're never offside when you're on the Falcons.

GORDON & PADDY, dir. Linda Hambäck (Sweden) — 2017, East Coast Premiere, Animation, 65 minutes; in Swedish with English subtitles

Gordon is an ace detective, but even he'll admit he's ready to hang up his badge. Luckily, he recognizes fresh talent in Paddy, a young rodent wise beyond her years and eager to break the grass—er, glass—ceiling. When Paddy gets the chance to crack the case of the purloined acorns, she's got a mystery to solve and a slew of woodland creatures' speculations to manage. This warm and witty police procedural for the junior set shows how generational divides can turn to bridges, and that even baddies have their good sides.

MINUSCULE - MANDIBLES FROM FAR AWAY, dir. Thomas Szabo & Hélène Giraud (France) — 2018, US Premiere, Animation, 90 minutes; no dialogue

"Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home..." the rhyme goes, but try heeding that when you're a quarter of an inch long and home is 4,000 miles away! When accidentally boxed into a chestnut shipment, the ladybug of *Minuscule* is inadvertently shipped to a Caribbean isle. Its parents embark on an odyssey to find it while, on the island, beachfront developers are threatening native habitats. A wild ride ensues—it's a bug-eyed ecological view made more eye-popping as a live-action animation hybrid shot in lush Guadeloupe.

MOOMINVALLEY, dir. Steve Box (Finland/UK) — 2019, World Theatrical Premiere, Animation, 44 minutes; in English

They may hail from faraway Finland, but artist/novelist Tove Jansson's cuddly, quasi-philosophical, not-quite-hippo creatures have a huge international following and were last seen at NYICFF 2014. This exciting new series uses brand new innovative techniques in 3D CGI bringing the Moomintroll family to vivid life as they adventure through the mystical islets and fjords of their glacial world. Rosamund Pike leads a top-notch voice cast as Moominmamma, wisely grounding the family's insatiable curiosity as they seek the shadowy Groke and luminescent Hattifatteners.

OKKO'S INN, dir. Kitarō Kōsaka (Japan) — 2018, World Premiere English Language Version, Animation, 94 minutes; in English

Bright-eyed Okko has joined her grandmother at their family-run, hot springs inn, rolling up her sleeves to learn the traditional ways. Her way to deal with the recent loss of her parents is to work diligently and think of others instead of herself. She does great, though as a city kid the country creatures make her jumpy, as does a surprising new friend she finds "spirited" in more ways than one. *Okko's Inn* beautifully addresses themes of loss, altruism, and love, while offering that—even in the face of challenges—compassion, and delight, can and will abound.

PENGUIN HIGHWAY, dir. Hiroyasu Ishida (Japan) — 2018, Animation, 118 minutes; in Japanese with English subtitles

Precocious Aoyama is crazy for science. He calculates the days until he is grown up and keeps a scientific notebook at the ready. He's got hypotheses and independent variables down pat. But some topics he hasn't mastered: How do the laws of attraction operate? What is this emerging feeling for his hygienist-turned-tutor? As if puberty isn't enough of a mystery, he must uncover what's causing hordes of *kawaii* penguins to invade his suburban town, with help from the bright girl in his class. A charming tangle of scientific principles, fantastical physics, and baffling hormonal surges, *Penguin Highway's* destination is the journey, all right.

QUEEN OF NIENDORF, dir. Joya Thome (Germany) — 2017, US Premiere, Live Action, 67 minutes; in German with English subtitles

The classic boys-coming-of-age drama (think *Stand By Me*) gets a thoughtful, feminist update in the luminously filmed *Queen of Niendorf*. Ten-year-old Lea is bored of the vapid aspirations of most tween girls. So she alternates between lazily cycling through her sleepy village and the thrumming excitement of two new discoveries: a makeshift raft and treehouse boys' club. Skeptical because she's a girl, the club members make her prove her mettle. Lea realizes that true bravery is not just what you do, but sometimes what you don't do—and isn't afraid to prove it.

RAOUL TABURIN, dir. Pierre Godeau (France) — 2019, US Premiere, Live Action, 90 minutes; in French with English subtitles

The truth takes some freewheeling liberties in this story based on the work of beloved writer and illustrator Jean-Jacques Sempé. Raoul's hilly French town is crazy for *vélos*, bicycles that impart freedom and joy to all—all, that is, except Raoul. Everyone believes he's the resident expert and champion stunt rider, but he's never mastered cycling. Try as he might to reveal his secret, no one will buy it. Proving that even the biggest champ harbors a little imposter syndrome, *Raoul Taburin* warmly shows that weaknesses can be strengths when we learn to roll with them together.

SUPA MODO, dir. Likarion Wainaina (Germany/Kenya) — 2018, East Coast Premiere, Live Action, 74 minutes; in English and Swahili with English subtitles

Plucky Jo's head is filled with the superheroes and action films that she so loves. Her posters of action heroes brighten the walls of the hospital where she battles cancer, and keep the spirits up and imaginations active for all the children who share her ward. So when her mother decides to take her home, she feels cut off from the community that helps her cope. It's Jo's older sister, Mwix, who understands that the magical, communal nature of filmmaking might be the very force to sustain Jo and the whole town of Mawel, proving it takes a village, and sometimes a movie, to make things better together.

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 22nd year in 2019, the flagship New York City Festival takes place February 22 - March 17, 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. 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, and public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, with support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. Girls' POV programming is supported by Sony USA Foundation and by a grant from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Film-Ed is supported by AMC Cares. Canadian films at the Festival are supported by the Consulate General of Canada Japanese films at the Festival are supported by Japan-United States Friendship Commission. Netherlands films are supported by *Never Grow Up!*, a joint effort of Dutch Performing Arts, the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in New York, EYE International, Netherlands Film Fund, Cinekid, Dutch Foundation for Literature, and DutchCulture.

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NYICFF 2019 information:

www.nyicff.org

Press Photos:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/iovhn9j1k8v58t9/AAAmDO3K8qvo9hailUV1Q6PGa?dl=0>

Photo Credits (clockwise from top left to bottom right):

- *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (2019), dir. Chiwetel Ejiofor. Courtesy Ilze Kitshoff / Netflix.
- *Pachamama* (2018), dir. Juan Antin. Courtesy New York Int'l Children's Film Festival.
- *Supa Modo* (2018), dir. Likarion Wainaina. Courtesy New York Int'l Children's Film Festival.
- *Okko's Inn* (2018), dir. Kitarō Kōsaka. Courtesy New York Int'l Children's Film Festival.
- *Aïlo: A Lapland Odyssey* (2018), dir. Guillame Maidatchevsky. Courtesy New York Int'l Children's Film Festival.
- *Queen of Niendorf* (2017), dir. Joya Thome. Courtesy New York Int'l Children's Film Festival.

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