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CineMondays 2017 tickets are on sale now!
The Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival is thrilled to share details about its spring cinema showcase

The Philadelphia Jewish Film Festival, presenting compelling Jewish cinema to the Philadelphia region for 36 years, is proud to announce its lineup for its **2017 CineMondays spring series**. With six films (and one short) that exemplify the best in international Jewish cinema, CineMondays has curated a diverse selection of stories that appeal to wide audiences and evoke a rich range of emotions. PJFF is a program of the Gershman Y, 401 S. Broad St.

With an **Opening Night** on **March 20th** and a **Closing Night** on **May 8th**, these six feature films are presented on Monday evenings, all at 7:30 PM, at three venues, with a two-week break in April for Passover. Films from Israel, America, Hungary, and France, featuring narratives of female empowerment, inspired perseverance, community connectivity, and Holocaust education, inspire. With box office smashes, star power, arthouse elegance, and one extraordinary documentary, there's something for everyone at CineMondays.

Opening Night launches PJFF's spring series with **THE WOMEN'S BALCONY** (Philadelphia Premiere), Emil Ben-Shimon's narrative depicting a tight-knit Orthodox community in Jerusalem. The women's balcony, where wives, sisters, and daughters worship during service, is the only space in the synagogue where women may pray. When the balcony collapses during a Bar Mitzvah service, rendering the rabbi in shock and his wife in a coma, a charming young rabbi enters with his interpretation of the accident: the women were not behaving modestly enough. Rabbi David's conservative, fundamentalist take on the balcony collapse ignites a gender rift that channels Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (see Spike Lee's CHI-RAQ for another contemporary re-interpretation). The women in the balcony refuse to be cordoned off to a back room, unseen; they organize to rebuild the balcony, reclaim their place in the congregation, and test Orthodox submissiveness.



Variety trumpets **THE WOMEN'S BALCONY** as "joyous." *Cinemascope* says it's a "good-hearted and charming" film by Ben-Shimon, a promising debut. Nominated for five Israeli Academy Awards, it has already been the Official Selection of many Jewish film festivals from one of the U.S.'s biggest and best (the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival) to Canada's premiere film festival (Toronto International Film Festival). The Opening Night film, screening at 7:30 PM on March 20th at the Gershman Y, is a \$25 ticket that includes a celebratory reception with music, food, and drink.

The following Monday, March 27th, CineMondays is thrilled to present **NORMAN** (Philadelphia Premiere), starring Richard Gere in the titular character role. The film's subtitle says it all: *The Moderate Rise and Tragic Fall of a New York Fixer*. The fixer, known as a "macher" in Yiddish, is an important person to know, a well-connected wheel-



greaser, or a man who can make things happen. Norman Oppenheimer fumbles through life hoping to exploit his rolodex populated by the upper echelon of the New York Jewish community. A lonely dreamer who strives to befriend all, Oppenheimer believes that one day his connections will pay off in some form. When Micha Eshel, a charismatic Israeli politician alone in New York on business, meets Norman and they pause at the window of a high-end shoe shop, Oppenheimer's ticket to notoriety emerges. He buys Eshel some pricey footwear and, three years later when the politician has become Prime Minister, Norman believes his path to meaningful "fixing" has arrived. Or has it?



NORMAN features dynamic performances from Hollywood stalwarts: Hank Azaria, Steve Buscemi, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Neta Riskin, and Michael Sheen. Writer/Director Joseph Cedar's past films have garnered Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards and Cannes Screenwriting Award nominations. *The Guardian* calls Gere's portrayal one of his "strongest performances" in years. NORMAN was named Official Selection at the Toronto International and Telluride Film Festivals. Presented as a free, sneak preview before the film's widespread release, PJFF is thrilled to offer this opportunity to audiences at Landmark Theatres Ritz East in Old City. Tickets will be open to the public starting March 13.



CineMondays screens its Centerpiece Film at the Gershman Y on April 3rd – **1945** is a visually dazzling arthouse film from Hungary's Ferenc Török. Based on Gábor Szántáo's short story, *Homecoming*, 1945 is set in a Hungarian village shortly after liberation and creates tension with the mysterious arrival of two Orthodox Jews carrying two curious boxes. Devoid of Jews since their mass deportation, their arrival cloaks villagers in shame and turmoil. As the town's folk prepare for a wedding rife with its own conflicts, the village quickly unfurls into chaos.

Visually arresting black-and-white dramas like 2013's *IDA* (Poland, a CineMondays 2014 pick) or 2009's *THE WHITE RIBBON* (Germany) could be considered apt company for this Miami Jewish Film Festival Audience Award recipient. Post-Holocaust history has never been so taut and heartfelt.

After a two-week break, CineMondays returns on Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) with the gorgeously shot, feel-good **FANNY'S JOURNEY** (Philadelphia Premiere). Lola Doillon's French-language film focuses on the titular character's courageous journey to freedom as safe zones in Hitler's Europe crumble. Landing the role after 10,000 auditioned for it, Léonie Souchaud delivers a powerful performance as a 13-year-old leading a band of orphans through Nazi-occupied France and Italy. Inspired by the autobiographical novel by Fanny Ben-Ami, her journey is initially guided by stern and tender Madame Forman (award-winning superstar, Cécile de France). Equipped with fake passports and fictional names, including for Fanny's two younger sisters Erika and Georgette, Fanny pushes through mounting fears to lead a propulsive journey to freedom.



The Official Selection of at least ten international film festivals, *Elle* magazine calls it “the perfect feel-good movie.” Though subtitled, *FANNY’S JOURNEY* may be the ultimate film for young audiences to take in a Holocaust narrative fit for a middle schooler. It will be screened at the Gershman Y’s Elaine Levitt auditorium.



IN BETWEEN (Philadelphia Premiere) is Maysaloun Hamoud’s dynamic tale of three women in a modern Tel Aviv apartment: Leila, a chain-smoking criminal lawyer whose magnetism doesn’t desert her on the dancefloor of underground clubs; Salma, a more subdued but similarly stylish DJ and bartender, floating from gig to gig; and Nour, the youngest and a religious Muslim engaged to be married who moves in with Leila and Salma to study at university. Though her newfound roommates initially strike her

as intimidating, she soon finds authentic friendship and companionship in the two. When Nour’s conservative fiancé arrives for a visit, he is incensed that his future wife has embraced her cosmopolitan, secular roommates. His insistence on hastening their impending marriage and Nour’s return to domesticity gets checked and challenged.

MC Saad provides a sleek, electronic soundtrack to these incredible performances. The bright camerawork compounds this compelling exploration of Israel’s ever-changing social landscape. This Official Selection at seven international film festivals heralds “an end to stereotyped Palestinian women” by *The Hollywood Reporter*. *Variety* says “Hamoud’s clever, nuanced screenplay offers a critique of traditional, patriarchal Palestinian society, threatened by modernity, feminine power, and the court of public opinion.”

Closing Night brings CineMondays to a fitting finale at the Kimmel Center with a wonderful documentary about the inspirational and resilient **BIG SONIA** (Philadelphia Premiere). Standing four feet and eight inches tall, the 91-year-old Sonia Warshawski leaves an indelible impression on everyone she meets. From loyal customers at John’s Tailoring, where she holds court in a dying suburban mall, to the church groups and high school students whom she dazzles, to her own filmmaking granddaughter (the film’s co-director, Leah Warshawski, who works here with her husband, Todd Soliday), Kansas City’s last remaining Holocaust survivor leaves her mark. Shuttled between camps as a teenager during the war, her worldview is remarkably far from “doom and gloom” – her outrageous fashions and larger-than-life persona inspire a powerful message of hope.



The Audience Award recipient for Favorite Documentary Film and Jury Award honoree for Best Documentary Feature at the Napa Valley Film Festival, **BIG SONIA** earned Official Selection status at nearly a dozen international film festivals. “This is not like any other Holocaust survivor film you’ve seen,” writes the *Atlanta Jewish Times*. “You’re not likely to forget *Big Sonia* any time soon.”

An Academy Award-nominated documentary short, **JOE’S VIOLIN**, will precede **BIG SONIA** on Closing Night. It recounts the heartening story of a 91-year-old Polish Holocaust survivor who donates his violin to an inspiring young musician, 12-year-old Bronx native Brianna Perez. Their improbable friendship leaves a powerful mark.

CineMondays 2017 at a Glance

OPENING NIGHT: Monday, March 20 at 7:30 PM at the Gershman Y

THE WOMEN'S BALCONY by Emil Ben-Shimon (Philadelphia Premiere)

Israel, 2016, 96 minutes, Hebrew with English subtitles, Narrative

Key words: Heroines, tradition vs. modernity, female directors, Israeli box office hits, feminist themes, *Lysistrata*

Monday, March 27 at 7:30 PM at Landmark Theatres Ritz East

NORMAN by Joseph Cedar (Philadelphia Premiere)

America, 2016, 117 minutes, English and Hebrew with English subtitles, Narrative

Key words: American Jewry, networking, fixers, ethics, archetypes, Richard Gere, political influence, validation

CENTERPIECE FILM: Monday, April 3 at 7:30 PM at the Gershman Y

1945 by Ferenc Török (Philadelphia Premiere)

Hungary, 2016, 93 minutes, Hungarian with English subtitles, Narrative

Key words: Collective guilt, post-Holocaust Europe, arthouse cinema, black-and-white films, stunning visuals

(TWO WEEK BREAK FOR PASSOVER)

Monday, April 24 at 7:30 PM at the Gershman Y

FANNY'S JOURNEY by Lola Doillon (Philadelphia Premiere, Yom HaShoa – Israeli Holocaust Remembrance Day)

Belgium, France, 2016, 94 minutes, French with English subtitles, Narrative

Key words: Jewish refugee children, strong women, French cinema, inspirational dramas, Cécile de France, educational opportunity, appropriate for kids comfortable with subtitles

Monday, May 1 at 7:30 PM at the Gershman Y

IN BETWEEN by Maysaloun Hamoud (Philadelphia Premiere)

Israel, 2016, 96 minutes, Arabic and Hebrew with English subtitles, Narrative

Key words: Arab-Israeli women, gender issues, feminist friendship, Tel Aviv, feature film debuts, female directors

CLOSING NIGHT: Monday, May 8 at 7:30 PM at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

BIG SONIA by Leah Warshawski and Todd Soliday (Philadelphia Premiere) with **JOE'S VIOLIN** by Kahane Cooperman
USA, 2016, 93 minutes, English, Documentary feature and documentary short

Key words: Holocaust survivor, Holocaust education, family stories, inspirational women, stories of human resilience, empowerment, perseverance

TICKETING

OPENING NIGHT: \$25 for **THE WOMEN'S BALCONY** includes film and admission to Opening Night party with live music and refreshments.

NORMAN: FREE! EXCLUSIVE SNEAK PREVIEW (This special screening is limited to 250 guests. Online registration at PJFF.org begins Monday, March 13. Reservations are first come, first serve. Patrons will not be admitted without prior registration.)

TICKETS FOR ALL OTHER CINEMONDAYS SCREENINGS: \$13 General Admission; \$11 Seniors; Children 18 & under and College Students are FREE with IDs (students are welcome to attend all PJFF CineMondays for free, excluding Opening Night and NORMAN. Closing Night tickets can be acquired by visiting the Gershman Y at 401 S. Broad St. during business hours). To purchase tickets online, visit PJFF.ORG. To purchase tickets by phone, call 215-545-4400. To arrange for group sales of ten or more, call 215-446-3013 (discount will be applied to total purchase).

VENUES

THE GERSHMAN Y 401 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, 215-545-4400; **KIMMEL CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS** 300 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, 215-670-2388; **RITZ EAST** 125 South Second Street, Philadelphia, 215-925-4535.