

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

RHODE ISLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL PRESENTS 4th ANNUAL PROVIDENCE JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

Curated by the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University

PROVIDENCE, RI (July 27, 2005) **The Rhode Island International Film Festival** (August 9-14, 2005) will mount the Fourth Annual Providence Jewish Film Festival as a sidebar highlighting the diversity of the Jewish experience. The films include two USA Premieres, one East Coast premiere and five Rhode Island premieres and will be screened at the Columbus Theatre and the Providence Chamber of Commerce Theatre.

In announcing the programming, George T. Marshall, RIIFF Executive Director, stated, "Providing a focus on world cultures has long been a hallmark of the Rhode Island International Film Festival. This year we are delighted to bring this sidebar of new films about Jewish communities around the world to our Festival. Thanks to our partnership with the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University we have been able to find a wonderful array of new films which touch the core of the Jewish Experience. We hope these films will help challenge stereotypes and bring a better understanding of the human dimensions behind the headlines."

Working with RIIFF, Sharon Pucker Rivo, Executive Director of the National Center for Jewish Films at Brandeis University, is curating the program. The six film programs being presented include the deeply emotional documentaries **No. 17** and **Widowed Once, Bereaved Twice**, the whimsical musical **American Matchmaker**, the fascinating south-of-the-border portrait **Tijuana Jews** and the compelling archival story of Jewish American soldiers in **From Philadelphia to the Front**.

All screenings are \$10 and can be purchased on line at www.RIFILMFEST.org or 866 RFF TIXS or at the door of the theatre.

**10:30 AM Wednesday August 10
Columbus Theatre**

American Matchmaker (Amerikaner Shadkhn) **Rhode Island Premiere**
USA, 1940, 87 minutes, B&W, Yiddish with English subtitles, restored, digitally re-mastered
Produced & Directed by: Edgar G. Ulmer
Screenplay by: S. Castle
Music and Lyrics by: Sam Morgenstern, William Mercur

Starring: Leo Fuchs, Judith Abarbanel, Judel Dubinsky, Anna Guskin,
Celia Bodkin, Abraham Lax

Great film-noir director Edgar G. Ulmer's last Yiddish movie was also his most modern, an art-deco romantic comedy about male ambivalence and Jewish assimilation. Starring Leo Fuchs, known on Second Avenue as "the Yiddish Fred Astaire," an elegant and eligible bachelor who appears to never be able to close the marriage deal. With its urbane, neurotic hero, *American Matchmaker* looks ahead to the films of Woody Allen. "As in the best Yiddish theater traditions, there is a successful combination of humor and schmaltz with the sentimentality at the end well-earned by the comic insights along the way... The title says it all – a clash between the urbane, slick manners of the new country and the old, busybody communal ways of the shtetl." – *Films*, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1983

Also included, the hilarious short **I Want to Be a Boarder**, a small classic of Yiddish absurdism that showcases Fuch's comic virtuosity.

6:30 PM Wednesday August 10

Providence Chamber of Commerce Theatre

Presented in association with The Consulate General of Israel New England

No. 17

Rhode Island Premiere

Israel, 2003, 75 minutes, Hebrew with English subtitles, video

A Film by David Ofek, Ron Rotem, Elinor Kowarsky **[produced and directed by?]**

Best Documentary, Israeli Academy Awards, 2003

Best Feature Documentary, DocAviv 2003

Special Jury Award, Hot Docs, 2004

In June, 2002 a bus on its way from Tel Aviv to Tiberius, was bombed. Seventeen people were killed; all but one were identified. No. 17 wasn't. A few weeks later he was buried anonymously. The police soon stopped searching, believing that he must have been a foreign worker. This is where the filmmakers stepped in, documenting over a period of six months the search for the identity of a man no one had claimed to be missing. In the form of a detective investigation, the film pursues the stories of several people who were directly and indirectly affected by this bombing, creating a tragic-comic portrait of a society living under the shadow of death.

5:00 PM - Thursday Aug 11

Providence Chamber of Commerce Theatre

Presented in association with The Consulate General of Israel New England

Widowed Once, Twice Bereaved

Rhode Island Premiere

Israel, 2004, 60 min,

Hebrew with English subtitles

Director: Orna Ben Dor

Filmmaker Orna Ben Dor's new documentary focuses on five women whose husbands and/or children were among the fifteen Israeli civilians killed in the suicide bombing of the Matza Restaurant in Haifa, Israel, on March 31, 2002. Ben Dor's is a sensitive tribute to the strength and beauty of these Israeli women, including Carmit Ron whose husband, Aviel, seventeen-year-old son Ofer, and her twenty-one-year-old daughter Anat were killed while eating lunch together at the sidewalk cafe.

w/

Second Watch

Israel 1995 14 minutes Color 16mm/ Beta Sp

Hebrew with English subtitles

Director: Udi Ben-Arie

Best Short Film, 1996 Dresden International Filmfest; Nominee for

Best Foreign Film, 1996 Student Academy Awards Berkowitz, an

An Israeli Reserve soldier on watch at a remote post along the Israeli-Jordanian border finds, just a few yards across the border, a Jordanian soldier as bored to death as he. Together they help each other pass the time and create some trouble that they manage to get away with!

8:30 PM - Saturday Aug 13

Providence Chamber of Commerce Theatre

From Philadelphia To The Front

USA Premiere

2005 USA 36 minutes Video

Directed by Judy Gelles and Marianne Bernstein

Many documentaries have been devoted to the topic of the destruction of European Jewry in Nazi-occupied Europe, but relatively little attention has been focused on Jewish Americans who participated in the Allied victory in WWII. For Jews, the war to defeat Hitler had deeply personal significance. The memories of six Jewish men in their 80's who remember grew up in Philadelphia and served their country in World War II provide a fascinating perspective. Combined with photographs from the men's personal collections, the film includes rare archival footage, stills, and newsreels including Jewish soldiers celebrating Shabbat and Passover during wartime and the first Jewish service at Dachau after it was liberated. Milton Dank, a noted physicist and historian who flew glider planes in WWII, contributed hundreds of photographs he took on the front lines.

w/

Appelfeld's Table

USA Premiere

Israel, 2004, 47 minutes, beta

Hebrew with English subtitles

Director: Adi Japhet Fuchs

Producer: Catherine the Great Productions

Mayor's Prize for Best Jewish Documentary: Jerusalem Film Festival, 2004

Presented in association with The Consulate General of Israel New England

Imagination, memories and fiction are mixed together to portray the world and life of the Israeli writer

Aharon Appelfeld. The film revolves around the acclaimed author's daily pilgrimages to the Anna Ticho House in Jerusalem, where he uses the cafe as a study and meeting place for friends and colleagues. This dramatic personal story is enriched by excerpts from Appelfeld's writings as he attempts to understand the creative process. "**Appelfeld's Table** beautifully transmits the humanity, optimism and joy of living with which Appelfeld, both the writer and the ordinary person, managed to emerge from the horrors he endured as a youngster. At the same time, it is a film about the making of the Israeli collective and of the creative struggle that awaits those who refuse to automatically assimilate."--Jerusalem Post

12:30 pm Sunday August 14th
Columbus Cinematheque

Tijuana Jews

2005 USA 52 min

Directed by Isaac Artenstein

Produced by Jude Artenstein

East Coast Premiere

Throughout the early twentieth century, thousands of European Jews sailed to Mexico escaping increasing persecution at home and searching for opportunity. A small group made its way north to the border town of Tijuana. **Tijuana Jews** is a documentary and personal exploration of a community that blended Jewish and Mexican cultures and customs in an unlikely place and time. Having grown up Jewish in Mexico, director Isaac Artenstein encountered reactions of surprise, even disbelief, from many people north of the border who had no idea there were Jews in Mexico, especially in Tijuana, a city with dark legends of free-flowing liquor, cheap narcotics, beautiful señoritas and black-velvet paintings. **Tijuana Jews** is an authentic and living testimony set against the conceptions and misconceptions of this mythic border city.

w/

Jews of the Spanish Homeland (Los Judios de Patria Espana)

Spain 1929 13 minutes B&W Silent

Produced by Ernesto Giménez Caballero

This newly restored documentary visits Sephardic communities in Salonika, Constantinople, Yugoslavia, and Romania as well as former centers of Jewish life in Spain. Filmmaker Caballero addresses the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, with the deft use of drawings to depict Jewish dispersion to Europe, North Africa, and the Americas.

7:00 pm Sunday August 14th

Columbus Cinematheque

Seeds

USA, Israel, Pakistan, 92 minutes, video

Directed by Marjan Safinia

Rhode Island Premiere

Presented in association with The Consulate General of Israel to New England

Imagine spending three weeks living with someone you consider to be your enemy. In **Seeds**, ten extraordinary teenagers undertake that challenge. Every summer, kids from Israel, Palestine, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and America meet at the Seeds of Peace International Camp in Maine. For three life-changing weeks, they learn to share their dreams and fears, listen to opposing views, see beyond prejudices, and eventually respect each other as individuals as they attempt to build the one thing they all strive for: a future. This is no “kumbaya” camp experience. Struggling through extreme highs and lows, these kids face one another with inspiring honesty and courage. In the end, among the things they learn is that “in order to make peace with your enemy, you have to go to war with yourself.”

The National Center for Jewish Film (NCJF) is a unique nonprofit motion picture archive, distributor and resource center housing the largest, most comprehensive collection of Jewish-theme films and video in the world. The ongoing mission of NCJF is to gather, preserve, catalogue and exhibit films with artistic and educational value relevant to the Jewish experience, disseminating these materials to the widest possible audience. NCJF's first priority continues to be the preservation and restoration of rare and endangered nitrate and acetate films. The Center has long been recognized as a leader in the revival of Yiddish cinema, rescuing watershed films like *The Dybbuk* (1937) and *Tevye* (1939) from virtual oblivion. By producing and distributing pristine film and videocassette editions of such historic works with new English subtitles, NCJF effectively reintroduces modern audiences to a unique cultural and cinematic experience.

This year **RIIFF**, New England's largest film festival, will feature 221 films from across the United States and over 61 countries in a truly statewide celebration of film. There will be 80 World and US Premieres, setting a new RIIFF record. Each year the Festival attracts more than 20,000 filmmakers, audience members, celebrities and members of the industry. In Providence screenings will be held throughout the week at the Columbus Theatre Arts Center, the Cable Car Cinema and Providence Chamber of Commerce Theatre. In other parts of the state films will be shown at venues in Newport, Westerly, Kingston and Cranston. RIFF is the only festival in the US that can boast of being truly statewide.

RIFF Honorary Co-chairs are Governor Donald Carcieri, Providence Mayor David M. Cicilline and US Senator Jack Reed. RIFF is sponsored in part by SONY, Rule Broadcasting, Clear Channel Communications, the Goethe Institut-Boston, Delta Airlines, Amtrak, RISCA, NBC10, the City of Providence, the Providence Tourism Council, the Providence Phoenix, the Federal Hill Gazette, Motif, the Feinstein IMAX, Federal Hill Merchants Association, Newport Storm, RIPTA, Dolce Villa Hotel, Hotel

Viking, Damron and Jenn Lee Designs and Amoeba Graphics.

Advance Ticket sales for screenings and special events will be available through the RIIFF website (www.RIFilmFest.org) and www.ARTTixRI.com. Student, group and senior discounts are available in advance. To purchase tickets or obtain more information about any aspect of RIIFF, call 401-861-4445, too free at 866-RFF-TIXA or log onto www.RIFilmFest.org.

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The Rhode Island International Film Festival (RIIFF) is dedicated to the creation of opportunities for artistic interaction among independent filmmakers, directors, producers, distributors, backers and the filmgoing community. The Flickers Arts Collaborative, an organization with 24 years of experience presenting major artistic events as well as independent and foreign films to the public produces the RIIFF. For more information call or write RIIFF at PO Box 162, Newport, RI 02840; e-mail info@film-festival.org. Web: www.RIFilmFest.org.