

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCES COMPLETE FEATURE SLATE

NYICFF Runs Friday, March 4, 2022 - Saturday, March 19, 2022

NEW YORK, NY (February 14, 2022): The Oscar®-qualifying New York International Children's Film Festival (NYICFF) announced its complete feature film slate for 2022, heralding its 25th Anniversary celebration as North America's largest and most prestigious film festival for young audiences. NYICFF is thrilled to be welcoming audiences back to the cinema with in-person events, kicking off Friday, March 4th at SVA Theatre (333 W. 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011) and running weekends through March 19th.

For its 25th edition, NYICFF's thematic focus is on the power of science and art through films that demonstrate creativity and inclusivity as being at the core of the next generation's superpowers, regardless of discipline. Whether dreaming of space on an intergalactic scale - or within a film camera's frame - the motion pictures featured in this year's slate conjure new and powerful worlds for young people to break free of the rules and troubles of our earthbound existence.

From accomplished filmmaker Richard Linklater's return to his space-age childhood dreams thanks to the magic of rotoscoping in *Apollo 10 ½: A Space Age Childhood*, to Oscar®-nominated Ari Folman's imaginative and thoughtful interpretation of a true-to-life tale using exquisite animation in *Where Is Anne Frank*, to debut filmmakers Fanny Liatard and Jérémy Trouilh's space-inspired and social justice-minded dazzler *Gagarine*, to Mascha Halberstad's colorful stop-motion animation *Oink*, this carefully curated, acclaimed selection of films come to the NYICFF on the heels of screenings at Cannes, Berlinale, and SXSW, reinforcing the idea that young audiences are ready for and well-deserving of the most sophisticated, thoughtful film fare.

There are plenty of films in this year's NYICFF slate that convey their meaningful messages with a sense of fun, whimsy, and humor including the aforementioned *Oink*, and the episodic premieres of *Swop* and the ever-beloved *Moominvalley*.

Also represented in this year's NYICFF program is a diverse range of impressive female filmmakers from all over the world who have helmed compelling features such as *Turning Red*, *Oink*, and *The Ape Star*.

Exploring the craft of both filmmaking and film-going is a selection of movies that revel in high-energy, infectious fun and the power of cinematic storytelling including *Pompo the Cinephile*, *It's a Summer Film*, and *The Strangest Girl in the World*.

Additionally, the Festival will showcase a number of highly accomplished animated features from across the Asian continent with engaging stories from a variety of gifted filmmakers including *To The Bright Side*, *I Am What I Am*, *Pompo the Cinephile*, and *Poupelle of Chimney Town*.

Audiences will also have the opportunity to experience a selection of thoughtful films based on real stories, re-interpreted and reimagined through artful animation in the case of *Where Is Anne Frank* and *Charlotte*, or through the medium of live-action documentaries such as *Kids Cup*, *Polar Bear* from DisneyNature, and *Zero Gravity*.

Finally, explorations of space and science are paired with equally rich examinations of social justice, family, community, inclusivity and the value of childlike wonder in the aforementioned *Zero Gravity*, *Gagarine* and *Apollo 10 ½: A Space Age Childhood*.

NYICFF is thrilled to celebrate innovation and the science and art of creativity at the core of its 25th anniversary year. The slate also underscores NYICFF's commitment to curating and uplifting diverse new voices as well as the most accomplished, established ones, all with fresh stories to tell for a generation whose time has finally come to gather again around the big screen to dream big dreams which will shape futures full of hope and promise.

Following last year's completely virtual event, this year's Festival will bring back in-person events with must-see screenings and filmmaker Q&As from March 4-19. The Festival's annual Shorts for Tots and other programs for ages 5 and under will be offered exclusively online, ensuring the youngest film fans can watch safely at home. Tickets will be available for members on www.NYICFF.org starting Monday, February 14th, with the General Public on-sale following on Thursday, February 17.

NYICFF FEATURE FILM SLATE

The Ape Star

Norway, Sweden, Denmark

Animation, Linda Hambäck, 2021, 73 min

Recommended ages 6+

In English

Though Jonna's home is filled with wonderful kids and a caring guardian, she can't help but pin her hopes on one day being adopted. When that long-awaited day finally arrives, she learns that love comes in all shapes, sizes, and, er, creatures...like the enormous ape with the equally enormous heart who wants to take Jonna home. Director Linda Hämbäck (NYICFF 2019's *Gordon and Paddy*) uses her own experience as an adoptee to share this hilarious and moving story through a powerful, nuanced lens. A warm, fuzzy, feel-good tale of love over greed, the joy in the things that make us different, and the life-changing magic of sometimes letting things get a little messy, *The Ape Star* is sure to win hearts.

Apollo 10½: A Space Age Childhood

United States—East Coast Premiere

Animation, Richard Linklater, 2022, 97 min

Rated PG-13

In English

Apollo 10 ½: A Space Age Childhood tells the story of the first moon landing in the summer of 1969 from two interwoven perspectives – the astronaut and mission control view of the triumphant moment, and through the eyes of a kid growing up in Houston, Texas who has intergalactic dreams of his own. Taking inspiration from Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Richard Linklater's own life, this snapshot of American life in the 1960s is part coming-of-age, part societal commentary, and part out-of-this-world adventure. The film will release globally on Netflix.

Best Birthday Ever

Germany, Netherlands, Sweden — New York Premiere

Animation, Michael Ekblad, 2021, 82 min

Recommended ages 3-5

In English

Little Charlie is a small rabbit who lives with his loving family and pets in a house at the edge of town. Like many five-year-olds, he goes to a kindergarten and plays with his friends in the neighborhood, basking in the delight of his parents' complete attention. But all of that changes with the arrival of his baby sister, Clara. When the chance for adventure with his best friend, Monica, arises, Little Charlie—eager to make his own mark and maybe a little jealous—hops to it.

Charlotte

Canada, France, Belgium — New York Premiere

Animation, Tahir Rana & Eric Warin, 2021, 92 min

Recommended ages 14+

In English

Charlotte is a testament to the power of art to endure, affront, and thrive, even in the face of impossible circumstances. This beautifully animated saga is based on the life of Charlotte Salomon, an aspiring painter living in Germany during the Nazi rise to power. As hard as it is to gain acceptance to the art academy as a girl, Charlotte's Jewish background makes achieving her dream even harder, and soon her entire community's existence is threatened. Eventually she is forced into exile with her difficult, emotionally distant grandparents before finding safe, loving harbor in the South of France. Charlotte's new host wholeheartedly encourages her artmaking. The result is a decades-spanning, boldly ambitious visual autobiography that confronts the perils of war, a family legacy of mental illness, and dashed dreams. Featuring the voice of Keira Knightly, *Charlotte* paints the legacy of a little-known artist whose impact lasts long beyond her brief life.

Gagarine

France - New York Festival Theatrical Premiere

Live Action, Fanny Liatard & Jérémy Trouilh, 2021, 102 min

Recommended ages 13+

In French with English subtitles

Yuri, 16, has lived all his life in Gagarine Towers, a vast, red-brick housing project on the outskirts of Paris. It's not always the most relaxing place to live, but it is a vibrant, warm and

richly diverse community filled with people from all corners of the world. From the heights of his apartment, Yuri dreams of becoming an astronaut. On the ground, he utilizes his engineering know-how to keep his home base humming. So when plans to demolish Gagarine are leaked, Yuri joins the resistance. With his friends Diana (Lyna Khoudri of *The French Dispatch*) and Houssam, he embarks on a mission to save his home, transforming the building into his very own "starship." This Cannes award-winner dazzles with both cinematographic and deep-space bravura while holding up decent housing as a core human right. The film opens in theaters in the U.S. on April 1, 2022.

I Am What I Am

China —New York Premiere

Animation, Haipeng Sun, 2021, 104 min

Recommended ages 9+

In Chinese with English subtitles

Prepare yourself for the hallmarks of all the classic genres: *I Am What I Am* is a buddy film, a road movie, an underdog heartstring-puller, and even a little bit of a rom-com. Our hero Gyun is a hard working kid with even harder working parents. While his parents toil away in the big city of Guangzhou, Gyun is left to his own devices in his small village, where he stumbles upon the transfixing Lion Dance Competition. Beneath the extraordinary costume is a powerful girl who gifts him with her stunning headdress and encourages him to pursue his newfound aspirations. Soon, Gyun and his buddies are traversing the enormity of the vast Chinese countryside as their own ragtag troupe. With hard work, athleticism, and a reluctant dance-champ-turned-fishmonger Sifu to coach them, they begin to outwit their competitors by harnessing their perceived weaknesses. The eye-poppingly bold and realistic CG animation that breathes fierce light into this rags to riches story will have you bouncing to the beat of the Lion's drum.

It's a Summer Film

Japan

Live Action, Soushi Matsumoto, 2020, 97 min

Recommended ages 10+

In Japanese with English subtitles

Infatuated with sword-slinging samurai films, Barefoot and her two best friends, Blue Hawaii and Kickboard, study every scene, honing their directorial chops like another martial art. When Barefoot gets the chance to produce her own screenplay for a high school project, it's both a dream come true *and* an enormous challenge—especially with all of the support and attention going to a competing student's cheesy, soft-focus rom-com. So Barefoot mobilizes a crew to shoot the film in one summer, guerilla-style. But just as production hits its stride, the sudden appearance of a mysterious, equally samurai-obsessed student brings dismal news of the future of movies. *It's a Summer Film* is a love letter to cinema of all stripes, with an exhilarating mix of time travel, swordplay, and girls-behind-the-camera action that will keep you cheering from "Action!" to "Roll credits!"

Kids Cup

Norway, Denmark, Finland — New York Premiere

Live Action, Documentary, Line Hatland, 2021, 90 min

Recommended ages 10+

In Norwegian, English, Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic with English subtitles

The Norway Cup is the world's biggest soccer tournament for kids, and tough teams overcome enormous challenges—on and off the pitch—to play in it. Tenacious Afnan worries about the fighting back home in Palestine, while introspective American Khalidi navigates showing respect for his Tanzanian father, even when they don't see eye to eye. Yu from China misses her father, and Fred from Brazil dreams of getting off of the bench. Their goal is the same: to win, of course. But along with the distinct challenges they bring from abroad, they also meet new ones: unfair referees, bland cafeteria food (and lots of fish!), homesickness, and the sting of a missed penalty shot. But there are wonders, too: for some, it's teen flirtation, for others, it's the marvels of the bounty at the candy shop, and for some, it's even the running water in the locker room. Above all, *Kids Cup* is about teamwork, friendship, and discovering that today's goal is a new generation's to define.

Moominvalley

Finland/UK—North American Premiere

Animation, Steve Box, 2022, 66 min

Recommended ages 6+

In English

Tove Jansson's delightful universe is back, premiering exclusively at NYICFF with all the Moomincapers you could ever wish for in three new episodes. It's a battle to decide who's in charge in *Brisk and Breezy* when camper and notorious mischief-maker Little My runs Mr. Brisk through a series of tests to prove his mettle. Next, leave it to Moomintroll to get into a muddle inadvertently following valley rogue Stinky down a foul path to thievery, only getting into more rot when trying to make things right. Finally, the Moominfamily must postpone their winter hibernation while Moominmamma (voiced by Rosamund Pike) keeps something under wraps in *Winter Secrets*.

Oink

Netherlands, Belgium—North American Premiere

Animation, Mascha Halberstad, 2022, 73 min

Recommended ages 7+

In Dutch with English subtitles

Fabulously bespectacled nine-year-old Babs has the perfect life in the Netherlands, with parents who see to it that she has a lovely home and only the healthiest vegetarian meals on her plate. But what she really, really wants is a dog to call her own. So when Babs' grandfather, an American with a curiously rootin tootin' cowboy accent, suddenly appears on the scene, he just may be the key to her perfect pet. Instead, he finds Oink, a lovable if constantly, er, digesting, pig, whom he gifts to Babs. Yet Babs' mother is less than thrilled and insists that Oink stays only on the condition he passes a rigorous puppy training program. Add to that her grandfather's secret nefarious connection to the Sausage King competition organized by The Society for Meat Products from Fresh Pigs, and *Oink* is full of cheeky humor, porcines behaving badly, and people behaving even worse. It's an uncannily realistic and genius stop-motion charmer that will have you snorting and cheering.

Disneynature's Polar Bear

United States

Documentary, Alastair Fothergill & Jeff Wilson, 2022, 95 min

Rated PG

In English

Narrated by two-time Academy Award® nominee Catherine Keener (*Capote*, *Being John Malkovich*), Disneynature's *Polar Bear* tells the story of a new mother whose memories of her own youth prepare her to navigate motherhood in the increasingly challenging world that polar bears face today. Helmed by Alastair Fothergill and Jeff Wilson, the directing team behind Disneynature's *Penguins*, and produced by Fothergill, Wilson, Jason Roberts, Keith Scholey, and Roy Conli, *Polar Bear* launches on Disney+ on April 22, 2022.

Pompo The Cinephile

Japan — World Premiere English-language Version

Animation, Takayuki Hirao, 2021, 94 min

Recommended ages 9+

In English

If you're reading this, chances are you like movies. You'll feel right at home with Pompo, the talented and gutsy producer whose love of cinema is unflinching and unapologetic. One day, Pompo turns her uncanny eye for talent to her movie-loving but apprehensive assistant Gene, selecting him to make his directorial debut with her latest script. But Gene has his work cut out for him with a young starlet looking for her first big break and a legendary, aging, Brando-like superstar in front of the camera. It's not an action movie, but *Pompo's* breakneck pace combined with the high stakes of creative fulfillment pack in as much excitement as standard superhero fare. Add to that a slew of insider movie references and countless winks and nods to the filmmaking process, this hilarious and heartfelt dramedy has what it takes to fulfill even your wildest celluloid dreams.

Poupelle of Chimney Town

Japan

Animation, Yusuke Hirota, 2020, 107 min

Rated PG

In English

Our wide-eyed, top-hatted, scruffily charming young protagonist Lubbichi—such a big name for a little boy—has a very big job to do: serving as a busy chimney sweep in his enormous and gritty post-industrial town. With all the factory soot in the air, Lubbichi and the townspeople haven't seen the sky in years, but that won't stop this plucky boy from dreaming of the stars. His dreams get even closer to reach when he befriends Poupelle, a gentle giant robot made of trash whose heart beats as true as any human one. Based on the beloved Japanese manga and filled with amazingly detailed CG worlds of complex, inventive devices and fantastical landscapes, this ragtag buddy movie brushes, clanks, and sweeps its way through the debris to dazzle eyes, hearts and minds. Chim, chim, cher-ee, indeed.

The Strangest Girl in the World

Argentina—New York Premiere

Live Action, Mariano Cattaneo, 2021, 89 min

Recommended ages 9+

In Spanish with English subtitles

The colorful world of high school, with its cool kids, chaos, and excitement, is just a pale backdrop for Melián. For her, true thrills aren't found in dances, crushes, or acing exams, but in the mysteries she reads and horror stories she writes that transport her far beyond the tame walls of her bedroom. When she finds that the worlds she can conjure in her sketchbook start to become a little too real, she'll have to learn to rely on some collective teamwork to slay some demons—of both the fantasy and mean-girl variety—who've tagged her 'the strangest girl in the world.'

Swop

Netherlands — World Premiere

Animation, Job, Joris & Marieke, 2022, 60 min

Recommended ages 7+

In Dutch with English subtitles

Based on the beloved, Emmy and NYICFF award-winning short *Heads Together*, this new series follows three wacky friends Sef, Wesley, and Marjory. One day, they discover an abandoned washing machine with mysterious powers: it lets you swap heads with someone else! This presents the three BFFs with a range of amazing possibilities...and side-splitting challenges. As they take turns trying on each other's heads, they literally see the world through new eyes. Will their new perspectives help them discover a whole new world of possibilities, or get them into a mess? Well, the sayings tell us *there are many sides to every story* and *two heads are better than one*. Run, don't walk (but please hold onto your head) to the slapstick silliness of *Swop*.

To the Bright Side

China — North American Premiere

Animation, Xiya Lan, Nianze Li, Yi Zhao, Kun Yu, Gaoxiang Liu, Maoning Liu, & Chen Chen, 2021, 83 min

Recommended ages 7+

In Mandarin with English subtitles

Hop on this delightful omnibus of a film, composed of seven stunningly animated short films, and you'll travel to China past and present, urban and rural, in realistic contemporary settings or fantastic mythical realms. Though the protagonists range from a family of rabbits, a boy doing his homework at his parents' restaurant, or a child and his grandmother in the countryside, all tell a unique stories of love, challenges, and maturing to the beat of your own drum. The distinctive styles of each short equally captivate, beautifully hand illustrated through rich colors, ink painting, paper-cutting, watercolor, collages, and more to create affectionate interpretations of life, love and growth as seen through these gifted Chinese filmmakers' viewpoints.

Turning Red

United States

Animation, Domee Shi, 2022, 99 min

Rated PG

In English

Disney and Pixar's *Turning Red* introduces Mei Lee (voice of Rosalie Chiang), a confident, dorky 13-year-old torn between staying her mother's dutiful daughter and the chaos of adolescence. Her protective, if not slightly overbearing mother, Ming (voice of Sandra Oh), is never far from her daughter—an unfortunate reality for the teenager. And as if changes to her interests, relationships and body weren't enough, whenever she gets too excited (which is practically ALWAYS), she "poofs" into a giant red panda! Directed by Academy Award® winner Domee Shi (Pixar short *Bao*) and produced by Lindsey Collins, *Turning Red* releases on Disney+ on March 11, 2022.

Where Is Anne Frank

France, Israel, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg—East Coast Premiere

Animation, Ari Folman, 2021, 99 min

Recommended Ages 9+

In English

Kitty is the most famous imaginary friend in history, created in the ink-filled pages of Anne Frank's diary. When she suddenly materializes in the near future as a fully-fledged girl, she can neither find her friend nor understand why her home is now a tourist attraction. Aided by a resourceful pickpocket, a group of young refugees, and modern jeans and sneakers, Kitty sets out to solve the mystery. Her search takes her on a journey criss-crossing through war-era Germany and contemporary Amsterdam, where she constantly and puzzlingly finds Anne's name on everything from streets and bridges to schools and hospitals. But Kitty can't shake the feeling that her friend's true legacy is being overlooked. Award-winning filmmaker Ari Folman (*Waltz with Bashir*) mixes a modern punk sensibility with time-spanning fantasy sequences and a Karen O soundtrack to create a poignant, urgent, social justice anthem by way of detective story for all ages.

Zero Gravity

United States

Live Action, Documentary, Thomas Verrette, 2021, 74 min

Recommended ages 8+

In English

Think your assignments are hard? Imagine if your work was checked in space—by astronauts! That's the case for the real students of the ISS Finals Tournament who are tasked with creating code for satellites aboard the International Space Station. *Zero Gravity* follows three middle school innovators and their first-time coach as they learn to navigate the complexities of NASA technology and life as a pre-teen. Gorgeous footage of outer space adds to the grandeur of their task, but the most compelling stories happen here on Earth, where the students support each other with teamwork and compassion, and their own hidden figure: the Mexican-American grandfather of their instructor whose experience at NASA sheds new light on the history of science and flight.

Additional programming announcements are forthcoming.

ABOUT NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM FESTIVAL

Established in 1997, and celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2022, NYICFF's mission is rooted in the belief of film as a path for young people to understand themselves and others. All programs are designed to celebrate the beauty and power of film, spark the inherent capacity of children to connect with complex, nuanced art, and encourage the creation of intelligent films that represent and celebrate unique, diverse, and historically excluded voices. NYICFF serves children, students, families, educators, filmmakers, and media arts professionals through its three core activities: the annual, Oscar®-qualifying [NYC film festival](#) and [national touring program](#); [FilmEd](#), a media arts and literacy program; and [Toward an Inclusive Future](#), an annual industry forum.

New York International Children's Film Festival is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts; public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, with support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. NYICFF is additionally supported by Humanities New York. Funding support for FilmEd Classroom is provided in part by Audible and SONY USA Foundation.

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

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