



San Francisco Dance Film Festival Announces Lineup for its 6th Fall Festival with October 5 Kick-Off Event & October 8-11 Program Highlights

San Francisco, CA – San Francisco Dance Film Festival announces program highlights for its 6th fall festival, featuring dance films from around the world, including a special kick-off event, opening and closing receptions, as well as discussions with local and international filmmakers, choreographers and special guests.

Artistic Director/Founder Greta Schoenberg says of this year's selections, "Through the accessible medium of film, we hope our programming will draw new audiences to dance. Our popular screendance shorts programs run a virtual tour of the latest in dance around the globe, while documentaries unravel the choreographic process and bring historical works back into relevance. Within a broad spectrum of genres we have the opportunity to introduce local dance fans to foreign artists who may not otherwise be seen in the Bay Area, as well as to independent local choreographers who may still fall under the general public's radar. We're thinking of our mission as twofold: Bringing dance to new audiences, and bringing new dance to dance audiences."

Below are highlights of the kick-off event and the 2015 festival program, a celebration of dance in myriad forms, both old and new.

FESTIVAL KICK-OFF EVENT

7 pm, Monday, October 5

Kanbar Hall Theater, JCCSF, 3200 California St
San Francisco, California

Mia - A Dancer's Journey

USA, 2013 (60 min.)

Directors: Maria Ramas & Kate Johnson / Narrator: Blythe Danner

SFDFFF launches its 6th festival with a special screening of the documentary film *Mia - A Dancer's Journey* at the Kanbar Hall Theater at the JCCSF. *Co-presented by San Francisco Ballet and the Museum of Performance + Design*

Mia Slavenska was one of the most celebrated ballerinas of the 20th century, Croatia's greatest dancer, and a pioneer in American ballet. Caught in the maelstrom of 20th century political events, she was forced to leave her native Croatia at age twenty in order to continue to dance; at age twenty-one, she was being celebrated in Western Europe as the likely successor to Anna Pavlova; and, at age twenty-three, she was escaping the looming world war by emigrating to the United States with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. When Mia arrived in the late 1930s, she found an America where ballet—known as “fancy dancing” and “toe dancing”—was most often found as novelty acts in music reviews and movie halls. She was one of a small band of famous European émigré ballerinas who literally changed the face of American culture by introducing Americans across the country to ballet as an art form. Without Mia and her émigré colleagues, Balanchine's American revolution in ballet would never have made it past the borders of New York City. But at the end of her life, Mia was haunted by the fear of obscurity and spent her last years writing and rewriting her memoirs. When Mia died in 2002, they remained unpublished and she believed that she had been completely forgotten. Before she died, her daughter Maria promised that she would tell her mother's story. This film is the keeping of that promise. As Maria retraces her mother's life journey, she unearths the story of a maverick ballerina and a lost time in American dance.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8
Brava Theater Center

Opening Night Shorts

Some of the top selections of 2015 will be featured in the opening of the 6th festival season where many international filmmakers are welcomed to screen their films to Bay Area audiences.

Followed by Q & A and an opening reception.

The weekend will include three additional shorts programs, with two more composed of mixed international selections and an all-local showcase at the close of the festival,

FRIDAY OCTOBER 9
Brava Theater Center

Rare Birds

USA/Norway, 2014 (60 min.)

(US Premiere)

Director: T.M. Rives

Choreographer: Alexander Ekman

Following renowned Swedish choreographer Alexander Ekman through his epic production of *A Swan Lake* (Norwegian National Ballet), *Rare Birds* tracks dance creation from ideas to hard reality. Dance fans and general audiences alike will appreciate this fascinating look into the craftsmanship, challenges and pleasures behind a large-scale production in a major institution. The house's army of artists and workers took on unique challenges, requiring new approaches to costume and sets and the installation of a 6000-liter lake onstage. Athletic dancers slide through water, creating a new dance form approaching such velocities that helmets were soon required to avoid concussion. With costumes by top designer Henrik Vibskov and new music by composer Mikael Karlsson, very little of the classic ballet remains. But the production became a sensation, selling out the entire run in one day and later nominated for the 2014 Prix Benois de la Danse.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 10

Brava Theater Center

***Symmetry* (Screendance Short) / *Symmetry Unraveled* (Documentary)**

The Netherlands, 2014 (28 min. / 25 min.)

(West Coast Premiere)

Director: Ruben Van Leer (Short) / Juliette Stevens (Documentary)

Symmetry is a dance and opera film created by choreographer Lukáš Timulak during a residency at Cern, the world's largest particle physics laboratory near Geneva, Switzerland. The work was created under a program called Arts@Cern, where artists are invited into a labyrinth of particle accelerators and other complex instruments to explore and experiment alongside scientists. Researchers at Cern study the basic constituents of matter – the fundamental particles. Theoretical physicist John Ellis says, "I think it's very interesting that artists and filmmakers are intrigued by what is happening at Cern. Our experiments here are really addressing fundamental principles about what we're made of and our place in the universe... I'd like to think that at the base [artists have] a similar impulse, that all of us are trying to answer Gauguin's questions: 'What are we?' 'Where did we come from?' and 'Where are we going?'" A fascinating making-of documentary, *Symmetry Unraveled* explores the intersection of art and science through the project, followed by the 28-minute film *Symmetry* itself, where a Cern researcher is thrown off balance while working on the theory of everything and the smallest particle.

Discussion with directors and local scientists to follow. Guests TBA.

Parables of War

USA, 2014 (32 min.)

(West Coast Premiere)

Director: Nina Gilden Seavey

Using MacArthur “Genius” Award-winning choreographer Liz Lerman's theatrical performance piece *Healing Wars* as a point of departure, *Parables* witnesses the journey of three men who are, in one way or another, all casualties of war: Bill Pullman, the actor; Keith Thompson, the dancer; and Josh Bleill, the former Marine. Transcending performance, *Parables* explores the intricate nexus that exists between art and artist, between representation and personal narrative, and between historical truth and contemporary experience. Ultimately, what is laid bare is the struggle of the wounded and of their healers that expresses itself both in art and in life itself.

Renewal

USA / Israel, 2014 (40 min.)

(Bay Area Premiere)

Director: Stacey Menchel Kussell

Renewal profiles an internationally renowned group of dancers – the Vertigo Dance Company – in their pioneering Eco-Arts village on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The film features captivating scenes of the Vertigo company in performance and rehearsals, and in their ecological pursuits including gray-water recycling and permaculture. The process of becoming more sustainable forces these dancers to reconsider their art, their values, and their place in the world.

Une Courte Histoire de la Folie (A Brief History of Madness)

Canada, 2014 (27 min.)

(West Coast Premiere)

Director: Isabelle Hayeur

Through the lens of modern dance, the scenes in *A Brief History of Madness* guide us through the history of how mental illness has been treated from the end of the 19th century to the present. In evocative spaces, solitude takes on various guises, from the whiteness of mental institutions to the gaze of a woman mesmerized by a traffic light, or the depths of a teenager's bedroom. Gestural language expresses a variety of perspectives on a reality that transcends time.

Ma Mère Adorait la Danse (My Mother Loved Dance)

France, 2014 (65 min.)

(US Premiere)

Director: Thierry Teston

Ma Mère Adorait la Danse is a portrait of Brigitte Lefèvre, who was the director of the Paris Opera Ballet for more than 20 years. During her last year in office, filmmaker Thierry Teston followed her, from Paris to Tokyo, behind the scenes of a lifetime, and those of one of the world's finest and oldest companies. As she floats among luminary choreographers and breathtaking dancers, Lefèvre manages her demanding role like a motherly sylph. We witness delicate interactions never seen by the public which

illustrate with unusual frankness and clarity how the world (and not just the dance world) really runs. This beautifully crafted documentary treats the subject with an intimacy and elegance that will be fascinating to anyone who aspires to lead a company of any kind.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 11
Brava Theater Center

Let's Get The Rhythm: The Life and Times of Miss Mary Mack

Mill Valley, USA, 2014 (53 min.)

(SF Premiere)

Directors: Irene Chagall and Steve Zeitlin

Let's Get the Rhythm celebrates the wondrous world of hand-clapping games, a traditional genre that thrives on the playgrounds of large cities and in remote corners of the world. Local director Irene Chagall captures the quintessence of childhood wit and wisdom; the documentary is a delightful homage to the beauty of the beat as three 8-year-old girls of diverse cultural backgrounds consider one of their favorite pastimes. The charm of their personal insight is complemented by observations by folklorists, musicians, ethnomusicologists, cognitive neuroscientists and just plain folk. Archival footage collected by Alan Lomax, Laura Boulton, and Kate Rinzler brings deeper emphasis to the empowering impact of these games on the budding social mind.

New York Times dance critic Gia Kourlas (January 30, 2015): "The film, which features interviews with young girls, also accomplishes something else with its choreographic pulse: As it swings between games and interviews, *Let's Get the Rhythm* has a beat; its incandescent musicality brings this hand-clapping universe to life."

The screening will be followed by a brief hand-clapping workshop and demonstration by children led by filmmaker Irene Chagall, also a longtime music teacher at the Community Music Center in the Mission, which provides music education to all, regardless of financial means.

The program opens with *Tap, Tap, Tap* which was written, produced, directed, and performed by 12-year-old Theo Taplitz of the Cinematic Arts Academy at Millikan Middle School in Los Angeles.

Feelings Are Facts: The Life of Yvonne Rainer

San Francisco, USA 2014 (82 min.)

Director: Jack Walsh

At the age of 25, Yvonne Rainer took her first dance class; at the age of 28, she changed dance forever. *Feelings Are Facts: The Life of Yvonne Rainer* tells the story of postmodern dance maverick Yvonne Rainer. As a choreographer and filmmaker, Rainer has pushed the boundaries of America's avant-garde for five decades. Over the course

of her career, she revolutionized modern dance, was a performance art innovator, and radically changed experimental filmmaking -- all during a time when the art world largely ignored women. Now 80, San Francisco native Rainer continues to make provocative works that push the boundaries of dance. *Local director Jack Walsh will be in attendance.*

CO-LABORATORY AND LOCAL SHORTS
7 p.m., Sunday October 11

SFDFFF announces participants for the 2015 Co-Laboratory project, a unique collaboration between two teams of local choreographers and filmmakers who will create two short dance films in one week just before the festival. Iconoclastic choreographer Sara Shelton Mann will be paired with San Francisco Film Society's Film House resident Elena Greenlee and music video director Mark Kohr will collaborate with ballet choreographer Christopher Stowell to create their dance films which will premiere on the closing night of the festival.

Local shorts including new work by Kate Duhamel, Deborah Slater, RJ Muna & Jodi Lomask, Diablo Ballet, Amy Seiwert with filmmakers Kristine Samuelson and John Haptas, former San Francisco Ballet Soloist Dana Genshaft's contest-winning George Harrison music video, and San Francisco Ballet Principal Dancer Davit Karapetyan's "Tribute to the Armenian Genocide" with an ensemble of his colleagues will also be screened as part of the traditional closing night celebration for local choreographers, dancers, filmmakers and audiences.

Followed by Q & A and closing reception.

Ticket Information

Tickets and Program Information: www.sfdancefilmfest.org or 844-567-3333 or info@sfdancefilmfest.org. The Brava Theater Center is located at 2781 24th Street in San Francisco's lively Mission district.

Pricing:

October 5 Special Kick-Off Event: General \$20; Patron \$85 (includes private reception)
Kanbar Theater, JCCSF, 3200 California Street, San Francisco.

Opening/ Closing Night Screenings (includes reception): \$20 general ; \$17 students

Other festival screenings: Single Tickets \$15 ; Students: \$13

Festival Pass: \$100 / Patron Pass \$250 (\$100 festival pass + 2 patron tickets to opening Kick-off Event)

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