



## PRESS RELEASE

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### WOMEN IN FILM DALLAS ANNOUNCES TOPAZ FILM FESTIVAL AND FESTIVAL LINEUP

**DALLAS, Texas, August 26, 2019:** In celebration of the organization's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Women in Film Dallas (WIFD) is changing the name of their film festival from Flicks by Clicks to Topaz Film Festival.

For 18 years, Women in Film Dallas has provided a platform for independent female filmmakers to promote their work through its annual film festival. This year, the festival will span three days from September 19-21, 2019 with screenings at MediaTech Institute, Backdoor Comedy Club, and the University of Texas Dallas Richardson campus. For more information or to purchase passes, please go to <http://www.wifdallas.org> or <https://filmfreeway.com/topazfilmfestival/tickets>.

Topaz, the official gemstone of Texas, was thought in ancient times to enhance visions. In 1987, Women in Film Dallas established the Topaz Award to honor distinguished Texas women and men who, through their own visions, have made outstanding contributions to the film and television industry.

The Topaz Awards took a five-year hiatus until this year when the WIFD Board of Directors voted with enthusiasm to bring the awards back, along with the rebranding of the festival. "Part of the decision to rename the festival was our desire to honor past Topaz Award recipients as well as the vision of new independent female filmmakers," said Alicia Pascual, President of Women in Film Dallas and Festival Co-Director. "We had an unprecedented number of submissions this year and it has been wonderful to see that there is such a pool of talented, creative women out there sharing their stories."

Films were eligible if women were credited in two or more of the following positions in the making of the film: director, writer, producer, director of photography, editor or composer. "We were proud to see that many films had crews made up almost entirely of women and the majority of films credit multiple roles to a single woman (writer/director, producer/director, producer/writer, etc.)," said Pascual.

This year's festival screenings will include a Student Shorts block, a Texas Shorts block, a Comedy Shorts block and a Festival Shorts block, composed of



films from across the nation and around the world. The Topaz Film Festival will close with their selected spotlight feature documentary presentation of *The Zen Speaker: Breaking the Silence*.

In addition to film screenings, there is a full schedule of events to share with WIFD members and guests. WIFD will host a fundraising event on Thursday, September 19 as part of North Texas Giving Day to raise funds for their Grants and Scholarships program. Included during Thursday's event is the WIFD membership showcase, where local production companies and colleagues are invited to see the past works of WIFD members and develop relationships to create future works together. Friday night is the festival's comedy night! Accompanying the scheduled Comedy shorts block will be performances by local female standup comedians.

WIFD's exclusive Topaz awards brunch on Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup> will honor Topaz Award Recipient, Angie Harmon, Rising Star Award Recipient, Kim Matula, and Gratitude Award Recipient, local costume designer, Stephen Chudej. Along with the Topaz awards, WIFD will be officially announcing and presenting their Scholastic Grant Fund Awards for the Suzanne Dooley College Tuition Scholarship and ARRI Camera Course Grant. This event also offers opportunities to meet some of the honorees and festival filmmakers in a private meet & greet directly after the awards presentation.

The Topaz Film Festival is an extension of the Women in Film Dallas Scholastic Grant Fund, a 501C3 that provides financial support through grants and scholarships to women in the pursuit of media arts degrees and those in the productions of film, television and screen-based media. Proceeds from the festival will serve to fund the 2020 scholastic grant program.

## **OFFICIAL SELECTIONS:**

### **FEATURE FILM**

Movie Title: *THE ZEN SPEAKER: Breaking the Silence*

Director: Robin Greenspun

Country: USA

Running Time: 1:39:00

Synopsis: As a prominent public speaking coach and former political fundraiser, Amy Ayoub always encouraged her clients to be authentic and to share their personal stories—painfully aware that she wasn't ready, yet, to tell her own. Then, in 2012, she learned about Nevada Assembly Bill 67, a bill designed to fight sex trafficking. *THE ZEN SPEAKER: Breaking the Silence* charts Amy's



transformational journey from a tumultuous childhood in Las Vegas to her emotionally wrenching testimony before the Nevada State Legislature in 2013. A personal portrait, the film explores the emotional and physical devastation associated with sex trafficking; being a survivor; public vs private personas; and finding one's voice in unexpected ways.

## **STUDENT SHORTS BLOCK**

Movie Title: In your memory

Director: Karlinette Galván López

Country: Puerto Rico

Running Time: 09:58

Synopsis: Keyla López (21 years old) is a university student studying business administration to continue working in the family business. She has been developing the new business plan with her grandfather, but his unexpected death complicates the process. In spite of everything, Keyla continues with the hope of fulfilling her grandfather's dream and hers. When she presented the proposal to her mother, Lourdes (40 years old), Keyla learned that her grandfather did not leave anything prepared and accepted the reality of closing down the business. While collecting her grandfather's office, Keyla finds a will, signed by him, which helps Keyla continue with their initial plan.

Movie Title: A letter to myself at 16

Director: Claire Tankersley

Country: USA

Running Time: 03:05

Synopsis: I was sexually assaulted by a close friend at a party in high school. Five years later, there is so much that I wish I'd known when I woke up the next morning.

Movie Title: Songs Remembered

Director: Eboni Johnson

Country: USA

Running Time: 08:33

Synopsis: No one is ever ready to lose a loved one, especially to a disease that dims the bonds of the past. Through the Haynes family, we explore what it means to love someone present in the body, yet absent in the mind, and how the spirit can transcend all boundaries.

Movie Title: Number Ten

Director: Grace Eitrheim

Country: USA



Running Time: 03:40

Synopsis: The daily routine of a mysterious girl who is on a mission to obtain her "Number Ten."

Movie Title: Unified Theory

Director: Christina Hibner

Country: USA

Running Time: 04:42

Synopsis: Unified Theory is an experimental animation that follows two cosmic entities. The main character, Junior, is trying her best to learn about the nature of the universe from her teacher, Senior, who is a master of the universe. Junior experiences moments of enlightenment that transform the way she sees the world, literally opening her eyes to things she could not imagine. This film is inspired by the scientific learning process, drawing conclusions by making millions of mistakes. This transcendental adventure across time and space will spark the viewer's curiosity and question their perception of reality.

Movie Title: Somewhere In Between

Director: Arnila Guha Nolak

Country: Dallas, TX, USA

Running Time: 10:08

Synopsis: A young woman who faces cultural dissonance navigates between her inner world and reality.

Movie Title: The Shootout

Director: Elizabeth Junkin

Country: USA

Running Time: 01:10

Synopsis: A modern take on classic western shootouts.

Movie Title: Common Grounds

Director: Sammi Shoemaker

Country: USA

Running Time: 08:54

Synopsis: Common Grounds tells the story of love and its fleeting nature throughout youth. Danny and Jess were once lovers whose path ended in an abrupt and uncertain fashion and in a last ditch effort Danny decides to confess his feelings to Jess in hopes of finding closure. Trying to break through Jess's hard outer shell leads the duo into a realization of much stronger feelings that will ultimately bubble to the surface.

Movie Title: Perfect Match



Director: Tatyana Keller

Country: USA

Running Time: 04:50

Synopsis: A hopeless romantic girl finds herself at a matchmakers offices to find her Perfect Match. But who she meets might not be who you would expect.

Movie Title: Tiffany

Director: Christina Christie

Country: USA

Running Time: 06:15

Synopsis: While packing away her deceased grandmother's affairs, Pauline discovers that one of their stained glass sculptures has come to life. As the lights in the house go out and their memories together begin to dim, Pauline realizes there is joy in celebrating the legacy of those who have been lost.

## **COMEDY SHORTS BLOCK**

Movie Title: Flour Baby

Director: Caroline Iaffaldano

Country: USA

Running Time: 11:55

Synopsis: In a world where a woman must prove that she is capable of caring for a child before she's allowed to conceive, a hopeful mom recruits the help of her BFF to pass the state's rigorous test: to take care of a bag of flour for an entire year.

Movie Title: Kitchen Sink Classic

Director: Lauren Shein

Country: USA

Running Time: 03:00

Synopsis: When he wants one thing and she wants another, who prevails? A humorous look at a woman who knows how to get things done.

Movie Title: Nothing to See

Director: Chris Andersen

Country: USA

Running Time: 07:45

Synopsis: A visible girl in an invisible world.

Movie Title: Service Animal

Director: Wendy Pennington

Country: USA



Running Time: 05:56

Synopsis: Preboarding 50-50 Airlines flight to Los Angeles is going smoothly until one passenger arrives with a shocking service animal.

Movie Title: Sac de Merde

Director: Greg Chwerchak

Country: USA

Running Time: 13:27

Synopsis: An unlucky-in-love yet irrationally-optimistic New Yorker thinks her luck has changed when she spends the night with the man of her dreams. But as it turns out, he might just be full of shit. Literally.

Movie Title: What Becomes of the Broken Hearted

Director: Lyn Chick

Country: Australia

Running Time: 07:43

Synopsis: Can you ever love someone too much? Rose doesn't think so.

## **TEXAS SHORTS BLOCK**

Movie Title: Mack Minded: Humanly Possible

Director: Susan Carol Davis

Country: USA

Running Time: 08:27

Synopsis: Before the acronym STEM even existed, Dr. Pauline Beery Mack, Texas Woman's University professor in the 1950s-1970s, pioneered in the quest for knowledge in science, technology and statistical research. Her advances in bone density provided NASA invaluable information for manned spaceflight, earning Mack a Silver Snoopy award presented by Astronaut Jim Lovell in 1970, a time when women scientists were rarely recognized among their male peers.

Movie Title: Joan's Song

Director: Natasha Straley

Country: USA

Running Time: 07:00

Synopsis: A woman is investigated by the local police and mysteriously denies her knowledge of any events occurring the previous night. She battles the effects of gaslighting attempting to remember exactly what took place in her own home.

Movie Title: This is Me

Director: Lydia Isnanto

Country: USA



Running Time: 05:00

Synopsis: She has a name, a history and a personality. From the outside looking in, it's hard to understand. From the inside looking out, it's hard to explain. A successful & smart young CEO, Sandy, battles post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). What if mental illness can be seen? What if it can be explained?

Movie Title: Frequency of Forgiveness

Director: Alicia Eastes

Country: USA

Running Time: 06:16

Synopsis: An anonymous Austin arborist, known as Pukka Pristine, ponders the changing landscape of the Austin art scene and how it motivated him to create his art sanctuary in the woods, as an outlet for his personal fulfillment.

Movie Title: Sweeter on the Vine

Director: Anna Terry

Country: USA

Running Time: 04:30

Synopsis: A country music video showcasing a family man's life, from cradle to grave.

Movie Title: Ribbons

Director: Marcela Cantú Serrano

Country: USA

Running Time: 14:57

Synopsis: Lucy is a studious high school junior who dreams of attending the Sadie Hawkins dance with Tomás, a classmate who keeps to himself and sits behind her in Spanish class. After devising a way to get his attention, the two strike up a flirtatious friendship, setting off a chain of events that inspire Lucy to finally take the leap -- but just when she thinks the hardest part is over, things take an unexpected, and rather mortifying, turn.

Movie Title: Chicle (Gum)

Director: Lizette Barrera

Country: USA

Running Time: 13:50

Synopsis: An ill-tempered teenager attempts to find peaceful solitude on the day of her grandfather's passing until an estranged friend pays her a visit.

Movie Title: Earth Mother

Director: Kelly Riot

Country: USA



Running Time: 03:13

Synopsis: There's an Earth Mother in every woman. "Earth Mother" is an musical short that portrays Rosa Parks, Frida Kahlo, Amelia Earhart and Joan of Arc taking a stand against the societal norms and restrictions of their time. Each of these women is a pioneering force in history and the struggles they overcame cemented their places as feminist icons. Featuring an original composition by Fenwick and the Big Loop, "Earth Mother" hopes to encourage others to defy convention and break the mold.

### **FESTIVAL SHORTS BLOCK**

Movie Title: The Bony Lady

Director: Thiago Zanato

Country: Brazil, Mexico, USA

Running Time: 20:00

Synopsis: La Flaca is a film about Arely Vazquez, a transgender woman and leader of the Santa Muerte (Saint Death) Cult in Queens, New York. During her yearly celebration to the Bony Lady ("La Flaca" as she likes to call her), Arely faces a lot of challenges to fulfill a promise she made ten years ago.

Movie Title: Topanga

Director: Aycil Yeltan

Country: USA

Running Time: 14:59

Synopsis: Hearing impaired, homeless Gala escapes from a man who continuously abuses her. While her life becomes a routine in an abandoned old truck on a mountain road, she is unaware the abusive man finds out where her hiding place is. One night, after a brutal attack, she finds the strength to stand up one last time and starts walking. She has no clue where this survival walk will end up and change her life!

Movie Title: Oh Baby!

Director: Meghann Artes

Country: USA

Running Time: 08:30

Synopsis: More and more often these days there is as much science as there is miracle in how we all come to be. Oh Baby! is an entertaining and imaginative interpretation of what goes into the making of a human being. Start with a dash of Busby Berkeley dance spectacle, add a pinch of wacky Rube Goldberg engineering, top it off with a sprinkle of serendipity and lo and behold, here comes the little bundle of joy. This short film uses a mix of live action, stop motion and visual effects to tell its fantastic story. The result is a beautiful world





where intricate choreography, a metaphorical machine and a cosmic trip all combine in a feast for the eyes, the ears and the heart.

Movie Title: Driving Lessons

Director: Marziyeh Riahi

Country: Iran

Running Time: 12:48

Synopsis: According to the laws of Iran, Bahareh must have her traditional, chauvinistic husband accompany her to driving lessons so she and her instructor will not be alone.

Movie Title: #3 Normandy Lane

Director: Brenda Strong

Country: USA

Running Time: 21:10

Synopsis: Army wife and Young Mother, Sarah Winston's life is inextricably altered when a series of visitors arrive on her doorstep.

## STAND UP COMEDIANS

**Sheridi Lester** is a Dallas native, she has performed at the Laughing Skull Comedy Festival in Atlanta, the Boston Comedy Festival, and was chosen as one of the Highlights of the Burbank Comedy Festival. She performs throughout Texas including all the Hyenas Comedy Clubs, The Addison Improv and the Backdoor Comedy Club.

**Kathleen Nickels** - Kate is a member of ComedySportz Dallas, performs at the Comedy Arena and can often be seen at the Addison Improv on weekends - attempting to sneak in. When she is not trying to be funny, she is desperately trying to look younger. Or more personal bio - Kate has a husband, four children, two dogs and a fish. Also a very boring and serious day job.

**Jan Norton** is actress and comedian, she has appeared on NBC, PBS, and recently had a featured role in the film LOSING FAITH. She is a longtime member of SAG/AFTRA. As a comic, she has performed at comedy clubs and colleges throughout Texas and the Southwest including the Addison Improv, Backdoor Comedy and The Velveeta Room in Austin.

**Britainy Goss** is a stand-up comedian, singer, and comedy show producer. She has performed stand-up at the State Fair of Texas, sang in front of thousands at the Texas Rangers games, and is a producer of the Boss Comedy Show and the



Plano Comedy Festival. She's been known to save some souls and a kitten or two.

**Linda Stogner** is a winner of multiple Emmy awards. She was just named the Funniest Comedian of the Heartland and was the 2014 Funniest Comic in Texas. She has appeared on PBS in Life 360 and on the Joan Rivers Funniest Woman in America Show. She has appeared at Laughing Skull Comedy Festival, Boston Comedy Festival, Limestone Comedy Festival and Seattle and San Francisco's International Comedy Competitions.

**Angelia Walker** is a McKinney, Texas native Angelia Walker has been doing comedy a little over a decade. With her quick wit and down home delivery she a crowd favorite wherever she performs.

## **SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER – CYNTHIA J. POPP**

"Directing for TV"

We interrupt this film festival program to you bring you television! Join us for a discussion about directing TV with Cynthia Popp. She has directed over 1,200 episodes of The Bold and the Beautiful, as well as episodes of the sitcom Frasier and the one-hour drama Passions. Cindy's has also produced nearly 5,000 episodes of The Bold and The Beautiful as well the feature film Maybe Someday.

As a six-time Daytime Emmy Award winning director/producer, Cindy understands the demands of a daily half-hour drama. On The Bold and The Beautiful, she is part of a team that shoots 8 shows in 4 days, 252 episodes a year. "B&B" holds the title of "the most watched show in the world" and is syndicated in over 108 countries.

She also directed Hollywood Heights for Nick at Night, the CBS primetime award winning Fraiser, NBC's drama Passions and produced music videos for John McCook, Bobbie Eakes, and Jeff Trachta. Cindy's production company, Elocin Entertainment Inc., seeks "to create well told, compelling and entertaining stories that engage and enlighten the human spirit." Through it she produced her first indie film Maybe Someday that garnered a Best Film nomination at the Carmel International Film Festival.