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MEDIA RELEASE

TIFF UNVEILS WRITERS' STUDIO CLASS OF 2021 **Including international participants from around the world, for the first time**

TORONTO — TIFF is pleased to announce the eight screenwriters that will participate in the 2021 Writers' Studio. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the programme, applications were open internationally for the first time. Of the selected participants, 50% identify as women. Writers' Studio is a five-day intensive workshop offering personalized script consulting, focusing on adaptation, character development, dialogue, and scene structure. Participants will also receive complimentary access to the 2021 Toronto International Film Festival and Industry Conference. The Writers' Studio sessions will take place digitally March 8–12, 2021.

After reviewing over 240 submissions from Canada and around the world, the following writers have been selected: **Maha Al-Saati, Jonathan Beaulieu-Cyr, Adrianna DiLorenzo, Jason Filiatrault, Abraham Gezaghne, Karabo Lediga, Silvina Schnicer, and Taratoa Stappard**. The participants will be celebrated tonight on Twitter at 7pm EST.

"TIFF champions diverse storytellers and provides mentorship opportunities by connecting up-and-coming talent with notable industry experts to elevate their projects and careers," said Geoff Macnaughton, TIFF Senior Director, Industry & Theatrical. "Our industry is only as strong as the calibre of its talent, and we're thrilled to nurture the next generation of screenwriters through TIFF Writers' Studio."

This year's lab will support the development of feature-film scripts, with dedicated one-on-one discussions from international script consultants Andrew Ahn, Avi Neshet, Alesia Weston, and Christina Lazaridi. Additionally, renowned industry experts will speak during the daily workshops and engage with screenwriters: Jorge Thielen Armand (Writers' Studio '18, TIFF Filmmaker Lab '17), Rosemary Dunsmore, Brad Fraser, Danis Goulet (Filmmaker Lab '11), Sardé Hardie, Iain Reid and Paul Tyler. From the Canadian Film Centre's CBC Actors Conservatory, Araya Mengesha, Vivien Endicott-Douglas, Ajuawak Kapashesit, and Getenesh Berhe will join for a full-day table read of the projects in development.

Notable TIFF Studio alumni include filmmakers Tracey Deer (*Beans*), Lina Roessler (*Best Sellers*), Martin Edralin (*Islands*), Cory Bowles (*Black Cop*), Romeo Candido (*Another Life*), Julian De Zotti (*Snowpiercer*), Lisa Jackson (*Indictment: The Crimes of Shelly Chartier*), Fawzia Mirza (*I Know Her*), Jasmin Mozaffari (*Firecrackers*), and Sanja Živković (*Cleo*). Following their involvement in TIFF Studio, many of these filmmakers have gone on to present their films at the Toronto International Film Festival, the Berlinale, and SXSW.

TIFF Writers' Studio 2021 biographies:

Maha Al-Saati (Saudi Arabia) with *From the West the Sun will Rise*

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Maha Al-Saati is an independent filmmaker exploring issues surrounding femininity and gender in the Arab world. Her short films include *Hair: The Story of Grass* (18) and *Cycle of Apples* (19). She was also a TIFF Share Her Journey Fellow in 2020, and she is a 2021 HFFPA Residency Fellow.

Jonathan Beaulieu-Cyr (Canada) with *Phénix*

Jonathan Beaulieu-Cyr's work is characterized by his strong collaborations. His latest short script, *Écume*, premiered at the 70th Berlinale and was named to the 2020 list of TIFF Canada's Top Ten Shorts. His first feature film, *Mad Dog Labine* (18), won the National Competition Award at the Festival du nouveau cinéma and was nominated for a Canadian Screen Award in 2020.

Adrianna DiLorenzo (Canada) with *Light Years*

Adrianna DiLorenzo is a screenwriter from Toronto. Her feature film credits include *Almost Adults* (16) and *Nobody Famous* (17). She is currently developing two feature films: *ExMas* with Comedy Dynamics, and *Light Years*, which was selected for the CFC's 2018 Telefilm Canada Feature Comedy Exchange program and was shortlisted for the TIFF–CBC Films Screenwriter Award.

Jason Filiatrault (Canada) with *Now, I Am A Bear*

Jason Filiatrault is an award-winning writer and filmmaker. His recent credits include two seasons of the Netflix original series *The Order*; an episode of the crime drama *Tribal* on APTN; and his debut feature, *Entanglement*, which starred Thomas Middleditch and earned Filiatrault the Writers Guild of Canada Screenwriting Award for Best Feature Film. Filiatrault is currently developing two half-hour series, including *Tracy and Unicorn* for Amazon Prime International.

Abraham Gezahagne (Ethiopia) with *Mehal Sefari*

Abraham Gezahagne is the award-winning Ethiopian director behind the feature films *Mizewochu (The Best Man)*, 2008; *Lomi Shita (The Scent of Lemon)*, 2012; and *Yenegem Alowoldem (I Won't Bear Tomorrow)*, 2016. Both took home multiple Gumma Awards – the Ethiopian film industry's most prestigious award – including Best Director.

Karabo Lediga (South Africa) with *Sabbatical*

Karabo Lediga has worked as a television director for the last 10 years in studio-based news satire, sketch comedy, and long-form narrative comedy. Her short film *What Did You Dream?* (19) screened in competition at the 2020 Clermont Ferrand International Short Film Festival and the Palm Springs International ShortFest.

Silvina Schnicer (Argentina/Germany) with *The Cottage*

Silvina Schnicer wrote and directed the short films *La Bicha* (10) and *Destello* (16), along with Ulises Porra. *Tigre* (17), their first feature film, had its world premiere in the Discovery section of the Toronto International

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Film Festival and screened at the San Sebastian International Festival. With her first solo film, *The Cottage*, she participated in the Ibero-American Film Projects Course in Madrid. She participated in “12 Miradas” at the Festival Internacional de la Habana in 2018, and in the Festival de Málaga’s MAFIZ in 2019. In September 2019, she was part of TIFF Filmmaker Lab as a TIFF Canada Goose Fellow.

Taratoa Stappard (New Zealand/United Kingdom) with *Mārama*

Taratoa Stappard is an award-winning writer-director born in Aotearoa, New Zealand. His father was English and his mother is Māori (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa). His first feature, *Mārama*, won BFI Early Development Funding and was selected for the 2020 imagineNATIVE Indigenous Screenwriting Intensive. This year he will direct his half-hour script, *Taumanu (Reclaim)* in New Zealand, for an anthology of supernatural Māori stories commissioned by Television New Zealand. He was a 2019 Edinburgh International Film Festival Talent Lab participant, and he received a 2020 John Brabourne Award from the Film and TV Charity.

For participant headshots, contact proffice@tiff.net.

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About TIFF

TIFF is a not-for-profit cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world through film. An international leader in film culture, TIFF projects include the annual Toronto International Film Festival in September; TIFF Bell Lightbox, which features five cinemas, major exhibitions, and learning and entertainment facilities; and innovative national distribution program Film Circuit. The organization generates an annual economic impact of \$189 million CAD. TIFF Bell Lightbox is generously supported by contributors including Founding Sponsor Bell, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the City of Toronto, the Reitman family (Ivan Reitman, Agi Mandel and Susan Michaels), The Daniels Corporation, and RBC. For more information, visit tiff.net.

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TIFF's Talent Development programmes are supported in part by the Share Her Journey campaign, which is committed to increasing the participation, skills, and opportunities for women behind and in front of the camera.

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For more information, contact the TIFF Communications Department at proffice@tiff.net.

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