

World Artists Experiences Presents



Bridges to the World

15th Annual International Film Festival
February 7 - March 7, 2023

Sponsored in partnership with
the Embassies of five countries



Uruguay

International

Jordan

Poland

Pakistan

PROGRAM GUIDE FOR
VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE
www.WorldArtists.org

Arts as a bridge to international understanding

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





February 2023

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 15th Annual Bridges to the World International Film Festival, sponsored by World Artists Experiences in partnership with the embassies of Uruguay, Jordan, Poland, and Pakistan, 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 the region.

The five-week celebration features films from countries in the order they are presented: Uruguay, Jordan, Motions Art, Poland, and Pakistan. 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 third 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. 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 for partnering with World Artists Experiences to produce the 15th annual Bridges to the World Film Festival.

Building bridges with people and cultures of the world, Betty McGinnis and Film Festival Team,

Betty McGinnis

Betty McGinnis

World Artists Experiences

Guide for Attending the Virtual Film Festival

In order to attend the 2023 Bridges to the World International Film Festival, attendees will need to follow the Zoom link below and provide a valid name and e-mail 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_fr8YlitvRm-OIFm7AFNTyg

If prompted, the webinar ID is **883 1557 9925**, and the password is **Bridges**.

World Artists Experiences Webinar



TOPIC:

2023 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 7, 2023, 7pm

February 14, 2023, 7pm

February 21, 2023, 7pm

February 28, 2023, 7pm

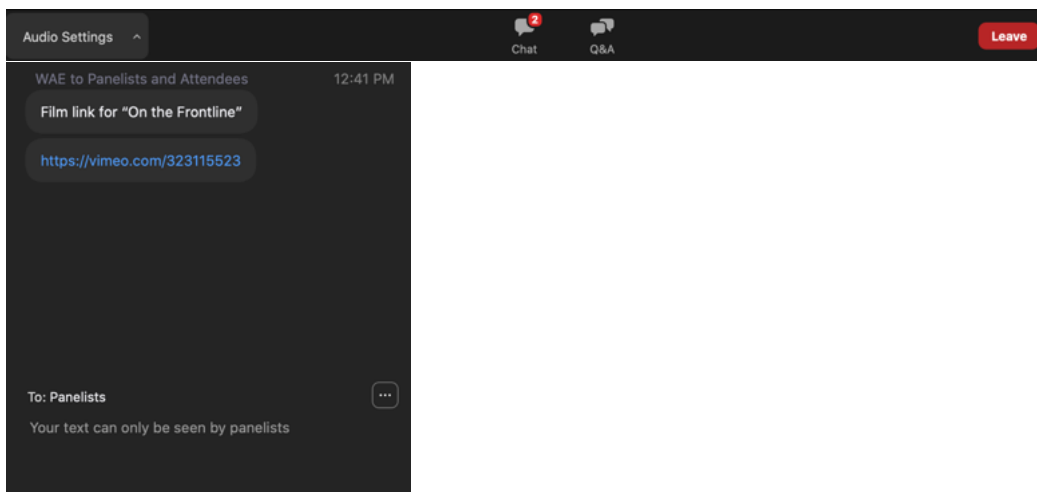
March 7, 2023, 7pm

Time shows in Eastern Standard Time (US 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.

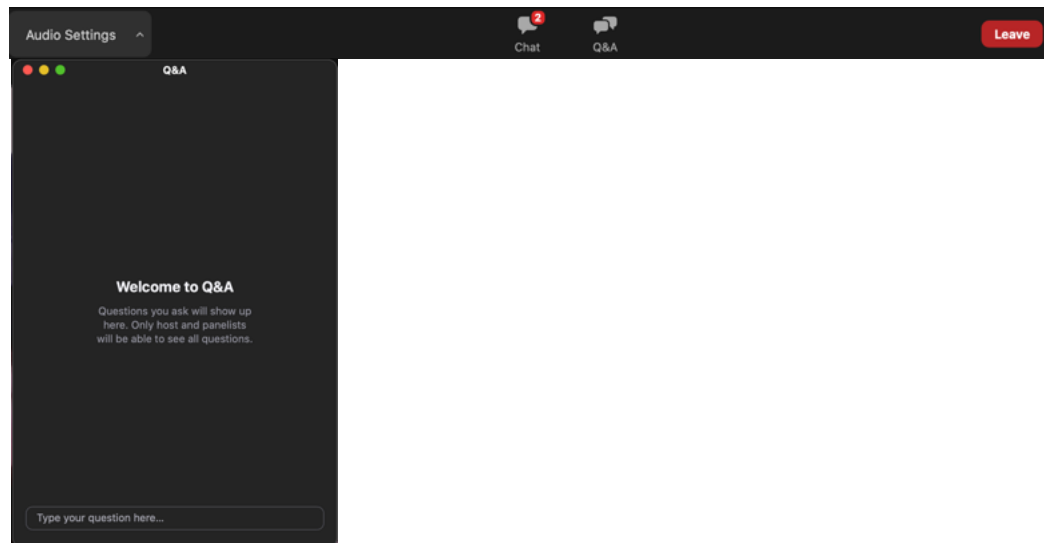


❖ Guests will then follow the link in the Chat to screen the film on their own computers. Selecting the link will bring up an Internet browser window.

❖ 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 7, 2023

URUGUAY



Mr. Kaplan (2014)

Directed and written by: Alvaro Brechner

Running Time: 100 minutes

Moderator: Betty McGinnis, World Artists Experiences

Speaker: Counselor Maria Fernanda Garcia

A dark and cynical comedy-thriller, *Mr. Kaplan* tells a story about an elderly Jewish man's investigation hoping to prove an elderly German beach-goer was a concentration camp Nazi. This serious premise is contained by an off-beat structure and tone signaled from the beginning. And then, when Serge Gainsbourg's loopy (and controversial) song, "SS in Uruguay," plays over the opening credits, the off-kilter quality of the film is confirmed. Yet, the film is more of a "buddy picture" — tracing the mutual friendship that develops between a grumpy old family man and a gentle ex-cop down on his luck. Think Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

Jacob Kaplan is played by the famous Chilean actor Héctor Eugenio Noguera Illanes, winner of numerous Best Actor awards and recipient of Chile's 2015 National Prize for Performing and Audio Visual Arts. Jacob, at 76, wonders about his life and legacy. He asks existential questions like: Did I accomplish anything memorable? Is the world a better place because of me? How useful was I? Of course, he asks these questions as he compares himself with Goethe, Winston Churchill, and Abraham. Looking for something to prove his worth, he hears a news report about the discovery

of a Nazi hiding in Argentina that makes him wonder about “the Nazi” (played by the well-known German actor, Rolf Becker), who runs a beach-side café his granddaughter mentioned. Reading Simon Wiesenthal’s *I Chased Eichmann: A True Story*, he decides to kidnap the café owner and take him to Israel for trial.

The evidence Jacob believes supports his actions is circumstantial to say the least; even his impromptu conversation with God proves confusing. Nevertheless, he convinces Wilson (played by award-winning actor Néstor Guzzini) to help him in his quest, a quest that takes them around Montevideo and to its beautiful beaches. They bumble through a series of odd encounters until Jacob and “the Nazi” play a serious game of cat and mouse on a public bus. Wilson comes to the rescue ensuring a successful outcome. However, the film offers a final twist (or perhaps more accurately, a half-twist) revealing that an idealized and simplistic dream of renown and justice cannot compete with the hard and complex truth of reality.

Mr. Kaplan won seven Uruguayan Film Critics Association awards, including Best Actress (Nidia Telles, who plays Jacob’s wife), Best Film, Best Director, and Best Screenplay. It was also selected as the Uruguayan entry for the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar in 2015. Watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRZcX-d4cSl8>

February 14, 2023

UNITED KINGDOM, ITALY, GERMANY, ICELAND, AND THE UNITED STATES



Motion States International Dance Films

Organized and curated by: Ali Kenner Brodsky and Andy Russ

Running Time: 60 minutes

Moderator: Dr. Greg Faller, Associate Dean of the School of Fine Arts, Towson University

Speakers: Ali Kenner Brodsky, Susan Mann

World Artists Experiences is excited to feature a screening using a different approach. Instead of a single film, Motion States Arts curated a customized selection of international screen dance shorts. A screen dance, or a dance for the camera, is not a film/video document of a proscenium dance performance as a live audience might experience it, but a collaboration and synthesis between the various techniques of film/video and the act of choreography. Dierdre Towers, a well-known choreographer, video artist, and writer, describes a screen dance as “a unique art form with the potential to capture and express what neither live dance nor traditional film can.” There are hundreds of examples; here are three for your consideration: Dissolving Contention — <https://vimeo.com/230993601>

See You When You Appear — <https://www.wilderprojectdance.com/seeyouwhenyouappear>

Descent — <https://vimeo.com/138305446>

As explained on their website, “The Motion State Dance Film Series is the only year-long, traveling short film festival devoted to showcasing the diversity of contemporary creative voices exploring choreography for the camera. By taking the festival ‘on the road’ and into nontraditional film venues, such as art galleries, music halls, performing arts theaters, and university classrooms, the Motion State Dance Film Series seeks to expose the films and filmmakers to new audiences.” Learn more at <https://motionstatearts.org>

Motion States’ current 5th series was launched on 30 September 2022. Previous series included films from: the Philippines, Uganda, Austria, South Korea, Israel, and Japan. Tonight we will see 10 films, including works from the UK, Italy, Germany, Iceland, Italy, and the US. The US dance for the camera was created by Baltimore filmmakers Susan Mann (who teaches at Towson University) and John Mann (who teaches at Johns Hopkins University).

Ali Kenner Brodsky co-founded Motion State Arts with Lila Hurwitz and Andy Russ. Motion State Arts presents innovative dance films and live performances from local, national, and international artists. Ali is on the Board of New England Presenters, which provides leadership and support for the presentation/development of the NE performing arts. She works as a dance advisor and curator to the Zeiterion Theater in New Bedford, MA and has designed award-winning choreography for The Wilbury Theater Group in Providence. She was recognized with a 2022 Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship in Choreography. She was honored to be a part NEFA’S New England Regional Dance Development Initiative 2021–22.

Susan Mann performed with professional companies, including the Hartford Chamber Ballet, Das Bonner Ballet in Germany, and the Sharir Dance Company before receiving her M.F.A. in Choreography from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. She has performed in numerous ballets, including the lead in Paquita and Swan Lake. She has also performed solos by modern choreographers such as Yacov Sharir, Jan Van Dyke, and Peter Pucci. Susan is the recipient of Maryland State Arts Council Awards for both Solo Dance Performance and Choreography. She has created more than 40 works including award-winning screendances. She is a dance faculty member at Towson University.

February 21, 2023

JORDAN



Lamma dehkhet Monaliza [When Monaliza Smiled] (2012)

Written and directed by: Fadi Haddad

Running Time: 95 minutes

Speaker: Fadi Haddad, Producer and Professor, American University of Dubai

Co-Moderators: Dr. Greg Faller, Associate Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communications, Towson University; Dr. Kimberly Katz, Professor of History Towson University

A romantic comedy, *When Monaliza Smiled* spins the familiar tropes of the genre into a wonderful example of regional Arab cinema. A couple meet awkwardly. Their budding relationship must survive numerous challenges created by supporting and often quirky characters, including the possibility that their relationship may unravel. At a point of near failure, a romantic epiphany occurs that re-unites them and leads, of course, to a happy ending.

Set in the old neighborhoods of Amman, the shy Monaliza (played by Tahani Salim) and the cheerful Hamdi (played by Shady Khalaf) meet at work. She is starting her government job, and he is the coffee boy (also a technical wiz). After Monaliza summons the courage to ask Hamdi to fix her computer, she begins to slowly transform. Hamdi introduces her to a more positive perspective, shows her a larger world, and ultimately gets her to smile (the moment of her first smile may be predictable but is undeniably lovely).

As their relationship grows, they must navigate misunderstandings and machinations that threaten their romance. Monaliza's older, grumpy, unmarried, agoraphobic sister Afaf doesn't want Monaliza to marry. Their neighbor Rudaina wants her to marry her brother. Hamdi's work visa is ending, and he must return to Egypt. His boss Nayfeh dislikes everyone and threatens to deport him. Everything is resolved at a last-minute reunion at a bus depot. Yet, *When Monaliza Smiled* is more than a simple love story. It addresses issues of class, ethnicity, societal pressures (especially regarding marriage), financial independence, immigration, and work place norms. Women are often pressured into smiling, but Monaliza refuses to do so except on her own terms. She will smile only when she is truly happy.

When Monaliza Smiled was Fadi Haddad's first feature film. It premiered at the Dubai International Film Festival in 2012 and was nominated for the Muhr Arab Award for Best Feature Film. It also won the Critics' Choice Award in Oran Arab Film Festival in 2013. Haddad is an Associate Professor of Production and Storytelling at the American University in Dubai.

The film was produced with the support of the Royal Film Commission (RFC) in Jordan, established in 2003 to encourage filmmaking and train Jordanian filmmakers in the art of making cinema. It is a young and growing film industry with talented filmmakers envisioning a unique cinema for the region. Watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-L8mQl1xVg>

Fadi Haddad is a professor at the American University of Dubai, United Arab Emirates. His background is in story development & research. In filmmaking field since 2010, he is well-versed in a wide range of aspects related to storytelling and production. This skill set is complimented by research focused on Arab television, particularly story development and screenwriting practices of transnational television series in relation to national and cultural identity. Mr. Haddad's background includes story development consulting for film and TV projects, academic solutions consulting, and analysis of content, production, and audience.

Dr. Kimberly Katz is a Professor of History at Towson University. Her research and teaching interests focus on the Middle East and North Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, spanning social, cultural, colonial, and post-colonial historical perspectives, with a particular interest in biographical and urban history.

February 28, 2023

POLAND



Godspeed, Los Polacos! (2020)

Directed by: Adam Nawrot

Produced by: Sonia Szczesna

Running Time: 90 minutes

Moderator: June Krell-Salgado, Former Director of Cultural Affairs and Consultant

Speakers: Sonia Szczesna, Adam Nawrot, Piotr Chmielinski, and Katarzyna Rybka-Iwanska

Described as “the lost story of the world’s greatest road trip and the fall of the Soviet Union,” *Godspeed, Los Polacos!* combines a suspenseful South American adventure tale with a geopolitical examination of Poland during the era of Pope John Paul II and Solidarity. Alternating between contemporary interviews, archival footage, and animated sequences, five amateur kayakers tell their improbable story of deceiving the Soviet Union, making the first whitewater descent of the world deepest canyon,

and becoming international political activists.

In the late 1970s, Krakow university students established a kayaking club to escape the gray monotony of Soviet oppression and avoid participating in mandatory communist rallies. They paddled flat water in local rivers and lakes with homemade kayaks and then navigated Poland's only river with Class III rapids (short sections of fast currents with moderate, irregular waves). Thinking this was enough experience, a group of friends secured basic equipment, transportation, and permits to travel to Peru and attempt the Río Colca, a Class V river (long, narrow, obstructed, violent rapids that require extensive experience and rescue skills). They woefully underestimated their equipment and abilities.

After surviving a gruelling 17-day ordeal, they paddled other rivers in South America and Mexico — with a side trip to Wyoming to raise more money — and became seasoned kayakers. One of the group, Piotr Chmielinski, later became the first person to paddle the Amazon River from its source to the sea. After two years of touring and exploration, they were unable to return to Poland; martial law was declared in 1981 to counter democratic opposition, primarily Solidarity. Back in Peru, the friends used their newfound fame to support Solidarity and advocate for democracy in the Eastern Bloc. Their political activism was not well-received by the Soviet Union. They did not return home until 1991, staying in the US as both refugees and asylum-seekers.

Godspeed, Los Polacos! offers a crazy and entertaining mix of history, hubris, humor, adventure, politics, swagger, loss, and a dash of "Polish charm." The film provides an example of the unseen twists of a life's journey and the unexpected consequences of political change. It also offers intimidating and breathtaking images of the Colca Canyon. The film has won numerous international awards. Watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0pPK4obwjA>

Sonia Szczesna is a documentary producer, photographer, and environmental advocate. She co-owns Sourland Studios, a production company based in Trenton, NJ, that focuses on the intersection of commercial and nonfiction storytelling. Sonia brings experience as a community organizer and activist into her work. Her most recent project, *Godspeed, Los Polacos!*, is available on streaming services. soniaszcz@gmail.com

Adam Nawrot, a NYC/PHL-based filmmaker and director of *Godspeed, Los Polacos!*, operates Sourland, a production company focused on the intersection of commercial and nonfiction storytelling. Comfortable in both studio and harsh/remote work environments, he is also the author and illustrator of a series of outdoor caricatures published in *Climbing* magazine and was voted *Canoe & Kayak* magazine's most popular article of the year. atnawrot@gmail.com

Piotr P. Chmielinski was born in Rzeszow, Poland, and received an M.S. in Mechanical engineering from University of Mining and Metallurgy (AGH), Krakow. Piotr left Poland in 1979, and, after many years of adventure and residence in South America, settled in Casper, Wyoming in 1983. Following the successful navigation of the

Amazon River, from source-to-sea, Piotr moved to Washington, DC in 1986 where he worked as a scientist and industrial hygienist, ultimately founding the firm HP Environmental in 1991 and being honored as a Diplomat of the American Board of Industrial Hygiene. In 1983, Piotr established Canoandes, Inc., a not-for-profit organization. He remains the president of that organization through which he coordinates
pchmielinski@hpenviron.com

Katarzyna Rybka-Iwanska is a career diplomat and head of public and cultural diplomacy at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, DC. In her previous posting at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tel Aviv (2018–2022), she headed public diplomacy and communications. Between Sept 2021 and Jan 2022 she was the CDA a.i. of the Republic of Poland in the State of Israel. Prior to being posted overseas, Katarzyna assisted the Board of Strategic Advisors to the Prime Minister in Poland's Prime Minister's Office (2008–2010) and spent 8 years at the Foreign Policy Planning Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010-2018). She is an expert in strategic planning, educational and digital projects, as well as in promoting women's stories. katarzyna.rybka-iwanska@msz.gov.pl

March 7, 2023

PAKISTAN



Parwaaz Hai Junoon (2018)

Directed by: *Haseeb Hassan*

Running Time: 130 minutes

Moderator: Betty McGinnis, World Artists Experiences Founder

Speakers: To be announced

Parwaaz Hai Junoon combines a love story, a comedy of friendship, and a celebration of the Pakistan Air Force. It champions military heroism, patriotism, and the selfless act of national martyrdom while combating terrorism. It also comments on the patriarchal structure of the armed forces and the sexist attitudes of some of its soldiers — while forwarding a feminist perspective. The film offers a wonderful musical score, features the beautiful northern Pakistani landscape, and provides some exhilarating flying combat sequences. This mix of serious themes, high emotions, strong visuals, engaging characters, and memorable music makes

Parwaaz Hai Junoon very entertaining and insightful.

The film is a long flashback, bookended by Sania (played by popular film and TV actress Hania Aamir) recalling her three years training at the Pakistan Air Force Academy and her romance with a dashing fighter pilot, Hamza (played by the equally popular actor Hamza Ali Abbasi). The scenes at the academy feature the high jinks of four other new recruits: Shahmir, Zaid (played by TV host and stand-up comedian Syed Shafaat Ali), Rashid, and Saad.

Sonia develops a friendship with the earnest Rashid and an antagonistic relationship with the arrogant Saad. At her cousin's wedding — highlighted by a colorful dance sequence that rivals Bollywood — Sania meets Hamza and they begin to fall in love. Their romance is complicated by his dangerous missions, her mother's fear of tragic loss, and his father's stubbornness regarding an arranged marriage. The film does not end in a full romantic comedy mode. Instead, it provides a complex meditation on the tension between individual love and devotion to country.

American audiences might recognize a similarity of *Parwaaz Hai Junoon* to *Top Gun* in its blend of romance and patriotism, the "need for speed," and the depiction of the deep and long-lasting bond that forms between service men and women who train together.

Parwaaz Hai Junoon was released on Eid al-Adha, an important Islamic holiday that often includes the debut of many new films. It was the first film about the Pakistan Air Force in 50 years, the 7th highest grossing Pakistani film of all time, only the second Pakistani film to be commercially released in Saudi Arabia, and the first Pakistani film to be screened in China after 40 years. Watch a trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJ2Fm-4CR5k>

Speaker and bio to be announced