



THE BEST IN INDEPENDENT FILM AT CIFF49

Cleveland International Film Festival Reveals 2025's Spotlight Films

The Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF) reveals this year's spotlight films to be featured in the line-up of 300 independent films from around the globe. The 49th season runs March 27 - April 5, 2025, at Playhouse Square, followed by CIFF Streams April 6-13, 2025. Explore the complete CIFF49 Film Guide starting February 28th at clevelandfilm.org.

This year's program, curated from over 3,500 submissions, is a testament to the power of independent filmmaking. With representation from 60 countries the program schedule offers diversity in cultural perspectives, storytelling styles, and visual formats.

Mallory Martin, Artistic Director for CIFF, says, "The Festival is an opportunity for artists and audiences to connect and converse about the stories that move us – often these are stories we wouldn't have access to if not for the Festival."

Providing a sneak peek into what is ahead at this iconic Cleveland event, Martin and her team reveal CIFF49's highlights, including spotlight films, world premieres, North American premieres, and U.S. premieres. Several filmmakers are also planning to attend, making their travel arrangements now.



Spotlight Films



Opening Night: FOR WORSE - Actress Amy Landecker (*Transparent*, “A Serious Man”) makes her feature screenwriting/directorial debut with this biting comedy of manners, starring as a newly divorced sober mom who accompanies her Gen Z date to a wedding where things crash and burn (literally) as she tries to keep up with the young wedding party. *Directed by Amy Landecker. Produced by Amy Landecker, Bradley Whitford, Valerie Stadler, Jenica Bergere, and James Portolese. English with Closed Captions. 2025. (Thursday, March 27 at 7:00pm, Connor Palace).*



Centerpiece: MARLEE MATLIN: NOT ALONE ANYMORE - Marlee Matlin is an Oscar®-winning, Emmy-nominated Deaf actress, though fame came to her quite suddenly with her breakout performance in “Children of a Lesser God” at the age of 21. Learn how she fought through the naysayers and troubled, in-the-spotlight relationships to become a venerated philanthropist and a household name. *Directed by Shoshannah Stern. Produced by Robyn Kopp, Justine Nagan, Bonni Cohen, and Shoshannah Stern. English and ASL with Open Captions. 2024. (Tuesday, April 1 at 7:30pm, KeyBank State Theatre)*



Closing Night: LOVE, BROOKLYN - André Holland (“Moonlight”), Nicole Beharie (“Miss Juneteenth”), and DeWanda Wise (*She’s Gotta Have It*) strike a perfect balance in Rachael Abigail Holder’s sensitive, wryly funny dramedy about a trio of Black friends-slash-lovers who are just trying to cope in a rapidly gentrifying Brooklyn. *Directed by Rachael Abigail Holder. Produced by André Holland, Kate Sharp, Patrick Wengler, Maurice Anderson, and Liza Zusman. English. 2025. (Saturday, April 5 at 7:30pm, KeyBank State Theatre)*

World Premieres

IF AN OWL CALLS YOUR NAME - For generations, the government has forcefully stripped away the rights and identities of the Esk’etemc, Gitxsan, and Wet’suwet’en territories within Canada, leaving behind unceasing ripples of trauma. But as this defiant documentary shows, they’ll never strip away these tribes’ souls. *Directed by Zaya*

Benazzo and Maurizio Benazzo. Produced by Zaya Benazzo, Maurizio Benazzo, and Finley MacNeil. English with Closed Captions. 2024. (Tuesday, April 1 at 5:15pm, Allen Theatre)

SOUND SPRING - In this experimental omnibus documentary, filmmaker Catalina Alvarez paints a picture of small-town America as she chronicles the centuries-long history of Yellow Springs, Ohio. The stories, ranging from comical to disquieting and everything in between, point to a rich community demanding to be heard. *Directed and Produced by Catalina Alvarez. English with Closed Captions. 2025. (Saturday, April 5 at 5:10pm, Upper Allen)*

North American Premieres

BURY YOUR DEAD - As the world teeters on the edge of destruction, a roadkill collector and an excommunicated priest make their way through an apocalyptic hellscape in search of a way out. From the director of the heralded werewolf drama “Good Manners”—Cliff42 comes another genre-busting masterpiece of the surreal. *Directed by Marco Dutra. Produced by Lourenço Sant’Anna and Rodrigo Teixeira. Portuguese and Chinese with English subtitles. 2024. (Thursday, April 3 at 9:45pm, Upper Allen)*

TARIKA - Acclaimed writer/director Milko Lazarov (“Ága”) spins this humanistic, magical realist yarn—marvelously shot by Kaloyan Bozhilov—about a quiet, widowed villager who must protect his extraordinary, gifted daughter from the scorn and pitchforks of superstitious locals. *Directed by Milko Lazarov. Produced by Veselka Kiryakova. Bulgarian with English subtitles. 2024. (Thursday, April 3 at 2:35pm, Upper Allen)*

THE ANTIQUE (Antikvariati) - In snowy St. Petersburg, an unlikely friendship emerges amidst political upheaval when Georgian immigrant Madea purchases an apartment for a steal—only to realize she must share the space with the curmudgeonly old Russian owner. Rusudan Glurjidze’s haunted second feature deftly navigates the refugee crisis and what it means to have your life uprooted time and time again. *Directed by Rusudan Glurjidze. Produced by Zurab Magalashvili, Manana Shevardnadze, Andrey Epifanov, Tanya Petrik, Jussi Myllyniemi, and UschFeldges. Georgian, Russian, and English with English subtitles. 2024. (Friday, April 4 at 9:45pm, Upper Allen)*

U.S. Premieres

A SISTERS’ TALE - Filmmaker Leila Amini followed her sister Nasreen around with a camera for seven years, capturing her covert mission to become a famous singer. But an unsupportive husband, family pressure, and Iran’s oppressive stranglehold on female expression threatens Nasreen’s happiness every step of the way. *Directed by Leila Amini. Produced by Afsaneh Salari, Vadim Jendreyko, and Leila Amini. Persian language with English subtitles. 2024. (Friday, March 28 at 5:15pm, Allen Theatre)*

GULIZAR (Gülizar) - In this taut psychological drama about the ripples of assault, a Turkish woman is attacked at a roadhouse while on her way to her wedding in Kosovo. But the festivities must go on, and we are observers to Gülizar’s emotional turmoil of what to do, who to tell, and how to hold your head up high. *Directed by Belkis*

Bayrak. Produced by Mehmet Bahadır Er, Belkıs Bayrak, and Murat Yaşar Bayrak. Turkish and Albanian with English subtitles. 2024. (Friday, April 4 at 2:40pm, Upper Allen)

HONEYMOON (Medovyi Misiats) - In this claustrophobic thriller ripped from the headlines, newlyweds Olya and Taras are just getting settled into their new Kiev home when the Russians attack. Now they must stay perfectly silent within the confines of their apartment—cut off from the outside world—without tipping off the invading forces of their presence. *Directed by Zhanna Ozirna. Produced by Dmytro Sukhanov. Ukrainian with English subtitles. 2024. (Friday, April 4 at 5:00pm, Upper Allen)*

MY CHEST IS FULL OF SPARKS (Mi pecho está lleno de centellas) - Life doesn't always go as planned. After the death of the family patriarch, mother and child go separate ways to find themselves—she crosses the ocean to pursue the singing career she left behind, while filmmaker Gal realizes they are transgender—in this collage of video diaries. *Directed by Gal S. Castellanos. Produced by Eduardo Esquivel, Omar Robles, Metzli Paulina Ibarra, and Gal S. Castellanos. Spanish and Turkish with English subtitles. 2024. (Monday, March 31 at 5:20pm, Mimi Ohio Theatre)*

MY FRIEND AN DELIE - The remarkable adaptation of Shuang Xuetao's novel marks the directorial debut of actor-turned-director Dong Zijian. When a diverted flight reunites Limo with a childhood best friend, An Delie, who no longer remembers him, their journey through snowbound northeastern China unlocks long-buried memories, forcing him to confront the lingering ghosts of his past in this poignant tale of friendship, family, and forgiveness. *Directed by Dong Zijian. Produced by Juan Wan. Mandarin with English subtitles. 2024. (Wednesday, April 2 at 11:50am & Thursday, April 3 at 5:00pm, KeyBank State Theatre)*

SILENT STORMS (Les tempêtes) - Nothing looms over a city like the presence of death. While investigating a mysterious series of sandstorms that have laid a permanent cover over the seaside, a journalist comes face to face with his wife's ghost—a victim of the Algerian Civil War—in this haunting science-fiction drama. *Directed by Dania Reymond-Boughenou. Produced by Jérémy Forni and Camille Chandellier. French and Arabic with English subtitles. Audio description. 2024. (Saturday, April 5 at 5:05pm, Allen Theatre)*

And more...

In addition to this list of highlights, the Festival is proud to share that it will continue the longstanding tradition of celebrating Ohio films and filmmakers in the category of Local Heroes, in which filmmakers with regional ties compete for a prize of \$7,500.

One of the largest and longest running festivals in the country, CIFF awards a total of \$130,000 in prizes. Jurors include: **Alejandra Martinez, Bilgesu Sisman, and Lediona Kasapi** for the George Gund III Memorial Central and Eastern European Competition; **Cassidy Dimon, Karim Ahmad, Set Hernandez** for the Portrait Documentary Competition; **Jourdain Searles, Zuri Obi, and Ingrid Raphaël** for the New Direction Competition; and **Sharon Badal, Tiffany Alexander, and Jimmy Woody** for Short Films.

Ticket Information

Ticket Sales: Purchase tickets online at clevelandfilm.org, by phone at 1.877.304.FILM, or in person starting Friday, March 7th at 11:00 am ET for members, and Friday, March 14th at 11:00 am ET for the public. Tickets can also be purchased on site at the Film Festival Box Office in the KeyBank State Theatre Lobby at Playhouse Square (based on seat availability).

Ticket Cost: Individual tickets for in-person screenings are \$18 per person, with package deals available for those planning to see multiple films.

Film Guide: The CIFF49 Film Guide launches February 28th with details on 300 films. Find it online at clevelandfilm.org or pick up a physical copy at various locations, including public libraries.

Please note: CIFF members receive a printed Film Guide as a membership benefit.

Become a Member: CIFF members enjoy a range of benefits, including early access to tickets and parking passes, invitations to private special events, discounts on merchandise, and more. To learn about membership or to become a member, visit clevelandfilm.org.

Support: The Cleveland International Film Festival is generously supported by the residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. The Festival also receives support from the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally, and economically,1 through state tax dollars allocated by the Ohio Legislature.

About the Cleveland International Film Festival: Now entering its 49th year, the Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to showcasing the best in independent cinema. CIFF offers year-round programming, including the annual film festival, educational initiatives, and community screenings. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram. Visit us online at www.clevelandfilm.org



49

MARCH 27 – APRIL 5, 2025

PLAYHOUSE SQUARE

+CIFF49 STREAMS APRIL 6–13, 2025

clevelandfilm.org

CLE
INT'L
FILM
FEST

Cleveland International Film Festival

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Film Title: Honeymoon

Director: Zhanna Ozirna

Country: Ukraine

Synopsis: Ukrainian drama film about a young couple who are trapped in their apartment during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The film explores the couple's relationship, fears, and hopes as they try to survive in a dangerous situation.

Film Type: Narrative

Past Events are Listed Below

Born and raised in Cleveland's Hungarian neighborhood along Buckeye Road in the 1920s, as a girl Eleanor Buchla thrilled audiences with her masterful Hungarian dancing. During a year spent in Budapest after high school, she discovered exciting new currents in dance.



In the 1930s, her innovative choreography would create the first audience for Modern Dance in Cleveland. As the featured artist at Severance Hall, with the Cleveland Orchestra, she mesmerized Clevelanders with her interpretations of the music of Kodály and Debussy.

Photo by H. Hewitt; cover photo by Stanley T. Clough
(both courtesy of Cleveland Public Library
Photography Collection)



She became the subject of photographers and artists whose work is now at the Cleveland Museum of Art; among them Kálmán Kubinyi, Honoré Guilbeau, Doris Hall and William Sommer.

This event is part of a celebration of forgotten or underappreciated Cleveland and Northeast Ohio Past Masters called for by Cleveland Arts Prize in partnership with the Western Reserve Historical Society, in which many area institutions are participating.



Honore Guilbeau "Night" (1933)

On Sunday, October 30, 2022, 2-3 p.m., admission free, in the hall of beautifully restored St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church, 9016 Buckeye Road---where Buchla danced as a girl---her story will be told in words and images and music. A distinguished Cleveland dancer/choreographer recreates---based on contemporary accounts and the many images left us by artists and photographers---how she believes Eleanor danced.



Made Possible by a generous grant from
The Cleveland Hungarian Development Panel

SPECIAL THANKS ALSO TO

Akron Art Museum
Erin Jesson, Cleveland Arts Prize
Cleveland Museum of Art
Olivia Hoge, Cleveland Public Library
Center for Local & Global History
April Lancaster, CPL Popular Library
Brian Meggitt, CPL Photograph Collection
Heather Shannon, CPL Special Collections
Elizabeth Piwkowski, Cleveland State University
Ben Dooley, bedo.org
Narcisz Fejes
László Kubinyi and Moisha Kubinyi Blechman
Joan Meggitt, GroundWorks DanceTheater
Barbara Megery
Randolph Bergdorf, Peninsula Library & Historical Society
Mark Yonke, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church
Cyrus Taylor

THE ELEANOR BUCHLA PROJECT

Kathryn Karipides
Elizabeth Papp Taylor
Dennis Dooley

Printed Program/Invitation Design: Peggy Hornyak



THE CLEVELAND
MUSEUM OF ART



Eleanor Danced!

Narrator

Andrea Lázár, longtime host of Cleveland's
Kapossy Hungarian Hour

Dancers

László Tihanyi, principal dancer,
Eszterlánc Hungarian Folk Dance Ensemble
& Enese Pigniczky

Joan Meggitt, Director of Education
GroundWorks DanceTheater, and
dance faculty, Cleveland State University

Megan Bryars, dancer and choreographer,
Cleveland State University, B.A. '22

Projected Images

THE PROGRAM

Part I

The Girl from Buckeye Road.....Andrea Lázár
Her Hungarian Soul...László Tihanyi & Enese Pigniczky

Part II

How Cleveland fell in love.....Andrea Lázár
Reflections of Eleanor: A Dance Suite.....Joan Meggitt

Part III

Her passion for the future of dance.....Andrea Lázár
*Contemporary Currents—Making way
for the Eleanors of today*.....Megan Bryars

Afterward: Refreshments and, for the adventurous,
a lesson in Hungarian Dancing



Save This Date
Oct. 30, 2022

ELEANOR DANCED!

PAST MASTERS OF CLEVELAND AND
NORTHEAST OHIO

Eleanor Danced!

A recreation of the dances of ELEANOR BUCHLA who danced her way from Cleveland's Hungarian Buckeye neighborhood to the stage of Severance Hall with the Cleveland Orchestra and became one of the most distinguished dancers of her time

With narrator Andrea Lázár and dancers László Tihanyi, Enese Pigniczky, Joan Meggitt, and Megan Bryars



OCTOBER 30, 2022 2-3 PM
ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY CATHOLIC CHURCH
9016 BUCKEYE ROAD

FREE ADMISSION

MADE POSSIBLE BY A GENEROUS GRANT BY THE CLEVELAND HUNGARIAN DEVELOPMENT PANEL