

BRIDGES TO THE WORLD INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL  
SPRING 2021 (VIRTUAL)

*Na linha de frente*  
[On the Front Line] (2018)

**Mozambique**

Directed by James Byrne

February 2, 2021

Running Time: 70 minutes



Introduced by His Excellency Carlos dos Santos  
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Mozambique to the U.S.A.  
and  
Brett Kuxhausen, Producer & Cinematographer

Gorongosa National Park sits in the center of Mozambique, about 100 miles west of the Indian Ocean coast. Established in 1960, the 1500 square mile park includes a wide diversity of geographical features and some of the densest wildlife populations in Africa. The flora and fauna of the park were severely diminished during the 1981-1994 civil war, but eventually rebounded over the next 20 years due to extensive restoration efforts by the government and international organizations. The Park was damaged again in March 2019 by Cyclone Idai, one of the worst tropical storms ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere. Fortunately, the wildlife was not significantly impacted and today the park continues to develop its ecotourism while working with local communities to abolish poaching and illegal logging. In short, conservation of the park is now the main goal of the Mozambican government.

Empowered with leading the conservation effort, the Gorongosa Rangers provide the “front line” of protection for this beautiful wilderness. Fighting against ivory and bush meat hunters, illegal teak loggers, wildfires, and concerned members of buffer zone communities, the Rangers struggle to maintain the integrity of the park and demonstrate its immense value for the country. A team of only 150 Rangers could not effectively patrol the park’s nearly one million acres, so a call went out for reinforcements.

700 hundred candidates from the surrounding communities registered to participate in the intensive physical and mental examinations required to become a Gorongosa Ranger. For the

first time in the park's history, women were encouraged to sign-up for the opportunity – but they weren't shown any preferential treatment. We meet some of the women, including Rosa Costomo and Micaela Alexandre, as they endure 14 days of a grueling selection process (reducing the 700 candidates to 40) and 45 days of ranger training.

*On the Front Line* follows the candidates as they devote themselves to the heroic work of preserving the environment. The film offers an inspiring story of what people will endure to reach their dream of proudly wearing a Ranger's uniform. The film also provides a glimpse into the sublime natural wonders of the Gorongosa National Park.

To view a photoessay on Gorongosa National Park by Brett Kuxhausen, go to <https://africageographic.com/stories/gorongosa-in-images/#agtravel-3>

You can watch a trailer for *On the Frontline* at –

<https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-Lkry-SF01&hsimp=yhs-SF01&hspart=Lkry&p=on+the+front+line+the+rangers+of+gorongosa+national+park#id=1&vid=e9d930df0084ae90424ebc4480c1b9a2&action=click>

*Es esmu šeit* [Mellow Mud] (2016)

**Latvia**

Written & Directed by Renārs Vimba

February 9, 2021

Running Time: 105 minutes



Introduced by Sarma Gintere

Third Secretary Public Diplomacy, Embassy of the Republic of Latvia

*Es esmu šeit* (which translates as “I am here”) presents a bittersweet story of a young woman coming of age under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Not only does she seek to establish a mature self-identity, but to also assert her value and independence in a world that has ignored her – to exclaim “I am here.” Living with her younger brother Robis in a simple wooden

cabin at the end of a soggy, nearly impassible road, Raya must function as a sister, mother, student, farmer, and lover. Her poverty, a deceased father, a difficult brother, an absent mother, an uncaring grandmother, and the threat of being placed in foster care push Raya to make some rash and unfortunate decisions in an attempt to improve her life. Elīna Vaska, in a stellar debut film performance, depicts Raya as a complex and confused youth whose emotional quest is to find the respect, love, support, and family she once experienced. She fully conveys Raya's **feelings of desperation, anger, abandonment, bitterness, and first love with incredible conviction and deep authenticity. Vaska also expertly reveals Raya's strength, tenderness, sensuality, and self-reliance.**

*Es esmu šeit* is Renārs Vimba's first feature-length film. Vimba studied filmmaking at the Latvian Academy of Culture and also studied under director and screenwriter Boris Frumin at the Baltic Film and Media School in Tallinn, Estonia. His embrace of social realism provides the mechanism to honestly tell Raya's poignant story of youthful mistakes and links the film to other examples of "Baltic Cinema" that this series has recently screened: *Stupid Young Heart* (Finland), *Cherry Tobacco* (Estonia), and *Children from Hotel America* (Lithuania). These films aspire to capture the "poetics of the everyday" which includes challenging – often ugly – issues that teenagers must navigate such as immigration, racism, poverty, abortion, alcoholism, and inappropriate sexual relationships. The young characters in these films, frequently without adult role models, make mistakes and exercise poor judgement at every turn. Their actions typically make older viewers uneasy and fearful, because experienced individuals can see the tragic consequences headed their way; unexpected repercussions that these young adults simply can't recognize. That dreams of happiness often end in disappointment. That plans often fall apart. That obligations replace personal freedom. And yet, even with these setbacks, they ultimately learn to take responsibility for their actions, learn how to negotiate the harsh reality of their lives, and assume the mantle of adulthood.

In 2016, *Es esmu šeit* was named Best Film by the Youth Jury at the Berlin Film Festival and won Best Film, Best Screenplay, and Best Actress (Elīna Vaska) at the Latvian National Film Festival. You can watch a trailer at –

[https://www.imdb.com/video/vi2218574105?ref=tt\\_pv\\_vi\\_aiv\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/video/vi2218574105?ref=tt_pv_vi_aiv_1)

*Redes* [The Wave] (1935)

**Mexico**

Co-Directed by Emilio Gómez Muriel  
and Fred Zinnemann

February 16, 2021

Running Time: 60 minutes



Introduced by Gregorio Luke, former Director of the Museum of Latin American Art  
<https://www.gregorioluke.com/>

In terms of cinematic and musical history, *Redes* is a monumental – if perhaps unfamiliar – piece of art. A collaboration between Silvestre Revueltas, Paul Strand, and co-directors Emilio Gómez Muriel and Fred Zinneman, the film proved to be an innovative and seminal work that not only launched Mexico’s golden age of cinema (1935-1960), but also created a new form of semi-documentary filmmaking. It demonstrates a clear political and aesthetic link to the Soviet Cinema of the era, particularly the shooting and editing styles of Eisenstein and Pudovkin. Its use of oppressed people living in poverty, shooting in real locations with natural light, using non-actors, working on a limited budget, and exposing social injustices connects the Soviets to the Neorealist Movement that would flourish in the 1940s. In fact, *Redes’* story, theme, and filmmaking approach are almost identical to Luchino Visconti’s *La terra trema* (1948), the Italian Neorealist classic about exploited Sicilian fishermen.

Produced by the new Mexican government that emerged after the devastating Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), *Redes* tells the economic struggle of poor fishermen manipulated by the sole owner of their region’s fish market. It celebrates day-to-day physical labor and depicts the working class as intrepid and valiant. Unabashedly pro-union, it champions consciousness-raising and organized resistance as means to achieve social justice and political reform. The film clearly expresses the left-leaning politics in international artistic circles of the time when artists championed the rights of workers everywhere.

**Silvestre Revueltas** composed *Redes’* music, the first of 11 films he scored. He served as the Assistant Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico (1929-1935) and did much to promote modern Mexican orchestral music. He wrote most of his compositions between 1930 and 1940 when he died due to various health issues at 41. Revueltas’ dazzling score for *Redes* is emotional, vibrant, colorful, and ultimately heroic. The music elevates the images of the film especially noticeable in three scenes: the sad processional of a funeral; the pulsing excitement of the season’s first successful catch; and the epic drive of an inevitable working-class rebellion. In short, the film’s score is one of the most powerful examples of cinematic music ever written. After *Redes*, Revueltas’ best known work is *Sensemaya* (1938).

**Emilio Gómez Muriel** was an up and coming cineaste in the 1930s and would eventually become one of Mexico's most prolific filmmakers, best known for his melodramas, into the 1970s.

**Fred Zinnemann** was also beginning his directorial career in the 1930s and would go on to become one of Hollywood's major director, helming such films as *High Noon* (1952), *From Here to Eternity* (1953), *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), and *Julia* (1977), and winning four Academy Awards.

**Paul Strand** was a major American photographer with strong social realism tendencies. He was also a filmmaker; his best known films include *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936) – sponsored by the US Resettlement Administration – and the anti-fascist *Native Land* (1942). Both films are clearly influenced by *Redes*.

*Redes* was restored in 2010 by Martin Scorsese's World Cinema Project and features a new recording of the original score produced in 2014 at the University of Maryland's Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center.

*Koi no shizuku* [For Love's Sake] (2018)

**Japan**

Directed by Naoki Segi

23 February 2021

Running Time: 115 minutes



Introduced by Minister Shinichi Saida

Head of Economic Department, Embassy of Japan in the U.S.A.

and

Reed Hessler, Scholar and Lecturer on Asian Cinema

*Koi no shizuku* offers a light-hearted combination of romantic, culinary, and family dramas. Initially focusing on Tokyo university student Shiori (Rina Kawaei, a former member of the girl group AKB48) and her undesired sake internship, the film eventually features an ensemble cast

of complex characters dealing with multiple personal issues. *Koi no shizuku* also shows us how sake is made through dedication, intense labor, and teamwork. We see how sake is enjoyed as a central part of Japanese culture (for example – a visit to a sake festival highlights a *kagami biraki* ceremony where a wooden cask of sake is opened with mallets). As one character exclaims, “making sake is a trade that cultivates life.”

Due to an unfortunate incident in college, Shiori detests sake. Consequently, she has developed exceptional skills in wine tasting and is hoping an internship will take her to France. Instead, a lottery sends her to the Nogami Sake Brewery outside of Hiroshima. Shiori’s visit does not start well; the small, family run brewery forgot to cancel the internship because of financial troubles. She meets the owner of the brewery Teruyoshi (played by the famous actor Ren Osugi), his renegade son Kanji (Hayato Onozuka, known for his role in the *Kamen Rider* metaseries), master brewer Tsubosima (Mantarô Koichi), rice farmer Misaki (Mao Miyaji), rival brewer Arishige (Yuichi Nakamura), and many others who help her slowly appreciate sake – as a beverage and as a way of life. Shiori becomes an important mediator between the old traditions and the new model of mass production. Ultimately, she not only rejuvenates the brewery but also her perspective on life.

Shiori develops a close friendship with Misaki (who is secretly loved by Arishige) and eventually a romantic connection with Kanji. A quiet death precipitates the reconsideration of a business deal to modernize production, the exploration of a family secret, the importance of honoring tradition, the value of community, and the various ways people fall in love. Life altering decisions must be made by the main characters at the end of the film. They begin thinking about their options by following Yukio Mishima’s short story “The Seven Bridges” where four geishas walk across seven bridges without stopping or speaking, in the hope that the Moon will grant their wishes. In *Koi no shizuku*, after much walking and contemplating, some wishes are granted and some are left unanswered – but with hope. The future is appropriately ambiguous, but clearly full of promise.

You can watch a trailer at – <https://mydramalist.com/25424-loves-water-drop>

To learn more about the sakes of Hiroshima, go to <https://sake-hiroshima.com/en/>.  
Kampai!

*Al-mowaten* [The Citizen] (2013)

**Egypt**

Produced, Directed, and Co-Written  
by Sam Kadi

2 March 2021

Running Time: 100 minutes



Introduced by Dr. Mohamed Hamza,  
Minister and Director of Educational & Cultural Bureau of the Arab Republic of Egypt,  
Sam Kadi, Producer & Director  
and Khaled Nabawy

Not an “Egyptian Film” per se, but an independent American film that foregrounds an important challenge faced by Arab immigrants – and all immigrants: how to access and live the American Dream in a society that is suspicious of or feels threatened by you. Imagine how this challenge is amplified if you happen to arrive in New York City one day before the 9/11 terrorist attack. You learn that innocence is not a defense against xenophobia.

Ibrahim Jarrah (played by the well-known and award winning Egyptian action Khaled Nabawy) enters the United States as a lucky winner of the green card lottery. A skilled auto mechanic and car salesman, he plans to gain American citizenship and open his own business. A miscommunication with his cousin leads Ibrahim to fabricate an excuse about where he will stay; an excuse that later creates a significant problem. His life in New York proves to be quite a rollercoaster – he befriends a young American woman, is arrested without cause and held at an undisclosed location for six months, finds a job, befriends a homeless man who later betrays him, begins to fall in love with a Lebanese woman he meets at an English language class, defends a Jewish man from a vicious attack, becomes a media hero, and defends himself against an unjust deportation order. Through every set-back and humiliation, Ibrahim maintains his resolve to become a citizen. His credo – “to reach your dreams, plant your good deeds” – foreshadows the conclusion of the film and the realization of his goal.

Sam Kadi is an award winning filmmaker; his documentary *Little Gandhi* (2016) about murdered peace activist Ghiath Matar was selected as the Syrian entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2017 Academy Awards and *The Citizen* has received international acclaim. Effectively using some of the conventions of melodrama (concerns of the family, a focus on morality and ethics, the interplay of coincidence and fate, an unexpected threat from an external source, and a strong appeal to emotions), Kadi creates a powerfully moving film that also corrects Arab stereotypes and advocates for social justice. Kadi gave a TedTalk in 2018 about the need to tell

the stories of the oppressed and to lend voices to the unheard as a means to change lives, opinions, and society (see – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMkzQ47FwI0>).

*The Citizen's* ensemble cast (featuring Carey Elwse, William Atherton, Rizwan Manji, Brian Edward Marable, and Agnes Bruckner) effectively portrays believable New York City characters caught up in the insecurities of urban life during a crisis. The standout performance belongs to Khaled Nabawy. He creates a fully rounded and complex Ibrahim; reacting to everything he experiences with a combination of wonder, disbelief, and determination. Through his perseverance, Ibrahim becomes a true hero in every sense of the word.

You can watch a trailer at – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhRCfX1pU5U>