



**CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL** Oct. 12 - 26, 2017  
Presented by Cinema/Chicago

**53  
NEWS**

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**Monday, September 18, 2017 at 10:30 a.m. CST**

## **53<sup>RD</sup> CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES PRESTIGIOUS INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION LINEUP**

### 16 Films from Around the World Compete for the Esteemed Gold Hugo Award

**CHICAGO** - The **Chicago International Film Festival** today announced the 16 films selected for the **International Competition** category, a selection of outstanding films competing for the Festival's top honor, the Gold Hugo. Eleven of the 16 films in this year's International Competition are made by Festival alumni returning with their latest masterpieces, including previous Gold Hugo winners (Joanna Kos-Krauze and Aki Kaurismäki) and Silver Hugo winners (Mohammad Rasoulof and Diego Lerman). The Competition is rounded out by a collection of internationally celebrated, award-winning filmmakers and directors with ambitious second feature-length films (Jimena Montemayor, Andrea Pallaoro, and Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza).

"All of the films in this exceptional competition are defined by the strength of their storytelling and their powerful emotional resonance. It is very exciting that a number of Festival favorites are returning with their most recent work, as we continue to trace their careers," said **Artistic Director Mimi Plauché**. "Be it the streets of Kinshasa, a small Georgian village, the borderlands between the Ukraine and Slovakia, or the highways of Los Angeles, each film has a unique flavor in its specificity of place while telling stories that have universal reach."

The following films will compete for the Festival's top honor, the Gold Hugo. The International Feature Film Competition is supported by Penelope R. and Robert Steiner.

***Arrhythmia*** -- Dir. Boris Khlebnikov, Russia/Finland/Germany

In this compelling, relatable drama, writer-director Khlebnikov trains his frenetic lens on Oleg, a hard-charging, rule-breaking Russian paramedic determined to save lives at any cost. But the stressful nightly calls fuel a destructive alcohol dependency, which, in turn, threatens his marriage to a promising young doctor. Beneath Oleg's brash exterior lies a punishing self-doubt, but love offers a chance at redemption. *Russian with subtitles. 116 min.*

***Birds are Singing in Kigali (Ptaki Spiewaja w Kigali)*** -- Dir. Joanna Kos-Krauze, Poland

Polish ornithologist Anna saves a colleague's daughter from being swept up in the Rwandan genocide and brings her back to Europe, where 23-year-old Claudine hopes to build a new life. But the lure of Africa proves too strong—only there can either woman come to terms with the tragedies they witnessed. With rich, nuanced performances and evocative storytelling, Kos-Krauze crafts a bittersweet story about the circuitous routes of healing. *Polish, English, Kinyarwanda with subtitles. 113 min.*

***The Confession*** -- Dir: Zaza Urushadze, Georgia/Estonia

In his follow-up to the arthouse hit *Tangerines*, Urushadze tells the story of a film-director-turned-Orthodox-priest who uses cinema to bring the parishioners of a small village closer to the church. After a screening of *Some Like It Hot*, the residents note the resemblance between a local music teacher and Marilyn Monroe. When Father Giorgi meets the siren in question, even he is not immune to temptation. *Georgian with subtitles. 89 min.*

***Félicité*** -- Dir. Alain Gomis, France/Belgium/Senegal

Single mother and chanteuse Félicité ekes out a living performing in a rough Kinshasa bar. Her fiercely guarded independence is threatened after her son is involved in a life-altering accident, and she must find a way to pay for his care. A love letter to persistence and the power of song, *Félicité* is buoyed by one woman's irrepressible spirit in the face of overwhelming odds. *Lingala, French with subtitles. 123 min. Also screening in Black Perspectives.*

***Gemini*** -- Dir. Aaron Katz, U.S.

In this intoxicating L.A.-set neo-noir, Lola Kirke (*Gone Girl*) stars as Jill, a personal assistant to a Hollywood starlet (Zoe Kravitz). When the young actress is found dead, Jill sets out to investigate the murder and prove her own innocence. But *Gemini* is much more than its mystery plot and cool, sleek surfaces: Indie auteur Katz has wrapped his engaging thriller around a sly riff on celebrity and identity in the City of Angels. *92 min. Also screening in International Film Noir.*

***Hannah*** -- Dir. Andrea Pallaoro, Italy/France/Belgium

When her husband is imprisoned, Hannah (Charlotte Rampling) is left alone with her thoughts as she tries to make sense of his crimes and cope with her newfound loneliness. Saddled with grief, she watches as the life she knew slowly slips from her grasp. Anchored by a quietly ferocious performance from the always captivating Rampling, *Hannah* is an intimate exploration of character and alienation in the face of family tragedy. *French with subtitles. 96 min.*

***The Line (Čiara)*** -- Dir. Peter Bebjak, Slovakia/Ukraine

Cigarette smuggler Adam is squeezed from all sides in this entertaining, fast-paced thriller. His eldest, unmarried daughter is pregnant, and his gang is pushing him to expand into the narcotics trade—cargo Adam steadfastly refuses to transport. Featuring muscular direction, a savvy screenplay, spectacularly photographed locations, and a propulsive score, *The Line* is an exemplary crime drama that never lets up. *Slovak, Ukranian with subtitles. 112 min. Also screening in International Film Noir.*

***A Man of Integrity (Lerd)*** -- Dir. Mohammad Rasoulof, Iran

Tehran-native Reza moves to the countryside to establish a goldfish farm, but in the dusty town where he settles, a powerful corporate entity calls the shots—and has designs on his property. Clandestinely shooting in the north of Iran, director-writer Rasoulof returns to the theme that underlies his previous work (the Cannes award-winner *Goodbye*): the means by which an authoritarian regime succeeds in silencing independent voices. *Farsi with subtitles. 117 min.*

***The Other Side of Hope*** (*Toivon Tuolla Puolen*) -- Dir. Aki Kaurismäki, Finland

In his latest deadpan tour-de-force, Finnish master Kaurismäki (*Le Havre*) follows the evolving relationship between an odd couple in modern-day Helsinki: Khaled, a Syrian asylum seeker, and Wikstrom, a cantankerous huckster. As Wikstrom haphazardly attempts to get a new restaurant off the ground, he forms a wry kinship with the self-effacing refugee. Set against a harsh backdrop of anti-immigrant violence, this Berlin Film Festival award-winner is a heartbreaking and humorous story of cross-cultural bonding. *English, Finnish, Arabic, Swedish with subtitles. 101 min.*

***Paris Square*** (*Praça Paris*) -- Dir. Lúcia Murat, Brazil/Argentina

In this taut psychological thriller, Camilla, a psychotherapist, has arrived in Brazil to study the effects of violence on society. Glória, hoping to work through her troubled past growing up in a favela, comes to Camila as a patient and case-study subject. The doctor-patient relationship becomes increasingly strained as social tensions rise to the surface and power dynamics shift in what becomes a high-stakes battle of the minds. *Portuguese with subtitles. 110 min. Also screening in Cinemas of the Americas.*

***Samui Song*** -- Dir. Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Thailand

In this off-kilter riff on *Double Indemnity*, the maverick filmmaker (*Headshot*) follows a Thai soap opera starlet stifled by her marriage to an overbearing artist obsessed with a charismatic Buddhist cult. When her husband pressures her to succumb to the sect leader, the actress meets a mysterious stranger who offers up a risky way out. An idiosyncratic thriller, *Samui Song* blurs the lines between fiction and reality, guilt and innocence. *Thai with subtitles. 108 min. Also screening in International Film Noir.*

***Sicilian Ghost Story*** -- Dirs: Fabio Grassadonia and Antonio Piazza, Italy

In a small Sicilian village on the edge of the forest, Giuseppe, a boy of 13, vanishes. Luna, a classmate who loves him, refuses to accept his mysterious disappearance. Rebelling against the code of silence and collusion that surrounds them, Luna plunges into the criminal underworld that has swallowed him up. Only their indestructible love can save them both. With its heady fusion of gothic fantasy and Mafia thriller, *Sicilian Ghost Story* is a unique, atmospheric fable of innocence lost. *Italian with subtitles. 120 min. Also screening in International Film Noir.*

***A Sort of Family Una*** (*Especie de Familia*) -- Dir. Diego Lerman, Argentina

A doctor desperate to experience motherhood, Malena journeys to a remote province in northern Argentina to adopt a baby girl illicitly. An outsider in this isolated community where many live hand to mouth, Malena is emotionally unprepared for the additional financial demands made by the child's biological family. But she is determined to take home the newborn, whatever the cost. Lerman skillfully lays bare the social, psychological and ethical complexities at the heart of his harrowing drama. *Spanish with subtitles. 95 min. Also screening in Cinemas of the Americas.*

***Thelma*** -- Dir. Joachim Trier, Norway/Sweden/France

In Trier's follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Louder Than Bombs*, shy college student Thelma moves away from her religious family to attend college in Oslo. After experiencing a violent seizure, she becomes powerfully attracted to Anja, another woman on campus. As her passion becomes all-consuming and her behavior increasingly reckless, her seizures—a manifestation of some inexplicable paranormal abilities—intensify. Soon, Thelma must confront the terrifying implications of her powers. *Norwegian with subtitles. 116 min. Also screening in Out-Look Competition.*

***Wind Traces*** -- Dir. Jimena Montemayor, Mexico

In this magical-realist reverie set in 1970s Mexico, Carmen (the mesmerizing Dolores Fonzi) and her young children, Ana and Daniel, are reeling from an unspoken trauma. As the family learns to cope—returning to school, socializing with friends—they are haunted and comforted by woodland and folkloric spirits moving in and out of their lives. Captivating cinematography draws viewers into their intimate family sphere, as we experience their pain, their sorrows and their joys. *Spanish with subtitles. 95 min.*

***The Workshop (L'Atelier)*** -- Dir. Laurent Cantet, France

In this gripping, politically-charged drama from the award-winning director of *The Class*, Parisian author Olivia (Marina Fois) travels to the beachside town of La Ciotat in Southern France for a writing workshop with local teenagers. There, she develops a troubling relationship with Antoine, a combative student whose tales of imagined violence and support for extremist ideologies raise alarm bells. But her intellectual curiosity draws her ever closer to him as the film veers toward a blistering conclusion. *French with subtitles. 114 min.*

**The 53rd Chicago International Film Festival is October 12-26.** Screenings take place at AMC River East 21 (322 E. Illinois). Tickets go on sale to Cinema/Chicago members on Wednesday, September 20 and to the general public on Friday, October 22. Tickets are available by calling 312-332-FILM (3456), online at [chicagofilmfestival.com](http://chicagofilmfestival.com), at the Festival Box Office at AMC River East at 322 E. Illinois Street, and at the Festival Pop-Up Box Office at 400 S. Dearborn.

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**About Cinema/Chicago**

Cinema/Chicago, the presenting organization of the Chicago International Film Festival, is a year round non-profit arts and education organization dedicated to fostering better communication between people of diverse cultures through the art form of the moving image. In addition to the Chicago International Film Festival, Cinema/Chicago's programs include: International Screenings Program, Chicago International Television Festival, CineYouth Festival, and year-round Education Program. Celebrating its 53rd edition October 12-26, 2017, the Chicago International Film Festival is North America's longest-running competitive film festival.

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