

World Artists Experiences Presents



Bridges to the World

16th Annual International Film Festival
February 13 – March 12, 2024



Uganda



China



Estonia



Cuba



Brazil

REGISTER: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_D1thuUg2ScSilr2tMaNKJg

**PROGRAM GUIDE FOR
VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE**
www.WorldArtists.org

Arts as a bridge to international understanding

For information: wae@comcast.net www.WorldArtists.org





February 2024

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 16th Annual Bridges to the World International Film Festival, sponsored by World Artists Experiences in partnership with Uganda, China, Estonia, Cuba and Brazil. as well as Motions Art. The theme is in recognition of bridging the people and cultures of the world with those in communities throughout Maryland and all regions.

The five-week celebration features films from countries in the order they are presented: Uganda (2/13), China (2/20), Estonia (2/27), Cuba(3/5), and Brazil (3/12). The films are a means of presenting each country through images and sounds. Our hope is that you will gain the spirit of each country represented. All films were selected by their respective embassies or international organizations.

For the fourth year, the festival is being held virtually. In the past, the films were screened throughout the State of Maryland. We recognize the venues who held and supported the festival: Allegany College of Maryland, University System of Maryland at Southern Maryland, Towson University, Salisbury University, Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts, Community Place, and numerous other venues.

Each film will be introduced by a diplomat, scholar, actor, and/or producer. The audience will then screen the film through the chat box. Following the screening, questions and answers will be addressed by the presenters. This program guide will direct you through the details for attending virtually and provide information on each film www.worldartists.org.

We express gratitude to the planning committee: Greg Faller, June Krell-Salgado, Linda Smith, and Mendy Nitsch. We appreciate Dr. Greg Faller for writing the essays, Patrick McAlister for his technical expertise, Suzanne Jaques and team for communication organization, and Margaret Rose Caro for editing and designing the program guide. Also, to all of the Communications' Team, Suzanne Jaques, Bernard Wulff, Douglas Steele, Beth Penn and Diana Elson. We acknowledge all volunteers and in-kind supporters who have generously contributed their time, talents, and resources to make the festival possible. We especially thank the embassies and other international organizations for partnering with World Artists Experiences to produce the 16th Annual Bridges to the World Film Festival.

Betty McGinnis and the Film Festival Team

Betty McGinnis

Betty McGinnis

World Artists Experiences

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SUSAN C. LEE
SECRETARY OF STATE

January 11, 2024

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to extend my congratulations to World Artists Experiences on the 16th anniversary of the *Bridges to the World* international film festival, which connects people and cultures through the art of film.

World Artists Experiences plays a vital role in strengthening our communities, deepening cultural connections, and honoring our collective principles. It reflects the spirit of diversity and inclusivity that makes Maryland a vibrant place to live and work.

Thank you to World Artists Experiences' leadership and volunteers across the state, as well as the members of the film festival planning committee, whose hard work makes this event such a success year after year. And, a very special thank you to WAE Founder and President Betty McGinnis for her long-time commitment to arts diplomacy.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Susan C. Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susan" and last name "Lee" clearly visible.

Susan C. Lee
Secretary of State

Guide for Attending the Virtual Film Festival

In order to attend the 2024 Bridges to the World International Film Festival, attendees will need to follow the Zoom link below and provide a valid name and email address to attend. Zoom Webinars require both a valid name and e-mail address for security purposes.

ZOOM LINK:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_D1thuUg2ScSiIr2tMaNKJg

If prompted, the webinar ID is **834 0654 9352**, and the password is **bridges**.

World Artists Experiences Webinar



TOPIC:

2024 Bridges to the World International Film Festival

DESCRIPTION:

At 7pm, guests will be invited into the Zoom Webinar room, where we will kick off the screenings with an introduction to that evening's film. After the introduction, we will post the film's screening URL in the chat box of the Zoom Webinar Platform. Guests will then follow that link to screen the film on their own computers. After the film has completed its runtime, guests are invited to return to the Webinar room to participate in a Q&A using the chat feature, if they would like to. We will hold brief closing statements and thank you's at the conclusion of the evening.



February 13, 2023, 7pm

February 20, 2023, 7pm

February 27, 2023, 7pm

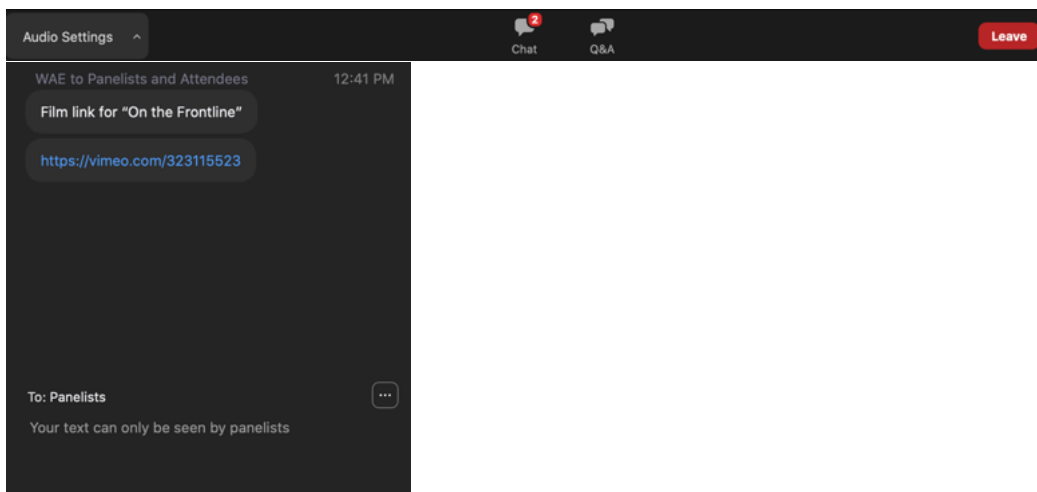
March 5, 2023, 7pm

March 12, 2023, 7pm

Time shows in Eastern Standard Time (U.S. and Canada)

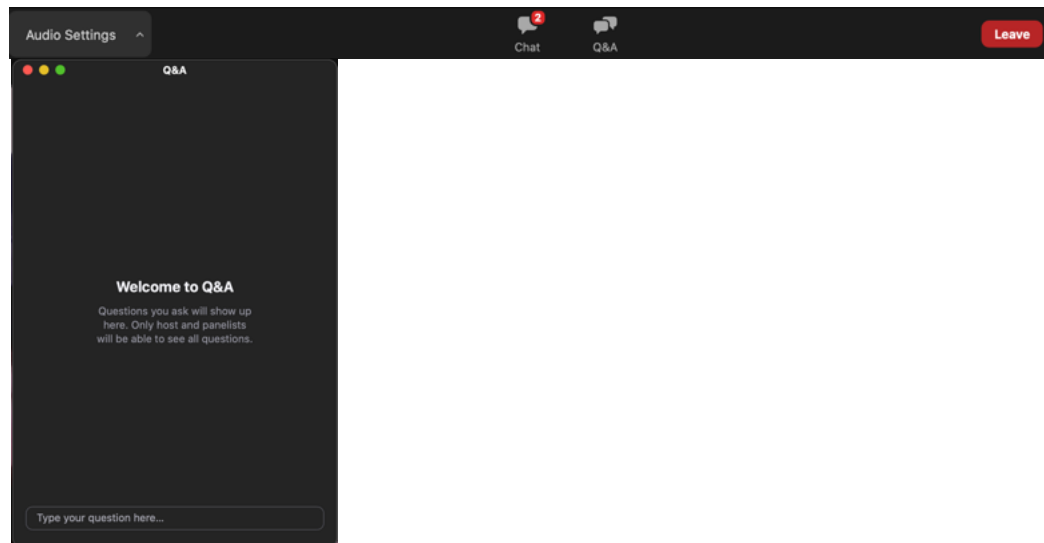
Each Tuesday night, screening of the film festival will use the same link listed above and begin promptly at 7pm.

- ❖ At 7pm, guests will be invited into the Zoom Webinar room, where we will hold a pre-screening introduction.
- ❖ After the introduction, we will post the link to the film's screening URL in the Chat box of the Zoom Webinar platform. The Chat feature is located in the "Control Bar," either at the top or bottom of your Zoom window. A notification will appear announcing that the link has been posted. When directed, select this box to bring up a new window.



- ❖ Guests will then follow the link in the Chat to screen the film on their own computers. Selecting the link will bring up an Internet browser window.
- ❖ We will make an announcement to play the film and expectations for the length of the film's runtime. Guests are invited to come back to the Zoom Webinar at the conclusion of the film's runtime. We will give you an expectation for a specific time to rejoin the Zoom Webinar.
- ❖ Please leave your Zoom Webinar open and in the background during this time. Be aware that while you will have the ability to pause and resume play of the film at your leisure, we are only allowing for a five-minute buffer before the post-screening discussion. If you close your Zoom Webinar window, you will have to rejoin the Zoom Webinar to participate in the post-screening discussion.

- ❖ After the film has completed its runtime, guests are invited to return to the Zoom Webinar room to participate in a post-screening discussion using the Q&A feature. Submit questions by writing them in the Q&A box.



- ❖ We will hold brief closing statements and thank you's at the conclusion of the evening.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

- ❖ Guests will be muted during the session. If guests have any technical difficulties, they may correspond with WAE Tech Support via the Chat feature. WAE Tech Support will privately message you to respond. Please reserve the Q&A function for the post-screening discussion.
- ❖ The links to these films will only remain active DURING the screening, so guests will NOT be able to watch these films via the links after the evening of the event.

February 13, 2024

UGANDA

The Forbidden (2018)

Directed and Co-written by: Kizito Samuel Saviour

Producer: Claire Nampala

Running Time: 90 minutes

Introduced by: Kizito Samuel Saviour,
Producer

Moderator: Ms. Mary E. Mendy Nitsch,
Director of International Affairs, Office
of Secretary of State, Maryland State
Government



A domestic drama with a powerful message, *The Forbidden* follows the tragic life of the young Dian (played by Leila Nakabira, an award-winning actor, writer, and women's activist). Dian is the top student in her class with a close group of friends but doesn't have the financial means to continue. She constantly asks her single mother about her father, hoping he might be able to help. Circumstances lead her to work as a maid in the home of a wealthy friend, where she learns about her father with devastating consequences.

The Forbidden was produced by Claire Nampala through her film company, Red Pictures Production, started in 2013. Red Pictures Production produces educational films about human rights, childhood marriage, domestic violence, AIDS, and other cultural, economic, and political issues in Uganda. It was directed by Kizito Samuel Saviour, an award-winning and multi-skilled Ugandan filmmaker.



To an American audience, *The Forbidden* may suggest a connection to the #MeToo movement, given that the film was released one year after the movement entered global awareness in 2017 (it trended in more than 85 countries). It's important to note that the phrase "Me Too" began in 2006, created by social activist Tarana Burke to empower women of color who were sexually abused. Ms. Nampala notes that sexual harassment is a significant problem in Africa and hopes this film — based on a true story— contributes to correcting cultural attitudes about sexual abuse.

The Forbidden also presents the daily life and people in Kampala and includes a culinary motif about a national dish of Uganda, matoke — plantains wrapped and cooked in banana leaves. Even with the irony of its tragic ending, the film provides an optimistic coda about keeping hope alive, the value of education, and the importance of governmental support. As Dian finally says, "After all my unbelievable forbidden tragedies, it's never the end; life goes on."

The *Forbidden* earned 68 regional and international award nominations, winning 13 top prizes. Watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxJ6pSnPdew>

Kizito Samuel Saviour, an award-winning Ugandan filmmaker, is a producer, director, writer, editor, and cinematographer. He has



worked on *MANIA* (2022), *Your Turn* (2022), *Catch Out* (2021), *KEMI* (2020), *Judas Kiss* (2019), *The Forbidden* (2018), *Extra Time* (2017), and *Bunjako* (2016), among others, earning more than 130 international nominations and more than 30 international awards.

He is a film and video tutor at the ESOM School of Music in Uganda and a film and television studies mentor at the University of Limpopo in South Africa. Mr. Saviour also launched a mentorship program aimed at nurturing young talent into the skills of script writing, acting, and directing.

He is the founder of the Uganda Academy Selection Committee (UASC) approved by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' International Feature Film Award Executive Board (The Oscars).

He is also the founder of Kyooto Media Group, a full-service entertainment and media production company based in Kampala, Uganda, that specializes in producing audiovisual content in various dimensions for film, television, online, and other platforms as well as using film to rehabilitate and promote talent development.

In 2021, he was nominated as Entertainment Founder of the Year at the Kenyan-based Founder Of The Year Awards (FOYA) 2021.

Thank you to Clara Ekeke, Founder/ Executive Director, HOUSE OF DJELI, Inc., Home of PanAfrican Arts and Cultures.

February 20, 2024

CHINA

***Snow Leopards & Friends* (2023)**

Directed and Co-Produced by:
Xi Zhinong

Running Time: 85 minutes

Introduced by: Chenglin Xuan and
Xi Zhinong

Moderator: Dr. Greg S. Faller,
Associate Dean, College of Fine
Arts and Communication Towson
University

Webinar Panelist: Chenglin Xuan.
Second Secretary at the Embassy
of the People's Republic of China in
Culture and Tourism.



Six years in the making, *Snow Leopards & Friends* is the first Chinese documentary about the snow leopard (“the ghost of the mountain”). It offers a breathtaking visit to the remote Qinghai-Xizang Plateau, “where the earth rises to meet the heavens,” in China’s Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve. Renowned wildlife cameraman Xi Zhinong works with three young yak herders to capture the lives of this endangered species, other fauna in the mountainous ecosystem, stark beauty of the landscape, and the few families who live there.

The altitude (more than 15,000 feet) is a harsh environment and an even more challenging location to make a film about a reclusive animal. Camera drones helped to some extent, but the film depends on the three “shutterbug herders” — Zi Ding, Qu Peng, and Da Jie — who worked with the director, Xi Zhinong. These young men grew up in the mountains defending their yaks from predators.

When the Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve was established in 2006, guns were banned, and they had to find another way to understand the snow leopards and protect their livelihood. Through the knowledge gained by filmmaking, the yak herders become protectors of the snow leopard and capture many amazing moments never seen before in nature documentaries: Tibetan wolves attacking a yak herd in daylight, bar-headed geese migrating from India, a blue bear cub playing with its mother, musk deer, twin snow leopard cubs in their den, and the unique protective relationship between Bharal sheep and snow leopards.

The documentary captures the most primitive and authentic forces of nature in a spectacular setting and provides an opportunity to reflect on wildlife, how humans can coexist with animals, and the need for conservation. You will most likely be touched by the power and strength of the life depicted in the film that aspires to further conversations about climate, the role of national parks, the importance of biodiversity, the fragility of life, and protecting the global environment.

Snow Leopards & Friends was an official section at seven international film festivals and has won four best nature documentary awards. Watch a trailer at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaVmD_qmm_w

Xi Zhinong, born in 1964 in Yunnan Province, China, is a famous wildlife cinematographer and founder of Wild China Film, an organization devoted to promoting conservation through photo and film documentation of China's wildlife and natural environment.

He was awarded the National Geographic Society's 2022 Wayfinder Award. In addition, his works have been published in journals such as *National Geographic* and *China Photography* and have become publicity materials for major international environmental protection organizations. He won the Endangered Species Award of the British BG Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition and the TVE Award of the British Wildscreen Festival, the first Chinese photographer to win awards in these competitions. Other awards include Excellent Photographer of China Photography, China Photography Media Award Photographer, Earth Award, and Mother River Protection Award. He was appointed Yunnan Environmental Ambassador by the Yunnan Provincial Environmental Protection Bureau for his contributions.



February 27, 2024

ESTONIA



Apteecker Melchior (2022)
Melchior the Apothecary

Directed, Co-written, and Produced by: Elmo Nüganen

Running Time: 100 minutes

Introduced by: Amari Lemmik and Elmo Nüganen

Questions/ Answers: Elmo Nüganen; Ms. Aari, Counselor Embassy of Estonia;
Ms. Maarja Johanna Mägi, Actress

Setting: The film is shot in an authentic historic location,
the Medieval Old Town of Tallinn.

Based on the best-selling novels by popular author Indrek Hargla, *Melchior the Apothecary* is the first film of a trilogy set in Medieval Tallinn following the crime-solving acumen of Melchior Wakenstede. Beginning as a straightforward murder mystery — who killed Knight Clingenstain? — the film gains complexity by exposing the motives of multiple characters guilty, in various degrees, of greed, revenge, piety, love, power, deceit, and fear.

It recreates 15th Century Tallinn through exceptional costuming, set design, and lighting, winning awards for cinematography, editing, and production design. The film also demonstrates the harshness, cruelty, and superstitions of the times,

a culture against which Melchior attempts to practice basic detective skills such as observation, scientific understanding, and reasoning.

A series of disparate objects (sword, coins, gold chain, chessboard, book, amulet) seem to point to a mysterious “Prisoner of Tallinn,” who may be responsible for three additional murders. The film includes several narrative twists and false solutions to create suspense until the end. There is even a subplot about Melchior’s new apprentice. The structure of the film may bring to mind another medieval detective film, Jean-Jacques Annoud’s *The Name of the Rose* (1986) based on Umberto Eco’s novel. Both films explore the influence, power, and leadership of Christianity and the Church.

Melchior the Apothecary was directed by esteemed stage director Elmo Nüganen, who helmed the Tallinn City Theatre from 1992–2021. His 2015 film, *1944*, became Estonia’s submission for the Academy Awards that year. He directed the other two parts of the trilogy (*Melchior the Apothecary: The Ghost* and *Melchior the Apothecary: The Executioner’s Daughter*), also in 2022, marking the first time in the Estonian film industry an entire trilogy was released in the same year. These films are among the most successful in Estonian cinema box office history.

Märten Metsaviir plays the title character, his first major film role after graduating from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2020. Maarja Johanna Mägi plays the Gerke the apprentice. She also graduated from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in 2020. Henessi Schmidt plays Hedwig. She might be best known for her role as Princess Gytha in the Netflix series *Vikings: Valhalla*. The rest of the ensemble cast are well-known Estonian film, stage, and television actors.

Watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGrCW7ijknA>.

Aari Lemmik is Counselor for Press and Culture, Embassy of Estonia, in Washington, D.C.

Elmo Nüganen is one of the most esteemed producers, theatre directors, film directors, and actors in Estonia. He has been the artistic director of the Tallinn City Theatre since 1992. He graduated from the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre in 1988 and was a professor at the academy 1998–2002 and 2008–2012. Known for his outstanding classical plays, he has won numerous nominations and awards, including Nika Award for Best Film of CIS and Baltic States, the Pyramid Award for the best Producer, and the Silver Award for best writer.

March 5, 2024

CUBA



Hermanas de corazón (2021-2022)

Sisters of the Heart

Directed by: Gloria Rolando

Running Time: 105 minutes

Introduced by: Dr. Samuel Springer, Music Faculty Morgan State University

Moderator: Dr. Greg Faller

Gloria Rolando's *Sisters of the Heart* — part of a series of poetic documentaries labelled "Histories and Images of Our People" — explores the invisible and fascinating history of The Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first Roman Catholic sisterhood in the world established by women of African descent. Founded by Mother Mary Lange in Baltimore in 1829, the order ministers to and educates people of color in the United States, Costa Rica, and Cuba (1900–1961).

Mother Mary Lange was reportedly born in 1794 in Santiago de Cuba of parents fleeing the Haitian Revolution. She arrived in Baltimore as a free, educated, French-, Spanish-, and English-speaking woman of color in 1813. She took the radical step of teaching the children of slaves how to read, a dangerous undertaking, where they faced a racist and classist society more than five

decades before the abolishment of slavery in the U.S. In 1828, she established the St. Francis School for Colored Girls, one of the first schools in Maryland dedicated to educating Black children. Now known as Saint Frances Academy, it remains (after 196 years) the oldest African



American Catholic school still in operation in the United States, continuing to serve the African American and Hispanic community of Baltimore. On 22 June 2023, Pope Francis declared Mother Mary Lange venerable, allowing her to be considered, ultimately, for sainthood.

Sisters of the Heart is presented in two heartfelt chapters that highlight the dignity and the struggle of black Cuban families to educate their daughters. The first chapter ("Colegio de San Jose") introduces the educational and religious connection between Baltimore and Cuba established by the Oblate Sisters of Providence and then highlights their work in Cuba. A group of Black Cuban women visit the ruins of their old school and recall their childhood and the nuns who taught them. The second chapter ("Las Novias de Dios") further develops the Baltimore-Cuba connection, provides historical context (the Haitian Revolution, the Spanish expulsion of French-speaking refugees, the Cuban Revolution), and describes the schools the order established across Cuba. Again, a group of former students share memories of the nuns who taught them and explain the importance of their education.

Gloria Rolando's career as a filmmaker spans nearly 40 years, much of it at ICAIC (the Cuban National Film Institute). She also leads an independent filmmaking group, *Imágenes del Caribe*. Her documentaries reveal the often forgotten history and culture of the African diaspora in the Caribbean. She aims to present a true voice for Black leadership and to counter racial stereotypes. As she explains, "I have worked very hard all of these years to bring to light episodes that are inconvenient for the official history."

March 12, 2024

BRAZIL



Amazônia Groove (2018)

Directed and co-written by: Bruno Murtinho

Running Time: 80 minutes

Introduced by: Counselor Iberê Uchoa de Azevedo Barbosa, Embassy of Brazil

Moderator: Betty McGinnis

A camera slowly glides along the Amazon River revealing the beauty and mystery of an inscrutable waterway. It comes upon a small Círio de Nazaré procession, continues on its way, then rises until the surrounding jungle completely fills the frame. This is our introduction to the northern Brazilian state of Pará, its people, culture, folklore, and most importantly music.

Amazônia Groove offers a musical journey through a series of portraits of some of the most talented musicians of the region, whose lives intersect with the Amazon river and rainforest. The film asks, "How many songs fit in the river?" The answer is many!

Numerous— and always evolving — musical genres encapsulate the rhythm of the river, the perpetual motion of the water as it governs all aspect of life. As one musician says, "poetry comes from the water."

The film introduces us to nine famous “poets” influenced by the river, each one practicing a different type of music. In order of appearance:

- **Mestre Damasceno**, a popular culture idol and the creator of the Buffalo-Bumbá. He performs with his group, the Conjunto de Carimbó Nativos Marajoara.
- **MG Calibre**, an electric bass player using Afrobeat, hip-hop, and rap to advance social and environmental justice.
- **Albery Albuquerque**, creates biologic transomorphic music from regional animal sounds.
- **Paulo André Barata**, poet, guitarist, and composer of popular Brazilian songs.
- **DJ Waldo Squash**, internationally known creator of technobrega. He performs with his group Gang do Eletro.
- **Sebastião Tapajós**, internationally celebrated classical guitarist and composer, We see him perform in Belém’s famous Theatro da Paz.
- **Dona Onete**, a national icon and singer of traditional Brazilian songs, the “Queen of Carimbó.”
- **Gina Lobrista**, a pop singer, music video performer, and social media celebrity best known for her “street music” at Ver-o-Peso, the outdoor market in Belém.
- **Manoel Cordeiro**, famous guitarist, arranger, and producer of popular Amazon music, including Lambada, Guitarrada, Zouk, Carimbo, Boi Bumbá, Maramaior, and Batuque.

A few of these musicians perform together in a jam session that wonderfully concludes the film – you may even feel like dancing!

Watch a trailer for Amazônia Groove at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsg27MeawWs>

Amazônia Groove was directed by **Bruno Murtinho**. It was his first feature film after a successful and award-winning career as a director of music videos and television commercials. The film was acclaimed by Brazilian critics and won the award for Best Cinematography at the SxSWest Film Festival in 2019.