



**NEW YORK
INTERNATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
FILM FESTIVAL**

**NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL (NYICFF):
ANNOUNCING 2020 OPENING NIGHT and Countries of Focus:
FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS: JAPAN /
SPOTLIGHT ON CANADA**

FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS: JAPAN
Celebrating Japanese Film

OPENING NIGHT: **CHILDREN OF THE SEA**
US PREMIERE: **ON-GAKU: OUR SOUND**
EAST COAST PREMIERE: **BENTO HARASSMENT**
RETROSPECTIVE: **MAGIC BOY**
SHORT FILM COLLECTION: **CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE SHORT FILMS**

SPOTLIGHT: CANADA
Celebrating Canadian Animation

Including WORLD PREMIERE: **HILDA SEASON TWO**

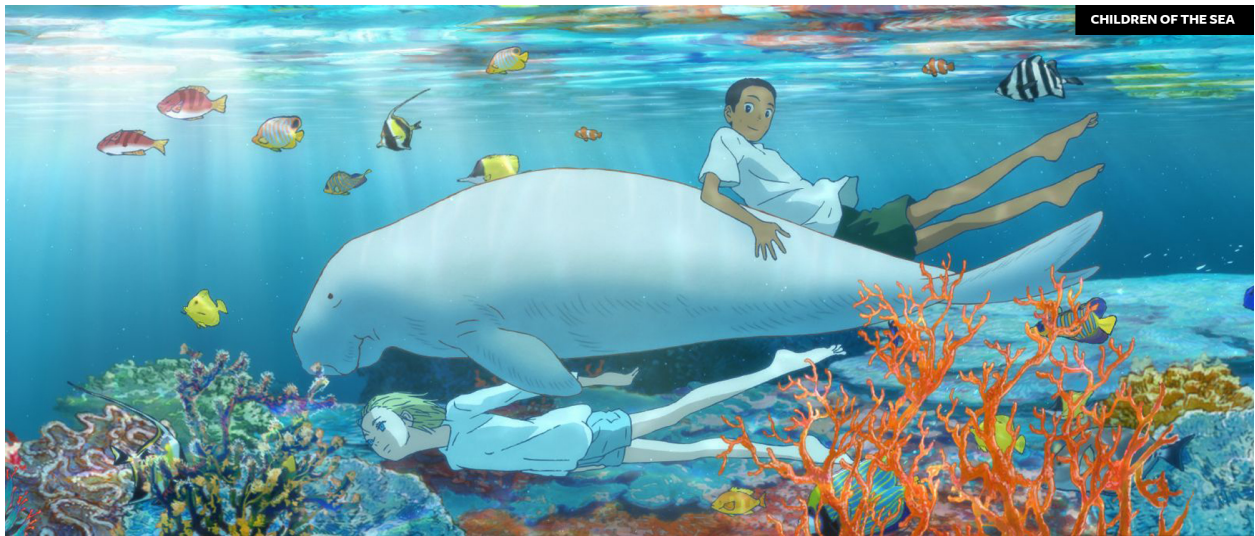
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NEW YORK, NY (Friday, January 10, 2020)

New York International Children's Film Festival (NYICFF), North America's largest film festival for children and teens, announces the 2020 edition Opening Night Film and countries of focus: Japan and Canada.

The Oscar® qualifying NYICFF, now in its 23rd year, runs **February 21 through March 15, 2020**, debuting an exciting new slate of the very best animation, live action, documentary, and experimental features and shorts from around the globe. NYICFF 2020 will highlight the cinematic achievements of Japan in an expanded program, shine a spotlight on new Canadian animation, and introduce its first-ever Industry Forum to focus on inclusion and representation in children's media.

Tickets go on sale January 15 for Members, and January 22nd for the general public at [**www.nyicff.org**](http://www.nyicff.org).

More lineup announcements, including the full slate of Features and Short Film selections, are forthcoming.



CHILDREN OF THE SEA



ON-GAKU: OUR SOUND



BENTO HARRASSMENT



MAGIC BOY



FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS: SHORT FILM PROGRAM
GOA, THE LITTLE FOX



HILDA

FEBRUARY 21-
MARCH 15



nyicff.org

FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS: JAPAN —

Four Feature Films:

CHILDREN OF THE SEA (2019), *Ayumu Watanabe* (OPENING NIGHT FILM)

ON-GAKU: OUR SOUND (2019), *Kenji Iwaisawa*

BENTO HARASSMENT (2019), *Renpei Tsukamoto*

MAGIC BOY (1961), *Taiji Yabushita and Akira Daikuhara*

Short Film Program:

FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS: JAPAN, Short Film Collection, *Various*

Now in its fourth edition, NYICFF's celebrated **Friends & Neighbors** program showcases the cinematic achievements of **Japan**.

From anime to art-house, Japanese film is a global phenomenon, with enormous box-office success and loyal fans in both its home country and around the world. NYICFF 2020 offers audiences the opportunity to broaden their experience of Japanese film with an exciting slate of premiere animation and live action feature, alongside shorts that expand styles, break with conventions, and show the originality, complexity, humor, and spirit of this cultural powerhouse.

Executive Director Nina Guralnick says, "NYICFF has long been at the forefront of showcasing the latest and best Japanese features for an admiring U.S. audience; from Katsuhiro Otomo's **STEAMBOY** (US Premiere 2005), and acclaimed Studio Ghibli titles including Gorō Miyazaki's **FROM UP ON POPPY HILL** (US Premiere 2013) and Hiromasa Yonebayashi's **WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE** (North American Premiere 2015); to Mamoru Hosoda's acclaimed **WOLF CHILDREN** (US Continental Premiere 2013); and Makoto Shinkai's box-office phenomenon **YOUR NAME**. (East Coast Premiere 2017). NYICFF has also long cultivated ties with Japanese filmmakers whose animation, live-action and experimental work has populated the Festival's celebrated short film collections. The 2020 Festival furthers this connection with Japan and offers a strong program that reflects NYICFF's mission of demonstrating and fostering the best in films for all ages."

NYICFF 2020's **Friends & Neighbors: Japan** shares a curated selection of **four new and retrospective feature films** and **one short film collection**, highlighting the region's rich cinema and cultural history in a breathtaking range of styles: from the East Coast Premiere of **Ayumu Watanabe's** atmospheric **CHILDREN OF THE SEA** (2019, NYICFF OPENING NIGHT FILM), and the US Premiere of the award-winning, fresh vision of Kenji Iwaisawa's **ON-GAKU: OUR SOUND** (2019) to **Renpei Tsukamoto's** charming live-action inter-generational twist in **BENTO HARASSMENT** (2019); to a retrospective screening of **Taiji Yabushita and Akira Daikuhara's** landmark anime **MAGIC BOY** (1961). A contemporary short film collection offers the world premiere of **Koji Yamamura's** highly anticipated hand-drawn animation **DREAMS INTO DRAWING** (2020), alongside other other stop motion, 2D animation, and live action films from a wide range of Japanese filmmakers.

NYICFF Programming **Director María-Christina Villaseñor** says "We had an extraordinary opportunity to dig deeply into Japanese film, with the intent of expanding on NYICFF's history of bringing the best anime titles to U.S. audiences. With this year's program, audiences will have the opportunity to see two premiere features that are truly expanding the visual style, language and thematics of Japanese animation with **CHILDREN OF THE SEA** and **ON-GAKU: OUR SOUND**. Our live action selection, **BENTO HARRASSMENT**, offers a fantastic and witty exploration of strong Japanese female characters, and our retrospective title gives audiences a unique historical perspective through **MAGIC BOY**, the first anime Japan ever released in the US in 1961 and an inspiration to anime titles since. Alongside this, we have a collection of gorgeous, alternately moving and hilarious shorts from Japan's celebrated short filmmakers working in a range of styles."

Joining NYICFF's celebrated annual **Animators All Around** panel, we welcome Daisuke 'Dice' Tsutsumi, filmmaker and co-founder of California-based Tonko House. Dice will share insight into Tonko House's creative process and an exclusive look at some intriguing new projects in development. Previous to founding Tonko House in 2014, Dice was an art director at Pixar, and a visual development and color key artist for Blue Sky Studios. Dice joins Jill Culton, director of **ABOMINABLE**, for the 2020 **Animators All Around** event, with details on the full lineup forthcoming.

Japanese films at the Festival are generously supported by the Japan-United States Friendship Commission, Sony Pictures, and the Japan Foundation New York, and organized in part with the Kineko International Children's Film Festival.

FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS 2020 builds on three successful past collaborations; Canada's TIFF Kids in 2017, Mexico's Morelia International Film Festival in 2018; and 2019's Netherlands Consulate General in New York, Cinekid and Eye International partnership.

SPOTLIGHT ON CANADA

NYICFF 2020 showcases an exceptional range of animated shorts, features, and episodic content from fresh and innovative Canadian filmmaker voices, including the world premiere of the second season of Netflix and Silvergate Media's acclaimed new series **HILDA**, with director Andy Coyle from Canada's Mercury Filmworks appearing in person for an exclusive Q&A. With a dynamic animation and national film sector, unique cultural perspective, and outstanding animation schools, Canadian cinema is shaping new boundaries in creative visual storytelling. By turning a lens on Canada with 2020 program focus, NYICFF will explore the nuances of Canadian culture and highlight its national cinema for an avid all-ages audience—while also introducing Canadian filmmakers to the wider NYC film community.

"Canada is proud of its continued leadership in children's cinema, and in the creation of films that promote Canadian values like inclusivity, diversity, and civic duty and resonate with young people around the world. The 2020 spotlight on Canada is a symbol of the strength and influence of Canada's creative industries."—**Catherine Scheinman, Head of Cultural Affairs and Creative Industries; Film, Television & Arts, Consulate General of Canada**

"This is a great opportunity to showcase the wealth of talent and animated works that delight audiences the world over," said **Francesca Accinelli, Director, Promotion and Communications at Telefilm Canada**. "We get a chance to show audiences the wide range of voices and storytellers that we have shaping and expanding our entertainment landscape."

Canadian films at the Festival are generously supported by the Consulate General of Canada and Telefilm Canada.

FILM DETAILS

OPENING NIGHT:

Children Of The Sea

JAPAN—EAST COAST PREMIERE

Ayumu Watanabe, 2019, 111 min.

Ages 10+

Japanese with English Subtitles

Based on the exquisite manga of the same name, ***Children of the Sea*** (GKIDS) draws on the talents of Japan's famed Studio 4°C (*Mind Game*; *Tekkonkinkreet*) and the mighty Joe Hisaishi, whose magical scores are the life-force behind so many of Studio Ghibli's animated classics.

A visually dazzling, mind-bending aquatic mystery. Ruka's dad is so absorbed in his studies at the aquarium that he hardly notices when she befriends Umi and Sora. Like Ruka, the mysterious duo has the unique ability to hear the call of the sea and its endangered creatures. Together, can they save them?

"This is a film you experience on a deeper level, one that washes over you like a wave... It's hard to overstate what an atmospheric triumph Studio 4°C has pulled off here."—Matt Schley, *The Japan Times*

On-Gaku: Our Sound

JAPAN—US PREMIERE

Kenji Iwaisawa, 2019, 71 min.

Japanese with English subtitles

Recommended Ages 12+

From grunge to genius, ***On-Gaku*** turns it up to eleven musically *and* visually! Kenji and his two buddies are considered the toughs in their high school. Only clever Aya knows their too-cool-for-school attitude is a total act, until a bass guitar unexpectedly ends up in Kenji's hands. With its deadpan humor, fresh animation style, and upending of the musical genre, there's no wonder this film won the Ottawa Int'l Animation Festival's top prize.

Bento Harassment

JAPAN—EAST COAST PREMIERE

Renpei Tsukamoto, 2019, 106 min.

Japanese with English subtitles

Ages 10+

Can food speak louder than words? With Futaba's mother tired of her teen's icy attitude, she'll try an unusual tactic to get her to talk—by way of her bento lunch box. For an entire school term, Futaba opens box after box, each designed with its own cringe-worthy message. An offbeat story of growing up, ***Bento Harassment*** will leave audiences laughing...and hungry.

Magic Boy

JAPAN

Akira Daikuhara and Taiji Yabushita, 1961, 83 min

English

Ages 8+

Anime? Check. Disney-inspired cute critters? Check. Beautiful colors? Do you even have to ask?! Our Festival Flashback is a groundbreaker: the first-ever anime film released in the US (from renowned Toei Studios), and quite possibly the inspiration for many more. Step back in time and follow Sasuke's adventures from the very beginning!

Friends & Neighbors: Japan
Short film program

75 min

Ages 9+

Say *konichiwa* (hello!) to our 2020 **Friends & Neighbors**. Celebrate Japan's rich film and cultural history in a breathtaking range of styles: the hand-drawn artistry of master animator and NYICFF alum Koji Yamamura's world premiere, **Dreams into Drawing**, the stop-motion nod to traditional Japanese puppetry in **Gon, the Little Fox**, and the manga-style *zaps, zings*, and *pows* of **Onomatopoeia Rap**, and more.

Hilda

UK/US/CANADA—WORLD PREMIERE

Andy Coyle, 2020, 44 min.

English

5+

She's clever, kind, witty—and rocks a pair of red boots like nobody's business. Hilda is back, rescuing elves, dodging trolls, and exploring Trolberg's strange history and stranger personalities. The BAFTA award-winning Netflix Original series inspired by Luke Pearson's hugely popular graphic novels returns to NYICFF with the world premiere of Season Two. Join us for sneak peeks of "Troll Circle" and "The Witch," two truly enchanting adventures!

ABOUT NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL 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 aged 3-18. NYICFF 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 of filmmakers, actors, and academic and industry leaders selecting qualifying films. The Festival, the largest film event for children and teens in North America, cultivates an appreciation for the arts, encourages active, discerning viewing, and stimulates lively discussion among peers, families, and the film community.

2020's flagship annual month-long event takes place February 21 - March 15. Presenting consistently sold-out screenings for the general public and weekday screenings for school groups at venues throughout New York City, the Festival's rich and dynamic film program — drawn from over 1,500 international submissions — boasts over 100 short and feature films, exclusive filmmaker Q&As, retrospective programs, parties, premieres, audience voting, and a awards celebration.

The Festival will host its inaugural *NYICFF Industry Forum* on February 28 & 29, 2020, the

second weekend of the Festival, bringing leaders and creators together for dialogue around inclusion and representation in the creation and dissemination of media content for young audiences. In addition to presenting the annual month-long Festival, NYICFF is a multifaceted arts organization that offers year-round engagement including its city-wide media arts and literacy program, *NYICFF Film-Ed*; and its national screening program serving major and regional cultural institutions, cinemas, and museums, *NYICFF Kid Flicks*.

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 the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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NYICFF 2020 information:

www.nyicff.org

Press Photos:

<https://nyicff.org/about-us/press-center/press-materials/>

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Photo Credits:

- CHILDREN OF THE SEA: *Ayumu Watanabe*, Studio 4°C, GKIDS
- ON-GAKU: OUR SOUND: *Kenji Iwaisawa*
- BENTO HARASSMENT: *Renpei Tsukamoto*
- MAGIC BOY: *Taiji Yabushita and Akira Daikuhara*, WB Classics
- GUN, THE LITTLE FOX: *Takeshi Yashiro*

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