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**THE INTERNATIONAL LATINO CULTURAL CENTER OF CHICAGO
UNVEILS THE FIRST ROUND OF TITLES FOR
THE 35th CHICAGO LATINO FILM FESTIVAL, MARCH 28-APRIL 11**

The critically acclaimed political thrillers “The Realm” and “Rojo”; “José,” winner of the Queer Lion Award at last year’s Venice Film Festival; “Belmonte,” Federico Veiroj’s latest film; and Argentinian actress Valeria Bertuccelli’s directorial debut “The Queen of Fear” are among the high profile titles announced today.

CHICAGO (February 19, 2019) - The **International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago** is proud to announce the first confirmed titles out of the more than 100 features & shorts that will be screened during the **35th Chicago Latino Film Festival** to be held **March 28-April 11** at the **AMC River East 21 Theatres, 322 E. Illinois St.** Opening and Closing Night selections will be announced in the next couple of weeks; the full lineup will be announced in mid March.

This first round of fifteen titles include Rodrigo Soroyen’s exciting political thriller ***The Realm*** (winner of seven Goyas, including Best Director and Best Actor), Benjamín Naishtat’s equally tense thriller ***Rojo*** starring Darío Grandinetti (*Talk to Her, Wild Tales*) and Alfredo Castro (*Tony Manero, The Club*), Cheng Li’s ***José***, winner of the Queer Lion Award at last year’s Venice Film Festival, actress Valeria Bertuccelli’s directorial debut “***The Queen of Fear***” and the latest films by acclaimed directors Silvio Caiozzi, Jorge Pérez Solano and Federico Veiroj.

“From exciting new voices to edge-of-your-seat thrillers, from documentaries to feature films that explore the Afro-Latino experience, this first taste of our Festival is a representative sample of the great work that is coming out of Latin American, Spain and Portugal and the U.S. Latino diaspora. Audiences this year can look forward to a strong and diverse program of films that are thoughtful, entertaining and that speak to the times we live in,” said **Pepe Vargas**, founder and executive director of the International Latino Cultural Center, producer of the Chicago Latino Film Festival.

THE FIRST FIFTEEN

- **...And Suddenly the Dawn/...Y de pronto el amanecer (Chile; Director: Silvio Caiozzi):** Chile's submission to this year's Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Silvio Caiozzi's first film in 13 years is inspired on a trip he made with Chilean novelist Jaime Casas to the latter's native Chilean Patagonia. Arts and entertainment reporter Pancho Veloso returns to the island of Chiloé 45 years after leaving it against his will. He wants to write something with meaning and expects to find inspiration among the friends and people he left behind. Moving back and forth between three different time periods, *...And Suddenly the Dawn* is literary in scope as well as intimate, political, poetic and heartbreaking.
- **Belmonte (Uruguay/Mexico/Spain; Director: Federico Veiroj):** From the director of *A Useful Life* and *The Apostate* comes this portrait of a melancholic middle-age painter facing an existential crisis as he prepares for an upcoming exhibition. As an artist and as a father, Belmonte strives to strike a perfect balance. He wants to spend more time with his ten-year-old daughter now that his ex-wife is pregnant with the child of her current partner. Belmonte may long for the intimacy family life offers but he is also too caught up in his own world to fully embrace it.
- **Black Mexicans (Mexico; Director: Jorge Pérez Solano):** Neri, a fisherman, splits his time between two women: his wife Juanita with whom he has a daughter and his lover Magdalena, mother of three additional children. Things are about to change for Neri as Juanita falls gravely ill and Magdalena prepares to take her place. Shot entirely in the beautiful beaches of Corralera in Oaxaca and featuring a cast of non-professional actors from the nearby communities, *Black Mexicans* explores the social mores of and the discrimination faced by Mexico's unacknowledged black community.
- **Decade of Fire (USA; Directors: Gretchen Hildebran and Vivian Vázquez):** The South Bronx was one of New York City's most vibrant and diverse neighborhoods in the 1950s and 60s; by the late 70s, most of the neighborhood was reduced to ashes, victim not only of the city's financial crisis but also of such practices as redlining, white flight, crime and the illegal burning of buildings by unscrupulous landlords for their insurance value. Vivian Vázquez's and Gretchen Hildebran's extensively researched documentary unearth the forces that led to this destruction and show how those who stayed behind rebuilt their community.
- **El Chata (Puerto Rico; Director: Gustavo Ramos Perales):** Samuel could have been, in the immortal words of Marlon Brando's Terry Molloy in *On the Waterfront*, a contender. Life has delivered its blows, both in and outside the ring. Now out of prison, Samuel can only find work as a sparring partner or "chata." He wants to prove himself in the ring once again. He also wants to be a better father and husband. Ramos Perales' feature debut is hard-boiled and claustrophobic, and further proof that Puerto Rico's indie film scene is thriving against all odds.
- **Esmeralda's Twilight (Mexico; Director: Ehécatl Garage):** Set in a small town in rural Mexico, Ehécatl Garage's moving feature debut centers on recently widowed Esmeralda, a woman so used to taking care of her now deceased husband and her son, who left for the United States, that she now feels bereft. No matter how hard her neighbors try to lift her spirits, she can't get out of her funk. That is until a cute little pig by the name of "La

Cuina” walks into her life. Anchored by Concepción Márquez’s poignant lead performance, *Esmeralda’s Twilight* is an intimate portrait about solitude.

- ***Havana from on High* (Cuba/Canada/Venezuela/Spain; Director: Pedro Ruiz):** Nestled above a decaying district of Havana is a secret village, hidden from the clamour of the streets below. Its residents, like many others, have been forced upwards by the chronic shortage of housing. In the elusive quest for happiness, they have developed survival tactics as clever as they are tenuous. These unique characters now bear witness to a society that is in the process of a major historical transformation after 60 years of revolutionary government.
- ***Heiress of the Wind* (Nicaragua; Director: Gloria Carrión Fonseca):** Gloria Carrión Fonseca once believed that the Sandinistas were superheroes. But the Revolution took its toll as her parents’ dedication to the cause meant neglect for her and her siblings. Thirty-six years later, she tries to come to terms with the Revolution and its aftermath through intimate yet painful discussions with her parents about tragic deaths, disillusionment and parenting. Carrión Fonseca’s voice-over and extensive use of archive footage also presents audiences with a clear impression of a changing Nicaragua.
- ***José* (Guatemala/USA; Director: Cheng Li):** Nineteen-year-old José lives with his devout mother in one of Guatemala City’s roughest neighborhoods. They earn a living selling sandwiches and delivering food. While his mother devotes her free time to church, José arranges random sexual encounters with strangers through an app. Through Luis, a migrant from the Caribbean, José will discover a world far more tender than the violently homophobic one he lives in. Winner of the Queer Lion Award at last year’s Venice Film Festival.
- ***Little Histories* (Venezuela; Director: Rafael Marziano):** The April 2002 failed coup d’état against President Hugo Chávez provides the background to this anthological film. Five “little histories” featuring characters and families that represent a microcosm of Venezuelan society: a successful and arrogant lawyer; a corrupt and cowardly military man; a homeless man clinging to the fragments of his life like a castaway; a couple of naively hopeful teenagers; and a single, self-sacrificing and resigned mother. Stories involving pettiness, hope and discouragement, each of them are moving, definitive and tragic.
- ***The Longest Night* (Ecuador/Mexico; Director: Gabriela Calvache):** Dana turns to prostitution against her will. She must surrender her income to the leader of a human trafficking ring, but her daughter’s illness and a drug addiction prevent her from delivering her usual share. Dana decides to take matters into her own hands when she meets a young girl that might end up just like her. Gabriela Calvache’s uncompromising feature debut throws a harsh spotlight on the sexual abuse and exploitation of women and children across Latin America.
- ***Original Sin* (Paraguay/USA; Director: Jean Lee):** Eva is a woman of class and elegance. She behaves the way society expects her to...and that includes following her husband Adrián to Spain. Adrián, though, is so focused on his work and ambitions that he won’t even have sex with her. Eva’s compulsive purchase of a sexually explicit painting lands her in the arms of artist Luis; when she is caught in flagrante by Adrián...Luis is

invited to stick around for lunch. Jean Lee's feature debut is a quirky and irreverent update of the Adam and Eve story.

- ***The Queen of Fear* (Argentina; Directors: Valeria Bertuccelli and Fabiana Tiscornia):** Robertina's dream to produce her own one-woman show is about to become a reality. So, what is she afraid of and why? She keeps making up excuses to avoid rehearsals or delays the play's production with outrageous ideas. And to top it off, she flies off to Denmark when she receives news that an old friend is dying of cancer. Featuring a riveting performance from Bertuccelli—who also wrote and co-directed the film—in the title role, *The Queen of Fear* captures the essence of a woman facing her fears and insecurities.
- ***Rojo* (Argentina/Belgium/Brazil/Germany/France/Switzerland; Director: Benjamín Naishtat):** Winner of the Jury Prize for Best Cinematography and the Silver Shell for Best Actor and Best Director at last year's San Sebastian Film Festival, Benjamín Naishtat's latest film is an impeccably shot and edited thriller set in 1970s Argentina. The movie opens on an apparently abandoned house being stripped clean by the neighbors. Cut to a restaurant where Claudio (a pitch perfect Darío Grandinetti) is confronted by a complete stranger. The encounter ends with Claudio dumping the stranger's body in the countryside. Months later, a Chilean detective (Alfredo Castro) arrives to investigate a disappearance.
- ***The Realm* (Spain/France; Director: Rodrigo Soroyen):** Manuel López-Vidal (a superb Antonio de la Torre) is an influential politician ready to make the leap to the big leagues when a leak involves him in a corruption scandal. But when the party closes ranks against him, Manuel finds himself without power and without friends. But he is not going down alone. Winner of 7 Goyas including Best Director and Best Actor, *The Realm* is a suspenseful, character-driven political thriller ripped from today's headlines.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets to each regular screening are: **\$13, general admission; \$10 (with valid ID), ILCC Members, students and seniors. Mondays and Tuesdays, \$10 all.** Festival passes worth 12 admissions are: \$110 (a savings of \$46) for the general public and \$80 (a \$76 savings) for ILCC Members. Cash, debit and major credit cards are accepted at the box office. Festival passes and tickets for these confirmed titles can now be purchased at **ChicagoLatinoFilmFestival.org, or CLFF's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ChicagoLatinoFilmFestival/>).**

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ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

The Chicago Latino Film Festival receives additional support from: The Reva and David Logan Foundation, Prince Charitable Trusts, The National Endowment for the Arts, Nordstrom, the Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, the Illinois Arts Council, a State Agency, and the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events.

ABOUT THE ILCC

The International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago is a pan-Latino, nonprofit, multidisciplinary arts organization dedicated to developing, promoting and increasing awareness of Latino cultures among Latinos and other communities by presenting a wide variety of art forms and education including film, music, dance, visual arts, comedy and theater. The Center prides itself for its outstanding multidisciplinary local and international cultural programming which spans Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and the United States.

Born out of the Chicago Latino Film Festival, The International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago also produces other programs, including the Latino Music Festival, which will celebrate its 14th edition in the Fall; Film in the Parks, also in its 14th season; the monthly Reel Film Club, already in its 10th year; and many others. All in all, the audience has grown from 500 people in 1985 for the first Chicago Latino Film Festival to more than 70,000 (Latinos and non-Latinos) who enjoy the year-round multidisciplinary cross-cultural exchanges offered by the Center.

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