



**NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL TO OPEN
WITH PREMIERE EVENT FOR *CITY OF GHOSTS* ON MARCH 5;
ANNOUNCES OPENING SPOTLIGHT *NAHUEL & THE MAGIC BOOK* AND
CLOSING SPOTLIGHT *RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NEW YORK, NY (February 5, 2021): New York International Children's Film Festival (NYICFF) announced its 2021 Special Programs today. The 24th edition of the Festival will open on March 5th with a premiere event for Elizabeth Ito's new Netflix animated series *City of Ghosts*. The animated feature *Nahuel and the Magic Book*, directed by Germán Acuña, will make its North American premiere on March 6th as the 2021 Opening Spotlight program, and the Festival will conclude with a Closing Spotlight screening of Disney's *Raya and the Last Dragon* with an exclusive, live conversation with the film's directors Don Hall and Carlos López-Estrada and appearances by lead voice cast members Kelly Marie Tran and Awkwafina.

All three programs continue the Festival's longstanding tradition of programming new films that bridge worlds and broaden horizons. This year's selection spotlights stories of kids discovering their cultural histories, defining their own identities, and shaping their futures by connecting with the past. Completely virtual for the first time, NYICFF 2021 will provide families across the country access to the best animated, live action, and documentary features and shorts from around the globe, amplifying storytelling from a wide range of diverse voices. Festival programs transform high-quality, engaging, and entertaining films into conversations within families, discussions between teachers and their students, and opportunities for viewers to discover new ideas and gain insight about the world and themselves. These varied and urgent programs provide an accessible avenue through which young people can process this complex cultural moment and the complicated events taking place around the world.

OPENING NIGHT: CITY OF GHOSTS

City of Ghosts comes from Emmy®-winning writer/director Elizabeth Ito and is inspired by her own experiences as a fourth-generation Japanese-American—or yonsei—growing up in the multicultural neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Featuring a charming blend of animated characters and live-action settings, *City of Ghosts* is a documentary-style series about a group of ghost-loving kids in LA who learn about the rich history of their city through encounters with friendly local ghosts. Each episode is based on the stories of characters voiced by real residents from different neighborhoods. Members of The Ghost Club help others explore their city by communicating with ghosts of the past. Ito serves as executive producer and showrunner of the 6-episode series.

Ito won a 2017 Primetime Emmy® for her work on Cartoon Network's animated series *Adventure Time* and created the Cartoon Network short *Welcome to My Life*, which won the NYICFF Audience Award and which she discussed at the inaugural Animators All Around panel at the festival that same year. In 2020, Ito served on the NYICFF jury alongside fellow filmmakers, actors, and academic and industry leaders committed to recognizing and supporting the best new works for young audiences around the world.

ABOUT THE WATCH PARTY / EVENT

Viewers can watch the first episode of *City of Ghosts* on Netflix before joining NYICFF at 8pmET / 5pmPT on March 5 for an exclusive live conversation with Ito and other members of the show's creative team. The conversation will be available across the Festival's social media accounts, and passholders will have the opportunity to participate in a Q&A through the Festival's official streaming platform. *City of Ghosts* premieres on Netflix March 5.

NYICFF Executive Director Nina Guralnick says, "our mission has always been to provide young audiences with the nuanced, complex programs that we know they can understand and appreciate. We are excited to present films that generate the kind of joy and inspiration that comes from exploring the many cultures and shared humanity of the world we live in—especially during a time when we are unable to travel much further than our own households."

NYICFF Programming Director Maria-Christina Villaseñor says, "we're thrilled to be highlighting *City of Ghosts*, *Nahuel*, and *Raya* as animated works that harness children's propensity for curiosity, sharp observation, and attentive listening to connect generations and underrepresented cultures and histories. These inventive, artistic, delightful, and deeply meaningful works embody NYICFF's core mission of fostering a more intelligent, diverse, film culture for kids."

Elizabeth Ito says, "One of the big reasons why I created *City of Ghosts* was to celebrate the ingenuity, humor, and imagination of children—which to me, makes NYICFF the perfect place to be celebrating *City of Ghosts's* premiere."

OPENING SPOTLIGHT: NAHUEL AND THE MAGIC BOOK

NYICFF's 2021 Opening Spotlight program, taking place on March 6th, features the North American premiere of *Nahuel and the Magic Book*, a new animated feature from Chile and Brazil, followed by a special Q&A with director Germán Acuña. Acuña has crafted a richly

detailed and expressive 2D animated feature, utterly distinctive yet with shades of stylistic influence from Studio Ghibli set within a universe of magic and ancient indigenous mythology. The son of a fisherman, Nahuel wrestles with his deep fear of the sea. An ancient magical book seems to offer a solution but leads to more challenges in this epic tale of finding strength and connection.

CLOSING SPOTLIGHT: RAYA AND THE LAST DRAGON

NYICFF will offer audiences an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at Disney's latest animated feature and the research and artistry that went into it. The stellar creative team of directors Don Hall (director, *Big Hero 6*, along with Chris Williams) and Carlos López-Estrada (*Blindspotting*), together with screenwriters Adele Lim (*Crazy Rich Asians*) and Qui Nguyen (*Vietgone*) take as inspiration the rich cultures of Southeast Asia to craft the captivating mythological world of Kumandra, where humans and dragons once lived together in harmony. But when an evil force threatened the land, the dragons sacrificed themselves to save humanity. Now, 500 years later, that same evil has returned and it's up to a lone warrior, Raya, to track down the legendary last dragon to restore the fractured land and its divided people.

Additional programming announcements are forthcoming.

ABOUT NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL:

The New York Int'l Children's Film Festival (NYICFF), now in its 24th year, supports the creation and dissemination of a more intelligent, diverse film culture for young viewers that sparks dialogue and understanding through film. A year-round organization, NYICFF cultivates an appreciation for the arts, encourages active viewing, stimulates discussion, and expands cultural access. Through its FilmEd program, National Touring Program, Oscar®-qualifying annual Film Festival, and Industry Forum, NYICFF serves children, families, filmmakers, classrooms, and cultural organizations.

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 on the Arts, with support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. NYICFF is supported by Humanities New York, the Cornelia T. Bailey Foundation, and the New York Community Trust. Funding for the FilmEd program is provided by Goldfish Crackers.

To learn more about NYICFF, visit: www.nyicff.org

Visit NYICFF's [PRESS CENTER](#) for images and additional information.

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