

Black History Month

VIFF Welcomes Guest Curators to Honour the Past and Celebrate Brighter Futures

Inspiring Cinema, Live Jazz and a Special Tribute to Canadian Filmmaker Charles Officer

VANCOUVER, BC (JANUARY 23, 2024) – This February, Vancouver's premiere independent cinema VIFF Centre honours Black History Month and celebrates Black voices with two new series guest-curated by *Union Street* director Jamila Pomeroy and Vancouver Art Gallery's Kika Memeh, along with a free screening of *Mighty Jerome* in tribute to the late Charles Officer.

A NEW CHAPTER

In addition to bringing back Jamila Pomeroy's made-in-Vancouver festival hit *Union Street* for screenings from February 2-7, VIFF is excited to have the director guest-curate **A New Chapter**. Jamila has chosen to screen two inspiring international films for this series: Boots Riley's surreal comedy *Sorry to Bother You* and Suhaib Gasmelbari's *Talking About Trees*, in which four Sudanese cinephiles attempt to resurrect film culture after years of civil war and oppression.

"These selections honour a new chapter in Black cinema. Each film has inspiring characters that stand in their power and are community leaders; and instead of centering Black pain, they prioritise Black joy and ask us to look beyond the tired Black cultural archetypes we've been fed by film and media."

Sorry To Bother You, Talking About Trees and Union Street together challenge the idea of a Black cultural monolith, expand our ideas of Blackness, and showcase rich African and African diasporic cultures.

Centering community, resilience and positive action, these films invite us to break generational cycles, laugh and co-create an Afrofuturism that honours a multiplicity of African experiences for years to come." — Jamila Pomeroy, Guest Curator

CELEBRATING BLACK FUTURES

On successive Thursdays in February, writer and journalist Kika Memeh guest-curates **Celebrating Black Futures**. This series is presented in partnership with the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Highlighting Black and African films that reflect the present and demonstrate the exciting future of cinema, this series kicks off on February 8 with Ben Shapiro's documentary *Max Roach: The Drum Also Waltzes*, which delves into the American jazz legend's creative peaks, personal

struggles, and inspiring commitment to Civil Rights. The special event includes live jazz from the Feven Kidane Sextet.

Kika will also showcase Babatunde Apalowo's *All the Colours of the World Are Between Black and White*, which tells a tale of forbidden love in an unsupportive society, and Kelly Fyffe-Marshall's *When Morning Comes*, which sees a nine-year-old faced with a move from Jamaica to Canada, and his mother dealing with the decision to send her son abroad.

Celebrating Black Futures also encompasses a showcase of four short films on February 22 (Toye Aru's *Gita Boy*, Janessa St. Pierre and Courtenay Mayes' *Hair or No Hair*, Courtenay Mayes' *DEAD END*, and Brandon Wint's *My Body Is A Poem The World Makes With Me*). Ranging from humorous dark comedy to sombre drama, these shorts explore existential crises, beauty standards and daring ambitions in the lives of the protagonists.

"The Celebrating Black Futures film series brings together Black and African films that reflect the present and exciting future of cinema. In three feature films and a series of shorts, these filmmakers present a contemporary snapshot of the multilateral nature of African, African-American, Caribbean, and Black Canadian culture and cinema."

Through colourful visual rhythms and dynamic storytelling, these stories of love, immigration, pain, ambition, and family are representative of the new wave of Black and African cinema." — Kika Memeh, Guest Curator

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES OFFICER - FREE SCREENING OF MIGHTY JEROME

On February 4 VIFF will pay tribute to the late **Charles Officer**, one of Canada's most accomplished and adventurous filmmakers who passed away last year at the age of 48, with a free screening of *Mighty Jerome* introduced by the film's producer Selwyn Jacob.

The documentary tracks the rise, fall and redemption of Harry Jerome, Canada's most record-setting track and field star.

The full program can be viewed at viff.org/blackhistorymonth. Tickets are available now.

TICKETS & INFORMATION

Adult	\$15
Senior	\$13
Student	\$10
Accessible	\$10

Special Events

A Tribute to Charles Officer: Mighty Jerome (Feb 4, 4 pm)	FREE
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Celebrating Black Futures Opening Night Event featuring live jazz from the Feven Kidane Sextet and the screening of Max Roach: <i>The Drum Also Waltzes</i> . (Feb 8, 6:40 pm)	\$30
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Press Kit

[Download images here.](#)

About Jamila Pomeroy

Jamila Pomeroy is a Kenyan-Canadian WGC screenwriter, internationally-published writer, director and filmmaker with experience spanning print, media and film. Her work often champions historically underrepresented people and narratives, while generating both accessible, intellectually-charged and comedic storylines. She's worked with globally-recognized outlets like BBC, CBC, TELUS originals, Hypebae & Hypebeast, Network Entertainment, Amazon Prime, Netflix and more. Union Street is her first feature-length documentary as a director.

About Kika Memeh

Kika Memeh is a writer and journalist whose work revolves around Black and African arts - with a focus on the Nigerian Film Industry (Nollywood) - and African diasporic relationships. In the Public Engagement and Learning team at the Vancouver Art Gallery, Kika is committed to building memorable relationships through wholesome, community-centered programming.

About VIFF | viff.org

Beyond film exhibitions, VIFF strives to engage and empower communities, encourage dialogue and champion local artists. With decades of experience and an unwavering commitment to creating exceptional programs, VIFF has transformed into a highly esteemed annual festival and a premier arthouse cinema.

Founded in 1982, the Greater Vancouver International Film Festival Society is a not-for-profit cultural society and federally registered charitable organization that operates the internationally acclaimed Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) and the year-round programming at the VIFF Centre. All year, VIFF produces screenings, talks, conferences and events that act as a catalyst for the community to discover the creativity and craft of storytelling on screen. The festival's 43rd year will feature over 120 features and 100 short films screening in-cinemas across Vancouver from September 26 to October 6, showcasing the top international, Canadian and BC films along with creators and industry professionals from around the globe.

VIFF is presented on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səłílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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Media Inquiries

For more information and interview opportunities contact press@viff.org.