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ReelAbilities: Denver Film Festival Promotes Awareness and Appreciation of People with Different Disabilities Through Film

Festival Comes to Colorado May 5-8, 2021 through JCC Mizel Arts and Culture Center

DENVER, Colo., April 15, 2021 – The [JCC Mizel Arts and Culture Center](#) is hosting the first ever Colorado-based [ReelAbilities: Denver Film Festival](#) from May 5-8, 2021. The entirely virtual festival includes diverse and thought-provoking films alongside supplemental content including discussions and panels by, for, and about people with various disabilities. To continue their dedication to inclusivity, the JCC Mizel Arts and Culture Center will provide several accessibility features for films and the supplemental content to ensure the festival can be enjoyed by everyone.

“We are excited to bring ReelAbilities to Colorado, and we’re honored to be the newest host site of the festival,” said Amy Weiner Weiss, Director of Festivals at the Mizel Arts and Culture Center. “Through ReelAbilities, we have the opportunity to highlight a robust catalog of films that connects us to fellow presenters all around the world. Hosting ReelAbilities: Denver allows us to not only bring this important programming to our own community, but it helps shine a light on the importance of inclusivity and the organizations doing this work locally.”

Films and supplemental programs that relate to the content of the films that are showing at the festival include:

- **Film: Code of the Freaks** – In this blistering critique of Hollywood representations of disabled characters, Code of the Freaks gives the mic to some of Hollywood’s most incensed and ignored critics – actual disabled people.
- **A panel conversation about representation, visibility, and identity** – Hosted by Phamaly Theatre Company, with SAG-AFTRA and Code of the Freaks filmmakers.
- **Film: There’s Still Hope for Dreams: A PHAMALY Story** – The inspiring and extraordinary story of Denver’s own Phamaly Theatre Company, a critically acclaimed troupe of performers whose actors and actresses all live with some form of disability.
- **Film: Heaven is a Traffic Jam on the 405** – A portrait of a brilliant artist, represented by one of Los Angeles’ top galleries, whose body of raw, emotional work reveals a lifetime of extreme depression and anxiety. The film will be accompanied by a pre-recorded conversation with the film’s director, Frank Stiefel, and festival staff.
- **A Creative Mindfulness Workshop** entitled “How To Be Within Me” – Facilitated by visual storyteller and Colorado Art Therapy Association Board Member Arielle Rothenberg, MPS.

- **Film: Living Art** – The story of a young woman living with Familial Dysautonomia, whose art became her stunning and profound means of communication and livelihood. The film will be accompanied by a pre-recorded conversation with director David Rochkind, Mara Clawson, whom the film is about, and festival staff.
- **Film: Spectrum: A Story of the Mind** – A live-action and animated documentary exploring sensory issues through the lens of various autistic individuals. Features Colorado-based scientist, activist, and scholar Dr. Temple Grandin. The film will be accompanied by a pre-recorded conversation with Dr. Temple Grandin and festival staff.
- **Film: Jmaxx and the Universal Language** – Jarell is a Chicago teenager with autism, who has found hip hop dance as a way to communicate his true self to the world. The film will be accompanied by a pre-recorded conversation Q&A with director Ryan Mayers, Jarell Sullivan, whom the film is about, and festival staff.
- **Adaptive Dance/Movement Class** – For all ages and all abilities, presented by Colorado Conservatory of Dance in partnership with Art as Action.

To ensure the festival is inclusive and accessible to everyone, both films and supplemental programs will include the following:

- **Open captions:** English-language subtitles that depict narration, dialogue, and any sound cues are built into all film files. All spoken content (introductions, filmmaker Q&As, and supplemental programs) will be pre-recorded and captioned.
- **Audio description:** Narration describing visual elements for the blind and visually impaired are built into every program as separate catalog listings.
- All spoken content will be pre-recorded and offer **ASL interpretation**.
- **“Pay What You Can” Ticketing:** All festival content will be offered in a “pay what you can” format to allow participation of all interested community members at any ticket price that is accessible to them. The recommended ticket price is \$12 for feature-length films and supplemental programs, and \$6 for short films.
- All festival content will be offered **virtually and on-demand** for home access at any time of day to users across the U.S. during the entirety of the festival. This format offers flexibility to those with limited mobility, who require sensory friendly environments, or who might require additional time to enjoy programs.

The presenting sponsor of ReelAbilities: Denver is Jane E Rosenbaum, who is supporting the festival with an individual gift and with a gift via Danielle’s Fund for Special Needs, which was created for her daughter with autism. To connect the festival to local audiences, the JCC Mizel Arts and Culture Center has partnered with several community organizations including Phamaly Theatre Company, Jewish Family Service, Firefly Autism and Colorado Conservatory of Dance/Art as Action. The festival, and all JCC Mizel Arts and Culture programming, is supported by Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) and Bonfils-Stanton Foundation.

“In the world we live in, there are so many people who are unaware of the uniqueness of people with differences and I always want to try to bring more awareness to these people,” said Jane E Rosenbaum, festival sponsor. “I hope the community sees how important it is to look beyond appearances and get to know people, all kinds of people; people who are different from themselves. In that way, I hope that the world can be a more welcoming and less judgmental place for all of us.”

For more information about the festival, visit jccdenver.org/reelabilities.

ABOUT JCC MIZEL ARTS AND CULTURE CENTER

As one of the Rocky Mountain region's premier arts organizations, the [JCC Mizel Arts and Culture Center](#) illuminates the human experience through creative and cultural programs in the performing, visual, cinematic and literary arts for the Jewish community and the Denver community at-large. The Mizel Arts and Culture Center is a Tier II member of the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) and is guided by a mission that is focused specifically on arts and cultural programs. A variety of festivals are offered throughout the year including Denver Jewish Film Festival, JAAMM Fest (Jewish Arts, Authors, Movies and Music Fest), and ReelAbilities Film Festival. The JCC Mizel Arts and Culture Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located at 350 S. Dahlia Street in Denver. For more information, visit www.jccdenver.org/arts-culture or call 303-316-6360.

ABOUT REELABILITIES

ReelAbilities Film Festival is the largest festival in the U.S. dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories, and artistic expressions of people with disabilities. Founded in New York City in 2007, the festival presents international and award-winning films by and about people with disabilities in multiple locations throughout New York and then travels internationally to cities across the U.S., Canada and Latin America. Post-screening discussions and other engaging programs bring together the community to explore, discuss, embrace, and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience.

ABOUT STAENBERG – LOUP JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

The [Steenberg – Loup Jewish Community Center](#) (JCC Denver) serves the metro-Denver area through educational, social, cultural, fitness, sports and other programs that are rooted in Jewish values. The JCC Denver's mission is to create a vibrant and inclusive family and social gathering place, guided by these timeless Jewish values. The JCC Denver's four program areas focus on connection, community and well-being and include: a robust fitness, sports, tennis and aquatic center; Early Childhood Engagement, including an Early Learning School and a variety of programs for families; the Mizel Arts and Culture Center which offers Jewish Arts, Authors, Movies & Music Festival (JAAMM Fest), Denver Jewish Film Festival, and ReelAbilities Film Festival; summer camps including Ranch Camp and Camp Shai; engagement programming for teens, young adults, seniors and the LGBTQ+ community. The JCC Denver is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located at 350 S. Dahlia Street in Denver. For more information, visit www.jccdenver.org, like us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) @jccdenver or call (303) 399-2660.

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