



## Press release

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 Thursday 10 March

# FIVE LGBT FILMS UNVEILED FOR A WORLDWIDE CELEBRATION OF LOVE AND DIVERSITY ON 17 MARCH

The British Council, the UK's international organisation for cultural and educational opportunities, and the BFI (British Film Institute) today announce the five short films from BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival, that will be made available online and completely free of charge on 17<sup>th</sup> March for audiences across the world as part of this year's **fiveFilms4freedom**, an online film festival which celebrates love and diversity.

On Thursday 17 March, **fiveFilms4freedom** will become a 24-hour campaign asking people everywhere to watch a film together over the course of one single day. **fiveFilms4freedom** is the world's first digital, global, LGBT film festival and will be promoted through the British Council's network in more than 50 countries and regions, reaching audiences across the Americas, China, India, Israel, Kosovo, Poland, Turkey, Ukraine and the Middle East. This will be a chance for audiences, wherever they are, to enjoy LGBT cinema; to find out a little bit more about emerging LGBT filmmakers from around the world; and most importantly, to show support for freedom and equality everywhere.

From travelling communities to Easter bonnets to the wonderment of growing up, the five films tell a range of affecting stories about contemporary LGBT life in countries including Brazil, Ireland, Spain, the Philippines and the UK. They are polished, rough, funny, sad and inspiring and each has a different voice.

The five films are:

- **SWIRL** Two girls, young and in love, move backwards through the city in Peterson Varga's lyrical short from the Philippines.
- **XAVIER** is a film by Brazilian director Ricky Mastro about a father who notices that his 11-year-old son pays a lot of attention to slightly older boys.
- **BREATHE** is a British-Irish film by James Doherty, about an Irish traveller is increasingly concerned that his son is 'soft', so sets about toughening him up.
- **TAKE YOUR PARTNERS** In this British short film by director Siri Rodnes, Miss Paterson expects Ollie to make an Easter bonnet like the other girls. But Ollie is not like the other girls.
- **THE ORCHID** A man has something important to tell his son, but can only get through to his voicemail in this film by Spanish director Ferran Navarro-Beltrán.

The five films will be available to watch online on 17<sup>th</sup> March on the British Council website and BFI player.

**Alan Gemmell, Director fiveFilms4freedom, British Council** said:

"fiveFilms4freedom is a ground-breaking LGBT film festival supporting freedom and equality all over the world. For our second year we are showcasing some of our finest short film makers to help celebrate love and diversity through one of the world's most powerful and accessible cultural forms: film. By bringing together the British Council and films from BFI Flare we are promoting LGBT cinema in countries that make up half of the world's population.'

**Briony Hanson, Director Film, British Council** said:

"The British Council's job is to connect people around the world and fiveFilms4freedom explores the diversity, freedom of expression and celebration of difference that characterise UK society. We believe passionately in the power of culture and film to change people's lives and hope that this programme has a long lasting, far reaching and positive impact."

**Tricia Tuttle, Deputy Director of Festivals at the British Film Institute** said:

"LGBT film festivals are great spaces for nurturing new film talents and creating dialogue between filmmakers and audiences. In this, our 30<sup>th</sup> edition of BFI Flare, we are thrilled to present a rich and diverse programme which shows LGBT cinema to be in great shape. And it's fantastic to work with British Council to connect filmmakers to a truly global community united in a love of film and a belief that love is a basic fundamental human right."

The British Council has joined together with BFI Flare - the UK's leading Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) film event – to help celebrate love and diversity through one of the world's most powerful and accessible cultural forms: film.

Queer filmmakers have delivered some of cinema's most striking, vital, challenging, provocative and beautiful films and for 30 years BFI Flare has been key in bringing these to UK audiences - this unique partnership with the British Council is designed to open up the films and celebratory spirit of the festival for audiences across the world. Empathy requires understanding and film is a powerful tool in helping people see and explore lives and experiences different to their own - as director Paul Greengrass has said, "film festivals at their best are a window and also a mirror. A window through which we can see the world, and a mirror in which we can see ourselves."

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#### **Notes to Editors**

##### **About fiveFilms4freedom**

fiveFilms4freedom run alongside BFI Flare 2016, the British Film Institute's LGBT Film Festival. Using the BFI Player and the British Council's global network it promotes five films from this year's Flare Festival to people all over the world.

##### **About the British Council**

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.

We work in more than 100 countries and our 8,000 staff – including 2,000 teachers – work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year by teaching English, sharing the arts and delivering education and society programmes. We are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter. A core publicly-funded grant provides 20 per cent of our turnover which last year was £864 million. The rest of our revenues are earned from services which customers around the world pay for, such as English classes and taking UK examinations, and also through education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. All our work is in pursuit of our charitable purpose and supports prosperity and security for the UK and globally.

For more information, please visit: [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org).

##### **About BFI Flare**

BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival is the UK's longest running LGBT film event. It began in 1986 as Gay's Own Pictures. By its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition it was tagged the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival and since then has grown to become the largest LGBT film event in the UK, and its most anticipated. The Festival changed its name to BFI Flare in 2014 to reflect the increasing diversity of the audience and programme. Last year's festival saw admissions of over 23,000. The festival is programmed by Jason Barker, Jay Bernard, Michael Blyth, Brian Robinson and Emma Smart, led by Deputy Head of Festivals, Tricia Tuttle and Head of Festivals, Clare Stewart. The full programme of BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival will include 50 feature films, an expanded industry programme, selected films on BFI Player VOD service, a series of special events and archive screenings. fiveFilms4freedom will see Flare offer five LGBT short films for free across the world and promoted through the British Council's global networks. The full programme will be available on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016. The festival runs 16<sup>th</sup> March – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2016. [www.bfi.org.uk/Flare](http://www.bfi.org.uk/Flare)

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