

A fresh visual identity, new ideas, a new team, and even more emotions – the Warsaw International Film Festival returns in grand style! From October 10–19, 2025, the capital of Poland will once again become the center of world cinema – the 41st edition of WIFF marks the beginning of a new decade and the opening of a new chapter in the history of one of Europe's most prestigious film festivals.

This October, for the 41st time, we will invite audiences to embark on a journey through images and emotions from around the world – from intimate stories to narratives of global scope, from debuts to masterpieces – announces Joanna Szymańska-Szcześniak, General Director.

The changes are visible at first glance – the new visual identity heralds a complete transformation of the festival on every level: structural, organizational, and programmatic. The team responsible for its implementation consists of Joanna Szymańska-Szcześniak – General Director, Bartłomiej Pulcyn – Program Director, and Eliza Subotowicz – Head of Industry Events.

This year, the festival spreads even more widely across Warsaw – it will take place in eight venues: Kinoteka, Atlantic, Luna, Kinomuzeum at the Museum of Modern Art, Iluzjon, "Cinema in the Clouds" on the 46th floor of Varso Tower, the "Promised Land hall" at FINA, and the "Pod Pelikanem hall" at 62 Krakowskie Przedmieście. The program will be enriched with numerous accompanying events and meetings with distinguished filmmakers and cultural figures from around the world. These encounters are what make WIFF more than just a film showcase – they turn it into a shared experience and a lasting memory.

This year's Festival program will again feature the International Competitions, Free Spirit section, and special screenings. We will present **112** feature films and **56** shorts. Over 80 of them will be world, international, European, or regional premieres.

We are especially proud that the **OPENING FILM of the 41st WIFF** will be **Anniversary**, the first film Jan Komasa has made in the United States, based on his own concept, starring a Hollywood cast including Diane Lane and Kyle Chandler. The film will also compete in the International Competition.

# INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

Fifteen world premiere productions will compete for the Warsaw Grand Prix – an award of 100,000 PLN funded by the City of Warsaw – including the "razor-sharp" new film *Our Girls* by Oscar® winner Mike van Diem (*Character*, WFF 1997); *Father* by Tereza Nvotová, which was presented in the Orizzonti section at the Venice Film Festival; as well as eagerly awaited Polish entries: *Brother* by Maciej Sobieszczański, starring Agnieszka Grochowska, and *Home Sweet Home*, the latest film by Wojciech Smarzowski, a multiple WIFF award-winner (*The Wedding* – WFF 2004, *The Dark House* – WFF 2010, *Rose* – WFF 2011).

# **COMPETITION 1-2**

This section – dedicated to debuts and sophomore works – will also feature 15 titles, including the surprisingly mature directorial debut *Bubbles* by Sebastian Husak; *Omaha* by Cole Webley, which premiered at Sundance; and the comedy-drama *Solomamma* by Janicke Askevold, awarded at the 2025 Locarno Festival.

### **DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION**

This year's lineup includes as many as 8 world premieres and 7 international premieres.

### SHORT FILM COMPETITION

Traditionally, four winners from this section will qualify for Oscar® consideration, the prestigious Academy Award. Audiences will see 28 short films – fiction, documentary, and animated – selected from over 3,000 submissions.

This year, WIFF also revives the legendary **ENCOUNTERS** – a showcase of the hottest films of the season. The section will present 24 features that premiered over the past ten months at the world's leading festivals in Cannes, Venice, and Locarno. Screenings will be held at the Luna cinema, with the winner chosen by audience vote. The prize – PLN 40,000, funded by the Polish Film Institute – will be awarded to the Polish distributor of the winning film.

Among the contenders are some of the most anticipated titles: It Was Just an Accident by Jafar Panahi, winner of the Palme d'Or at Cannes 2025; Smashing Machine by Benny Safdie, which earned the Silver Lion for Best Director in Venice's Main Competition; The Secret Agent by Kleber Mendonça Filho, awarded at Cannes 2025 for Best Actor (Wagner Moura) and Best Director; The Holy Boy (La valle dei sorrisi) by Paolo Strippoli, presented in Venice; from the Toronto Festival, Aziz Ansari's comedy Good Fortune, starring Keanu Reeves as a well-meaning but inexperienced angel Gabriel; and Martin Scorsese's moving Indian production Homebound by Neeraj Ghaywan, which premiered in the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes 2025.

The winners of the 41st WIFF will be announced during the Awards Gala on Saturday, October 18, at 8:30 PM at the Museum of Modern Art (MSN).

A new feature of WIFF will be the so-called **Centrepiece** – two special titles to be presented as part of the **SPECIAL SCREENINGS**: Anders Thomas Jensen's latest film *Last Viking*, an intriguing and subversive story of identity starring Mads Mikkelsen, and *After the Hunt* – a moving story with a star-studded cast including Julia Roberts, Chloë Sevigny, and Andrew Garfield, directed by Luca Guadagnino. We also invite audiences to the **world premiere** of *Notes of a Mortal* by Maciej Żak, starring Ireneusz Czop.

In the new section **CINEMA**, **MY LOVE**, we will present films chosen by stars and film experts, followed by meetings with audiences where our guests will share how the selected film influenced their lives. This year's invitees include: Grażyna Torbicka (*Day for Night*), Andrzej Chyra (*Viridiana*), Maciej Zakościelny (*Knock Knock*), and Piotr Witkowski (*Buffalo '66*). Screenings will take place at Iluzjon.

In the **out-of-competition Free Spirit section**, we will showcase films that break patterns – independent, innovative, rebellious – perfectly suited for the cinema of our partner, **KINOMUZEUM at the Museum of Modern Art**. Highlights include the timely film *Post Truth* by Turkish director Alkan Avcıoğlu, exploring our relationship with technology and how we reached a point where truth no longer matters; *Lijepa večer, lijep dan (Good Evening, Good Day)* by Ivona Juka – a story of freedom and persecution in Yugoslavia liberated from Nazi rule, the official Croatian Oscar® submission for Best International Feature Film 2025; and *Tornado*, the latest work by John Maclean, director of the acclaimed *Slow West* (2015).

One of the festival's accompanying events will be **CINEMA IN THE CLOUDS**, held on the 46th floor of Varso Tower – film screenings combined with breathtaking views of Warsaw from 200 meters above ground. In these extraordinary circumstances, we will revisit memorable titles: *You Are the Universe*, *Flow*, the timeless *Amélie*, Paolo Sorrentino's *Parthenope*, the documentary *Baltic*, and *Light Sensitive*.

A new section, **ANIMUS. CINEMA OF VALUES**, will invite audiences to reflect on what truly matters – in an increasingly divided world, we need what unites and inspires us. Films in this section address values, social responsibility, and moral courage. We particularly recommend the Iranian film *Whisper My Name* by Rasoul Sadrameli and *Family Matters* by Ke-Yin Pan – a story spanning twenty-four years and four time periods, tracing the seemingly ordinary life of a Taiwanese family.

At the **Pod Pelikanem Hall** (62 Krakowskie Przedmieście), there will be free screenings for seniors under the banner **BOOM GENERATION**, featuring titles such as *State of Emergency*, *The Straight Story*, *Juliette's Spring*, *The Art of Beautiful Living*, and *Maria Callas*.

Seat reservations are available **online only** via: <a href="https://animus.film/pokazy">https://animus.film/pokazy</a> Seats are limited.

The project – a cycle of free screenings and workshops for seniors – is financed by the City of Warsaw and organized by Caritas of the Archdiocese of Warsaw in cooperation with the Warsaw International Film Festival.

The festival also remembers its youngest viewers – as always, we invite families to the **Family Film Weekend**, featuring *The Girl Who Stole Time* (dir. Yu Ao, Zhou Tienan) and *Thelma's Perfect Birthday* (dir. Reinis Kalnaellis).

For the first time in WIFF's history, we invite audiences to a **Film Music Concert**, dedicated to the works of **Michał Lorenc**, performed by the ensemble **DesOrient**, which for more than two decades has created a unique musical world blending classical sound, ethnic sensitivity, and cinematic emotion. Their performance at the 41st Warsaw International Film Festival will be a special opportunity to hear live the music of Michał Lorenc – one of Poland's most outstanding film music composers. Join us on **Thursday**, **October 16**, **at 7:00 PM** at the Promised Land hall (Ziemia Obiecana) in FINA, 3/5 Wałbrzyska Street, Warsaw.

The **CLOSING FILM of the 41st WIFF** will be another highly anticipated title – *The Voice of Hind Rajab* by Kaouther Ben Hania, winner of the **Silver Lion – Grand Jury Prize** and eight other collateral awards in Venice. The film also set a new record for the longest ovation after its premiere – 23 minutes! This will be the perfect finale to ten intense days at our festival.

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The festival also offers a rich program for film industry professionals. In 2025, under new leadership and in a refreshed format, **WARSAW INDUSTRY DAYS** will launch – an international industry event held from **October 13–18** as part of WIFF.

The festival has a long tradition as a meeting place for the Polish and Central-Eastern European film industries, with industry events playing a key role in supporting emerging talent from the region by connecting creators and producers with the international film market.

Warsaw Industry Days aims to promote creators from Central and Eastern Europe, showcase the most exciting projects from the region, and provide space for professional exchange of experience and collaboration between the Polish and international film industries. The event combines the Festival's longstanding expertise with new initiatives responding to today's market needs. Its mission is to build relationships, foster collaboration, and strengthen mutual support within the industry. The initiative also seeks to tighten regional bonds and create new co-production opportunities with Poland and among Central and Eastern European countries.



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