

**RENDEZVOUS WITH MADNESS FESTIVAL 2019
ANNOUNCES MULTIDISCIPLINARY LINE-UP OF FEATURE & SHORT
FILM PROGRAMS, THEATRE, VISUAL ART & COMEDY CASTING
LIGHT ON MADNESS, MENTAL HEALTH, & ADDICTION**

AUDIENCES INVITED TO #GETMAD

**FESTIVAL OPENS ON WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY WITH A SCREENING OF THE NFB
DOCUMENTARY *CONVICTION* SPOTLIGHTING THE GROWING POPULATION OF
CANADIAN WOMEN IN PRISON**

October 10 - 20, 2019

For Immediate Release – **Toronto (August 21, 2019)** – After 25 years as the **first and largest** mental health film festival in the world, in 2018 **Rendezvous with Madness (RWM)** launched into their next 25 years as a **multidisciplinary arts festival adding live performance, music and visual art to their established mix of** provocative films. Today the festival is thrilled to announce the full programming line-up for its **27th edition, running from October 10 – 20, 2019** and showcasing **14 feature film and short programs** from around the globe, **4 live performance pieces**, a **visual arts exhibition**, AND the addition of a new event, ***Laughter vs. The Universe* – a one night only comedy showcase** designed to remind us that sometimes laughter truly is the best medicine.

This important and provocative festival uses art to investigate and illuminate the realities and mythologies surrounding mental illness and addiction, and in that spirit, this year, Rendezvous with Madness introduces the unifying theme and discussion prompt **#GetMad**, inviting audiences, artists - and anyone who wants to join the conversation - to share what 'mad' means to them. Extending the conversation, almost all screening events this year will be followed by compelling and urgent talks with filmmakers and experts in a programmed discussion series entitled **#GetMad: Join the Conversation**.

"In 2019 we are inviting our audiences and community to #GetMad and to talk about what that means to them," says **Workman Arts' Executive Artistic Director, Kelly Straughan**. *"The word mad and the language of madness has long been pejorative. #GetMad has a multiplicity of meanings to us – we can be angry about a lack of empathy towards mental illness, we can celebrate the complexity of our emotional lives, we can reclaim the idea of madness and champion the arts as a means to enlightenment and understanding. #GetMad is a call to action reminding us that sharing stories is a powerful tool against isolation, stigma and discrimination*

and we invite everyone to #GetMad on social media and share their stories of resilience alongside us as part of the celebration of World Mental Health Day and the ongoing conversations we'll be having at the festival this year."

*"Every day we wake up with a little more knowledge about addiction and mental health, but each day also brings another wave of resistance," adds **Rendezvous Film Program Director Geoff Pevere**. "Nothing panics ignorance or prejudice more than facts or passion. Of course, there are many sides to all stories, and for nearly thirty years the Rendezvous with Madness Festival has been scouring the globe for the best, most current, controversial and – most important – most likely to keep us talking. This year is no exception."*

The 2019 festival kicks off on **October 10th – World Mental Health Day** – with a special screening of the East Coast made documentary ***Conviction*** by filmmakers **Nance Ackerman, Ariella Pahlke, and Teresa MacInnes**. Women have become the highest growing prison population in the world. In *Conviction*, a team of three documentary filmmakers gain access to a correctional facility in Nova Scotia to tackle the crisis from within. Instead of simply conducting interviews, the filmmakers collaborated with women in the facility to create a deeply personal documentary in which these women share their experiences with institutionalization and unapologetically address the ineptitude of incarceration. Working alongside the Elizabeth Fry Society and the filmmakers, the women envision a better alternative to a failing criminal justice system - to build communities instead of prisons.

The opening night film will unspool this year at the **Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema** and will be followed by the festival's first panel discussion with filmmaker Ariella Pahlke and subject Tanya C Bignell of *Conviction* and representatives from the Elizabeth Fry Society. Moderated by **Orev Reena Katz haKohenet**, a Mental Health Correctional Chaplain, they will discuss the various realities and difficulties for women living with mental health issues within a correctional facility and ask why women have become the fastest growing segment of the prison system in Canada.

Other film highlights in 2019 include the **Canadian Premiere of the Sundance Film Festival selected documentary *Bedlam*** which looks at the crisis of mental health deinstitutionalization in the US and will be followed by a rigorous panel discussion about the issue on both sides of the border; César-nominated French filmmaker (who began her career as a psycho-sociologist) **Fabienne Godet's *Nos Vies Formidables/Our Wonderful Lives***, a naturalistic drama about a 30-something woman who lives with addiction and enrolls in a rehab facility in the French countryside; ***Chaos* (Golden Leopard Award-winner at Locarno 2018)** is a documentary from acclaimed Syrian director **Sara Hattahi** that looks at three women (including herself) in three cities to examine the impact of war on the human spirit; in ***My Soul Drifts Light upon a Sea of Trees*** Dutch documentary director **Heinrich Dahms** follows the story of **Zen Buddhist Itetsu Nemoto** who makes it his life's work to support individuals struggling with depression and suicidal ideation after losing an uncle and two friends to suicide; documentary director **Iain Cunningham**

goes on a 6-year journey to learn about a mother whom he never really knew and the truth of how she died in the acclaimed ***Irene's Ghost*** which first premiered at the BFI London Film Festival; and celebrated Iranian director **Bahman Farmanara** directs and stars in a family drama meets homage to Iranian artists in ***Tale of The Sea***, the story of a writer who suffers a breakdown after witnessing a violent murder.

Short films will screen alongside many features this year and for its third consecutive year, ***If You Ask Me*** (IYAM) returns to the festival, supporting emerging filmmakers with mental health and/or addiction experiences to create new work. This constantly evolving program has grown to follow the needs of the filmmakers and RWM is very excited to be showing four new short films in 2019 by emerging artists **Saba Akhtar, Julianne Ess, Erum Khan** and **James Knott**.

The live performance program begins **October 10** at the Dead End Studio with an interdisciplinary, site-specific production of **2019 Cayle Chernin Award finalist Natalie Liconti's *The Life and Death of Fred Herko***, about the 1964 suicide death of queer dancer Fred Herko and directed by Storefront Theatre's **Claire Burns**. The 2019 live performance program also includes the dance piece ***PSYCHOSIS*** choreographed by acclaimed Caribbean-Canadian dancer/choreographer **Ronald Taylor**; **Grace Thompson** (RARE Theatre's *Welcome To My Underworld*) writes and directs ***In This House*** at Workman Arts Theatre, a play about four millennials struggling with loneliness and depression as they try to find their way in the world; and **Lisa Anita Wegner** and collaborator **Scott White** bring an immersive theatrical experience exploring the impact of celebrity worship in ***Intangible Adorations*** at the Workman Arts Chapel.

The 2019 visual arts exhibit curated by Claudette Abrams - ***Making Mad: How Expressions of Vulnerability Connect Us*** – will run for the duration of the festival at the Toronto Media Arts Centre. Exploring the ways depictions of vulnerability in their work resonate on a human scale, the exhibit will feature work from filmmaker and photographer **Alison Crouse**; an interactive VR installation by the collaborative team of **Ben McCarthy and SpekWork** studio; artist, photographer, and architect **Esmond Lee**; artist **Peter Dillman**; media artist **Sarah Trad**; and large-scale sculptures by artist **Véronique Vallières** that the audience is encouraged to interact with.

At the end of the festival and new this year, on **Saturday, October 9th** the festival presents ***Laughter vs. The Universe***, a comedy showcase at Comedy Bar hosted by **Christophe Davidson** and headlined by **2018 Canadian Comedy Breakout Artist award-winner** and **2018 Sirius XM Top Comic Chanty Marostica**. Marostica was the recipient of the 2019 Canadian Comedy Award for Album of the Year and nominated for the 2019 Juno Award for Comedy Album of the Year for their debut album ***The Chanty Show*** (which also hit #1 on iTunes) and as a trans person in the comedy space, is an absolute vanguard in their field.

Tickets for *Rendezvous with Madness* events go **on sale September 9**. Advance tickets for all events are “pay as you wish” and offered for \$12, \$15, or \$20 online at workmanarts.com or by phone (416-583-4339 Mon-Fri 10am-5pm). Tickets will also be available for purchase at the venue starting 1 hour prior to start time on a “pay what you wish” basis with a minimum suggested of \$12. The opening night film program is \$15 for the film and performances only; \$40 with pre-film reception including food and beverage. This year passes are also available for \$44 for four events, \$80 for eight events, and \$100 for unlimited single entry to all events. Matinee screenings at CAMH are by donation.

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RENDEZVOUS WITH MADNESS Feature Film Line-Up:

For complete listings including short films screening with features and post-screening panels and Q&As visit www.workmanarts.com

OPENING NIGHT FILM

Conviction Nance Ackerman, Ariella Pahlke, Teresa MacInnes | 2019 | Canada | 78 mins

October 10 | 6:30 PM | Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema

World Mental Health Day

Women have become the highest growing prison population in the world. In *Conviction*, a team of documentary filmmakers gain access to a female correctional facility in Nova Scotia to tackle the crisis from within. Instead of simply conducting interviews, the filmmakers collaborate with women in the facility to create a deeply personal documentary. Using cameras, spoken word poetry and art supplies, the women share their experiences with institutionalization and unapologetically address the ineptitude of incarceration.

Bedlam Kenneth Paul Rosenberg | 2019 | USA | 84 mins | Canadian Premiere

Haunted by the death of his sister Merle, psychiatrist Kenneth Paul Rosenberg takes on the role of documentary filmmaker to examine a national health crisis in the US. *Bedlam* follows personal stories of people living with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and other chronic mental health issues with a television style precision. *Bedlam* describes the deinstitutionalization triggers pulled in the mid- and late 20th century (which occurred in Canada as well) to create this ‘bedlam’ on an inter/national scale.

Chaos Sara Fattahi | 2018 | Austria, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar | 95 mins | In Arabic and German with English Subtitles | Toronto Premiere

Winner of the Golden Leopard Award at the 2018 Locarno Film Festival, *Chaos* tells the story of three women in three cities and asks: what's the effect of war on the human spirit? As the personal stories of these Syrian women are intimately revealed, *Chaos* bears witness to the scarred existence of survivors. Beguiling our senses, Fattahi draws us into the processes of profound grief and inner disengagement.

Foxy, Trista Suke | 2018 | Canada | 60 mins

Hair is just keratin protein and dead skin cells. Yet, today and historically, beauty standards have made hair and its appearance a signifier of status. When you are dissatisfied with the state of your hair, each haircare advertisement is a microaggression advocating anything but otherness. *Foxy* is a spunky film that debunks the social stigma surrounding alopecia universalis by interweaving a scripted memoir of director Trista Suke's personal story with interviews highlighting people from the community who are also living with hair loss.

If You Ask Me (IYAM) 50 mins | 1-hour panel discussion

For its 3rd consecutive year, If You Ask Me (IYAM) has supported emerging filmmakers with mental health and/or addiction experiences to create new work. This constantly evolving program has grown to follow the needs of the filmmakers and RWM is very excited to be showing four new short films in 2019 by Saba Akhtar, Julianne Ess, Erum Khan and James Knott.

In Search... Beryl Magoko | 2018 | Germany, Kenya | 90 mins | In German and Swahili with English Subtitles | Toronto Premiere

The director of [In Search...](#), Beryl Magoko underwent Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a child. Years later, Beryl learns that her FGM can be reversed with the help of reconstructive surgery. After everything she has been through, she is hesitant to make a decision and wonders if she will be making another terrible mistake. In her documentary, Beryl searches for an answer through asking other women who survived FGM about their experiences and thoughts on reconstructive surgery.

Junha's Planet Hyung-sook Hong | 2018 | South Korea | Korean with English Subtitles | 108 mins | Canadian Premiere

Junha is a 4th grader who doesn't make friends easily. His peers are afraid that he will attack or spit on them so they don't play with him. Junha's teachers spend most of their time trying to discipline him or simply understand why he behaves the way he does. But Junha lives on the Autism spectrum. Concerned parents of his classmates question whether he should be educated in the same environment as their kids and while the school advocates for Autism awareness and encourages children to support Junha - many lose their patience - including Junha himself. is a quiet and observational documentary that addresses some of the most pressing issues intersecting disability and education.

Kabul, City in the Wind Aboozar Amini | 2018 | Netherlands, Afghanistan, Japan, Germany | Dari and Pashto with English subtitles | 88 mins

In this subtle and beautiful documentary portrait, first time feature film director Aboozar Amini captures the everyday lives of 12-year old Afshin and his younger brother Benjamin alongside bus driver Abas. The three subjects of this subtle portrait of Kabul take us on a journey of their daily lives where war is omnipresent. Amini's gentle camerawork gives us time to witness the intricacies of life in Kabul where dust appears as a main "character" in the film. Kabul, a city that is mostly known for war and death is presented lovingly as home for those who strive for a better tomorrow.

M Yolande Zauberman | 2018 | France | Yiddish, Hebrew, English with English Subtitles | 115 mins

Menahem Lang is an Israeli actor with a tragic past. He was raped as a child by several older men from his own community. Lang grew up in the Haredi sect, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community known for its theological conservatism. After confronting one of his abusers, Lang left his hometown of Bnei Brak and hasn't returned until the creation of this film when he returns to face his community, his trauma and to seek justice. But more than anything, Lang ends up finding other survivors. Through many candid interviews in *M* we learn that child molestation is rampant in their community, turning the abused into abusers in a vicious circle of sexual violence.

My Soul Drifts Light upon a Sea of Trees Heinrich Dahms | 2018 | Japan, Netherlands | 93 mins | Japanese with English Subtitles | North American Premiere

Suicide is universal. The figures are staggering. After losing an uncle and two friends to suicide, Zen Buddhist Itetsu Nemoto made it his life's work to support individuals struggling with depression and suicidal ideation. Despite cultural taboos from a temple in the high mountains of central Japan, priest Nemoto takes a community-focused holistic approach to healing trauma. *My Soul Drifts upon a Sea of Trees* inscribes the journey and mission of Nemoto as he helps three people find life after limbo.

Nos vies formidables / Our Wonderful Lives, Fabienne Godet | 2018 | France | 117 mins | In French with English Subtitles | Toronto Premiere

Group therapy sessions. Community meals. Heartfelt conversations. This life is foreign to Margot, a thirty something woman from a wealthy French family. Margot lives with addiction and she's just enrolled in a rehab facility in a remote French countryside. It's quaint and dreamlike in the country which is the complete opposite of Margot's fractured mental state. Repressed emotions make Margot reluctant to open up to strangers. She doesn't believe in the community approach to recovery. But what will happen if she lets go of her preconceived notions of group therapy and allows others to help her?

Retrospekt / Retrospect Esther Rots | 2018 | Belgium, Netherlands | Dutch and Flemish with English Subtitles | 101 mins

Retrospect is a chaotic puzzle of an unreliable narrator's memories contrasted by overwhelming punk music and mutilated by a sporadic and anarchic timeline. At the heart of the story is Mette and her perfect nuclear family; well, at least on the outside. Mette is a domestic violence support worker. We see her intervene in violent conflicts; confronting her husband who clearly devalues the importance of her career and suddenly see Mette in the hospital following a catastrophic accident. She's in a wheelchair and doesn't have any recollection of what happened to her. Gradually, she starts remembering how she invited one of her clients, Lee, to live with her to "save" her from Lee's violent partner. Mette's flashbacks offer vague clues to the calamity. But who is to blame for Mette's downfall?

Tale of The Sea Bahman Farmanara | 2018 | Iran | In Farsi with English Subtitles | 97 mins
This delicate and quiet film, part family drama part homage to older Iranian artists, comes from veteran director Bahman Farmanara. Taher Mohebi, a well-known writer, breaks down after witnessing a violent murder and spends three years in a mental institution. After his release, Taher is told that things are just as they were before but his relentless hallucinations make him want to return to the institution. This film is dedicated to Abbas Kiarostami and displays the late master's understanding of human relationships.

CLOSING NIGHT FILM

Irene's Ghost Iain Cunningham | 2018 | UK | 82 mins | Canadian Premiere

Iain Cunningham was three when his mother Irene died. His father never spoke of it and the family's silence around Irene meant that she was alive only in Cunningham's imagination. The birth of his own child inspires a journey to discover the truth, piecing together fragments of the past to make sense of the present. Utilizing gorgeous animation alongside moving archival footage, *Irene's Ghost* lovingly rebuilds Irene's lost life.

RENDEZVOUS WITH MADNESS Live performance program:

Intangible Adorations, Created by Lisa Anita Wegner and Scott White
Workman Arts Chapel

Intangible Adorations is an immersive theatrical experience that explores the impact of celebrity worship on the mental health of the famous, and on those who become infatuated with celebrity. Audience members will gather in the Hall of Celebrity, have the opportunity to learn the best way to approach someone famous, and then experience an iconic piece of performance art in the Red Chapel enacted by a celebrity whose identity is concealed by a morph suit. Will they reveal their identity, or will they choose to remain anonymous? That will be up to the individual who represents the ICON each night. Who in the audience will have the courage to participate in a celebrity panel where they'll get a taste of what it feels like to be famous?

In This House, Written and Directed by Grace Thompson

Workman Arts Theatre

Charlie is looking for happy, Remi is a struggling musician and bartender who has clinical depression, Jinx is a burlesque performer and PhD candidate who works at The Orange Balloon, and Minka, no one knows what Minka does. *In This House* is a play about four young adults living together in Toronto. It is a look into the epidemic of loneliness and depression among the Millennial generation and the daily struggle to make something of yourself in this city. *In This House* is a play about a generation, a city and an exact time in our lives. This is a play about how we save each other.

PSYCHOSIS, Choreographed by Ronald Taylor

Workman Arts Theatre

PSYCHOSIS is inspired by the investigation of Ronald's mental health episode in Canada and pulls into the present to explore an awareness of adversity, reconciliation and resilience. By connecting relationships between disability, environment and the human spirit, PSYCHOSIS seeks to explore the trauma and ongoing challenges of mental health, while dealing with bouts of darkness, depression and the human psyche.

The Life and Death of Fred Herko, Written by Natalie Liconti

Dead End Studio

In 1964, at the age of 28, a queer dancer named Fred Herko jeté out the window of his ex-lover's apartment – naked, and high on speed. *The Life and Death of Fred Herko* is an interdisciplinary, site-specific performance that sheds light on a footnoted figure in queer history and examines the collateral damage of art.

RENDEZVOUS WITH MADNESS Comedy:

Laughter vs. The Universe, hosted by **Christophe Davidson** Saturday, October 19, 7pm

Comedy Bar

For our closing night event, Comedy Bar and Rendezvous with Madness are thrilled to team up for a one night only special comedy showcase designed to remind us that sometimes laughter is the best medicine. Join us for a very special celebration of some of Canada's very finest stand-ups! Featuring a star-studded line up including guest appearances from Christophe Davidson, Tamara Shevon and a special **headline performance by Chanty Marostica**.

Visual Arts Exhibit: Making Mad: How Expressions of Vulnerability Connect Us

October 10-20

Gallery Hours: Daily, 12-6 pm (CLOSED Monday, October 14)

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 10, 7-11pm

Toronto Media Arts Centre

Through humour and pathos, the artists in *Making Mad* explore the ways in which depictions of vulnerability in their work resonate on a human scale. Deep-diving into personal touchstones that go beyond the individual, these works relate in poignant and absurd ways to our condition as a collective of fallible, temporal beings. Curated by Claudette Abrams.

VENUE INFORMATION:

Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, 506 Bloor Street West - Accessible venue

AGO (Jackman Hall) 317 Dundas St West - Accessible venue

Workman Arts Theatre, 651 Dufferin Street

Chapel, Workman Arts Theatre – 651 Dufferin Street

Toronto Media Arts Centre (TMAC), 32 Lisgar Street - Accessible venue

Comedy Bar, 945 Bloor Street. West.

Dead End Studio, 7 Fraser Ave #13,

GET IN TOUCH:

TWITTER: @WorkmanArtsTO

FACEBOOK: /WorkmanArts

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#RWMFEST

#RWMFEST19

#GetMad

FESTIVAL INFORMATION:

ABOUT RENDEZVOUS WITH MADNESS

The first festival of its kind in the world and currently the largest, **Rendezvous with Madness** was founded in 1993 and is produced each year by Workman Arts. **Rendezvous with Madness** investigates the facts and mythologies surrounding mental illness and addiction as presented by both Canadian and international filmmakers, Canadian live performance makers, as well as by visual and media-based artists. The festival provides filmmakers, performance makers, and artists with opportunities to exhibit work that may not otherwise be seen; facilitates discussion

between artists and audiences on these cinematic and media representations; and increases awareness of, and advocacy for, mental health and addiction issues among the broader public.

ABOUT WORKMAN ARTS

For 31 years, Workman Arts' growing audiences have enjoyed evocative and thought-provoking artistic productions that entertain, educate and challenge public perceptions about mental health and addictions, wellness and recovery. Workman Arts is the longest-running multi-disciplinary arts and mental health organization in North America and our member artists have benefited from exceptional training and educational programs unlike anything offered elsewhere in the world.

In partnership with CAMH (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health), Workman Arts supports artists living with mental health and/or addictions issues. We work to provide a safe and nurturing environment where artistic projects, professional opportunities and personal and professional networks are developed and fostered.

Founded in 1987 by psychiatric nurse Lisa Brown and guided by the principle that the creative process is integral to the quest for personal and spiritual growth, Workman Arts has grown over the years from a theatre company of eight members to a multidisciplinary arts organization with over 300 member artists. Located in the arts district in west-end Toronto, Workman Arts manages a 220-seat theatre, visual and media arts studios and training facilities and will be moving into new facilities at a new building at CAMH in 2020.

For more information please visit workmanarts.com