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Seattle Jewish Film Festival Announces 2017 Lineup Take-Off with Opening Night Film “Harmonia” and Return-Home Closing Night with Locally-Made “Big Sonia”

The festival, being held March 25 - April 2 at venues around Seattle and on Mercer Island, includes an advance screening of “The Zookeeper’s Wife,” starring Jessica Chastain, among films inviting viewers to journey into and celebrate global Jewish and Israeli life and culture.

Closing night will bring guests back home with the documentary “Big Sonia,” from Seattle-based award-winning filmmakers Leah Warshawski and Todd Soliday.

SEATTLE, WA – The Seattle Jewish Film Festival, presented by the Stroum Jewish Community Center, is thrilled to announce their 2017 program. The festival, which is marking its 22nd year as one of the longest-running film festivals in the region and an important part of Seattle’s cultural mosaic, offers a diverse spectrum of films that welcomes everyone aboard.

Exploring a theme of “Arrivals,” all selections will give audiences the opportunity to satisfy their wanderlust through international cinematic travel to France, the Netherlands, Greece, Israel and beyond.

“The Seattle Jewish Film Festival is the largest Jewish event in the Pacific Northwest and an important arts and culture destination for diverse arts-loving audiences. While the ‘destination’ is the festival, people will be transported and transformed through cinema. Audiences should get ready to ‘fasten their seat belts’ and prepare for exhilaration and reconnection, says Festival Director Pamela Lavitt. “In keeping with our mission, we’re building bridges and forging connections with unique and rarely seen films. It’s like we are all going on vacation somewhere exotic and soul-filling together!”

The first to arrive will be Ori Sivan’s “**Harmonia**,” opening the festival on Saturday, March 25th at AMC Pacific Place 11. The Jerusalem Philharmonic Orchestra is the romantic setting for this modern take on the biblical story and love triangle of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar. Lead actor Alon Aboutboul is expected to attend.

Another highlight will be an advance screening of “**The Zookeeper’s Wife**,” directed by Niki Caro and starring two-time Academy Award® nominee Jessica Chastain. The film tells the real-

life story of a working wife and mother (Chastain) who became a hero to hundreds during World War II. It will show Sunday, March 26 at 5:15pm at AMC Pacific Place 11.

Audiences will be in for a trip at the much-loved **Matzoh Momma Sunday Brunch**, which includes a screening of “**The Last Laugh**” on March 26 at AMC Pacific Place 11. Exploring the question “can the Holocaust be funny?”, top comedians (Mel Brooks, Sarah Silverman, Judy Gold) and Holocaust survivors weigh in with a wide range of answers, illustrated by archival footage and movie clips. The Brunch begins at 9:30am at AMC Pacific Place, and is hosted by Matzoh Momma Catering and accompanied by a live musical performance from perennial favorites The Klez Katz! The film begins at 10:45am. A special event ticket provides entry to the Brunch and film, and film-only tickets can also be purchased.

Younger audiences can look forward to two half-price Teen Screens (Age 13-19 pay just \$6.50 with a paying adult), including “**Supergirl**” which screens on Tuesday, March 28th at 6:30pm at SIFF Cinema Uptown. “Supergirl” is the story of a typical teenager, Naomi Kutin, who goes to school, does her homework, and hangs out with friends--but she may be “the strongest girl in the world.” Director Jessie Auritt and editor Erik Dugger will be in attendance and film subject Naomi Kutin is available for interviews.

The Closing Night Centerpiece returns audiences home after a 9-day journey, with the Seattle premiere of “**Big Sonia**” on Sunday, April 2 at the Stroum Jewish Community Center on Mercer Island, followed by a reception. Holocaust survivor, public speaker, and diminutive diva, 4’8”, 91-year-old Sonia’s towering personality, leopard-print panache, and life’s lessons have a big impact. Her story comes to life in this documentary by her granddaughter, Leah Warshawski.

“It is important that SJFF feature, work closely with, and cultivate the work of local Jewish filmmakers, giving them feedback and a forum for works-in-progress opportunities and premieres,” says Lavitt. “Leah and Todd have already presented short work-in-progress clips at our year-round screenings. Now that the film is finished, we are proud to have played a supporting role launching the film.”

Tickets for selected special events are on sale now, along with SJFF Full Festival Passes and a discounted 8-Pack of tickets. Always popular, the **SJFF Full Festival Pass** is priced at \$225 (\$200 for SJCC members/students/seniors 65+/youth) and includes access to all film screenings and ticketed special events. New this year, **8-Pack** can be redeemed for up to 8 tickets total with a maximum of 2 tickets per film or event for \$125 (\$100 for SJCC members/students/seniors 65+/youth). There are no restrictions on the type of ticketed event. **8-Packs** can be redeemed for special event tickets (valued at \$20-25 apiece), including Opening Night on 3/25, Matzoh Momma Sunday Brunch & Film on 3/26, and the Closing Night Centerpiece on 4/2 as well as regularly priced general admission screenings. Passes and 8-Packs are available at <http://seattlejewishfilmfestival.org/festival/tickets>.

The Seattle Jewish Film Festival is held at AMC Pacific Place 11, SIFF Cinema Uptown, and the Stroum Jewish Community Center. SJFF’s programming also continues year-round at SJCC.

To request interviews with SJFF staff or guests, or to request a press pass or tickets to any screenings, please contact Ryan Davis at ryan@smarthousecreative.com or 206.491.3738.

*For inquiries about “**The Zookeeper’s Wife**,” please contact Focus Features representative Kelsi Gauger at kelsi@janetwainwright.com or 425.283.3351*

Click here for preview links and to download high resolution images. [will create link when doc is finalized]

About Seattle Jewish Film Festival: www.seattlejewishfilmfestival.org

In its 21st year, the Seattle Jewish Film Festival is a nine-day annual event and year-round international cinematic exploration and celebration of Jewish and Israeli life, culture, and history. Founded in 1995 by AJC Seattle, SJFF is now a cornerstone program of the Stroum Jewish Community Center and a vital cornerstone of its Cultural Arts season and programming. Central to the J's community-building mission, SJFF brings people together to inspire learning and new perspectives by showcasing the virtuosity and diversity of Jewish cinema and talent.

About Stroum Jewish Community Center: www.sjcc.org

The Stroum Jewish Community Center inspires connections to build community and ensure Jewish continuity. Together we create outstanding programs, partnerships and spaces that welcome everyone to learn, grow and celebrate Jewish life and culture. To learn more about SJCC's new CEO Amy Lavin, please read our January 16, 2017 [press release](#).



Images: THE ZOOKEEPER'S WIFE; Closing Night Centerpiece BIG SONIA; Opening Night Film HARMONIA (lead actor Alon Aboutboul to attend).