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**Brooklyn Public Library Announces Second Annual  
International *LitFilm: A BPL Film Festival About Writers*  
March 18 – March 24**

***Week-long Festival Showcases the Private Lives and Artistic Process of the World's Best  
Writers and Literary Figures  
Featuring Director Talkbacks and Panel Discussions***

**BROOKLYN, February 28, 2019** – Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), one of the largest and most diverse libraries in the nation, today unveiled the line-up for the second annual ***LitFilm: A BPL Film Festival About Writers***. The library's week-long festival showcases films from around the world that provide an inside look at the private lives and creative processes of the world's best writers and literary figures from **Maya Angelou** and **Pablo Neruda**, to **Samuel Beckett** and the creators of the beloved *Curious George*, **Hans** and **Margret Rey**. The films, which span nearly seven decades, from a short film originally released in 1959 to a recently released HBO documentary, reveal new perspectives on the creators of these seminal works.

The free festival will begin Monday, March 18 and continue through Sunday, March 24, and includes 19 films. A highlight of the week includes a keynote discussion on March 18 with **Jonathan Alter, John Block, Steve McCarthy**, directors of HBO's *Breslin and Hamill: Deadline Artists*.

"The Library is thrilled to present six days of films and director talks for all New Yorkers for free," said **BPL President and CEO Linda E. Johnson**. "At BPL's *LitFilm* Festival, patrons will have the opportunity to look behind the scenes and to hear the stories about some of the world's most illustrious writers, critics, and artists."

*LitFilm* will feature films that explore the lives of legendary writers and playwrights such as **Samuel Beckett, Lorraine Hansberry, Larry Kramer, and Wole Soyinka**, and literary figures such as **Margaret Atwood, Naguib Mahfouz, and Zora Neale Hurston**. The festival will also feature director Q&As and panel discussions with filmmakers, critics, and scholars. In addition to the keynote discussion with the directors of *Breslin and Hamill: Deadline Artists*; Tracy Heather Strain, director of *Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart: Lorraine Hansberry*, will lead a public conversation about the film.

"This year's *LitFilm* line-up provides a compelling inside look at the rare and untold stories of our most notable literary figures, creators whose creative processes and personal histories are mined through film, and from which we can glean timely, relevant perspectives on society today," said **BPL's Vice President of Arts & Culture László Jakab Orsós**. "We hope the films inspire readers to discover works that were previously unknown and provide new context for works they've already encountered."

*LitFilm* is free and open to the public, with all events taking place at BPL's Central Library. A full calendar of screenings and discussions follow below. For more information on events and ticketing, please visit: <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/LitFilm>

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**MONDAY, MARCH 18**

**6:30PM *Breslin & Hamill: Deadline Artists***

Documentary, dir. by Jonathan Alter, John Block, Steve McCarthy  
US, 2019, 106 min.

Jimmy Breslin and Pete Hamill's brilliant, honest, and courageous writing defined New York City journalism. For five decades, these colorful columnists and longtime friends spoke for ordinary people and brought passion, wit, and literary merit to their reporting on their city and nation. Their writings probed issues of race, class, and the practice of journalism that resonate powerfully today. *Breslin and Hamill: Deadline Artists* explores the famed writers' intersecting lives and careers, while celebrating New York's grit and charm during the last great era of print journalism.

Following the screening, directors Alter, Block, and McCarthy will deliver a keynote conversation on the lives of Breslin and Hamill. The conversation is followed by a reception in the Dweck Lobby.

**TUESDAY, MARCH 19**

**6:00PM *Naguib Mahfouz: Passage of a Century***

Documentary, dir. by Francka Mouloudi  
US, 1999, 49 min.

Almost blind and struck with deafness, marked by the after-effects of a recent assassination attempt, Mahfouz turns out to be lively, witty, and lucid. This film helps us share the author's world and the evolution of Egypt in the past decades. Moreover, as a gift, Naguib Mahfouz offers us several aphorisms on matters of life. Thus, according to Mahfouz: "the present is what we suffer, the future is what we hope for and the past is what we love, whether it has been right or wrong, just or unjust."

**7:00PM *Wole Soyinka: Child of the Forest***

Documentary, dir. by Akin Omotoso  
Nigeria, 2009, 52 min.

A literary lion and a die-hard political activist, Wole Soyinka has spent a long lifetime speaking truth to power. Part tribute and part retrospective, this film examines the Nigerian Nobel laureate's actions and achievements through archival footage and insightful interviews. Commentary is provided by Soyinka; his sons, Makin and Olaokun Soyinka; his friend, Yemi Ogunbiyi; Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer; Maya Jaggi, cultural journalist and critic; Biodun Jeyifo, literary scholar and critic; publisher Margaret Busby; poet Odia Ofeimun; playwright Femi Osofisan; and writers Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Atta, Biyi Bandele, Teju Cole, Helon Habila, Bankole Omotoso, Ken Saro-Wiwa Jr., and Molara Wood.

**8:00PM *Zora Neale Hurston: Jump at the Sun***

Documentary, dir. by Sam Pollard  
US, 2008, 85 min.

Zora Neale Hurston, path-breaking novelist, pioneering anthropologist, and one of the first black women to enter the American literary canon with *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, established the African American vernacular as one of the most vital, inventive voices in American literature. This definitive film biography, 18 years in the making, portrays Hurston in all her complexity: gifted, flamboyant, and controversial, but always fiercely original.

The film will be introduced by the film's producer and writer, Kristy Anderson.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20**

**7:30PM *Obscene: A Portrait of Barney Rosset and Grove Press***

Documentary, dir. by Neil Ortenberg and Daniel O'Connor  
US, 2007, 98 min.

*Obscene* is the definitive film biography of Barney Rosset, the influential publisher of Grove Press and The Evergreen Review. He acquired the then fledgling Grove Press in 1951 and soon embarked on a tumultuous career of publishing and political engagement that continues to inspire today's defenders of free expression. Not only was he the first American publisher of acclaimed authors Samuel Beckett, Kenzaburō Ōe, Tom Stoppard, Che Guevara, and Malcolm X, but he also battled the government in the highest courts to overrule the obscenity ban on groundbreaking works of fiction such as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Tropic of Cancer* and *Naked Lunch*. Ultimately, he won and altered the course of history, but not without first enduring lawsuits, death-threats, grenade attacks, government surveillance, and the occupation of his premises by enraged feminists.

**THURSDAY, MARCH 21**

**5:00PM *Studs Terkel: Listening to America***

Documentary, dir. by Eric Simonson  
US, 2009, 40 min.

For over 60 years, Studs Terkel elevated the voices and experiences of everyday Americans through his skillful interviews on radio, in books, and on TV. This documentary takes a fond and illuminating look back at one of America's most influential authors and media personalities, whose curiosity about people never dimmed over the course of a long and brilliant career.

**6:00PM *Marguerite Duras: Worn Out with Desire to Write***

Documentary, dir. by Alan Benson, Daniel Wiles  
US, 1985, 58 min.

She was the sort of woman who spared neither herself nor others and arguably qualifies as 20th-century France's greatest *femme de lettres*. In this interview, the late novelist and filmmaker talks openly about the hardship and the romance of her childhood in French Indochina—sharing how this period haunted her life and shaped her work. Excerpts from her films and readings from her books, by actress Elizabeth Rider and Duras, herself, include *The Lover*—winner of the Prix Goncourt and translated into more than forty languages— and bring to life those formative years in Vietnam.

**7:00PM *Dreaming Murakami***

Documentary, dir. by Nitesh Anjaan  
2017, 58 min.

When Mette Holm begins to translate Haruki Murakami's debut novel *Kaze no uta o kike (Hear the Wind Sing)*, a two-meter-tall frog shows up at an underground station in Tokyo. The Frog follows her, determined to engage the translator in its fight against the gigantic Worm, which is slowly waking from a deep sleep, ready to destroy the world with hatred. More than 20 years ago, Holm read a novel by Haruki Murakami, who had yet to reach literary stardom. Back then, she had no idea how the Japanese author's imagined worlds would steadily shape and transform her own. Since then, Holm has spent thousands of hours translating Murakami's puzzling and widely discussed stories for his Danish readers. Stories that continuously spellbind and challenge millions of devoted readers all over the planet. As Holm struggles to find the perfect sentences capable of communicating what Murakami's solitary, daydreaming characters are trying to tell us, the boundary between reality and imagination begins to blur.

**8:00PM imagine...Margaret Atwood: You Have Been Warned!**

Documentary, dir. by Katy Homan

UK, 2017, 60 min.

BBC *imagine* Series

For decades, Margaret Atwood has been universally acclaimed as Canada's greatest living writer. Now at the age of 77, her star shines brighter and bolder than ever with an explosive television adaptation of her best-known work, *The Handmaid's Tale*, which was first published in 1985. It is a dystopian work of speculative fiction set in the future, which has drawn comparison to aspects of Donald Trump's leadership. Alan Yentob, the host of the BBC's series *imagine*, meets Margaret Atwood in Toronto and discovers how a childhood spent between the Canadian wilderness and the city helped shape her vision of herself and the world, set alight her imagination, and set her forth on a path to literary success.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 22**

**5:00PM *Monkey Business: The Adventures of Curious George's Creators***

Documentary, dir by. Ema Ryan Yamazaki

US, 2017, 82 min.

Curious George is the most popular monkey in the world. Since his introduction in the first publication in 1941, the beloved series has sold over 75 million books in more than 25 languages. *Monkey Business* explores the lesser-known tale of George's creators, Hans and Margret Rey. Originally from Hamburg, having heard that Hans was wasting his artistic talents as a bookkeeper in Rio, Margret traveled to Brazil to persuade him to marry her and do something creative together. After their four-week honeymoon to Paris turned into a four-year residency, they accidentally became children's book authors when a publisher suggested they create a book out of a cartoon Hans had drawn. Being German Jews, however, their life in Paris abruptly came to an end in June 1940 when the Reys were forced to escape from the Nazis by riding makeshift bicycles; a manuscript of the first Curious George book was one of the few possessions they could smuggle out with them. Arriving in New York as refugees, they started their life anew and over the next three decades they created a classic that continues to touch the hearts and minds of children around the world.

**6:30PM *Larry Kramer: In Love and Anger***

Documentary, dir. by Jean Carlomusto

US, 2015, 82 min.

From the onset of the AIDS epidemic, author Larry Kramer emerged as a fiery activist, an Old Testament-style prophet full of righteous fury who denounced both the willful inaction of the government and the refusal of the gay community to curb potentially risky behaviors. Co-founder of both the service organization Gay Men's Health Crisis and the direct-action protest group ACT UP, Kramer was vilified by some who saw his criticism to be an expression of self-hatred, while lionized by others who credit him with waking up the gay community and, eventually, the government and medical establishment, to the devastation of the disease.

**8:00PM *Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise***

Documentary, dir. by Bob Hercules and Rita Coburn Whack

US, 2017, 115 min.

Distinctly referred to as "a redwood tree, with deep roots in American culture," Maya Angelou gave people the freedom to think about their history in a way they never had before. Dr. Angelou's was a prolific life; as a singer, dancer, activist, poet, and writer, she inspired generations with lyrical modern

African-American thought that pushed boundaries. This unprecedented film weaves her words with rare and intimate archival photographs and videos, which paint hidden moments of her exuberant life during some of America's most defining moments. From her upbringing in the Depression-era South, to her work with Malcolm X in Ghana, to her inaugural poem for President Bill Clinton, the film takes us on an incredible journey through the life of a true American icon.

## **SATURDAY, MARCH 23**

### **1:00PM *The Little Prince***

Animated film, dir. by Mark Osborne  
US, 2015, 106 min.

*Kung-fu Panda* director Mark Osborne teams with producers Aton Soumache and Dimitri Rassam for this animated take on Antoine de Saint-Exupery's beloved novella about a pilot—voiced by Jeff Bridges—who crash lands in the Sahara Desert and encounters a mysterious young boy who claims to be an extraterrestrial prince. James Franco, Rachel McAdams, Marion Cotillard, Benicio Del Toro, and Paul Giamatti also lend their voices.

### **3:30PM *Waiting for Beckett***

Documentary, dir. by John L. Reilly  
US, 1994, 86 min.

*Waiting for Beckett* profiles the life and work of Nobel prize-winning author and playwright Samuel Beckett, a writer who shunned publicity throughout his life, and yet became a worldwide cultural influence. Director John L. Reilly worked with the guidance of Samuel Beckett and his American publisher Barney Rosset. The program took over five years to make and features the only known footage of Beckett at work. Also included are outstanding performances of his work, rare archival footage, interviews with friends and leading Beckett scholars, and excerpts from Beckett's letters which provide an astonishing and often humorous insight into his personal opinions of his life and art.

### **5:00PM *Working with Pinter***

Documentary, dir. by Harry Burton  
US, 2010, 56 min.

Harry Burton's 2007 film is a unique documentary about a unique writer. Achieving unprecedented access to Harold Pinter working with actors, the film captures his collaborative spirit and offers a remarkable insight into his writing. Participating in a masterclass in 2005, the playwright contributes to the rehearsal of extracts from his own plays, offering a rare insight into his creative processes. Complementing this revealing footage is an interview with Harold Pinter speaking with his friend and theatrical ally Henry Woolf, as well as liberal quotations from film and television productions of his plays.

### **6:00PM *The Polymath, or The Life and Opinions of Samuel R. Delany, Gentleman***

Documentary, dir. by Fred Barney Taylor  
US, 2007, 75 min.

A cinematic portrait of the larger than life Samuel R. Delany, a visionary and subversive novelist and one of the most important and innovative writers of the last 50 years. Delany, whose grandfather was enslaved, is an award-winning author, gay activist, cultural and social historian, professor, essayist and literary critic. Best known as the author of *Dhalgren* and *Babel-17*, and winner of multiple Hugo and Nebula awards, he recently received the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. He remains an icon in the literary, gay, and African-American communities.

**7:00PM *Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart***

Documentary, dir. by Tracy Heather Strain  
US, 2017, 120 min.

*Sighted Eyes/Feeling Heart* is the first-ever feature documentary about Lorraine Hansberry, the visionary playwright who authored the groundbreaking *A Raisin in the Sun*. An overnight sensation, the play transformed the American theater and has long been considered a classic, yet the remarkable story of the playwright faded from view. With this documentary, filmmaker Tracy Heather Strain resurrects the Lorraine Hansberry we have forgotten—a passionate artist, committed activist, and sought-after public intellectual who waged an outspoken and defiant battle against injustice in 20th-century America. The film reveals Hansberry's prescient works tackling race, human rights, women's equality and sexuality that anticipated social and political movements on the horizon.

Screening followed by a talkback with filmmaker Tracy Heather Strain.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 24**

**7:00PM *Pablo Neruda! Presente!***

Documentary, dir. by Mark Eisner  
US, 2004, 76 min.

A dynamic film-in-progress on Latin America's most renowned poet, *Pablo Neruda! Presente!* creates an intimate portrait of one of Latin America's most colorful characters and introduce a broad North American audience to the power of Neruda's poetry. Neruda was a public poet, statesman, activist, and Nobel Laureate who attained mythic stature in his lifetime. An incurable romantic, incorrigible womanizer, and unrepentant, militant communist, Neruda's contradictions found poetic expression in an aching lyricism and potent political verse. For Neruda, poetry was a rallying cry for the social function of art, a way of bearing witness to suffering and injustice. Chile's tumultuous history shaped Neruda and he became a major player in its ongoing political struggles with military dictatorship, fascism, national liberation, and U.S. intervention. The poet lived through some of the most significant events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his writing is a chronicle of the times, poetically expressed, from the Spanish Civil War to the Stalin purges, the Cold War, and the 1973 military coup that toppled Chile's democratically elected government. Neruda reclaimed "America" in the name of the entire continent and redefined the cultural landscape.

Screening followed by a talkback with filmmaker Mark Eisner.

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